CONFLICTS WITH RELIGIOUS OR WORLDVIEW DIMENSIONS: WHY THEY MATTER AND HOW TO ENGAGE THEM

*Michelle LeBaron and Maged Senbel**

I. INTRODUCTION

This Article discusses conflicts with religious or worldview dimensions, and why creative approaches are uniquely suited to intervening in them. Conflicts centered around identity, cosmology, and other aspects of worldviews need tools that reach beyond presenting logic and traditional conflict intervention approaches to parties' "grammars of being." "Grammars of being" refer to structural ideas and values below the surface of conscious awareness that influence beliefs, opinions, and actions, just as grammar organizes written or spoken language. Arts-based strategies are promising because they offer aesthetic, embodied pathways that are often missed in more traditional interventions. Case examples drawn from our and others' work illustrate the potential of these strategies. The Article concludes with a discussion of implications for theory and practice of experiential, arts-based approaches in worldview conflict analysis and intervention.

The current leitmotiv of polarized politics pits those who do not subscribe to a religion against believers. Though the majority of people in the world are religiously observant,[1] scientific worldviews are too often (and many times unnecessarily) framed as oppositional to faith-informed perspectives. Populist leaders have further exacerbated divisions in the public domain, stoking enemy images of "the other" in ways that amplify differences. This negatively-charged climate has not only increased gaps between those with faith perspectives and those who hold secular or scientific worldviews; it has also increased perceptions of gaps, thus inflaming conflicts over a range of issues.

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[1] Conrad Hackett et al., *The Age Gap in Religion Around the World*, PEW RSCH. CTR. 5, 64 (June 13, 2018), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330969885_The_Age_Gap_in_Religion_Around_the_World [https://perma.cc/75Y4-7FLW].

Donald Trump's U.S. presidency exacerbated habits of pitting right against left, and Evangelicals against those with other faith perspectives and non-believers. Religiously, racially, or ethnically motivated violence increased nearly 20% during Trump's presidency, as white supremacists targeted victims by race, ethnicity, ancestry, or religion.[2] Right-wing populism associated with xenophobic, nationalistic perspectives is not limited to the U.S.—it is a global phenomenon.[3] Yet even as divisions increase, theory and practice related to conflicts with religious or worldview dimensions remain underdeveloped.

What many religious or worldview-involved conflicts have in common is that they are not taken sufficiently seriously. Insufficient ink has been spent on them in the conflict resolution field, though this is changing.[4] Indeed, British researchers wrote that religion in conflict and peacebuilding has too often been framed in binary terms: either as a cause of conflict or a source of reconciliation, without further examination.[5] As Silvestri and Mayall[6] contend, this simplification has obscured the complexity of the subject and underlined the absence of serious grappling with the intersection of religion, worldviews, and conflict.

Frazer and Friedli[7] argue that conflicts with religious dimensions ("CRDs") involve world-making frames, evoking fundamental human needs of meaning and meaning-making.[8] [9] When historical conflicts are part of a geopolitical context, or a diaspora

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[2] *See* Daniel Villarreal, *Hate Crimes Under Trump Surged Nearly 20 Percent Says FBI Report,* NEWSWEEK (Nov. 16, 2020, 7:57 PM), https://www.newsweek.com/hate-crimes-under-trump-surged-nearly-20-percent-says-fbi-report-1547870 [https://perma.cc/LB3P-UTL7].

[3] Annalisa Merelli, *The State of Global Right-Wing Populism in 2019*, QUARTZ (Dec. 30, 2019), https://qz.com/1774201/the-global-state-of-right-wing-populism-in-2019/ [https://perma.cc/R54U-Y7Y8].

[4] *See generally* Jeffrey R. Seul, *Treat the Stranger as Your Own: Religious Prosociality and Conflict Transformation*, 24 J. INTERELIGIOUS STUD. 26 (2018); LEE MARSDEN, THE ASHGATE RESEARCH COMPANION TO RELIGION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION (2016).

[5] SARA SILVESTRI & JAMES MAYALL, THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING 1 (2015).

[6] Sara Silvestri is Senior Lecturer in International Politics at the City University of London; James Mayall is Professor Emeritus of International Relations at the University of Cambridge.

[7] Owen Frazer completed his Ph.D. in political science at the University of Birmingham in 2022 and is Senior Program Officer in the Mediation Support Team of the Centre for Security Studies at ETH in Zurich. Richard Friedli is Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at the University of Friborg in Switzerland.

[8] OWEN FRAZER & RICHARD FRIEDLI, APPROACHING RELIGION IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: CONCEPTS, CASES AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS 12 (2015).

[9] Meaning-making is the process by which we interpret situations, objects, events, and behaviors through the lenses of our (and others' in our groups) cultural experiences.

group feels aggrieved by actions elsewhere in the world, sacred proclamations by one side can be perceived as explicitly or implicitly questioning another group's sacred meanings and thus their identity. Combined with a cocktail of perceived social, economic, and political injustice or historical hegemony, the mere existence of religious differences can exacerbate deep-rooted conflict. The potency and potential violent repercussions of inadequate conflict analysis and ineffective intervention in CRDs and worldview conflicts make them an important focus for our field.

In this Article, we argue that another developing dimension of conflict resolution theory and practice, the use of creative and expressive arts-informed approaches, can aid in efforts to engage CRDs and worldview conflicts effectively. Our work aims not only to deepen ways of understanding these conflicts, but also to assist practitioners to make sense of, choose between, and apply effective arts-based conflict engagement strategies. We believe that engagement across diversity and conflict transformation in the midst of worldview and religious conflicts are not only possible, but they are also essential. An emic perspective of CRDs is essential to create a whole picture. As Benjamin N. Cardozo wrote: "There is in each of us a stream of tendency . . . which gives coherence to thought and action. . . . We may try to see things as objectively as we please. None the less, we can never see them with any eyes except our own."[10]

II. Why Make Religion or Worldviews a Focus of Conflict Resolution?

CRDs and worldview conflicts affect parties' "grammars of being," so attuning to these dimensions is important in all phases of conflict engagement, from getting to the table to generating durable resolutions. If a mediator works from an unexamined assumption that parties share her secular humanist orientation, or that her orientation is "generic enough" to match parties' worldviews, her effectiveness may be limited. As social scientist Peter Coleman of Columbia University argues in a recent piece in *Negotiation Journal*, addressing complex negotiations requires a systemic approach.[11] In addressing CRDs, religion and religious actors must

[10] Benjamin N. Cardozo, The Nature of the Judicial Process 12–13 (1921).

[11] Peter T. Coleman, *Conflict Intelligence and Systemic Wisdom: Meta-Competencies for Engaging Conflict in a Complex, Dynamic World*, 34 Negot. J. 7, 9–10 (2018).

therefore be seen as integral to systems, not isolated as factors to be analyzed. Peacebuilding scholars Mohammed Abu Nimer and Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana observe that many organizations in the peacebuilding field operate within secular frameworks, and thus employ a lack of in-depth engagement with faith-based organizations, parties, or perspectives.[12] Abu Nimer elaborates on how the failure to take religion seriously is perpetuated:

> When they design their programmes, they . . . tend to build partnerships with secular civil society groups and professionals, who share with them the same secular ideological assumptions of promoting diversity, human rights and sustainable development. Beyond the lack of awareness, there is basic resistance towards engaging religious leaders by policy and development practitioners, who are themselves secular and believe that religion and religious institutions should be confined to their primary function of providing theological and spiritual services to communities. . . . What is missing in such approaches, however, is an authentic read of the local context, including major players and power relations, which would reveal that religion and [faith-based organisations] are relevant beyond mere theological issues.[13]

Some thoughtful work on CRDs exists, dating back to Johnston and Sampson's 1994 book on religion as an essential dimension of statecraft.[14] Scott Appleby of the Notre Dame University's School of Global Affairs subsequently emphasized that active religious leadership can foster forgiveness and pluralism, building on ambiguities within traditions.[15] Incorporating religious rituals and spatial awareness of holy sites into conflict engagement processes was advocated by Davidheiser and Hassner, and more recently by Zalzberg and Aldrovandi.[16] [17] According to Mason and Kassam,

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[12] Mohammed Abu-Nimer & S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, *Muslim Peace-Building Actors in Africa and the Balkan Context: Challenges and Needs*, 33 PEACE & CHANGE 549, 562, 567–68, 576 (2008).

[13] MOHAMMED ABU-NIMER, ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO TRANSFORMING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE CASE OF ISLAMIC PEACE AND INTERRELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING 7 (2018) (alteration in original).

[14] RELIGION: THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT (Douglas Johnston & Cynthia Sampson eds., 1994).

[15] SCOTT R. APPLEBY, THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE SACRED: RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND RECONCILIATION 245, 255, 280–81, 307 (2000).

[16] *See generally* Mark Davidheiser, *Rituals and Conflict Transformation: An Anthropological Analysis of the Ceremonial Dimensions of Dispute Processing,* BEYOND INTRACTABILITY (June 2006), https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/rituals-and-ceremonials [https://perma.cc/BVW5-EU3M]; RON E. HASSNER, WAR ON SACRED GROUNDS (2013); CARLO ALDROVANDI, SACRED PLACES AND DIPLOMACY: A POST-SECULAR APPROACH TO THE STRUGGLE FOR TEM-

co-mediation may facilitate stronger inter-party acceptance of diverging religious perspectives by combining cultural proximity and impartiality.[18] [19] American practitioners Woodrow, Oatley, and Garred underline the importance of taking religion into account in monitoring and evaluating conflict engagement.[20] [21] Increasingly, interdisciplinary scholars are focusing on prosocial aspects of religion and its fruitfulness in conflict, as Jeffrey Seul and others detail in a special issue of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*.[22] [23] Below, we summarize some general aspects of religion and worldview-informed conflict intervention before describing the place of arts-based approaches.

III. Religion-Informed Conflict Analysis and Intervention

CRDs and worldview conflicts are always embedded in interwoven realities. Conflict analysis is an attempt to simplify, and so to augment understanding of, any particular conflict. Yet it is essential that analysts avoid over-simplifying approaching CRDs or worldview conflict, and instead:

- holistically analyze complexity;
- contextually understand and evaluate symbols; and
- foster dialogue across differences.

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ple Mount/Haram al-Sharif (forthcoming 2022); Ofer Zalzberg, *Beyond Liberal Peacemaking: Lessons from Isreali-Palestinian Peacemaking*, 53 Rev. Middle E. Stud. 46 (2019).

17 Mark Davidheiser is Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, and Ron Hassner is the Chancellor's Professor of Political Science at the University of California at Berkeley. Ofer Zalzberg is Director of the Middle East Program at the Herbert C. Kelman Institute. Carlo Aldrovandi is Assistant Professor, School of Religion, Trinity College, Dublin.

18 Simon J. A. Mason & Sabrin Kassam, *Bridging Worlds: Culturally Balanced Co-Mediation*, 52 Politorbis 69, 69 (2011).

19 Simon Mason is a Senior Researcher and Head of the Mediation Support Team at the Center for Security Studies, ETH, Zurich. Sabrin Kassam is Programme Manager, Frannan International, working on development assistance programming in Africa.

20 Peter Woodrow, Nick Oatley, & Michelle Garred, Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring & Evaluation of Inter-religious Action for Peacebuilding 5 (2017).

21 Peter Woodrow and Michelle Garred worked with CDA Collaborative Learning Projects at the time this piece was published. Michelle Gerrard founded and directs Ripple Peace Research and Consulting LLP. Nick Oatley works with the Alliance for Peacebuilding and is a strategist, organizational development and change management practitioner.

22 Seul, *supra* note 4, at 27.

23 Jeffrey Seul is a Lecturer on the Practice of Peace at the Harvard Divinity School.

A. *Holistic Analysis*

Effective conflict resolution is holistic rather than atomistic. The tendency to break units of understanding into smaller and smaller pieces to increase focus and isolate multivariate causes may lead analysts to miss the essence of religious or worldview aspects, which may be diffuse rather than specific. Conflict analysts should invite parties to share cognitive, sensory, kinaesthetic, and emotional dimensions of issues and experiences as undivided wholes. In Kashmir, for example, Frazer and Friedli created faith-based reconciliation seminars with "next-generation leaders from many areas of Kashmiri society: religious leaders, civil servants, NGO officials, student leaders, lawyers, doctors, [and] business people" to invite and increase holistic understandings of issues.[24] This wide aperture assisted participants to create new symbolic narratives of reconciliation. Reflecting on their experiences, Frazer and Friedli propose that conflict analysts consider how religion implicates identity markers; whether alternative interpretations of religious teachings exist, and if so, how paradox or discontinuity might be engaged; and how an awareness of alternative worldviews might change a particular conflict.[25] Questions like these can elicit more holistic perspectives, thus enriching conflict resolution processes.

B. *Contextual Evaluation Using Symbols*

Contextual evaluation is another essential aspect of conflict engagement. Contextual evaluation means to try to see a situation as insiders see it, *i.e.,* "from the inside, out," suspending judgement that could otherwise block nuances. Symbols are a significant portal to seeing "from the inside out." In his examination of the Syrian conflict, Mark Tomass underlines the potency of religious symbols as windows into the "grammars of being" that may enhance contextual evaluation.[26] [27] In times of real or imagined threat, symbols may be "externalized" into signifiers of "us" and "them," leading to distortions and enemy projections. These sym-

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[24] FRAZER & FREIDLI, *supra* note 8, at 19–20 (alteration in original).

[25] *Id.* at 27–29.

[26] MARK TOMASS, THE RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT: THE REMAKING OF THE FERTILE CRESCENT 16, 119, 128–29 (2016).

[27] Mark Tomass is an Extension School Faculty Member at Harvard University and holds a PhD in economics.

bols may then become proxies for stored resentments and entrenched intractability, leading to so-called enemies being objectified as targets for violence.[28]

Holy sites as indivisible symbols often relate to histories of divine encounters and reflect sacred symbolic designs. As Hassner has observed, symbols can literally reshape understandings of geography and other material things.[29] Thus, the designation of holy sites, when framed as housing divine presence, becomes a way of claiming material space. Symbolic roles and meanings of a location are indivisible from its material existence, yielding holistic connections between the place and the communities for whom it is sacred. Thus, though Jews praying at the Temple Mount violates the status quo agreement, Jewish prayer continues there alongside Muslim prayer at Haram al-Sharif, pointing to the robustness of indivisible threads. Sharing or compromising may be resisted when the ripples of change would be perceived as denying or denigrating sacred histories.

Acknowledging the potency of symbols, Carlo Aldrovandi argues for a post-secular approach to the struggle for Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif that embraces theology rather than marginalizing it.[30] Aldrovandi and colleagues are engaging Jewish and Muslim clerics from conservative constituencies in relationship-building, dialogue, and creative activities. Given their roles as potential spoilers to any diplomatically-negotiated peace agreement, clerics are key to building momentum toward peace.

C. *Dialogic Engagement*

Effective CRD engagement recognizes human drives for connection as central. Mary Clark, refuting earlier interpretations of primate studies for wrongly overemphasising violent tendencies, argues that humans' drives toward connection are stronger than any destructive impetus.[31] Dialogue processes must therefore be responsive to belonging, especially when belonging to community, place, or other aspects of identity crosscuts religious or worldview

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[28] Tomass, *supra* note 26, at 129.

[29] Hassner, *supra* note 16, at 44–46.

[30] Carlo Aldrovandi, Temple Mount & Haram al-Sharif Dispute: Engaging Religiously Conservative Clerics and their Sacred Values & Worldviews 3–5 (Nov. 29, 2020) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with authors); Carlo Aldrovandi, *Cultural Apocalypse*, *in* Apocalyptic Movements in Contemporary Politics: Christian and Jewish Zionism 222–23 (2014).

[31] Mary E. Clark, In Search of Human Nature 84, 97, 324 (2002).

differences. What do parties have in common because it is resonant in both religions involved in a conflict, or in spheres apart from religion? What will help reknit relational fabrics that have frayed or torn in the midst of conflict?

Conflict parties are very often acutely aware of differences between them, and unaware of or surprised to discover similarities. When LeBaron interviewed dialoguing pro-life and pro-choice activists, for example, several were surprised at how many commonalities they discovered with their counterparts, including a commitment to social action and change, interest in promoting the welfare of women and children, and concern to make adoption more available, to name a few.[32] Once awareness of belonging was heightened, activists looked across divides with empathy, even as they continued their advocacy. In an evaluation of pro-life/pro-choice dialogues, one member of a multidenominational group disclosed that he kept talking with those on "the other side" because he had come to see "God in the [eyes of the] other."[33] Several wondered at how the dialogues promoted learning and belonging: "I feel grateful for other people saying something new to me. The experience of learning [together] is a profoundly bonding experience."[34]

Adding arts-based tools to dialogic engagement can work well, particularly when dialogue is invited in phenomenological ways—*i.e.*, with a focus on what participants see, hear, sense, and feel arising from visual, musical, rhythmical, theatrical, or other experiential modes of engaging. The balance of this Article describes how we and others have worked with arts to engage people involved in conflict with religious or worldview dimensions. We explore why the arts are potent vehicles for fostering positive transformation and when they can be productively used. Then, we describe how we used arts-based processes on our Vancouver campus to address CRDs and worldview conflicts. Finally, we describe habits of heart, mind, and body conducive to successfully applying arts-based practices in conflict resolution.

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[32] Michelle LeBaron & Nike Carstarphen, *Negotiating Intractable Conflict: The Common Ground Dialogue Process and Abortion*, 13 NEGOT. J. 341, 341–42 (1997).

[33] *Id.* at 355.

[34] *Id.* at 350.

IV. Transformative Arts Practices

Because arts tap holistic, symbolically informed understandings, they are promising vehicles for CRD and worldview conflict intervention. As modes of expression that are not the product of logical analysis or logical framework thinking, they open space for discovery and possibility. They provide ways to touch the ineffable, to share what cannot be named, and to approach chasms of meaning not bridgeable through rational analysis. Arts practices activate complementary capacities for seeing beyond the visible, hearing beyond words and touching both the formless fears, and inspiring possibilities that reshuffle figure and ground. Because arts practices can be used in parallel or collaboratively, they emphasize connection between parties who are (or perceive themselves to be) disconnected.

In conflicts involving clashes of meaning, arts modalities can help surface deeply embedded meanings that cannot be directly named and may not even be consciously accessible. As conflict intervenors know, how meanings are framed and by whom is pivotal to conflict escalation or de-escalation. Scarry writes that the knowability of a situation revolves around how meaning is made of issues and events; she suggests paying attention to what is represented, how it is framed and by whom.[35] Meaning-making is a symbolic and highly variable process; worldview and religious conflicts are thus never static. They change with context, leadership, and retraumatization to name a few of many factors. Meanings change within groups unevenly, as what Vamik Volkan calls chosen glories and traumas are reactivated by current events.[36]

Given that arts practices invoke symbolic meanings, arts practices can become conduits for expressing and sharing values, ideas, or visions. They may also open windows into sacred meanings that might otherwise remain shut. As Cohen observes, aesthetic processes nourish many of the same capacities also necessary for coexistence and reconciliation.[37] Victor Hugo wrote that "music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which can-

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[35] Elaine Scarry, Resisting Representation 3–4 (1994).

[36] Vamik D. Volkan, Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity Opening Address at the XIII International Congress International Association of Group Psychotherapy (Aug. 1998), at 92–95, https://doi.org/10.1177/05333160122077730 [https://perma.cc/F3D9-89EE].

[37] Cynthia Cohen, *Creative Approaches to Reconciliation*, Brandeis Univ. 1, 3–4 (2005), http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.498.4233&rep=rep1&type=pdf [https://perma.cc/93FB-43K8].

not remain silent."[38] Silence or ineffective action often leads to conflict escalation or a frozen kind of stasis. Arts-based approaches hold the potential to shift longstanding patterns of enmity, or to at least improve conditions of coexistence.

A. *Why Arts?*

According to Clark, conflicts related to "sacred remnants of social identity" call out for reweaving these remnants into connection.[39] To be effective, reweaving is ideally experiential, drawing on emotional, embodied, and faith-related aspects of religion or worldview differences. Conflict parties cannot be reasoned out of their enemy image of each other. Because direct or confronting dialogue may actually deepen fissures in CRDs or worldview conflicts, the arts' capacity for fostering indirect engagement is especially valuable. When approaching a conflict embedded in parties' "grammars of being," approaches that allow for complexity, ambiguity, and diffuseness are more likely than direct approaches to help parties reconnect, generating holistic outcomes.

Arts leader Dagmar Reichert, founder of the Swiss NGO *Art as Foundation,* expands on why arts processes are so potent. While rationality and efficiency dominate the ethos of our time, they are not prime motivators in CRDs or worldview conflicts. To address these conflicts, practitioners need the unsettling effects of art processes, and the gifts they offer of experimenting with possibilities.[40] The power of arts processes, she writes, "is not to be found in specific themes or contents shared by art and mediation processes, but in an internal logic common to arts and peace building methods".[41] This logic, she maintains, is best described in philosophies of aesthetics. She makes the case that—through artistic production—people come to touch the ineffable, beyond utilitarian, technically-oriented, scientific ways of seeing and being. Reichert names several ways that aesthetics and transformative art

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38 VICTOR HUGO, HUGO'S WORKS: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE 91 (2007).

39 Mary E. Clark, *Meaningful Social Bonding as a Universal Human Need*, in CONFLICT: HUMAN NEEDS THEORY 34, 55 (John Burton ed., 1990).

40 Dagmar Reichert, *Art Initiatives in Fragile and Conflict Affected Regions: Notes for a KOFF Roundtable Discussion*, ARTS AS FOUNDATION (Nov. 2016), https://www.artasfoundation.ch/assets/downloads/2016_ReichertDagmar_ArtInitiativesInFragileConflictRegions.pdf [https://perma.cc/G2DQ-AR5S].

41 Dagmar Reichert, The Potential of Art 1 (2011) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with authors).

practices foster constructive relations with others and the world. Through arts, she writes, people:

- become interested in "the other," and in people, processes, and things outside themselves without assessing their utility;
- engage others they encounter as specific individuals and not as members of a category or class;
- turn attention away from who "the other" *is* and onto how "the other" *affects* them, with an appreciative gaze;
- train their attention on the aesthetic experience, and come to feel kindred with others who share their appreciative gaze;
- get absorbed in the aesthetic experience, and forget their physical presence and related assumptions about the "others" physical presence, at least for a moment;
- come to accept that "the other" incorporates contradictions and paradoxes that cannot be grasped in unequivocal terms; and
- enjoy that this "other" is independent of their expectations and is a source of vitality for them.[42]

This list is intriguingly resonant with CRDs and worldview conflicts, in which there are often significant perceived distances between "us" and "them," frequently involving demonization and dehumanization of "the other."[43] Stepping back from the precipice of violent escalation calls for both cognitive and affective shifts. Arts and aesthetic experiences help attain these shifts because they engage people on both sensory and cognitive levels, and thus help both to surface, identify, and mediate tensions.[44] As aesthetic experiences help adverse parties feel and sense each other's humanity, they increase understanding and lay a foundation for dialogue and problem-solving. Thus, arts experiences may be helpful in the convening phase of conflict engagement, as well as during processes when losses are mourned or forgiveness is sought.[45]

Art also serves to represent and remind those encountering or creating it of key social values and principles. Reflecting on the centrality of art and creative thinking in ending apartheid and enshrining human rights in South Africa, Justice Albie Sachs wrote:

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[42] *Id.* at 1.

[43] Cohen, *supra* note 37, at 12; Tomass, *supra* note 26, at 123–24, 126–34.

[44] Cohen, *supra* note 37, at 5–6.

[45] *Id.* at 52.

> Rationality is sometimes seen as inimical to art, and passion as hostile to Justice. Our building [the new Constitutional Court] shows how art and human rights overlap and reinforce each other. At the core of the Bill of Rights and of the artistic endeavour represented in the Court is respect for human dignity. It is this that unites art and justice.[46]

Creativity, as Sachs argued, is essential to untangling multidimensional injustices including religious differences and reciprocal denigration. In post-colonial societies where historical inequalities persist, advocating for and implementing conflict intervention is fraught with risk. At moments of sea-change such as the present, it becomes more difficult to imagine interdependent webs. Gaps are amplified in media and social media, thus deepening differences and perceptions of differences. Engagement with art and its physical properties helps us move back from the precipice toward spacious ambiguity, creativity, and beauty that touches us and connects us as humans.

Neuroscientific research has further buttressed the case for arts approaches in conflict. Sensed and felt experiences are contagious, and feelings can move between us without our being consciously aware of the exchange. The contagion process begins at birth and is made possible by mirror neurons in the brain, through the human mirror neuron system ("MNS") which fires up and "mirrors" the physical signals of another. A wealth of data demonstrates that when we observe others experiencing emotions, our brains engage the same neural circuits that are active in "the other"; this is the basis of empathy.[47] Through the activation of mirror neurons, these "shared representations" allow us to experience vicariously what is felt and expressed by others. This helps explain how we can be transported to our deepest fears by a painting or moved to tears by a dance performance, and how we can have empathy for others even in the midst of conflict.

Through the MNS, "human beings respond to music in ways that enhance resonance with others, emotionality, and behavior-

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46 ART AND JUSTICE: THE ART OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA 8 (Bronwyn Law-Viljoen ed., 2008).

47 G. Rizzolatti & L. Craighero, *Mirror Neuron: A Neurological Approach to Empathy*, *in* NEUROBIOLOGY OF HUMAN VALUES: RESEARCH AND PERSPECTIVES IN NEUROSCIENCE 107, 109 (J. P. Changeux, A. Damasio, W. J. Singer, & Y. Christen eds., 2005); Vittorio Gallese, *The Roots of Empathy: The Shared Manyfold Hypothesis and the Neural Basis of Intersubjectivity*, 36 PSYCHOPATHOLOGY 171, 173, 176–77 (2003).

ally."[48] As Beausoleil and LeBaron note, the MNS is also activated by dance performances, which open the possibilities of rehearsing positive behavioral shifts in conflict or experiencing the devastation of negative ones without actually incurring the emotional and physical costs of them.[49] Althaus underlines that:

> The neuroscience of narrative tells us that storytelling lights up the entire brain. . . . This supposedly explains why human beings are literally moved by stories. We relate to the story itself but also apply it to our own lives and circumstances. Stories thus motivate us towards refection and action.[50]

The inherent connection between arts and peacebuilding thus transcends humanities lenses and intertwines with our developing scientific understanding of the human brain. When aesthetic experiences are integrated into conflict resolution processes, mirror neurons help bridge gaps of perception and empathy.

Aesthetic approaches draw attention to gaps, to what is not known, and to things that are not reducible to a framework or rational analysis. Thus, another potent aspect of arts in engaging conflict is their capacity to highlight gaps and reveal the possibilities for diverse interpretations; they accentuate ambiguity and the elusive nature of "objective" truth. Scarry points to the potential of beauty to productively reveal gaps and differences as they relate to framing and processes of meaning-making.[51]

Italian architect Carlo Scarpa is known for his use of gaps in architecture. One of his works, the *Fondazione Querini Stampalia*, is a testament to the power of designing strategic gaps to invite the outside in and the inside out, to create contrasts and tensions, and, thus, to manifest a different sense of "space." Designer Alan Fletcher, in exploring why space is important, writes:

> Space is substance. Cézanne painted and modelled space. Giacometti sculpted by '*taking the fat off space*.' Mallarmé conceived poems with absences as well as words. Isaac Stern described music as '*that little bit between each note—silences which give the form*.' The Japanese have a word (*ma*) for this interval

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48 Helen Hintjens & Rafiki Ubaldo, *Music, Violence, and Peace-Building*, 31 PEACE REV. 279, 286 (2020).

49 *See generally* Emily Beausoleil & Michelle LeBaron, *What Moves Us: Implications of Neuroscience and Dance for Conflict Transformation*, 31 CONFLICT RESOL. Q. 133 (2013).

50 Catherine Althaus, *Political Science and the Arts as Allies and Strange Bedfellows: A Chapter in Five Parts, in* WHAT POLITICAL SCIENCE CAN LEARN FROM THE HUMANITIES: BLURRING GENRES 287, 307 (R.A.W. Rhodes & Susan Hodgett eds., 2021).

51 ELAINE SCARRY, ON BEAUTY AND BEING JUST 23–30 (2001).

> which gives shape to the whole. In the West we have neither word nor term. A serious omission.[52]

As conflict parties engage with arts-based experiences, they can inhabit the interval between their certainty and their counterparts' positions, between their accounts of history and those of "the other." In doing so, they may discover spaciousness and opportunities that they had not previously perceived. They might also surface unanticipated beauty, a particular if difficult to name aspect of aesthetic engagement.

B. *Does Beauty Have a Role in Shifting Conflict?*

Beauty, Scarry writes, relates to balance, symmetry, and equality of proportion. Humans are attracted to beauty. It should not be confused with glamour or image; beauty is a deeper thing that relates to equilibrium and sensual perceptibility. Dismissing arguments made against beauty as being too subjective and unwieldy, Scarry contends that beauty presses us toward a greater concern for fairness. Taking inspiration from Homer, Simone Weil, and Iris Murdoch, she argues for the revival of beauty as a value in intellectual work; and, by extension, in conflict resolution. Experiences of beauty, according to Scarry, have profound significance for individuals and societies because they make diffuse concepts such as integrity, collaboration, passion, accountability, diligence, perseverance, faith, and discipline available to the full spectrum of our senses.[53] Beauty, she asserts, stops and transfixes us, filling us with a "surfeit of aliveness."[54] In encountering beauty, we are transported beyond ourselves to perceiving others and the wider world, including an ethic of fairness. This is the essence of collaborative conflict engagement via arts. As parties observe, dialogue, or work together collaboratively with an accent on aesthetic values, they may access more aspects of themselves and their humanity.

Shared aesthetic experiences can literally foster an awareness of standing on new, more stable ground, as stability is generated by awareness of interdependence and of the effects of our actions on others and wider social worlds. The aesthetic dimension is inherent in John Paul Lederach's work on moral imagination. Lederach

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52 ALAN FLETCHER, THE ART OF LOOKING SIDEWAYS 370 (2001).

53 *See generally id.*

54 *Id.* at 89.

identifies imagination as important to effectively engaging CRDs and other complex conflicts, and to fostering needed creativity for shifting repetitive negative patterns.[55] Moral imagination involves:

- imagining ourselves in interdependent relational webs that include even our enemies;
- practicing paradoxical curiosity and embracing complexity;
- cultivating and applying humanizing capacities for creativity, including refusing to accept that conditions are static or cannot be changed; and
- accepting the risks and the mysteries that attend change.[56]

Lederach points out that engaging with arts involves deep listening in the midst of vulnerability.[57] Likening peacebuilding to haiku, he emphasises the importance of listening to the "essence" of what is important to the other.[58] He writes that the observational power of deep listening should not be reduced to method or strategy, but instead relates to "the art of giving birth to and keeping a process creatively alive. . . . [A] connection of discipline and art, the integration of skill and aesthetics."[59] Similarly, Cohen calls listening an important part of reconciliatory processes, as effective listening can allow former enemies to communicate their respect for one another.[60]

Aesthetic experiences also facilitate healing. Through sharing stories and mourning losses aesthetically, injustices can be acknowledged and apologies offered. Narratives heighten aesthetic awareness, amplifying the voices of those who have felt unheard.[61] Mourning may be facilitated by creating and displaying art, particularly as it can acknowledge trauma that would be unbearable to discuss directly.[62] Empathy with others can also be encouraged through viewing art.[63] Art itself can serve as a marker for acknowledging injustice and anchoring apologies, as seen in commemorative plazas and other memorials and through oral documentation.[64] Indeed, when a forensic investigation showed the remains of 215

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55 JOHN PAUL LEDERACH, THE MORAL IMAGINATION: THE ART AND SOUL OF BUILDING PEACE 39 (2005).

56 *Id.* at 173.

57 *Id.* at 70.

58 *Id.* at 73–74.

59 *Id.* at 70.

60 Cohen, *supra* note 37, at 17.

61 *Id.* at 16.

62 *Id.* at 31.

63 *Id.* at 32–33.

64 *Id.* at 37, 39–40.

children on the grounds of a residential school in British Columbia, one of the first responses was an installation of 215 pairs of children's shoes on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery, spearheaded by artist and activist Tamara Bell.[65] At the same time, the Musqueam First Nation installed 215 children's t-shirts on stakes at intervals on a highway median stretching for two kilometers (*see* Figure 1). Both created powerful images that evoked the reality and tragedy of innocent young lives that were lost without remembrance and contributed to increasing dialogue with various publics and the Canadian government on the impacts of residential schools on Indigenous peoples. Dialogue sparked by powerful art installations can assist parties to deep-rooted conflicts to deepen progress toward reconciliation.

FIGURE 1

As arts installations and practices help participants in arts-based conflict resolution processes access and share deeply meaningful aspects of their worldviews, they may also uncover unrealized shared and complementary values. In the words of Elaine Scarry, beauty "radically decentres" those who encounter it.[66] Decentring allows for new perspectives on ways to live out conflicting religious beliefs and rituals and may shift experiences of self in relation to others. Reichert explains:

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65 Kendra Mangione, *'I Can't Imagine My Children Dying at School': 215 Pairs of Children's Shoes Set Up as Tribute After Residential School Discovery,* CTV NEWS (May 28, 2021, 7:07 PM), https://bc.ctvnews.ca/i-can-t-imagine-my-child-dying-at-school-215-pairs-of-children-s-shoes-set-up-as-tribute-after-residential-school-discovery-1.5447455 [https://perma.cc/25PR-3P9E].

66 SCARRY, *supra* note 51, at 111.

> Thanks to their clear framework—a beginning and an end—artworks can . . . respond to the need for an overview, the desire to be able to discover an overarching meaning, even if only provisionally. Although human in general, this kind of need [is] particularly acute in the wake of violence and social upheavals. . . . The power of art lies in its powerlessness in extremely inhuman conditions (in POW camps, concentration camps and prisons) [where people are] able to benefit from a deep involvement in music, literature or painting. In their memoirs, these people valued . . . art because [it] provided "orientation," a "source of strength" and an " . . . insistence on humanity."[67]

Introducing multiple art forms as a part of conflict engagement processes—music, painting, dance, song, and others—can strengthen participants' experiences of common ground. Knill, a founder of the field of Expressive Arts, emphasizes low skill/high sensitivity; rather than striving for perfect art, we strive for art that is authentic, coherent, and resonant.[68] Cohen notes that poetry in particular can have the effect of helping individuals find coherent ways to re-imagine not only their enemies, but also themselves.[69] As parties are rehumanized to each other, they are more able to imagine shared futures.

C. *Examples of Arts-Based Approaches*

Arts-based approaches in conflict transformation have recently proliferated. As is clear from the above discussion, arts are not a magic potion to be applied, yielding wonderous results. These tools, like others, need to be carefully chosen, resonant for participants, thoughtfully facilitated, purposefully followed-up, and used at appropriate times. Because arts approaches are potent, it is essential that supports be available *in situ* and follow any intervention to help people with trauma that may surface in the course of experiences. Specific modalities should be chosen with cultural and religious norms in mind, and with awareness of effective design and sequencing. The examples we share below illustrate a spectrum of approaches now entering conflict transformation practice in many parts of the world.

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67 Reichert, *supra* note 41, at 2–3.

68 *See generally* PAOLO J. KNILL, ELLEN G. LEVINE, & STEPHEN K. LEVINE, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY: TOWARD A THERAPEUTIC AESTHETICS 97–99 (2005).

69 Cohen, *supra* note 37, at 49.

In 2019, we invited faith leaders, faculty members, administrators, and students at the University of British Columbia to participate in research and practice on conflict transformation. We interviewed several campus leaders (students, staff, and faculty) about conflicts with religious or worldview dimensions on campus. Based on their input, we designed and conducted three arts-based focus groups for twelve to twenty-five participants to learn more about these conflicts. In the course of this work, we heard many stories of students, staff, and faculty feeling denigrated or slighted in relation to their religion, or intersections of their religion with ethnicity, race, gender, and other aspects of their identities. On our public university campus, assumptions of secularity as both "neutral" and widely shared were frequently mentioned, as was a tendency of assuming religious views to be outmoded and outdated. Most student focus group participants and interviewees indicated that they self-censor aspects of their identities related to religion in classes and campus activities out of fear of offending others, being criticized, or being ostracized. Christian identity, in particular, was mentioned as frequently hidden, while Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, or spiritual-but-not-religious affiliations were more likely to be shared. Muslim identity may have been less possible to hide, particularly for women wearing head-coverings. Faculty members and staff also described the vulnerability of disclosing their faiths in the midst of an atmosphere perceived as critical and even hostile to religion. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim campus faith leaders expressed concern about the effect on students of perceived pressure to hide affiliations, given religious and moral formation as developmentally important during university years, and the importance of community in supporting these processes.

In collaboration with colleagues in our Equity and Diversity office, we designed a three-part series using various arts modalities that built on our interview findings. We sought to expand our understandings of conflicts with religious or worldview dimensions, whether manifest and latent, and to uncover ways forward. Each of the three sessions employed a different arts method, and staff, students, and faculty were welcome to attend one or more without charge. In designing the sessions, we sought to implement these principles of designing arts-based processes.

We chose arts activities that emphasized low skill and high sensitivity, with attention to crafting experiences that would be:

- embodied, and, thus, heighten sensing and feeling over thought or analysis;

- bounded, so participants could rely on a beginning, an ending, and on no-go zones to maximize a feeling of safety;
- structured in ways that would invite but not compel participation;
- liminal, and, thus, helpful in transitioning out of stuck or painful places and states of being;
- connected to imagination, and so encourage authenticity, humanity, and vulnerability;
- intuitive, so inviting to multiple ways of knowing, including those arising from so-called rational processes;
- participatory, so capable of generating positive experiences of collaboration; and
- aesthetically compelling and pleasurable, deepening human connection.

Our first event was called *Do I Dare Bring More of Myself to Campus?* Using a fishbowl format,[70] participants were seated in a large circle with a table in the center. The table was carefully set for dinner with food in the center, place settings, and a white tablecloth, creating the ambiance of an intimate meal amongst friends. The spread of the table was both ornate and bountiful, intended to evoke feelings of beauty for participants. Each setting had a "menu" describing ways to engage in this dialogue, and each chair in the outer circle had the same menu. Only those seated at the table were invited to speak in a single conversation. To join the conversation, participants would stand behind one of those seated at the table, who would yield their place to them. They could remain at the table for as long as they liked, but were invited to yield to others when they had finished speaking. A graphic recorder worked alongside the conversation. Her work is at Figure 2. The event ended with a group "harvest" about what stood out to everyone and what the experience was like for them.

In the dialogue, students, staff, and faculty talked about how they had found few spaces to talk about religious or worldview differences on campus even after years of being there. Several said that they get the impression from the university that they cannot talk about faith; they pointed out that holidays tend to be centered around Christian festivals, excluding other traditions (this policy has now been somewhat modified). A student shared that, growing up, he had felt differently about himself depending on his activ-

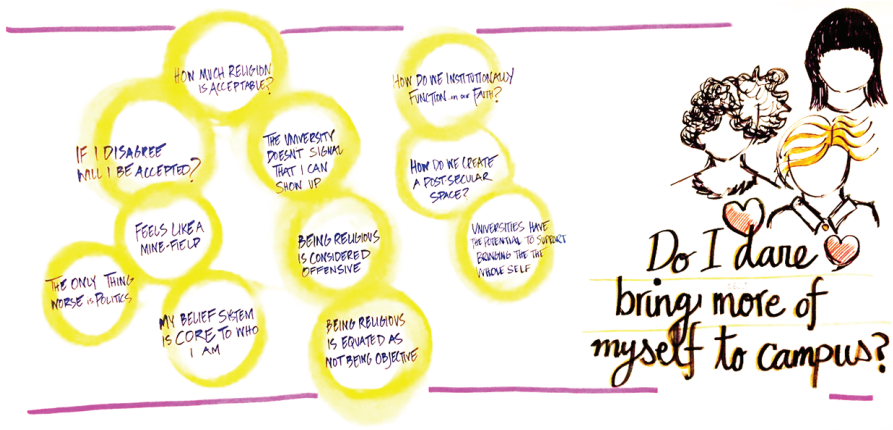
[70] A fishbowl format is a facilitation approach that involves participants sitting in two circles, an inner one used for demonstration or focused conversation and an outer one for observation.

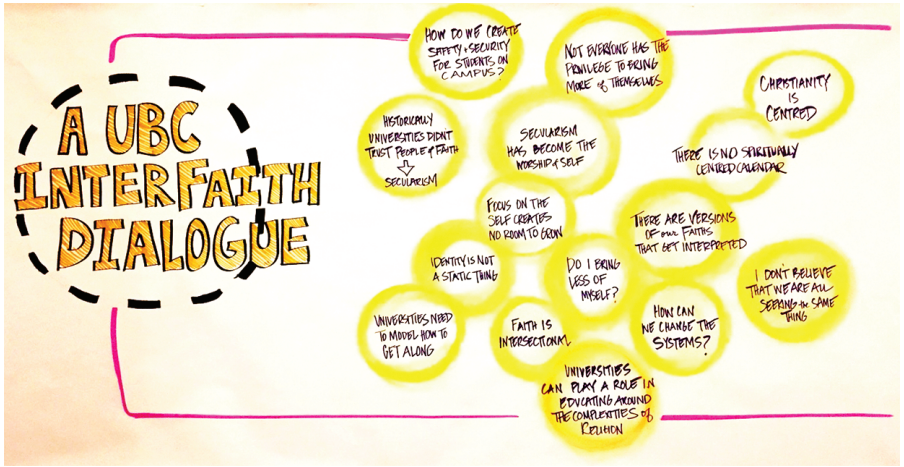
ities, who he was with, and which phase he was in. His desire at the university was to bring different parts of himself together in a whole; he was looking for spaces that supported this quest but was struggling to find them.

Several examples were shared of classes in which offensive comments about religion or intersections of religion and identity were not problematized. Comfort with conflict was lacking, and participants expressed anxiety when conversations surfaced about religion or worldviews on campus. Several people spoke about religion as a force that easily mobilizes perceptions of enmity, thus contributing to fear around engaging it. Examples of anti-Christian, anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish, and anti-Falun Dafa incidents on campus were shared, and the group problem-solved ways to prevent and engage future incidents.

One of the most striking aspects of this event was the near unanimity with which participants expressed marked relief at having a space for conversation about sacred beliefs. They reported that the table in the center became a focal point for a single, dynamic conversation that worked very well, even in the midst of strong disagreement. As organizers, we emphasized sensed and felt experiences by requiring participants to move, providing food, and through graphic recording. Having one single, facilitated conversation with ground rules about respect and speaking from personal experience in an intimate environment, while sharing a warm meal together, contributed to safety and participation in a deep and often personal dialogue with strangers.

FIGURE 2





Our second event was constructed around the question: *How Do I Experience Awe?* We invited participants to explore similarities and differences amongst faith and secular traditions and to build further on our evolving repertoire of ways to engage CRDs and worldview differences on campus. Participants were seated at small tables in small groups; each table was equipped with graphic supplies and old magazines. This event started with a brief visualization, during which participants imagined a time when they felt awe or peace. Then, participants were invited to work from the feelings that arose as they visualized, and to use the materials available to create a collage that represented their experience. After approximately thirty minutes, participants displayed their collages and went on a short "gallery stroll" to see others' work. Then, participants exchanged collages with others at their table. Each person described someone else's collage and then the person who created it described what they had felt and intended with their piece. Participants were invited to reflect on the experience in short written form. The event concluded with an open-ended reflection with the larger group.

In the reflection session, participants were asked to share what surprised them or stood out from the experience. Several commented on the power of combining visualization, collage-making, and sharing and writing. They observed that these ways of working:

- expressed the concept of oneness much more clearly than if it had been verbally expressed;
- led to increased insights into others' experiences, despite them "seeming like a random compilation in the beginning";

- triggered memories that "helped me feel awe viscerally, such that I listened and spoke from a place of awe";
- facilitated an expansion of their experiences of awe through the gaze of others; and
- made a "free-flow" and less-censored discussion possible as they were preoccupied with playful artmaking.

As is clear from these comments, these arts-based approaches fostered deeper and more full-spectrum exchanges than discussion alone might have yielded. As in our first event, several participants commented on the charged nature of sharing experiences of awe on campus. They also appreciated the permission the arts gave them to explore their own and others' sensed and felt perspectives. Some of the collages of awe are included as Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

Building on these two events, we held a final session using human sculpting on ways to build a more inclusive community to welcome faith and worldview discussions and differences on cam-

pus.[71] Sculpting was chosen as a mode after reading John Borrows' evocative writing on entanglement:

> [I]t must also be recognized that our entanglements can be either liberating or oppressive. In common parlance, entanglement sounds like a bad thing—as if we are caught, bound, constrained, tied up, and in need of liberation. Yet, in the real world, entanglement with other human beings can enhance our lives.[72]

We hoped that participants would have experiences of interconnectedness, even as they explored themes of exclusion. After a movement warm-up, participants formed small groups and composed "sculptures" by positioning their bodies in ways that spoke to their experiences of not belonging. They did not talk as they were composing so they would not revert to words that might intellectualize their explorations. As they showed their sculptures to each other, a facilitator asked questions designed to surface feeling, sensing words. The groups observing were also invited to ask questions of each other. Facilitator prompts then invited the group to somehow "progress" or "resolve" their sculpture through small, incremental movements. Finally, participants discussed what they had observed, and addressed ways to effectively work across religious or worldview differences on campus. They also reflected on the arts methods used in the sessions.

As with the previous sessions, participants commented on the potency of using the body in an arts modality. They reflected that the experience helped them see people as more complex, and yet also see that they had more in common with others than they had imagined. Sculpted experiences of exclusion were visceral, often pained, and archetypal. Participants reflected on their shared yearning for connection as well as on the hurt of not belonging. They also spoke about how the sculptures evoked layers of feelings about exclusion including anger, sadness, and frustration. Conversations about how to work with conflicts on campus were textured, nuanced, and spacious enough for paradoxes and contradictions. They reflected impatience with structural barriers to inclusion, and with intersections of exclusion that unfairly target racialized people

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71 Human sculpting is a method used in theater in which bodies are the medium for expressing emotions, sensations, and experiences. A facilitator may direct participants to take certain postures in relation to a particular situation, treating bodies like modeling clay, and then debrief the experience.

72 JOHN BORROWS, *Foreword*, *in* ENTANGLED TERRITORIALITIES: NEGOTIATING INDIGENOUS LANDS IN AUSTRALIA AND CANADA vii (2017).

whose religion is visible to others. By employing arts, we generated different conversations than would have arisen through dialogue alone, inviting holistic analysis and contextual evaluation *via* symbols. We now turn to a discussion of other arts in conflict engagement initiatives to illustrate a spectrum of possibilities.

D. *A Spectrum of Arts-Based Modalities*

As noted earlier, one of the advantages of arts-based approaches is its capacity to de-center. Theater is a very common avenue for conflict engagement and reconciliation for this and other reasons. Observing peacebuilding in Arab-Israeli theater, Terhaag notes that the physical space of theater provides for dialogue and plumbs its reflexive, re-evaluative nature.[73] The potential of theater to increase audience self-awareness and draw their attention to structural aspects of conflict is noted also in Premaratna's study of Sri Lankan theater group Jana Karaliya. Like the Arab-Israeli example, Jana Karaliya's productions deliberately do not address the ethnic conflict of the state, instead telling stories of "justice and tolerance" in which performers from both sides of the conflict *step out of* their ethnicities to portray roles both familiar and traditional about shared belonging.[74] The physical layout of the productions is also deliberate: the audience encircles the performers so that the theatergoers can view both the production and other audience members' emotional reactions.[75] In this way, a viewer might recognize that they have the same reaction to a justice-oriented performance as a member of an opposing group seated opposite; thus, common emotional ground is formed between ethnic groups where entrenched hatred has made communication "near-impossible."[76] Premaratna identifies theater's ability to alter conflict attitudes at three related levels: personal, emotional, and societal. Theater, she tells us, can

> (1) provide a forum through which individuals can come to terms with their personal experiences of conflict and become more attuned to understanding and appreciating the former en-

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[73] Simon Terhaag, *De-radicalisation Through the Performative Arts*, 22 J. DERADICALIZATION 218, 221–22 (2020).

[74] Nilanjana Premaratna & Roland Bleiker, *Art and Peacebuilding: How Theatre Transforms Conflict in Sri Lanka*, *in* PEACEBUILDING: CRITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND APPROACHES 376, 379 (Oliver P. Richmond ed., 2010).

[75] *Id.* at 383.

[76] *Id.* at 376.

> emies; (2) facilitate ways in which individuals and groups can come to terms with the deep emotional wounds inflicted by conflict; and (3) make the surrounding societal discourses more attuned to accommodating parties that were once in conflict, thus creating more inclusive and pluralist historical narratives.[77]

As mentioned earlier, conflicts with religious or worldview dimensions are infused with powerful symbols. In addition to theater, improvisation, visual art, and music/sound works open new ways to examine combinations of symbols. These modalities provide avenues for literally touching sacred meanings in their complexities, creating spaces where intimate perceptions and histories can be expressed and touched by all. William Kentridge's Rome installation, *Triumphs and Laments*, is an excellent example of how arts processes can convey the ineffable relations between "splendour and misery, glory and defeat," which are themselves part of many religious narratives.[78] *Triumphs and Laments* is both visual and performance art. Kentridge premiered the work in 2016 in Rome with free live theater performances. To prepare, he covered 550 meters of the Tiber River waterfront using a process called reverse graffiti, in which he washed accumulated grime off the walls while covering areas with stencils to create huge figures of horsemen, charioteers, generals, popes, martyrs, and refugees. Heroic figures like Marcus Aurelius and triumphs from the past are juxtaposed with Michelangelo's *Pieta with Madonna* placed alongside other desolate figures including bulging boats of refugees in the Mediterranean. The juxtapositions are powerfully alchemical, underlining Kentridge's words: "Every triumph and glory is someone else's lament and shamefulness."[79]

A walk along the walls reveals even more. Marcus Aurelius' horse gradually becomes emaciated, as though starving. The Roman wolf associated with the founding myth of Rome becomes increasingly deathly, "as though stalking or haunting the pictures."[80] This wolf stops feeding Romulus and Remus (Rome's original citi-

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77 *Id.* at 377.

78 Beatrice Zamponi, *William Kentridge: Triumphs and Laments*, DOMUS (June 10, 2016), https://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2016/06/10/william_kentridge_triumphs_and_laments.html [https://perma.cc/6RYG-C8ZC].

79 Diana Ketcham, *Writing on the Wall: William Kentridge in Rome*, ART AM. (May 13, 2016, 11:34 AM), https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/writing-on-the-wall-william-kentridge-in-rome-59982/ [https://perma.cc/5N7U-CP3S].

80 Andy Patton, *A Frieze in Rome: William Kentridge Updates Augustus, Tangling Time*, MOMUS (Nov. 27, 2018), https://momus.ca/a-frieze-in-rome-william-kentridge-updates-augustus-tangling-time/ [https://perma.cc/37MU-QM9G].

zens), instead pouring her milk into vessels. A blank section reads "Quello chi non recordo" (What I don't remember). Bernini's *Daphne and Apollo* moves from a fixed display to sit on wheels, symbolizing dynamism and transformation.[81]

At the launch, two processions began, one each at Ponte Sisto and Ponte Mazzini (half a kilometer apart), with performers moving in costume to original music by South Africans Philip Miller and Thuthuka Sibisi, who drew inspiration from African chants, Italian Renaissance madrigals based on *Exodus*, and quotations from Rilke. From one side, lamenters walked upstream to a haunting death march, while from the other, the triumphant processed in joyful cacophony. Between the two bridges, they met, with chaos, confusion, and serendipity. Their encounters blended music and movement of exodus, tragedy, and hope—themes that have been present for millennia and continue to play out in Rome and elsewhere. Thousands of people witnessed the processions from opposite sides of the river. And the effects of this work? Besides drawing attention to continuities of history and themes and to coming together in the midst of diversity, the work has also been an impetus to clean up the riverfront and has rekindled dialogue about refugees arriving in Italy and the use and design of public spaces in Rome.[82]

Bill Rolston's study of the role of Northern Irish murals is another take on the role of visual art in conflict settings. The Northern Irish murals are powerful works that amplify sectarian divides between Republicans and Loyalists with images of armed men and religious quotes.[83] While removal efforts were funded during the peace process, the fact that many murals still exist underlines their place in collective memory.[84] The tradition of mural-making is also one that can be employed bi-communally to create images that emphasize connection, human rights, and peacebuilding.[85] What if older murals were set side-by-side with those featuring reimagined symbols, marking a sense of possibility, multiple narratives, and progress toward transformation? Because aesthetic experiences draw people into something bigger than themselves, they can unsettle negative, intractable aspects of longstanding conflicts. The

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81 *Id.*

82 Ketcham, *supra* note 79.

83 Bill Rolston, *'Trying to Reach the Future Through the Past': Murals and Memory in Northern Ireland*, 6(3) CRIME, MEDIA, CULTURE 285, 287–92 (2010).

84 *Id.* at 294–303.

85 *Id.* at 304.

art-making process itself can contribute to transforming once-frozen relations and enemy images.

Arts-based approaches to shifting conflict are also discussed by Mary Ann Hunter in her study of Australia and the Southeast Asia/Pacific regions. She relates an example from the Pacific Arts Film Festival held on the Solomon Islands following civil unrest at the turn of the 21st century.[86] As members of diverse ethnic groups hosted and participated in the festival, those who had recently been in conflict began to regain an overarching sense of identity as Pacific Islanders. Shared community histories and cultural narratives were thus revitalized, and the festival became a vehicle for rebuilding post-conflict cultural and social capital. Hunter also describes a project in Timor Leste in which youth were engaged in theater making. Sacred ratu (clan) stories were shared and depicted by youth with input from elders.[87] Theater facilitated peacebuilding amidst the ratus' traditional rivalries, contributing to a foundation for ongoing interaction.

E. *How and When to Use Arts-Based Approaches*

While examples of arts in conflict engagement processes are abundant, how and when they might be optimally used remains an open question. In a 2016 presentation, Reichert discussed how arts can have different effects and achieve different goals depending on the phase of the conflict.[88] In emergent conflicts, arts can bring people together for discussion, give a voice to ignored minorities, and open spaces to experiment with new conceptions of self and others. In an escalating conflict, arts can offer a space of civility and discussion and allow for the safe expression of emotions. In post-conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding, arts can initiate group cooperation, facilitate sharing histories, contribute to mourning rituals, provide ways to express the unnameable, and bring formerly adverse groups together.

Althaus describes the effectiveness of arts-based approaches in the curriculum of the Executive Fellows Program, a leadership program for senior officials from New Zealand, Australia, and

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[86] Mary A. Hunter & Linda Page, *What is "The Good" of Arts-Based Peacebuilding? Questions of Value and Evaluation in Current Practice*, 21 PEACE & CONFLICT STUD. 115, 124 (2014).

[87] *Id.* at 125.

[88] Dagmar Riechert, Presentation to Expressive Arts Students at European Graduate School, Saas Fee, Switzerland (July 2016).

some Southeast-Asian countries in which LeBaron was a faculty member.[89] Traditionally absent from policymaking, diplomatic discourses, and professional education, creative experiences were used to shift policymaking and negotiating from cognitive to imaginative realms. Including somatic elements infused emotion into interactions, Althaus argues that policymaking training without arts or connections to emotion and intuition fosters disconnection.[90] Policy-making and conflict-responsiveness are strengthened when holistic approaches are employed and creativity "does not discard . . . the head but adds to the head by recognizing the heart and the hands."[91] Arts-based approaches also contrast "closed mode" thinking with "open mode" thinking and problem-solving. Althaus writes,

> [T]hose who connect with the arts are creatively connected to policy rather than seeing policymaking as a purely technocratic endeavour. Policymaking that turns sympathetically to the arts extends the boundaries of analysis beyond generalizable, population-scaled levels towards personalised, context-specific experiential insights. Blue-sky thinking, iterative prototyping, improvisation, co-creation and empathic connection facilitate different ways of confronting policy challenges and developing solutions.[92]

Given that conflict intervenors often draw from and are influenced by politics and policy discourses, Althaus' words are particularly pertinent.

V. Conclusion

Across contexts, we recognize that arts alone cannot guide successful negotiation or conflict engagement; rather arts-based approaches are valuable for their node-connecting qualities, both in individual self-reflection and group collaboration.[93] As Aguiar notes regarding theater, such methods "generate the necessary cog-

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[89] Catherine Althaus, *Political Science and the Arts as Allies and Strange Bedfellows: A Chapter in Five Parts*, *in* What Political Science Can Learn From The Humanities: Blurring Genres 290 (R. A. W. Rhodes & Susan Hodgett eds., 2021).

[90] *See id.* at 289.

[91] *Id.* at 300.

[92] *Id.* at 301.

[93] Premaratna & Bleiker, *supra* note 74, at 389; Hintjens & Ubaldo, *supra* note 48, at 281; Jeff Aguiar, *Applied Theatre in Peacebuilding and Development*, 15(1) J. Peacebuilding & Dev. 45, 54 (2020).

nitive and socio-emotional processes to further engagement in sustainable peacebuilding and development."[94] Thus, arts-based approaches are essential parts of extricating ourselves from labyrinthine conflicts and their attendant knots.

This Article has explored lenses for analyzing conflicts with religious or worldview dimensions, the importance of the aesthetic dimension in analysis, and the role of symbols and arts in intervention. We conclude with habits of heart, mind, and body derived from our work that we hope will be useful to the worldview/religion arts-fluent conflict intervenor:

1. *There are many names for the mystery, but the mystery matters no matter its name.* For secular humanist, or spiritual-but-not-religious negotiators, ritual or devotional practices may not resonate and, thus, may not be taken as seriously as for the parties. Devotional practices and religious rituals bring attention to a wider sphere, invoking awe and scale—*i.e.,* that we are a small aspect of a complex universe at a particular moment in immense time. Qualities of awe and wonder are familiar to those who have worked in negotiation or peacebuilding and witnessed the positive shifts that can arise from collaborative work. Cultivating these qualities, as well as respecting their significance in engaging conflict, is important learning for negotiators and conflict intervenors.

2. *Respect for different worldviews must go beneath the surface and include actual participation in aspects of what matters to parties.* Contextual evaluation, being able to see from the inside-out of another's worldview, does not happen through studying texts. It happens through interaction. There is no substitute for being present at a ceremony, for experiencing a ritual, or for responding to an invitation to dialogue about things apparently disconnected from a conflict. Interculturalists propose the platinum rule: Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.

3. *Beyond analysis of religions' component parts, religions and worldviews heave ineffable, holistic qualities. Appreciating or experiencing aesthetic dimensions of worldviews is*

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[94] Aguiar, *supra* note 93, at 54.

one way of grasping the ineffable and helps build bridges between parties. To experience a religion as a set of practices and ways of being and seeing is to begin to touch into its essence. Intervenors who actively seek out such opportunities may find, like the great historian of religion, Huston Smith, that different traditions have many common threads.[95]

4. *Perspective-taking is more than skin-deep. We know now from work on implicit bias that mental schemas are not easily shifted. Shifting negative associations thus requires actual experience with "the other" that can disrupt negative stereotypes.* Reaching across worldview divides with joint activities and shared creative processes is important not just for CRD parties, but also for analysts and third parties.

5. *Rituals and arts processes can be bridges for connection*. Rituals and arts, processes in which feeling and sensing are privileged over thought and analysis, give structure and coherence to the ineffable. Rituals can be used to help convene and connect parties in conflict, marking a space as apart from "business as usual." An example is an opening prayer offered by Indigenous elders before dialogue with settler Canadians in many negotiating and dialogic processes. Davidheiser writes of how Gambian faith prescribes humour before addressing conflict.[96] Across the world and in diverse traditions, ritual is a way of participating in a space where sensed connections and aesthetic ways of experiencing are accented. Participating in rituals may leave aspects of conflict issues unarticulated; the ambiguity of what is unsaid may lend flexibility to a negotiation process itself.

6. *Cultivating a practice of inner focus is vital for conflict analysts and intervenors*. Whether contemplative practices are religious, spiritual, or secular, mounting evidence shows their potency and importance. They lead to integration,

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[95] Barbara Falconer Newhall, *Huston Smith—A Spiritual Companion to Millions*, PATHEOS (Jan. 10, 2017), https://www.patheos.com/blogs/wrestlingwithgod/2017/01/huston-smith-a-spiritual-companion-to-millions/ [https://perma.cc/2QE9-QQSZ].

[96] Mark Davidheiser, *Joking for Peace. Social Organization, Tradition, and Change in Gambian Conflict Management*, 184 CAHIERS D'ÉTUDES AFRICAINES 835 (2006).

> increased awareness, and consciousness.[97] Because CRD and worldview negotiators and peacebuilders are always part of a relational system, the quality of consciousness we hold is important. Thus, cultivating quietness within and awareness of self and other is vital to effective practice, though under-emphasized in most trainings.

As these habits of heart, mind, and body are integrated into our work, we will not only become more effective mediators; we will also learn more about the nature and dynamics of CRDs and worldview conflicts, and discover new ways that creative and expressive practices can function as resources in conflict engagement.

Recognizing and actualizing socially-just interdependence requires reciprocity, including risk-taking by those parties with privilege, and a willingness to relinquish excesses in favor of improving collective wellbeing. Lederach stresses that cultivating moral imagination fosters a positive shift toward vulnerability and openness, both important to conflict transformation.[98] As vulnerability becomes a "live" lens, it is possible to see beyond habitual schemas, perhaps as far as the Northern Irish poet Seamus Heaney saw when he wrote:

> "So hope for a great sea-change on the far side of revenge,
> Believe that a further shore is reachable from here,
> Believe in miracles and cures and healing wells."[99]

Arts practices can foster a vision of the "further shore;" they can create what would seem like miracles through the process of making, reflecting, and discovering. Arts are thus deeply important in fostering the necessary creativity to imagine a new—and more constructive—future.

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97 *See generally* Daniel J. Siegel, The Mindful Brain (2007).

98 Lederach, *supra* note 55, at 42.

99 Seamus Heaney, The Cure At Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes 77 (1990).