

Ho-Won Jeong(Ed.)
Conflict Resolution: Dynamics, Process and Structure
(Aldershot, UK:Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 1999, 221pp)

As the psychologist Ronald Fisher notes in his important essay “ Social-Psychological Processes in Interactive Conflict Analysis and Reconciliation “ *‘One of the most serious global problems facing the world as it lurches into the new millennium is how to manage destructive and protracted conflict between groups with differing identities who are interacting within the same political system... ’*”

We see the cycle of violence, retribution and revenge in many conflicts with continuing reciprocal atrocities among people who have long been in close contact. There is a pressing need for reconciliation which Louis Kriesberg has usefully defined: *“Reconciliation here refers to accommodative ways members of adversary entities have come to regard each other after having engaged in intense, and often destructive struggle. They (can) put aside feelings of hate, fear, and loathing, put aside views of the other as dangerous and subhuman, and put aside the desire for revenge and retribution. To put aside does not mean not to have such feelings, perceptions and goals, but not to make them paramount nor to act on them against the former adversary.”*

Such reconciliation is not only an intellectual process based on a recognition of mutual interests and mutual acceptance but must also touch the “heart” – the emotions and the seat of one’s sense of identity and worth. Here one can acknowledge grievances, accept responsibilities and express contrition.

While there has been a good deal of research on the intellectual steps of conflict resolution (many useful outlines are given in this book), there has been much less work done on the ways of the heart – an area considered too subjective or too “spiritual” for systematic research. Thus most of the approaches in this collection of essays by scholars are devoted to social and psychological processes.

There are useful presentations of the need for structural changes for peace building as in Franklin Dukes “Structural Forces in Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Democratic Societies.” Structural approaches stress the development of cross-cutting ties in schools, work, health and housing. Structural changes are needed to reduce inequalities and income possibilities for social mobility. Structures can also improve communications between groups. A basic needs approach will help to delimit the areas to be studied: housing, education and socialization, health, access to food, water, space. How unevenly are these necessary goods distributed? To what extent are they shared between conflicting groups?

Emphasis is also placed upon psychological approaches. For reconciliation, one needs to be able to see the world through the eyes of the other. Yet, in post-conflict situations, there is often a strong mutual sense that the aggression was unjustified by any standard, coupled with a fear that the aggressor will strike again at a feasible time in the future.

There are useful sections on the organization of small-group meetings among antagonists where authentic exchanges can take place in an emotionally-safe environment.

The healing experience of such meetings must be transferred to their respective communities to be part of a wider process of peace building.

However, much of the psychological concerns do not really touch the spiritual nature of those in conflict. Thus, it was interesting to read an approach to the heart written by an author best known for his work on arms control: Malvern Lumsden's "Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Three Zones of Social Reconstruction". The three zones of reality in war-torn societies which he develops are:

1) *The outer, social world must be rebuilt in a post-war society. This includes dealing with dysfunctional underlying ecological relationships, along with maladaptive social and political systems.*

2) *The inner, psychological world which must be reintegrated to cope with the impact of trauma. This includes reconstructing meaningful world vies, self-worth, a sense of community, and eventually a degree of reconciliation across social divisions.*

3) *A third, transitional zone between the two, the zone of 'play' in childhood and 'culture' in adulthood. This transitional zone is a space which allows for healing, learning and creativity; a space where new ideas can emerge, emotions expressed, and perhaps symbolically, new relationships tried out, before these ideas are integrated psychologically or applied socially.*

Lumsden also draws upon the multiple intelligences approach in H; Gardner's *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Gardner maintains that we can learn in many different ways and that certain people learn more easily in some ways than in others: movement intelligence as in dance and ritual; a visual-spatial intelligence as in art and environmental design; a verbal intelligence as in speaking and writing.

These forms of intelligence or learning patterns can link the "head" and the "heart". Thus in inter-communal reconciliation there needs to be many approaches which call upon different types of intelligence –art, music, dance, the creation of play zones and public parks. We need to create meaningful rituals that can reconcile. In many current conflicts, communal groups belong to different religious communities so they have few common rituals. Therefore we need to find new spiritual rituals to strengthen the "ties that bind".

As Ho-Won Jeong notes in his overview on research on conflict resolution "*Self-esteem and identity as well as physical well-being are key elements to be considered in conflict resolution and peace building.*" Thus, there are many significant roles to be played by many different actors in the process of reconciliation. This book does not try to present a co-ordinated approach, but the individual chapters give useful indications of approaches which can be combined by a skilful practitioner.

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