Reflections on Kenneth E. Boulding's *The Image*:
Glimpsing the Roots of Peace Education Pedagogy

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Introduction

The March/April 2013 issue of the Global Campaign for Peace Education newsletter features a reflection on the evolution of the field of peace education in the spotlight of the nomination of Betty Reardon, renowned peace educator, for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. The article notes that the field of peace education, in its early years, "was viewed by research scholars and peace activists as a positive complement to, but not an essential and integral part of the larger movement."[1] This marginalization of the field, and general separation of areas of peace knowledge (research, studies, education, activism), is a major obstacle impeding possibilities for transdisciplinary efforts to cooperatively and collaboratively affect and transform systems and cultures of violence. Fortunately, in the past decade, peace education scholars have been slowly moving the field out of the shadows, and, as the Global Campaign for Peace Education newsletter goes on to note, these scholar/practitioners have *"illuminated learning itself as the essential peace process*, seeking ways to design and deliver peacelearning experiences most appropriate to particular learning audiences and the substance to be learned."[2] Pedagogical methods and strategies for personal and social transformation have emerged as critical realms of knowledge and action in peace scholar and activist communities. It is the hopeful observation of the author that the discrete separation of realms of peace

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[1] Global Campaign for Peace Education (2013). Peace Education in the Spotlight of a Nobel Nomination. *Global Campaign for Peace Education newsletter,* issue 103, March/April 2013. Retrieved from http://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/newsletter/archives/103.html
[2] ibid.

knowledge, essentially pervasive since the beginnings of the formal organization of peace fields as academic disciplines, are slowly beginning to dissolve. This evolution was in large part the vision of pioneering peace researcher and economist Kenneth E. Boulding. Boulding believed that to effect change on the magnitude of scale required to confront and transform global issues of violence would require a new approach to problem solving; for new knowledge and possibilities to emerge all academic disciplines – from physics to psychology - had to enter into a transdisciplinary conversation for the common good. In 1956 Boulding published *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*, his outline of a general, transdisciplinary theory of knowledge and human, social, and organizational behavior.[3] An almost forgotten volume in scholarly peace studies, *The Image* articulates many essential conclusions, strategies, and realms of inquiry that the academic peace community has taken the 50+ years since to reach.

As it concerns peace educators, *The Image* provides one of the earliest, integrative and holistic theories of knowledge, knowledge creation and knowledge transformation. How ideas, images, and concepts are nurtured, sustained and transformed is the general substance of inquiry in transformative peace education pedagogy. As the field of peace education has grown and matured many perspectives on pedagogy have emerged. For the sake of this discussion, the author draws upon the transformative pedagogical perspectives of Betty Reardon, Paulo Freire, Dale Snauwaert, Jack Mezirow and educators from the International Institute on Peace Education[4] and Global Campaign for Peace Education[5] networks. From these perspectives, peace education pedagogy can be understood as a value informed philosophy and practice of teaching and learning directed toward personal, social, political and institutional change and transformation. It is a learner-centered pedagogy that is transformational in nature, transdisciplinary in scope, and comprehensively and holistically presented and explored so as to be oriented toward capacitating learners to transform the culture of violence and nurture a culture of peace. Boulding's *The Image* offers an early glimpse at many of the component parts of this

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[3] Boulding K., *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1956). Subsequent quotations and references from *The Image* are referenced in the body of the text by page number.

[4] The International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) was founded in 1982 by Betty Reardon and colleagues at Teachers College, Columbia University. The IIPE is an annual, week-long intensive program hosted in a different country each year that brings together educators, professional workers and activists in the field of peace education from around the world to exchange experiences and learn with and from each other in an intensive, short-term learning community that embodies the practices and principles of critical, participatory peace pedagogy.

[5] The Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE) is a campaign to facilitate the introduction of peace and human rights education into all educational institutions that was established at the Hague Appeal for Peace Civil Society Conference in May 1999. An initiative of individual educators and education NGOs committed to peace, it is conducted through a global network of education associations, and regional, national and local task forces of citizens and educators who will lobby and inform ministries of education and teacher education institutions about the UNESCO Framework and the multiplicities of methods and materials that now exist to practice peace education in all learning environments. The goal of campaign is to assure that all educational systems throughout the world will educate for a culture of peace.

pedagogy and offers a past perspective and guiding voice that should continue to influence the evolution of peace education pedagogy far into the future.

Envisioning the Image: Contextualizing Knowledge and Shaping the Individual

The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society is Kenneth Boulding's effort at articulating a new science he labels "eiconics," an interdisciplinary field that attempts to define a general theory of knowledge and action. Although primarily trained as an economist, Boulding frequently treaded across the disciplines. *The Image* was published after Boulding spent a year as a fellow at Stanford University's Center for Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences in the company of anthropologist Clyde Kluck-hohn, political scientist Harold Lasswell, and biologists Anatol Rapoport and Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Together they founded the Society for General Systems Research, of which Boulding served as its first president ("Kenneth Boulding General Systems Theory," n.d.).[6] *The Image* is Boulding's personal articulation of a general systems theory, a unique perspective that reflects his moral and values position as a Quaker as well as his fundamental belief in empirical science.

As a theory of knowledge and behavior, *The Image* is of particular importance to peace education. Historically, Boulding's image theory has quietly had a significant influence to the field of peace research. The field was slowly beginning to emerge at the time and Boulding was rigorously involved in academic inquiries into the problematique of war, pursuing understanding of its origins, influences and possible transformation. Given the pervasive concerns of war and the launch of the nuclear arms race, peace research was particularly welcoming to an interdisciplinary and systems approach. *The Image* has also had significant influence on the partner field of futures studies that examines the psychological and sociological phenomena related to the creation of shared knowledge, worldviews and paradigms with the goal of identifying processes that might be used to nurture alternative, more preferred futures. Kenneth's wife Elise Boulding, also a prominent peace researcher and peace educator, conducted futures workshops using imaging processes to help participants image a future world without nuclear weapons. Thus, as it concerns peace education, the image provides a particularly important theory and perspective as to the creation of knowledge and knowledge's association with behaviors, illuminating processes by which educators might transform violent beliefs and ideologies.

Boulding describes the "image" as a subjective conception one possesses of the world that also simultaneously informs one's behavior. The concept of the "image" could be considered an early predecessor to Jack Mezirow's (1991) "meaning perspective" and transformative learning theory.[7] In his effort to understand the complexity of system

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[6] Kenneth Boulding General Systems Theory. (n.d.) Retrieved from:
http://www.economictheories.org/2008/08/kenneth-boulding-general-systems-theory.html
[7] Mezirow, J., *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

change, Boulding was especially concerned with the question of how the image is created and changed. He suggests that the image may be altered or transformed through "messages": encounters with information, symbols, experiences, and other inputs. Depending upon the nature of these messages and the receiver's present image, these messages may potentially transform the subjective image and modify future behavior, or as Boulding suggests the "meaning of a message is the change which it produces in the image" (p. 7). Boulding describes three possible impacts messages might have on the image. The first possibility is that it might have no impact at all. Such messages are generally filtered out as they have little or no potential of modifying the existing image. These messages are akin to background noise. The second possible impact of a message is that it "may change the image in some rather regular and well defined way that might be described as simple addition" (p. 7). These might be understood as clarifying messages, new inputs that add to our image of the world but do not alter it in a radical way. The third possible impact is more radical, resulting in a revolutionary change or reorganization of the image. This third possibility is of greatest relevance to peace education pedagogy, where understanding how to facilitate learning for personal and social change and transformation might be considered the fundamental pedagogical task.

Messages of type two and three have direct parelells to the concepts of change and transformation as used in peace education. Change can be understood as a "process of becoming different in a particular way without fully losing one's previous characteristics".[8] Change, as thus described, would be synonomous with messages of type two. Transformation, on the other hand, is more synonomous with type three messages. As described by Betty Reardon, transformation can be understood as a deeper change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviors, relationships, and social structures.[9] An example from every day life can be used to illustrate the difference between these concepts: when a light bulb burns out the bulb can be easily changed. A transformative approach would be to remove the lamp all together, replacing it with a skylight, thereby eliminating dependency on the light bulb and electricity.

A key principle of Boulding's image is that knowledge is subjective. He submits that the "image is built up as a result of all past experience of the possessor of the image. Part of the image is the history of the image itself" (p. 6). Paulo Freire shares elements of this perspective in his conception of emancipatory education, where pedagogy is rooted in theories and modes of learning in which "…to teach is not to transfer knowledge, but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge".[10] Freirean pedagogy puts more emphasis on helping learners to think critically and does not dictate

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[8] Jenkins, T., *Community-based Institutes on Peace Education Organizer's Manual: A Peace Education Planning Guide* (New York: International Institute on Peace Education, 2007). [available online at www.c-i-p-e.org]
[9] Reardon, B., *Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for Global Responsibility* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).
[10] Freire, P., *Pedagogy of Freedom* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

what to think. Freire assumes that the learner is not a blank slate or an empty vessel, and thus emancipatory pedagogy should be principly elicitive in form. Here Boulding and Freire share a similar conception of authentic learning, or modification of the image. Freire's conception of emancipatory education is essentially transformation in nature, similar to the impact of type three messages in Boulding's framework. The epistemological congruence here at the level of the understanding of the creation of new knowledge is significantly important. *New knowledge emerges when messages intersect and communicate with the image. Messages do not replace the image, but rather modify or reorganize it.* The individual, subjective learner is the most important element in this equation. This is a particularly important principle in the formulation of pedagogy: it requires the educator to take into consideration the existing experiences and worldview of the learner. It is this principle that contests the misguided assumption that the role of peace educators is to help students "unlearn" violence. In this framework it is impossible to "unlearn," and thus the pedagogial approach is rather contrary to this popular rhetoric. The approach, from the perspective of Boulding and Freire, is to find processes for bringing new messages into communication with the existing image with the hope of alterning, reorganizing, or transforming it. If one's pedagogical approach is to replace the image this will only be met with resistance. In addition to the pedagogical concerns, a question of values needs to be considered when examining these two approaches. Peace education, as a values explicit field, should abandon the concept of "unlearning" as it stands in direct contradiction to the conept of human dignity. A person's subjective experience and worldview cannot be dismissed – it is their lived reality regardless of our agreement with it.

The above argument is directly supported by Boulding's concept of the value image. "The subjecitve knowledge structure or image of any individual or organization consists not only of images of 'fact' but also images of 'value'" (p. 11). The value image is the filter through which messages are ascribed to a scale of good or bad, better or worse.   Boulding argues that the values image plays the most significant role in determining the impact of any given message. Boulding posits two very significant observations in regards to the values image that frame his ontological and epsitemological position. His first observation is that "we do not perceive our sense data raw; they are mediated through a highly learned process of interpretation and acceptance" (p. 14). This axiom pertains to our ability to interpret contradictory observable data and make sense of it. Observations of the physical world are abound with examples of the application of this axiom. Boulding suggests that "we only get along in the world because we consistently and persistently disbelieve the plain evidence of our senses. The stick in the water is not bent; the movie is not a succession of still pictures; and so on" (p. 14). These sensory messages are interpreted through our values image. Boulding's second observation is more startling. He proclaims that "what this means is that for any individual organism or organization, there is no such thing as 'facts.' There are only messages filtered through a changeable values system" (p. 14). Thus, Boulding sees values as playing a very significant role in his theory of knowledge. He sees values as shaping our perception of the world and as the gatekeepers of our larger conception of the

image. Boulding's own summation is that his theory of the image "might well be called an organic theory of knowledge. Its most fundamental proposition is that knowledge is what somebody or something knows, and that without a knower, knowledge is an absurdity" (p. 16).   This subjectivity might suggest that Boulding's ontological disposition could be found in subjective idealism. However, Boulding directly states that "on the question of the relation between the physical and chemical structure of an organism and its knowledge structure, I am quite prepared to be agnostic" (p. 17). Benton and Craib suggest "for some philosophers, the apparent difficulty of being sure about the nature of anything beyond the limits of our own conscious experience leads them to 'agnosticism'. This is not just the don't-know option in the philosophers' public opinion poll. Rather, it is the positive doctrine that the nature of the world as it exists independently of our subjective experience *just* cannot be known".[11] From these arguments alone it remains difficult to pinpoint where Boulding falls on the ontological and epistemological spectrum.   Benton and Craib further observe that "so-called 'methodological individualists' argue against this. For them, society is nothing over and above the collection of individual people who make it up".[12]   It might therefore be prudent to explore Boulding's conception of the image in society before probing deeper into these ontological and epistemological assumptions.

The Image: Shaping Society

Boulding's role of the image in society follows from the above arguments. He emphasizes that the image "is a property of the individual person. It is only by way of metaphor and analogy that we can speak of organizations or of society as a whole as possessing an image" (p. 54). He observes that social organizations and institutions are extensions of individual images, often originating in the creative mind of an individual. While these social images are often shared and can indeed impact the individual image, their origins lie wholly within the individual images of those comprising a particular social organization. Boulding puts forward the following analogy:

> The correct analogy to the image of the organization in the organism is what might be called the genetic image. As far as the genetics of organisms is concerned, it is the image of the cell that is important, not the image of the organization as a whole. Because of this fact, an organization, although it is an open system, is an open system of a very different and much more complex character than that of the biological organism. (p. 60)

Here Boulding's theory follows the social constructionist tradition, the ontological assumption that "what happens in the course of our action, and our interaction, is that we *negotiate* (or construct) the meanings of the objects in our world" (p. 87).   However, Boulding's position may be a bit more hybrid. At one point he argues:

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[11] Benton, T. & Craib, I., *Philosophy of Social Science: the Philosophical Foundations of Social Thought* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 5.
[12] ibid., p. 5

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> Out of our image we predict the messages which will return to us as a result of our acts. If this prediction is fulfilled the image is confirmed, if it is not fulfilled the image must be changed. This is the essence of the logical-positivist view that definitions must be operational and hypotheses must be testable. (p. 169)

Epistemologically, his theory of knowledge draws from both rationalist and empiricist traditions. The cogency in his theory to rationalism can be interpreted through the emphasis he gives to the values image as the gatekeeper of reason in the individual image. We find hints of empiricism in the phenomena of the "message" as an observable symbolic interaction or experience that has the potential to alter the image. However, rationalism still seems to pervade due to self-consciousness and the reflective nature of human beings, that is that we "not only know, but we know that we know" (p.25). To elaborate further:

> Because of the extended time image and the extended relationship images, man is capable of 'rational behavior,' that is to say, his response is not to an immediate stimulus but to an image of the future filtered through an elaborate value system. His image contains not only what is, but what might be. (p. 25)

The historical context in which *The Image* was written, and the particular place in which Kenneth Boulding found himself at the forefront of the emergence of a general systems theory, it would seem probable that this ontological and epistemological elusiveness had a highly political and strategic rationality. Boulding was pursuing the possibility that establishing a general systems theory could bridge the disciplines in an effort to address common societal problems, especially the issues of war and nuclear disarmament. In his conclusion, Boulding overtly states that he avoided addressing the epistemological question in philosophical terms by exploring the "image" as an abstract concept. As such, he argues, he has not "considered the question, whether the image is 'true,' or how, if it is true, we know that it is true" (p. 164). Boulding elaborates:

> Within the confines of my abstraction, for instance, it is clear that the problem of truth and validity cannot be solved completely, if what we mean by the truth of an image is its correspondence with some reality in the world outside it. The difficulty with any correspondence theory of truth is that images can only be compared with images. They can never be compared with any outside reality. The difficulty with the coherence theory of truth, on the other hand, is that the coherence or consistency of the image is simply not what we mean by its truth. (p. 165).

It could be argued that his intent in such elusiveness lies with his aims to situate his theory of the image within science, and not purely in the realm of philosophy. Further, Boulding somewhat rejects solipsism, reasoning that "our image includes within itself, as it were, the notion that the common sense world which we see around us is actually

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'there,' and it certainly does not include the idea that all we see around us is an illusion" (p. 166). *The Image* is ambitious in its scope to articulate a general theory of knowledge in life and society, providing ample openings for discourse across disciplines and paradigms. For Boulding this may have been a direct and intentional effort to open up the disciplines to cooperation – and more importantly to agency.

The Image: Pedagogical Form as Impetus for Agency

There should be little doubt as to the pedagogical intentionality of *The Image.* The book was dictated over the course of approximately 8 days, giving it a very opening and dialogical structure that invites the reader into a place where their own image of the world might be reorganized and restructured. As much as Boulding was a scientist he was also a Quaker, and agency, in whatever form, was something he highly valued. These values are peppered throughout his theory as exemplified in the statement: "The rise in the self-consciousness of the image of society and organization is of great importance in interpreting the dynamics of social change and of the change in the social image" (p. 61).

Here again, this emphasis toward agency is particularly relevant to peace education pedagogy. Boulding alludes to and describes the processes by which the image can be changed and transformed, however he does not articulate a general theory of a relationship between processes and image transformation. In my own work in transformative peace pedagogy I have developed a general theory of this relationship of process to learning outcome and agency: how you come to know (the process), what it is that you know and how you know it (epistemology and claims of truth), has a significant impact on how you will use or act upon that knowledge in the world.[13]

As mentioned previously, how to facilitate learning for personal and social change and transformation is the fundamental challenge at the core of peace education pedagogy. Facilitating learning for peace requires an educator to have an intentional and acute awareness of the relationship between the values that are being articulated and the processes through which those values are disseminated. Different processes can have different outcomes on the shaping of the image. For example, the ethos of much of the world's formal education is hierarchal and top down, in which teachers tell students what to think at the expense of developing critical thinking, information processing and problem-solving skills.[14] Implicit in such hierachal learning models is that knowledge is validated by authority (the teacher) and that knowledge can be used as a power to increase ones social mobility and enable them to climb the social ladder. Knowledge, when learned hierarchicly, results in knowledge being used to establish power over others, and not power with. Thus, the typical individual outcome of hierarchal learning is

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[13] Jenkins, T., "Rediscovering Education for a Better World: Illuminating the Social Purposes of Education through Peace Education Pedagogy and Content." In: Lin, J., Brantmeier, E., & Bruhn, C. *Transforming Education for Peace* (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2008).
[14] ibid.,

that a student will only value the knowledge learned to reproduce and establish power over others. The social outcomes of such heirarchal learning approaches are a reproduction of social and power inequities. Critical, participatory peace pedagogy, on the other hand, is concerned with nurturing ways of thinking that permit the learner to develop a critical awareness of their own individual, social and political reality so that they might autonomously move toward agency within their subjective reality. Betty Reardon describes pedagogy as the "determinant of human relationships in the educational process. It is itself the medium of communication between teacher and learner, and that aspect of the educational process which most affects what learners receive from their teachers".[15] Pedagogy is therefore more than just methodology and approach; it also carries values and models principles of relationships to knowledge, other human beings, and the world around us. Developing an awareness of the values associated with process and by becoming pedagogically intentional, educators can support autonomous learners in the transformation of their individual images and the collective public images.

The social purposes of peace education are oriented toward social change and transformation, in which transformation implies deep change affecting ways of thinking, worldviews, values, behaviors, relationships, and social structures. Peace education, in this sense, seeks to nurture the types of changes in thinking, attitudes and behaviors that will help learners to understand, confront, resist, transform and ultimately eliminate violence in all of its multiple forms.   Such changes require radical alterations of private and public images. The processes through which they are pursued are intended to inspire learners to actively pursue the transformation of elements of a culture of violence through considerations of alternatives. The consideration of future alternatives has a slow affect on the image, but an important one nonetheless. Boulding argued that:

> A symbol, therefore, may have no effect and indeed ordinarily will have no effect on the image of the immediate future around one.   It does produce an effect, however, of what might be called the image of the image, on the image of the future, on the image of the past, on the image of the potential or even of the image of the possible. (p. 44)

Boulding's wife Elise similarly observed:

> People have to be encouraged to image, taught to exercise a capacity that they indeed have but are unaccustomed to using in a disciplined way. The obstacles to imaging lie partly in our social institutions, including schools, which discourage

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[15] Reardon, B., "Pedagogy as Purpose: Peace Education in the Context of Violence."
        In Cremin, P. (Ed.), *Education for Peace* (Ireland: Educational Studies Association of Ireland and Irish Peace Institute, 1993, p. 101-113).

imaging because it leads to visualizing alternatives which challenge existing social arrangements.[16]

Kenneth Boulding's theory of the image provides a solid foundation for a theory of transformative peace pedagogy that might be used to help shape and reorganize individual and public images toward the common good. Historically, the image provides a somewhat radical conception and general systems theory of knowledge in life and society. It's impacts on the development of interdisciplinarity in academia might not be easily traceable, but the theory's fingerprints can be found all over the fields of peace research and peace education, both fields with an intentional values focus, emphasizing agency and personal and social change and transformation. The scope of Boulding's theory provides an ever-widening opening for the inclusion of multiple or parallel paradigms to co-exist within science. In grappling with the philosophical implications of his theory, Boulding proudly prompts that his theory might lead in "the direction of a broad, eclectic, organic, yet humble epistemology looking for processes of organization rather than specific tests of validity and finding these processes in many areas of life and experience" (p. 175). This emphasis on the processes of organization over finding the truth demonstrates the pragmatic nature of Boulding and his view of science as contributing to the betterment of human kind. These social values, and the agency required to make a better world, are perhaps best summarized in the last few and hopeful sentences of the book: "Most of all, perhaps, it [the theory of the image and the discipline of eiconics] brings the actor into the act; it looks beyond mechanism without falling into vitalism. It represents, I hope, one small step toward the unknown goal of human history" (p. 175).

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[16] Boulding, E., *Building A Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1998) p. 105.

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