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Johan Galtung
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Johan Galtung

Pioneer of Peace Research



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Preface

To me has fallen the great honor of writing a preface for this fine book: “*Johan Galtung, A Pioneer of Peace Research*”.

For the last 15 years I have had the privilege of working closely with the person the book is about. His contagious passion has motivated me to be a “girl scout” for peace, dreaming big and working hard to fulfill the ideals that are most meaningful and most transcendent for our communities and nations.

Trying to approach my task creatively, trying to be fair to all, and trying to write the adequate preface this book deserves, I ask myself the question, What makes Johan Galtung special, outstanding? What defines him as a genius?

A genius is someone who, among other things, achieves a paradigmatic shift. His or her ideas shake up and reconfigure the foundations of the field written about and worked in. This is precisely what the ideas of Johan Galtung have done in the field of peace and conflict.

His deep and precise thoughts and concepts have shaped the science he has founded. He has made constitutive contributions to its methodological, philosophical, social, and historical underpinnings. With his passionate way of being-in-the-world, charismatic and profound, he has changed the way we see conflicts. He has changed the way we “read” conflicts. He has changed the way we think about and approach political and social situations, especially for those of us who have the high honor to be his disciples.

Our world enlarges, and our responsibility and participation in our world grow, as we apply and operationalize his ideas. His theory is no longer just a theory as it becomes an educational, social, and political toolbox. We necessarily become lifelong learners, like our teacher himself who constantly revises his ideas and brings them up-to-date while our digital society changes around us at a dizzying pace.

His thinking incites us to become better and more responsible persons.

His ideas respond to new situations, always opening new horizons. They never rest. More than once following out his trains of thought I have arrived at a point where I look around and say to myself, “Now that I have learned all the answers, I find that all the questions have changed!”

Johan redefines “success” to make it less a personal achievement and more the achievement of a society, culture, or population. Although he uses a simple

definition of “conflict,” *his analysis of it* is complex. In the face of dominant logics of power, he proposes to give voice to all of the parties to a conflict, especially those who are weak and powerless.

For him mediation may require as many mediators as there are parties, in order to accomplish the aim of creating a discursive space where all can be understood.

In every conflict or complaint there are some legitimate needs of the parties that deserve to be heard and validated. In order to be sure this happens, Johan asks and expects that the mediators be primarily spokespersons. Their role calls on them to understand the demands of the parties, taking as a basis for negotiation the components of the demands that express underlying legitimate needs.

Among the many strands of Johan’s theoretical contributions, an important line of thought is his proposal to articulate dimensions of conflict juxtaposing variables from the past and the future; constructive and destructive. Thus he opens up new ways to analyze possible solutions to disputes. We need to learn from the destructive past to avoid repeating it. We need to learn from the constructive past to let it guide us in the present and in the future. Ideally we are trending toward a constructive and positive future. We build with the material found in the criteria of legitimacy already present in the conflict.

Sigmund Freud held that learning about the experiences lived in infancy is fundamental to understanding how a person behaves ever afterwards. The memories of infancy published in Johan Galtung’s autobiography help to explain his theories and his actions as an adult. The opening scene of the book describes his father being carried off to prison, certainly a traumatic incident in the life of a young boy. I believe that this childhood experience is related to the origin of his theory that most nations begin in trauma. I permit myself to add that the majority of individuals have lived through traumas that have marked our lives.

What is most significant about the fact of trauma is that both in the cases of nations and in the cases of individuals there are widely differing capacities to recover from it.

The existence of the trauma, the response to it, and recovery from it, all vary from case to case. Toward the end of the twentieth century, scientists began to develop what is known as the theory of “resilience”. “Resilience” refers to capacity to continue projecting the self into the future in spite of experiences of trauma, crisis, and emotional pain.

Persons showing high levels of resilience share qualities similar to those of the person whose life and work are celebrated in this book. They are creative, optimistic, and passionately engaged. In a crisis situation they focus on the glass half full and not on the glass half empty.

Johan has lived through, learned from, and moved on beyond traumas typical of those so many of us have endured. He has achieved a great capacity to understand and to accompany communities devastated by war and/or by other disasters natural and/or unnatural. His own life and background have contributed to making him the man whose contributions to science and practice the reader will learn so much about in the following pages. Johan is a scientist who brings to crisis situations a

wisdom born of experience underlying the marvelous conceptual tools he has created for analyzing them, for rethinking them, and for finding positive solutions that can be accepted as legitimate by all the parties involved.

Buenos Aires, March 2013

Sara Rozenblum de Horowitz

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Part I
On Johan Galtung



Photo 1: Johan Galtung. Photo by Fernando Montiel, Mexico

Chapter 1

Johan Galtung, the Father of Peace Studies

Abstract This brief overview of Johan Galtung's life and work begins with some of his childhood experiences (such as his father being imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp) that shaped his determination to work for peace. It surveys some of his main new concepts and theories (such as direct, structural and cultural violence, negative and positive peace, rank discordance as a factor of genocide, and peaceful conflict transformation, among many others). It summarizes his contributions in mediating in over one hundred international conflicts, founding peace institutes around the world, publishing over 160 books and over 1,600 articles, teaching thousands of people around the world in conflict resolution and peace building, and inspiring many to devote their lives to peace.

1.1 Introduction

Johan Galtung's parents and ancestors were mainly medical doctors and nurses for several generations. So when Johan was born on 24 October 1930, an uncle congratulated his parents saying, "Today a new doctor is born!" Johan indeed became a kind of doctor, but rather than treating individuals, his patients are entire societies with their pathologies, for which he developed diagnosis, prognosis and therapy, using the terms he heard repeatedly at the dinner table.

On 9 April 1940, when Johan Galtung was nine years old, the German warship *Blücher*, with over 2,000 soldiers and sailors on board, led a flotilla into Oslo Fjord to conquer Oslo and occupy Norway. An old torpedo hit the ship, and it burst into flames and sank. Many of the soldiers could swim ashore, but suffered from burns in their throats. Johan's father, an ear-nose-throat surgeon, feverishly operated day and night to save the lives of as many of those soldiers as possible. Johan asked his father, "Were you not sometimes tempted to let your scalpel slip a little?" His father answered, "Absolutely not! The most essential duty of a physician is to save lives, anyone's life, without distinction." This left a deep impression on little Johan.

In 1944, Johan's father was taken with other prominent Norwegians to a Nazi concentration camp in Norway. Every day, his family feared to hear on the radio the news, "In retaliation for English bombing, Dr. Galtung was executed today." But fortunately, one month before the end of the war, his father returned home unharmed. This reinforced Johan's determination to work for the prevention of war.

In 1951, Johan Galtung studied in Helsinki with a scholarship. He asked the librarian for books about peace research. She did not have any, and wrote to the Central Library in Sweden, which had a much larger collection. The answer came, "There are no such books." Johan found this strange. There were thousands of books about war and military strategy research, why should there be no books about research for peace? This was a missing discipline, and he decided that this was his life's calling. He has contributed original research and insights to many areas of intellectual inquiry, having so far published over 160 books and over 1,600 book chapters and articles in scholarly and popular journals. 40 of his books have been translated into 34 languages, for a total of 134 book translations, making him the so far most cited author in the field of peace studies.¹

Thanks in large part to his tireless efforts, there are today peace studies programmes at universities throughout the world, and a growing number of schools teach children how to handle conflicts constructively. In the United States alone, there are over 500 peace studies programmes at colleges and universities.

School children are enthusiastically practicing the TRANSCEND² method of finding mutually acceptable solutions to challenging personal conflicts, and numerous professionals around the world are learning and applying the method. The main focus of the TRANSCEND method³ is not to merely identify who is guilty and punish those, the traditional legal approach, but to create an attractive new reality acceptable to all those involved. A new organization, Lawyers for Dialogue, is propagating this new approach among their colleagues.

Galtung has also helped mediate in over one hundred international conflicts, often successfully, and in this way helped prevent wars and saved many lives. He is sought by Presidents and Prime Ministers, because he does not necessarily tell them what they like to hear, nor the opposite, but creative insights they do not hear elsewhere. He focuses on positive proposals, not merely criticism of what is wrong. He has also been a frequent consultant to various United Nations agencies.

Galtung has held numerous visiting professorships all over the world. He fluently speaks and lectures in eight languages (Norwegian, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Danish and Swedish), all learned the hard way after age 20.

¹ A list of his books is given [Chap. 2](#). A complete list of his publications, regularly updated, can be found on www.transcend.org/galtung/#publications. Many reports are available for free download at www.transcend.org. The covers of his selected major books are at: http://www.afes-press-books.de/html/SpringerBriefs_PSP06.htm.

² Transcend means 'going beyond' and refers to Galtung's main institutional basis that is introduced below.

³ The 'Transcend method' is introduced below.



Photo 1.1 Johan Galtung. Photo in personal possession of the author

He never reads his lectures, but speaks freely from memory, in well-structured, logical and original ways that are easy to remember. Then he writes up his speeches after he has given them. He is often invited to give the keynote address at international conferences.

Anita Kemp (1985) conducted a survey among 133 peace researchers, many of them members of the International Peace Research Association, which Johan Galtung had helped found in 1964. To the question, “Which person, dead or alive, has influenced your thinking the most”, many names were given, but nearly half (44 per cent) mentioned Johan Galtung, with the next runnerup receiving 12 per cent. He has inspired a generation of dedicated peace workers around the world.



Photo 1.2 Johan Galtung at the TRANSCEND meeting in Grenzach-Wyhlen, Germany, 15 August 2012. Photo by Stacy Hughes, USA

Johan Galtung was a conscientious objector. He served twelve months as cook and in geographic surveys, the same period as those who did military service. Those opting for a civilian alternative were required to serve an additional six months. Johan agreed to do so, but only if he could work for peace during that time. That was refused by the government, and he was put in jail with murderers and other dangerous criminals for six months. While in jail, he completed his first book, *Gandhi's Political Ethics*, together with his mentor, Arne Naess, a deep ecologist. As assistant of Naess, Galtung searched through Gandhi's voluminous writings and extracted, among many other ideas, 68 norms for behaviour in conflict.

After completing two PhD equivalents, in Mathematics (1956) and Sociology (1957), he was invited to teach mathematical sociology at Columbia University in New York. Before his first class he cleaned the blackboard. One of his students, most of whom were older than he, came to him and said, "You better sit down, the professor may come in any moment." Johan had to explain to him that he was the professor.



Photo 1.3 Johan Galtung. Photo by Fernando Montiel, Mexico

While at Columbia University, he mediated his first conflict, over desegregation in the school system in the southern states. Through his senior colleague, Professor Otto Klineberg, he got in contact with people in Charlottesville, Virginia, Thomas Jefferson's town. The Ku Klux Klan had already burned a cross, and people were afraid of violence. Three groups were pitted against each other, the white integrationists, the white segregationists, and the blacks. The integrationists tended to be immigrants, but also included Sarah Patton Boyle, a member of the 'First

Families of Virginia'. The cross had been burning outside of her window, as a 'traitor of her class'. After some thousand interviews it became clear to Galtung that even if most people were afraid of violence, very few were ready to commit any and that solutions that could be relatively acceptable to everybody were there for everybody to discover. The segregationists feared revenge from the blacks, whom they had mistreated, but it turned out that the blacks only really wanted equal rights of opportunity for access to the American Dream, which they finally achieved to a large extent.

Instead of writing a book about the conflict, what researchers had typically done up to now, Galtung felt it was his responsibility to mediate, to contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflict and to help prevent future violence. He did so successfully.

In 1960, Galtung was offered tenure at Columbia University, but he preferred to return to Europe to build up peace studies there.

On 1 January 1959, Johan Galtung and his then wife Ingrid Eide founded the *International Peace Research Institute in Oslo* (PRIO), the world's first research institute with the word peace in its name. Since then, Galtung has helped found numerous peace institutes around the world, which are thriving today. Without his initiative and constant intellectual support and encouragement, many of them would not exist. In 1964, he founded the *Journal of Peace Research*, which remains one of the leading journals in this field.

Galtung and his colleagues at PRIO published their research findings in a series of working papers and sent them to about 400 social science institutes around the world, including the Institute for *World Economy and International Relations* (IMEMO) in Moscow. They received acknowledgements from many quarters, but never heard anything from IMEMO. It was as if the papers disappeared in a black hole in the universe. In 1982, when Galtung attended a conference at IMEMO, the librarian showed him a locked file cabinet in the basement of the library. Here was the entire collection of papers that he and his colleagues had been sending over the years. Surprisingly, the papers seemed to have passed through many hands, with numerous notes in the margins. In 1991, Vladimir Petrovsky, then Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, visited Johan Galtung in Oslo, thanking him for sending those papers. He explained that during the Brezhnev era, he was part of a group of young scholars who met frequently to discuss new ideas, being aware that their system needed reform. These papers on alternative approaches to peace, security and development provided them with valuable new concepts and concrete ideas how to proceed. Sowing seeds can have unforeseen long term consequences.

In 1966, Johan Galtung was asked by the Council of Europe to do a study of how countries in the Cold War viewed the future. Since they had only a small budget for the study, the method chosen was not a traditional public opinion survey, but a dialogue about predictions and possibilities of cooperation, with only one person in each country: the head of the political department in the Foreign Office, in 19 countries in Europe and North America, during the summer of 1967.

In Washington, the dialogue was with Zbigniew Brzezinski, in Moscow with Jurij Vorontsov. The most interesting answers came from the Warsaw Treaty



Photo 1.4 Johan Galtung. Photo in the personal possession of the author

Organization countries outside the Soviet Union. They had done a lot of thinking about the future; they knew that they wanted peace, independence and cooperation. Galtung never argued, he only asked questions, to understand their world from the inside, not to have a verbal duel in order to try to convince them of anything. In other words, a true dialogue, not a debate. He probably got better information that way than the CIA, because they mainly listen secretly, without asking questions.

Arising from these dialogues during the Cold War came an idea: a United Nations' Security Commission for Europe, where all parties could sit together and