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ABSTRACT

Education systems are full of harmful violence of types often unrecognised or misunderstood by educators, education leaders, and bureaucrats. Educational violence harms a great number of innocent persons (those who, morally speaking, may not be justifiably harmed). Accordingly, this paper rejects educational violence used to achieve educational ends. It holds that educational violence is unjustified if the condition that innocent persons are harmed is satisfied, that this condition is satisfied in current educational practice (compulsory schooling), and that, therefore, the current education system (schooling) acts in an unjustifiable manner. If the means of educating cannot be justified, then that education system itself cannot be justified, since an end cannot be justifiably pursued if the means requisite to pursuing it are unjustifiable. I call this stance 'educational pacifism'.

1. Introduction

I am a pacifist – I reject war as a means of attaining peace. I hold war to be not only evil and supremely harmful, but also, on balance, morally wrong [*references removed*]. I am also a teacher. Several years ago I left my job as a philosophy lecturer because I thought I might do more good in a school somewhere. What I found was a system full of violence, hierarchy, and oppression. I now work at a peace school, where we work hard to eliminate violence from our pedagogical practices and students' educational experiences. So I arrive at the topic of educational violence as a political philosopher, teacher, and anti-war pacifist. After much deliberation and observation, I have concluded that I am also an educational pacifist: I believe that a great number of innocent persons are violently harmed in mainstream education; I reject violence committed in the name of education; and I hold educational violence to be not only evil and harmful, but also morally wrong. By 'violence' I mean that which unjustly separates its victims' actual realisations from their potential realisations. This includes both overt direct violence and covert indirect violence.

Conditional anti-war pacifism rejects war as a morally acceptable means of achieving peace. It holds war to be unjustified if the condition that innocent

persons are killed in war is satisfied. Since this condition is always satisfied in modern war, conditional pacifism implies the impermissibility of the modern war. It holds that if war cannot be justifiably waged, then war itself cannot be justified, since an end cannot be justifiably pursued if the means requisite to pursuing it are unjustifiable (e.g. Holmes 1989). The set of moral criteria known as *jus in bello* (justice in war), which dictates what may be justifiably done when waging war, cannot be satisfied because of the significant harm that war causes to innocents.

The aim of this paper is to construct a pacifist argument against harmful educational violence. Education systems are full of harmful violence of types often unrecognised or misunderstood by educators, education leaders, and bureaucrats. Indirect forms of educational violence, such as authoritarian and coercive structural violence, indoctrination, perpetuation of systemic inequality, and violentist content and pedagogies, harm a great number of innocents. Direct educational violence is overt and recognised, while indirect educational violence (structural, objective, and symbolic) is covert and mostly unrecognised. I argue that while direct violence garners almost all the attention, indirect violence is far more common, wide-ranging, and harmful. Thus education is more violent and harmful than commonly thought.

Accordingly, I reject harmful educational violence used to achieve educational ends. I hold educational violence to be unjustified if the condition that innocent persons are harmed is satisfied, and that this condition is satisfied in mainstream education. It is morally wrong to harm innocent persons, and since the current education system (schooling) does just that, it follows that the current education system (schooling) acts wrongfully – it is unjust. If the means of educating cannot be justified, then that education system itself cannot be justified, since an end cannot be justifiably pursued if the means requisite to pursuing it are unjustifiable. This *educational pacifism*[1] holds that *jus in educare* (justice in education) cannot be satisfied, because of the significant harm that the education system causes to innocents. I do not question the right to educate, but rather the right to use compulsory and violent schooling to educate.

Anti-war pacifists worry about the moral exceptionalism used to justify war. We find most forms of violence unacceptable – abhorrent, even – so why do we accept large-scale political violence as a means to peace? Similarly, why do we tolerate harmful violence (to children!) in education? A pacifist analysis of educational violence, I believe, creates an obligation towards a radical shift in educational thinking, policy, and practice. To make this argument I first establish the moral impermissibility of harming innocent persons. I then explain the nature and impact of educational violence in the current system, and how that violence harms innocents. Finally, I explain why educational violence and harm cannot be justified, as a lesser evil or otherwise.

2. Innocence and the right not to be harmed

Before examining the concept of innocence and the right not to be harmed, note that while peace education aims to develop (intrapersonal, interpersonal, national, and international) peace, my aim is to show that education systems unjustly and violently harm many innocents. I focus on the moral implications of violence *in* education, not how education can solve violence or create peace. This difference is akin to that between political pacifism, which aims to show the unjustifiability of war, and nonviolent resistance research and practice, which aims to provide an alternative to political violence and war. They are linked, of course, but they have different aims and methods, and the former ought to precede the latter, to provide moral foundation and motivation for the latter. The same is true of educational pacifism (which rejects educational violence) and peace education (which provides alternatives), but very little work has been undertaken on the former, for most peace educators (quite rightly) assume that peace education is valuable and that it is important to believe in peace and peace education.

Page (2008) has explored a range of possible moral foundations for peace education – virtue ethics, consequentialism, conservative political ethics, aesthetic ethics, and the ethics of care.[2] He ultimately argues that peace education requires a 'holistic' approach, where each moral foundation compliments the others. Page dismisses a duty-based as an ethical foundation for peace education, arguing that it would ultimately be counterproductive since 'exhortation [of individuals to work for peace] engenders a sense of powerlessness. Moral education involves far more than merely exhorting others to do their duty, and if peace education were only this simple, then we would have experienced universal world peace long ago' (2008, 187). However, moral imperatives of the sort created by deontological reasoning are just that – moral – not legal or hierarchical; they compel action based on ethical duty, not orders. In terms of the goals of peace education, we are basically at the beginning – the world and its education systems are full of violence, and the political presumption is that violence is sometimes a regrettable but acceptable means of attaining peace. Ruling out a duty-based system (and ignoring rights, the correlative of duties) is an odd thing to do at this stage.

I believe that violent education systems are morally wrong and thus ought to be replaced. *How* and with *what* they should be replaced is another matter (for peace educationalists), just as pacifists are not immediately concerned with making suggestions for a new international order, but rather with forwarding arguments as to why war is wrong.[3] In this paper I limit my discussion to the moral arguments surrounding educational violence. And now to innocence and rights.

The term innocent derives from the Latin *innocere*, meaning 'not harming'. *Moral* innocence means 'not unjustly harming', or 'not unjustly threatening to

harm'. A patient-centred or rights-based (c.f. agent-centred or duty-based) deontological educational pacifism rests on the impermissibility of harming innocents. Following Immanuel Kant, innocents cannot be justifiably harmed because doing so would treat them as means to an end, which violates the categorial imperative 'act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law'. A rights-based approach to innocence treats it as a right not to be harmed. One who is not unjustly harming another maintains one's innocence as well as one's right not to be harmed. Innocents are those who are not intentionally or foreseeably harming another; it is at least *prima facie* wrong to harm them, because they have done nothing to lose their own right not to be harmed. Thus innocence is defined in terms of moral responsibility.

Why do we have a right not to be harmed? Because we have basic rights to security, liberty, and subsistence (see Shue 2020), and harming us threatens those rights. We are ends in ourselves and should not be treated as means to ends. Accordingly, we have a *claim* against others not to harm us, who in turn have a *duty* to uphold this claim. Rights language is really just a way of discussing moral statuses and situations. If I have a right not to be harmed, then the moral situation (or my moral status) is such that it is *prima facie* wrong of others to harm me. Rights language is a dialectic tool that provides ways of describing what may or may not be done according to some moral system. To say that I have a certain right is essentially to describe what others may or may not do to me: '[T]o have a right just *is* its being the case that people may and may not treat you in these and those ways' (Thomson 1986, 253).

I have a claim that others not harm me, and others have a duty to uphold that claim. I (and only I) may alter and even abandon that right. But I can also lose my right not to be harmed by acting in certain ways. If, for example, I pose a significant threat to someone else, I may lose my immunity against that person or others in a position to help them. If so, I may become liable to be harmed if doing so prevents the harm that I am threatening. This is because the other person also has the right not to be harmed, and if I violate my duty to uphold that right then I risk my own rights. Hence a right is really an expression of a collection of moral factors; it explains a kind of moral status: 'so working out what a right is comes to the same as working out what people ought or ought not do, may or may not do, given a person has a right' (Thomson 1986, 373).

It is generally accepted that a *victim* has the right to use force to defend herself against an *unjust aggressor*. But she cannot defend herself by any means; we may only do specific things in specific situations. Such force must be *necessary* and *proportionate* – the harm caused in self-defence must be the only way of preventing the attack and must not be disproportionate to the harm threatened. We all have *prima facie* rights not to be harmed, but if under certain conditions I may justifiably employ violence to defend myself from attack, then my attacker must have somehow lost her right not to be harmed (otherwise

I would wrong her). Innocence, then, can be lost. *Non-innocent*s have done something to cause them to lose those rights; they are sufficiently responsible for some wrongdoing that causes their loss of innocence.

Let us briefly consider three possibilities as to how the supposedly inalienable right not to be harmed can be 'lost'. First, by unjustly harming another the aggressor might temporarily *forfeit* some of her own claims to non-interference that make up the right not to be harmed (Thomson 1986). Second, the aggressor's right not to be harmed might be *conditional* on her not violating the important rights of others (Uniacke 1994). Third, it might be that since the aggressor, not the victim, has created the situation, it is the former who is responsible for the harm no matter who ends up harmed, which in turn explains the asymmetry of rights between them (Ryan 1983). While it does not matter much for our purposes which of these three explanations we choose, it is necessary to conceptualise how the asymmetry between victim and aggressor affects their rights not to be harmed. What matters are the normative relationships that determine the status of certain rights in certain situations at certain times. Both the victim's and the aggressor's rights not to be harmed are contingent on certain facts about their normative relationship; by unjustly acting and thus violating her duty not to harm the victim, the aggressor's right not to be harmed is (temporarily and under certain conditions) no longer valid due to the situation that she herself has created.

Innocence and non-innocence greatly affect *liability* to be justifiably harmed – someone is liable to be harmed if she would not be wronged by that attack. And yet innocence may not guarantee non-liability – innocents might be justifiably harmed in self- or other-defence in (extremely rare) cases where they unintentionally and unjustifiably threaten harm to others. Examples might include the 'innocent aggressor' (who, for example, wrongly thinks that they are acting in self- or other-defence) and the 'innocent threat' (who, for example, is unintentionally blocking an escape route). These cases are worth noting to show that innocence and the right not to be harmed are complicated concepts, but although they are relevant in terms of political violence, they have little effect on educational violence.

In sum, then, innocents are (roughly) those who are not intentionally or foreseeably unjustly harming or threatening to harm, nor knowingly helping others to unjustly harm or threaten to harm, and who therefore have done nothing to lose their moral right not to be harmed. Non-innocents are those who lack that right, at least with regards to certain persons under certain conditions. So the answer to the question 'is it morally wrong to harm innocents?' is broadly, and almost always, *yes*.

The question of innocence in war is complicated, but not in education. Students are almost certainly innocent in almost all cases. They have done nothing to lose their right not to be harmed, except in rare cases when they might threaten others (for which there is almost always a nonviolent solution).

Note that general moral character does not affect innocence in particular situations – even a morally terrible person is innocent in most situations, if their right not to be harmed is intact. Moreover, innocence or non-innocence in particular normative situations only endure while the situation endures. Young people are innocent in the relevant sense. Thus harm to students means, in almost all cases, harm to innocents. Teachers are also innocent in almost all cases, even if they harm students according to my arguments in the following section, for as I argue, they are mostly innocent aggressors if they are aggressors at all. Let us now examine harmful violence in education.

3. Violence and harm in education

In this section I provide a taxonomy of violence and harm in education. I first look at *direct* educational violence, which is overt and recognised, before examining various manifestations of *indirect* educational violence (structural, objective, and symbolic), which are covert and mostly unrecognised. In doing so I argue that while direct violence garners almost all the attention, indirect violence is far more common, wide-ranging, and harmful. Thus education is more violent and harmful than commonly thought. While I have not covered all forms of educational violence and harm, I have done my best to discuss as much of it as possible.

Common definitions of violence restrict the concept to physical force causing injury or damage: 'exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on or damage to persons or property; action or conduct characterised by this' (OED 2022). Sometimes they include additional elements such as threats and general deprivation: 'intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' (2002, 4). These types of violence draw the focus of governments and politicians, policymakers, the media, the public, and educators.

Although many countries have mostly eliminated educator-on-student violence, direct violence is common in education. In terms of student-on-educator violence, all educators have experienced verbal violence, and physical violence is not unheard of. Many female teachers report having been sexually harassed by students (Hughes 2020). Student-on-student direct violence is common, especially bullying, which includes physical violence, threats, name-calling, theft, gossip, teasing, humiliation, and exclusion (note that bullies are more likely to come from at-risk families affected by aggression, violence, social injustice, and inequality (Eisenbraun 2007) – violence is drawn from society into education). This reflects the state of the world – human on human direct violence is common. Direct educational violence can also be *intrapersonal* – many students suffer from their own internal violence (also caused by numerous

factors outside of education). Intrapersonal violence can lead to interpersonal violence, and *vice versa*.

Some schools harm by omission, by explicitly or tacitly condoning direct violence in the form of student hierarchical violence, 'initiation rituals', normalised bullying, and so on. Violence often seems normal and inevitable to educators, who are ill-equipped to deal with difficult emotions and relationships. Adequately equipping teachers would require significant changes to teacher training and schools' power dynamics and perceived *raison d'être* (Harber 2004). Schools hold their core function to be teacher-centred transmission of content and skills knowledge, not violence prevention and reconciliation.

Limiting the definition of 'violence' to direct violence is too restrictive, for it allows 'peace' to exist in conjunction with highly unacceptable social orders and, therefore, means that too little is rejected when 'peace' is achieved. I think Johann Galtung is correct to include within violence a range of social injustices and inequalities: 'Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations' (Galtung 1969, 168). Similarly, Newton Garver argues that violence operates 'when people are deprived of choices in a systematic way by the very manner in which transactions normally take place' (Garver 1968, 822). Such definitions expand the concept of violence to include indirect violence.

The idea that violence is present when a person's actual somatic and mental realisations fall below their potential realisations certainly strains common usage of the term 'violence'. C.A.J. Coady argues (Coady 1986) that the concept of indirect violence is counterintuitive, and that there are more differences between direct and indirect violence than there are similarities. According to Coady, the concept of indirect violence is confusing (because it is removed from what people generally mean when they refer to violence), politically unhelpful (because the solutions to violence are different to those of social injustice, and it is unhelpful and inefficient to act as though they are not), and fails to acknowledge that violence is sometimes justifiable, whereas social injustice, by definition, cannot be. It would follow that inequality and injustice are problems for egalitarians, not pacifists.

I disagree. First, terminology and definitions are regularly adjusted to reflect contemporary ideas and reality – if the definition of violence changes to better reflect reality, so be it. Moreover, although the goals of reducing direct and indirect violence often require different ideas, methods, and outcomes, they are not in opposition to one another (but see Coady 2008). Second, recognising indirect violence *is* politically helpful – society, for the most part, abhors violence more than social injustice, and if social justice is a requisite element of 'peace' then all the better. Third, social injustice is wrong because it harms those who do not deserve to be harmed, and often leads to direct and indirect violence (Maas and Kurtz 1999). Even if some of the indirect harm discussed below is injustice rather than violence, the harm it causes is nevertheless real.

Direct violence is noticeable because it disturbs normality, but indirect violence goes relatively unnoticed because it *is* normality (compare reactions to war and systemic inequality). So while direct educational violence may have decreased over the years, indirect educational violence is ever-present and often overlooked. Education systems have focused on reducing direct violence and celebrating their success in doing so. For example, an Australian report on educational violence concluded that 'it is erroneous to conclude that schools are unsafe ... It is easy to form the view that violence is a regular feature of school life. It is not' (1994, v). A conclusion such as this ignores the presence of, and harm caused by, indirect violence.

The focus on direct violence has contributed to the obfuscation of the indirect educational violence embedded in education systems' hierarchical and authoritarian structures. Distinguishing direct and indirect violence helps explain why educational violence has hitherto received little attention. The education system itself is rarely critiqued – not one day of teachers' college or teachers' professional development is spent on why the system itself may be harmful, or wrongful, or corrupt. Educators and bureaucrats take it as read that education is beneficial and that the means justify the ends, but doing so skips a crucial justificatory step. An education free from direct violence cannot be considered peaceful if its systems and structures are violent. Education systems have traditionally monopolised violence by employing legitimist definitions of violence (which define violence as force or harm performed by those without the 'authority' to do so) to justify somatic and mental punishment of students, and now they monopolise violence by creating and maintaining violent systems and structures. In what follows I examine the forms of indirect educational violence: structural, objective, and symbolic.

Structures are the patterned relationships among components of a social system, and structural violence can be caused by unorganised subjective attitudes or practices (sexism, racism, ageism, and so on) and organised subjective practices (official restrictions of civil liberties, oppressive regimes institutional policies or practices that support discrimination, and so on). Structural violence is 'unintended harm ... working slowly as the way misery in general, and hunger in particular, erode and finally kill human beings' (Galtung 1985; 145, Vorobej 2008). The history of education is a battleground between control, conformation, and docility on the one hand, and critical consciousness, liberalism, and participation on the other (Harber 2004, 60). The former set is winning – the open classrooms that produced Plato and Aristotle have been replaced by mass schooling systems that provide political and social control. Structural educational violence manifests as authoritarianism, coercion, and exclusion, and causes great harm to students.

Developments in education during the industrial revolution sought to produce students with 'the subordinate values and behaviours necessary for the modern bureaucratic, mass production workplace and the existing social order –

regularity, routine, monotonous work and strict discipline. Its organisational form would therefore need to be authoritarian in order to inculcate habits of obedience and conformity' (Harber 2004, 60). Education became schooling, and schools came to mimic the very factories for which they prepared their students, producing 'the kind of adults needed [via] the regimentation, lack of individualisation, the rigid systems of seating, grouping, grading and marking, the authoritarian style of the teacher' (Toffler 1970).

Today's schools remain 'institutions of power' (Foucault 1979). As Freire (1972) puts it, authoritarianism is expressed via 'banking education', whereby the omniscient and omnipotent gatekeeper of knowledge, the teacher, deposits static and complete knowledge in the empty and unconscious student. The teacher controls all – knowledge transfer, content, pedagogy, delivery, and discipline – and the student is powerless. The teacher dictates; the student complies. Power and hierarchy characterise the entire system – teachers over students, management over teachers, bureaucrats and politicians over principals, and the system itself above all. Such authoritarian practices contrast with education's liberal democratic aims: 'While being taught that freedom and responsibility are the glorious features of our democracy, students are experiencing powerlessness and having almost no opportunity to exercise choice or carry responsibility' (Rogers 1983, 186–187). A successful democracy requires an open, critical, and creative citizenry, but the current system neither produces nor desires this [*references removed*]. The upshot is that while education is promoted as a liberating and mobilising good, it is instead 'one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one' (Bourdieu, Whitehouse, and Eggleston 2012, 46). This violence harms students just as direct violence does.

Students enmeshed in authoritarian power structures learn to normalise, respect, and even imitate them: 'When children are trained, they learn to train others in turn. Children who are lectured to, learn how to lecture; if they are admonished, they learn how to admonish; if scolded, they learn how to scold; if ridiculed, they learn how to ridicule; if humiliated, they learn how to humiliate; if their psyche is killed, they will learn how to kill' (Miller 1990, 98). Colonial and post-colonial governments have used authoritarian education in these ways to control indigenous populations and reiterate cultural superiority, outlawing or downgrading local culture. Authoritarianism habituates and institutionalises; it reproduces and harms by indoctrinating its victims to accept and support it.

Coercive structural violence manifests in education because compulsory education now means compulsory schooling (Harber 2004, 21). Coercive mechanisms such as structure, curriculum, assessment, inspection, qualifications, school organisation, and teaching are employed across the globe (Alexander 2000). Students are coerced into working via threat or 'negative

coercion' (punishment for bad behaviour or work) and reward or 'positive coercion' (rewards and admiration for good behaviour or work). If coercive practice results in externally caused differences between a student's potential and realisation, then that student is not at peace and is harmed.

Structural violence in schools causes a cycle of exclusion that affects both students and teachers. Students experiencing academic or social failure, behavioural problems, alienation, absence, and home issues can display disruptive behaviour and ongoing failure, and become alienated from school and teachers, who to them represent humiliation and punishment. Teachers, who themselves experience lack of professional prestige, blame for education's systemic failures, stress, and their own failure, isolation, and conflict, rarely find their efforts to be helpful for those students, and thus feel similarly alienated and helpless (Razer and Friedman 2017). Both students and teachers are harmed by the cycle of exclusion.

Objective violence is the violence present in high-level hierarchical structures and systems, inequality, and the capitalist order. It is caused by the social, economic, and political worlds whose smooth function belies their 'often catastrophic consequences' (Žižek 2008, 1). It is ever-present, pervasive, and universal. In the 1960s and 1970s, global capitalism responded to a range of 'crises' that affected accumulation and profit-making (including the Chinese cultural revolution, the Vietnam war, civil rights and counterculture movements, anti-colonial and socialist movements, and student uprisings) by restructuring (Robinson 2016). Dominant states, corporations, and groups sought new capital and profit by reducing or dismantling redistributive or social welfare systems, resubordinating labour through deregulation, deunionisation, and flexibilisation, and increasing neoliberal policies and trade. Public lands, utilities, social services, infrastructure, health, and education were progressively commodified, and resulted in a capitalism no longer predicated on free and fair trade, but rather on elite-controlled institutions and the exploitation of the global economic south by the north. The inequality and oppression caused by global capitalism harms 'just as surely as direct violence' (Christie et al. 2008, 8). Income inequality accurately predicts negative mental and physical health, mortality, and material outcomes (Dess, Shackelford, and Weekes-Shackelford 2012), and threatens democracy, stability, and direct peace (Piketty 2013).

The relevance of these developments for our purposes is that education systems reproduce and entrench them. As well as imitating factories, schools (their structures, norms, and values) use disciplinary processes, hierarchies, and hidden curricula to imitate and prepare students for working life in the capitalist economy. While the capitalist economy first required trained, intelligent, and self-directing workers, it now needs many workers with basic numeracy and literacy skills alongside relatively small numbers of technical and knowledge workers, all with limited ability or desire to challenge the system itself (Bowles

and Gintis 2002; Robinson 2016). This gap harms the majority by separating their potential and actual states.

Because objective violence goes unnoticed and unquestioned, the results of inequality – poor performance, unemployment, truancy, and crime – are blamed on schools, teachers, and students. Education is given the impossible task of creating jobs, eliminating poverty, and reducing inequality by increasing individual skills (Klees 2020). Schools are held responsible for problems that are systemic and beyond their control, including poverty, exclusion, and inequality. Employers and economists bemoan the dearth of skilled workers, ignoring the fact that the economic system requires unemployment (and thus competition for jobs) to keep conditions and wages down. Education systems also indoctrinate students to 'the promise of petty (and generally banal) consumption and entertainment, backed by the threat of coercion and repression should dissatisfaction lead to rebellion' (Robinson 2016, 4). Hence the education system plays a critical role in the control of labour and reproduction of social inequality, and the harm they cause.

Symbolic violence is produced and replicated through normalised thought, language, and ideology. It is the violent *status quo* by which a controlling group holds power over a subordinate group, normalised and unconsciously agreed to by those on both sides (Bourdieu 1989). Symbolic educational violence is expressed via content and pedagogy. Modern curricula promulgate ideologies of bourgeois control and acquiescence, capitalist work and productivity, preparation for the working life, and particular viewpoints, communication styles, and aesthetic and moral tastes (Bourdieu 1989). Neoliberal ideologies are 'tacitly embedded messages in educational design, discourse, and syllabus choice' (Hughes 2020, 28). Colonial and oppressive styles of knowledge transfer and testing are prioritised over critical and creative thinking, intellectual freedom, self-realisation, and wellbeing.

Certification, testing, and ranking produces and entrenches harmful symbolic violence. Educational symbolic power is expressed through educators' judgements on student achievement, and power processes are developed via enclosure, surveillance, rewards and punishments, and hierarchy. Institutional communication – lessons, questions, orders, differentiation of student 'value' and knowledge, and obedience – develops mindsets and behaviours (Foucault 1979). Grading systems divide and rank students into succeeding and failing groups, thereby imposing 'a dull uniformity on curricula, reducing learning to rote memorization, routine, punctuality, and obedience' (Robinson 2016, 15). Even education *systems* are internationally ranked, creating a worldwide hierarchy of legitimacy, and 'is aggressively judgmental and even attitudinally colonial to the point of symbolical violence' (Hughes 2020, 26).

Symbolic violence includes what I call *violentism*, the belief that violence is morally justifiable in principle and reality,[4] closely related to the concept of *warism*, the dominant view that war is morally justifiable in principle and reality

(Cady 2010). Challenges to violentist and warist beliefs are regarded suspiciously, for they are fundamental values, rarely questioned or even explicitly recognised: 'Across virtually all levels of society we see fights for superiority whenever conflict arises' (Cady 2010, 19–20). Violentism condones and encourages direct violence via entertainment, politics, and aggressive speech and thought, and condones structural violence via acceptance of widening inequality, increasing injustice, and lives of work and consumption.

Education is characterised by violentist power structures, pedagogies, and content, which abrade virtue and harm innocents (Dobos 2020). As schools mimic factories, so too they mimic militaries. Formal and rigid 'chain of command' structures organise the hierarchy, and orders are not up for debate. Uniforms, insignia, and rankings denote in and out groups. Normalised practices such as grouping, lining up, and silent acquiescence promote homogeneity and suppress individuality. Timetabling (start times, class length, rest periods, and location changes) is strict and rarely adjusted, and assemblies often include patriotic and martial singing and sermonising.

Pedagogical practices are also violentist. Banking education replicates the military drill; the teacher frames knowledge that the coerced student must memorise and regurgitate. Competition is encouraged to boost participation, enthusiasm, and resilience (it often has the opposite effect!), recently epitomised by the barely defensible 'gamification' of learning, where all hope of developing intrinsic motivation is abandoned in favour of externally produced dopamine hits. These violentist structures and practices harm innocent students by exposing them to violence and indoctrinating them to accept, desire, and reproduce it.

Educational content is violentist because of its bias towards violence and away from nonviolence. War, patriotism, and military service are glorified and over-promoted. Students leave school knowing 'more about organized hate than organized cooperation' (McCarthy 1994, 6). This reflect society's obsession with violence: 'History is generally thought of as the story of the rise and fall of empires, a chronicle of reigns, wars, battles, and military and political revolutions; in short, the history of power... Sometimes the peace culture has been a hidden culture, kept alive in the cracks of a violent society' (Boulding 2000, 13). This is not accidental – states use education for 'political socialisation and indoctrination and one aspect of this is to create loyalty to the state by encouraging not only obedience and a respect for the authority of the state ... but [also] patriotism and an ability and proclivity to fight for one's country' (Harber 2004, 125). Few notice it, because violentist attitudes are so pervasive that any counterview is regarded with immediate suspicion, threat, and ridicule: 'Entrenched in tradition and forming the fundamental perspective from which all judgments are made, the basic conceptions and values of a culture are rarely made explicit and even more rarely questioned from within the culture. When questions are raised, they tend to be met with defensive reactions, thus further

underscoring the status quo values' (Cady 2010, 20).[5] Hence educational vio-lentism derives from societal violentism, and yet education may be the only way out of this violent mess. In sum, then, many innocents are significantly harmed by educational violence, and even if one were to suggest that some of that 'violence' should instead be considered injustice, it harms nonetheless.

4. Justifying educational violence

I argued above that it is *prima facie* morally impermissible to harm innocents. It follows that harm to innocents caused by educational violence can be justified if and only if that presumption against harming innocents is somehow out-weighed. Can the harm to innocents caused by educational violence be justified as, say, the means to some important end? All justified violence requires a good reason, for the burden of proof must lie in favour of nonviolence. Political violence, for example, has no intrinsic value (romantic militarists may disagree), and thus may only be justified as means to an end, a lesser evil. Conditional pacifists presume against the justifiability of violence until it can be shown that it will prevent some proportionately serious harm and can be employed without harming innocents. So while the presumption can in theory be overcome, the burden of proof lies against it.

As I argued above, pervasive violentism means that the burden of proof is often seen to lie the other way, with those who reject violentism. The current violent schooling model is taken for granted as the best way to achieve educa-tion's aims. Violentism holds human nature to be violent and sets up institutions to curb and restrain that nature (and avoid, for example, the Hobbesian state of nature). But this is habituation, not good moral argument; the burden of proof rests with those who wish to justify violence because harming innocents vio-lates, in some very important sense, their lives, dreams, and humanity. For example, a justified war would be one in which the harm it prevents justifies the harm it causes. And although modern war cannot satisfy that condition (according to pacifists), it is plausible that it might if it could be fought without causing so much harm.

Education is different to political violence, of course. If my taxonomy of educational violence is correct, or at least on the right track, then innocents are regularly and significantly harmed in education. That harm can only be justified if it is morally outweighed by some other good. That is, while education is an unquestionable good, we may not do *anything* in its name. There are limits to what we may do to achieve any end, no matter how good, valuable, or noble. The goods of quality education include learning, critical and creative thinking, self-expression and self-realisation, empowerment, social meritocracy, well-being, and so on. But education's goods have resulted in a system that is rarely challenged, because the goods are simply assumed to be 'worth it'. Challenging the means is not akin to challenging the ends – one may agree with (and

admire) current education's goals while nevertheless arguing that the method is unjustifiable.

Perhaps current educational practices, along with the harm they cause, can be justified because they are good for the students. It may be *for their own good* that students require discipline, control, and so on. Perhaps harmful education prevents bad things (such as students leaving school having not learnt) or causes great things (such as students leaving school having learnt a lot). The economic system requires productive contributors, and external motivators are used to mould students into those contributors. But constraining and harming young people treats them as means to ends. And since the condition for right moral action is that it may not treat innocents as means to ends, it follows that those practices are impermissible, even if those ends are their own education. Moreover, of course, current educational practices harm many students, especially those who are already disadvantaged in various ways, without benefitting them in the ways that the system hopes or maintains they do.

All that I have said so far in this section assumes that the ends of the education system are *good*. But as discussed above, there are forces in education that act to suppress and control. Education is a political act; it is not neutral, but rather serves some interests and hinders others (Freire 1985). Just as it can be used for liberation (and nonviolence), it can be used for oppression. And in many cases, it is. The previous section gives reason to think that current schooling practices, based as they are on educational developments dating back to the industrial revolution, the attitudes and effects of colonialism, and the systemic effects of capitalism, have both noble and ignoble objectives. Perhaps more importantly, we also have reason to think that education systems are naturally affected and driven by social and economic systems far more powerful than they, and to which we are all, to varying extents, beholden. The means to an end obviously cannot be justified if the end itself is morally bad. So if the ends of current educational practices are morally bad, then the harm caused by the means to them obviously cannot be justified. The truth is surely somewhere in the middle, and varies depending on the education system in question. While education itself is a noble end, schooling as the chosen means to that end has some good objectives and some bad. What is clear, of course, is that current educational practices *do* harm innocents, and that this harm cannot be justified as means to an end, because it is wrong to use innocents as means to an end.

Anti-war pacifism is challenged by situations of supreme emergency, in which only war can prevent some great harm to innocents, forcing a choice between one great evil (harming innocents in war) and another (letting innocents be harmed). But educational violence and the harm it causes to innocents prevents no such evil. It is clearly morally wrong, because the 'evils' it purportedly prevents – such as students not learning – are not proportionate to the harm it causes. Moreover, to weigh this harm against its 'benefits' would be to reduce the problem to some set of consequences, an ethical action to which I do

not subscribe and will not defend (while noting the irony in the fact that consequences are what drive most political and economic analyses). Nor is the harm a last resort, for there are viable, peaceful alternatives to educational violence, which is not the subject of this paper but on which much can be found (why and how to do peace education, and so on). The main problem is that the harm to innocents caused by educational violence goes unrecognised by many and ignored or hidden by the rest.

Means and ends, moreover, are interdependent because the means used shape the nature of the ends produced. Violent educational means will produce violent educational ends. I mean this in two ways. First, educational violence is reproduced by those who experience it. Students are taught to accept and perpetuate inequality and injustice, and learn to imitate authoritarian practice – to train, lecture, admonish, scold, ridicule, humiliate, and kill psyches. And violentist thinking replicates and normalises itself. Violent education produces violent outcomes, because it normalises and encourages violence, especially covert indirect violence.

Second, acts are justifiable only if the means of performing them are justifiable. I may not, for example, water my garden unless I may attach the hose, turn on the water, and so on. If I may not turn on the water (perhaps there is a drought) then I may not water my garden. It would make little moral sense to claim that I may water my garden, turn on the water, and then lament the fact that I had to turn on the water. Justifying the act and justifying the means required to complete that act are not separate. The morality of an end is affected by how it is pursued: 'However hard we try to separate means and ends, the results we achieve are extensions of the policies we live; the means we choose reflect the sort of end we seek' (Cady 2010, 48). We must, therefore, find educational means that are consistent with, and suitable for, our educational ends.

5. Final thoughts

In this paper I have argued that it is morally wrong to harm innocents because doing so treats them as a means to an end, that education systems are violent in ways not fully recognised or acknowledged, that educational violence causes significant and widespread harm to innocents, that this harm cannot be justified as a means to some greater end and, therefore, that education systems that cause harm to innocents are unjust because what must be done in the course of educating is unjustified. I have called this stance of mine 'educational pacifism' because it eschews violence in education. It is a conditional pacifism, since it holds that an education system is justified under the condition that it does not significantly harm innocents, and it holds that many education systems currently fail this condition. (I suspect that if innocents are indeed wrongfully

harmed in education, then they may have the right to resist that harm. Just what they may do, and under what conditions, ought to be explored.)

The world, and education as part of it, contains more violence than we often care to admit. Direct violence is a problem in society and education. Significant attention is paid to it, and much effort goes into reducing it. Indirect violence in education unjustly separates students and former students' potential and actual states. It resides in education systems' very structures, thoughts, and language, and is pervasive, harmful, and largely unrecognised or ignored. It unjustly separates students and former students' potential and actual states. Disproportionate focus on direct violence in education (and in the private and political worlds) obfuscates indirect violence. Greater attention must be paid to indirect educational violence and the harm it causes, as well as the structures and attitudes that cause it in turn. Violence is all around us, in the very mechanisms of our world.

If there were only one way to educate, then we might throw up our hands at this point and let it be. But there are other ways. In my view, nonviolent educational means must be focused on aligning students' actual somatic and mental realisations with their potential realisations. It is not my aim here to suggest the specific forms of those means, but I would imagine they would have to include some fundamentally important elements. They should pursue both education *for* peace (aimed at developing peaceful intrapersonal and interpersonal relations, peaceful people, and peaceful societies) and education *of* peace (pacifism, nonviolent resistance, and so on). Students' rights not to be harmed or oppressed should be upheld. Ecological awareness should be a core focus.

Peace educationalists have proposed and developed a range of approaches that elicit desire for peace, nonviolent conflict management, and critical analysis of unjust and unequal structural arrangements (Harris and Synott 2002). Peace education aims to produce agents of peace, awareness of the effects of war and injustice, awareness of the value of peace and justice, motivation to develop and maintain institutions that create peace and justice, love for the world, and deep respect and compassion for self and others (Page 2008). Much has been written on how to educate peacefully and towards peace (Bajaj 2008; Salomon and Cairns 2011; Noddings 2012; Harris and Lee Morrison 2013, etc.). There are many ways to foster these values, and to some extent the journey has only just begun. An example of a worldwide educational movement founded on peace principles is Montessori education, which holds education responsible for developing and establishing intra- and inter-personal peace (e.g. Montessori 1992). There are thousands of Montessori education centres and schools across the world, many of which remember and focus on this foundational principle of peace (Duckworth 2006). Outside of education, concepts such as nonviolent communication (Rosenberg 2002) provide extensive guidance on how to develop and foster peaceful communication and existence.

Why then, is there not more peace education available to students? Why are there so few peace schools? Partly it is because the conservative forces in education, which include policy makers, schools, parents, students, and the system itself, (consciously or unconsciously) obstruct meaningful change. The standard response to any alternative education is laden with scepticism, much like the violentist response to pacifism and peace. The inevitable question 'but does it work?' refers not to happiness, peace, self-motivation, self-esteem, nor critical and creative thinking, but instead to grades and apparent preparation for participation in the economy.

There is a dearth of funding and support available for peace education research and training. A relevant parallel can be found with nonviolent resistance. It is generally assumed, in part due to violentist beliefs, that states must have standing militaries to provide violent defence if required. Nonviolent resistance aims to reduce an aggressor's power through noncooperation and nonviolent intervention, avoiding the many costs of a standing military while retaining strong defensive capabilities (e.g. Sharp 1973). Despite having never received significant state focus, resourcing, or preparation, nonviolent resistance has succeeded against many violent oppressors and has been shown to be more effective in many cases (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Nonviolent resistance training could enhance societal virtues such as peace, solidarity, communality, and love, and could even be used to 'wage war' on inequality, injustice, or systemic oppression.

Similarly, the true potential and value of peace education cannot be properly analysed until it has been given a chance. It requires bureaucratic support, funding, and freedom to be able to theorise, practice, experiment, and analyse. It requires properly trained and equipped educators. It requires real and enduring structural change. And finally, it requires a concerted effort by all responsible to turn society's preconceptions and judgments back on themselves, in order to recognise and address the pervasive and sceptical violentism that opposes and rejects pacifism and peaceful endeavour. There are many countries that have progressive and open curricula that allow for a wide range of pedagogical approaches, and yet educational conservatism discourages and suppresses experimentation. We in education must be braver, because we owe the world less violence and more peace.

Notes

1. I believe this term is novel, and best describes my position.
2. Other potential foundations for peace education include those posited in Reardon (1988) and Harris and Lee Morrison (2013).
3. This approach avoids Ilan Gur-Ze-Ev (2001) criticism of peace education as a Western hegemonic construct that produces the violence it aims to eliminate. While peace

education creates methods and objectives, educational pacifism rejects educational violence.
4. Relevant mentions of this concept can be found in Gay, Curtin, and Litke (1999) and Holmes, Cady, and Werner (1991).
5. For this reason, amongst others, students ought to be offered opportunities to learn and practice philosophy, but it also helps to explain why they are not [*references removed*].

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