

Panel Discussion

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I would like to talk about education, memory and dialogue, and first let me begin with a story. Two years ago, while waiting at Incheon Airport on my way home from Korea to the United Kingdom, I was approached by a Korean teenager – perhaps seventeen years old – who wanted to practice his English with me (such occurrences are fairly commonplace at this airport). The conversation quickly turned to the universally popular topic of football (soccer). I asked him if there was a particular team that he supported. He told me he used to love Manchester United, but now hated them because they had signed a Japanese player. I asked him if Koreans didn't like the Japanese, but he corrected my verb. He said: 'We don't 'not like' them. We hate them. I hate the Japanese. I want Japan to sink to the bottom of the ocean.'

I found this encounter really depressing, especially because my Korean interlocutor was so young. And I reflected that such hatred must have been instilled in him by his elders. It reminded me of Ireland, where hatred between communities has been ritually passed from generation to generation for a crazy 350 years. I thought also of the workshop I had just been attending in Seoul, where I had advocated dialogue with Japan. A Korean professor had asked me there, in all seriousness: 'Mr Woodman, you talk of opening contact with Japan, but how do you propose that we engage in dialogue with a nation of war criminals?' Thus were the Japanese people of today dismissed in his eyes, both collectively and individually, as being quite beyond the pale.

Now, I am very conscious of the terrible Japanese atrocities inflicted on Korea. At the time, many outsiders were unsympathetic to Korea's plight. Indeed, as Professor Dudden has written elsewhere, 'In the summer of 1907, the world declared Korea illegal'. But with today's global awareness of the Korean experience through those years, no-one with a heart could now fail to have sympathy. And it is certainly true that modern-day Japan does not always help matters. Apparently genuine apologies are no soon-

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er spoken than they are undercut by contrary pronouncements and actions, such as we witness from the Abe government today. But what I see in the personal vignettes I have related above is evidence of the classic ‘self-versus-other’ mentality that bedevils many social groupings, in particular national relations. What does this approach – suffused with outmoded notions of power, victory and triumph – actually achieve, except to entrench divisions and imprison us in the past? How can we break this cycle and prevent it from being passed on to future generations?

We could usefully examine this ‘self-versus-other’ phenomenon more closely. It is partly based on memory, but memory has its dangers, as Professor Metro-Roland has reminded us here. In a new book about the Spanish Civil War, another historical episode involving heinous crimes, Jeremy Treglown warns that memory can easily degenerate into what he calls a “politically manipulated, culturally amnesiac obsession”. Sabrina Ramet, in a 2013 article on memory and identity in the former Yugoslavia, tells us how collective memory, collective forgetting, collective trauma, collective neurosis and collective paranoia can all become intertwined. Memory can be used to distort reality and provide an excuse to perpetuate the justification of animosities. Thomas Berger too, in his 2012 book on war & guilt, notes how the political imperatives of the day can manipulate historiography, the manner in which history is written and related.

It is a group phenomenon. It is so easy to sit in meetings, comforted by the presence of like-minded souls with the same collective memory, and nod in agreement at papers that basically preach to the already converted. We should introduce more variety; people who might challenge these perceived certainties. There are different views out there, respectable views which should not be dismissed (as they were dismissed in one particular paper at this seminar) as the interfering machinations of so-called intellectuals. In particular, where are the Japanese at these meetings? Are they too scared of the reaction back home to attend, or have they simply not been invited? They used to attend, but have not done so in recent years. Yet they have a legitimate interest, and ultimately nothing of a diplomatic nature can be achieved without them. And talking to Japanese does not mean supping with Satan. The politicians can be by-passed. Thomas Berger, and also John Dower in his 2012 book on memory in Japan, both affirm that Japanese public opinion is generally much softer than the publicity-attracting nationalistic rhetoric that emanates from that country’s right-wing politicians.

So let me once again propose dialogue with Japan. Professor Choo has also suggested

this here, and clearly one of the ways to achieve it is through educational forums. We have had the good fortune here to have been presented with positive papers on education from Professor Stoltman and Professor Hausner. I note in particular Professor Hausner's reference to APNIEVE (the Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education). This UNESCO initiative, which was largely a Korean creation, aims to infuse all education in the Asia-Pacific region with the promotion of peace and understanding, encouraging the region's youth to live together with common core values, such as:

1. Harmony
2. Tolerance
3. Interdependence
4. Empathy
5. Trust & Respect
6. Honesty
7. Appreciation of diversity
8. Sensitivity to others

APNIEVE then lists the tools required to achieve this peace and understanding. They include:

1. Group discussions
2. Field visits
3. Internet communications
4. Participation in meetings & conferences

APNIEVE would provide a helpful regional framework within which topics of shared interest could be profitably discussed with neighbours. When you find you can identify many issues of common interest on which you can agree, then the few items on which you can't agree stand out far less dramatically. Through field visits, communications and participation in meetings, real achievements might follow, and perhaps future generations wouldn't grow up with the same animosity that they display now. In my experience, the 'self-versus-other' mentality frequently breaks down in the face of personal contact. If one actually sits down and talks to people, it is difficult to sustain the level of hostility and antagonism one might have felt towards them beforehand.

A final thought. In the Quechua language, spoken by several million people in the

Andean region of South America, there are two distinct forms of the first person plural pronoun 'we'. There is one version of this pronoun that signifies 'we as opposed to you', and there is a different version that signifies 'all of us together' inclusively. So much of what we have heard in these twenty seminars has been couched in terms of 'we as opposed to you'. I would like to think that in future seminars we will soon get the opportunity to say – and sincerely to mean – 'all of us together', inclusively.