55

Aesthetics in Negotiation: Part One—Four Elements

Nadja Alexander & Michelle LeBaron

Editors' Note: *At least in the West, negotiators have mostly assumed that the arts have little or nothing to do with their work. Not so, say the neuroscientists, in increasingly persuasive recent work. Here, the authors review that research, and place it in context of ancient wisdom. They draw a line through the classicists' four elements—earth, water, air and fire—and relate each concept to the heart and mind of negotiators. It turns out that aesthetics are a clue to much that's going on at the back of our counterparts' minds, and our own. We will negotiate better if we take due account of the wisdom they offer. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the same authors' Part Two, in which they argue for a contemporary negotiation application of the ancient concept of alchemy.*

Nadja Alexander is Academic Director at the Singapore International Dispute Resolution Academy, and Visiting Professor of Law at Singapore Management University. An awardwinning (2011, 2007, 1997) author and educator, Nadja also works as a policy adviser and conflict intervener in diverse dispute resolution settings. Her work on cross-border and cross-cultural conflict embraces interdisciplinary approaches to deepen conflict engagement. Nadja has been appointed Honorary Professor at The University of Queensland, Australia, and Senior Fellow of the Dispute Resolution Institute at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in the United States. Her books include *International and Comparative Mediation, Global Trends in Mediation, Negotiation: Strategy Style Skills,* and *The EU Mediation Handbook*.

Professor **Michelle LeBaron** is a conflict transformation scholar/practitioner at the University of British Columbia Allard School of Law whose work is animated by creativity, culture and interdisciplinarity. She has done seminal work in many types of conflicts including intercultural, international, family, organizational and commercial, exploring how arts help shift intractable conflicts. She is a fellow at the Trinity College Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute in Dublin and holds a Wallenberg Fellowship at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies, South Africa. Her books include *The Choreography of Resolution: Conflict, Movement and Neuroscience*; *Conflict Across Cultures: A New Approach for a Changing World*; *Bridging Cultural Conflicts*; and *Bridging Troubled Waters*.

Introduction

From Sun Tzu's *Art of War to Getting to Yes*, negotiation advice is widely available. Each publication offers a window on the subject, drawing from particular theories of human nature and change. They serve a variety of ends and address a number of possible avenues to improving negotiation that vary according to context, culture and discipline. The publications explain strategy, structure and skills; they promise efficiency, effectiveness or success. What they do not provide is insight into the essential roles that beauty and nature—aesthetic elements—play in negotiation. Overlooked through lenses that accent utility and orderliness, beauty and natural metaphors introduce a range of sensual, embodied ways that our human thirst for belonging and for feeling moved is implicated in negotiation. When these ideas are introduced to the corpus of work on negotiation, the importance of intuition and relational capacities comes into focus. Negotiation becomes more vivid and compelling; fields of possibility appear that were unavailable via more analytic ways of imagining negotiation processes.

Throughout this chapter, we tap into a significant 21st century vein of scientific, philosophical and aesthetic work that underlines ways we are all interconnected, portraying humans as porous beings with the ability for agency and mutual, multidirectional influence. What we previously believed as real—Cartesian duality of mind and body and separateness between individuals and objects—is a fast-fading myth (Damasio 1994; BenZion 2010). This significant shift in thinking has profound implications for our approach to negotiation.

We follow a discussion of aesthetics and beauty with an exploration of how four elements—earth, water, air and fire—can assist with the project of expanding our effectiveness as negotiators. We examine how these elements help us to better build awareness—of ourselves, of other negotiators and of the context within which negotiation interactions unfold. By developing greater awareness of beauty and nature, negotiators can better navigate the emergent and complex nature of the negotiation process itself.

Art as Vehicle for Aesthetic Engagement in Negotiation

One place that beauty and nature come together is through art. Art in its many forms is essentially about encounter. As Victor Hugo wrote about music, art expresses that which cannot be said and about which it is impossible to be silent. As a form of aesthetic engagement, art embraces and stimulates senses and perceptions beyond cognitive analysis. Arts practices activate our complementary capacities for

seeing beyond the visible, hearing beyond words and touching both the formless fears and inspiring possibilities that constitute figure and ground in negotiation. To the extent that negotiation writing draws on dated scientific frames, it either excludes these capacities altogether because they are not scientifically valid, or colonizes them into "optional extras" which, while nonessential, may be grudgingly admitted to serve utilitarian functions. However, as indicated earlier, science has seismically shifted, revealing evidence supporting the potency of arts-based approaches to decision-making, conflict resolution and negotiation. These insights invite beauty and nature into our thinking about negotiation.

Art is much more than an optional extra or an instrumental modality; it provokes or invites, posing questions without easy answers to the viewer or listener who gives it her attention. When used as a focus for dialogue, art comes alive, surfacing questions and complexities that simply do not arise in the course of more didactic forms of negotiation education. As part of her graduate coursework in negotiation, one of the authors has many times taken classes to the Hirshhorn Museum of Modern Art in Washington, DC. Standing in front of Anish Kapoor's *At the Hub of Things*, a concave, egg-like structure in vivid Prussian blue, students' dialogues on negotiation become subtler and layered, venturing into the complexities of perception, perspective, standpoint and representation. The intense color of the piece and its resemblance to a womb or a burial chamber evoke a myriad of sensed, felt phenomena: the unknown, the feminine aspect of presence and the transitory nature of all human relations. For some, it is inviting. For others, it evokes fear. These felt experiences become a canvas on which dialogue about the roles of fear, uncertainty and risk in negotiation are engaged with increasing nuance.

(Kapoor: 1987)

Studies in neuroscience explain the contagion of the sensed and felt experience, and how feelings can move between us without our being consciously aware of the exchange. This process begins at birth and is made possible by mirror neurons in the brain, which fire up and

"mirror" the physical signals of another. A wealth of data demonstrates that when we observe others experiencing emotions, our own brains engage the same neural circuits that are active in "the other"—the basis of empathy (Gallese 2005; Singer 2006). Through the activation of mirror neurons, these "shared representations" allow us to experience vicariously what is felt and expressed by someone else. This phenomenon helps to explain how we can be transported to the place of our deepest fears by a painting or moved to tears by a dance performance, and how we can have empathy for people we encounter without ever speaking to them. It explains how we can invite beauty into our negotiation worlds by connecting with others—and vice versa.

Art grounds us in a collective understanding that mystery is always a part of negotiation; no analytic framework is powerful enough to account for all the dimensions present in any human communication. Anchored by these exchanges and observations, students approach their negotiations with a spirit of inquiry and appreciation for the ways that aesthetic engagement amplifies self- and other- awareness. It is as if the parts of each of us that long for beauty and connection with something greater than ourselves are drawn out through engaging with the visual art, introducing spaciousness and a larger grid into our interactions and our sense of self.

Sophists and other relativist philosophers may challenge the existence and the endurance of beauty, arguing that meaning depends on the frame of the perceiver. While we agree that beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, we also see the element of subjectivity as crucial—for it opens the door to our souls and helps us perceive the vital process of meaning-making as we link our experiences with our values, and the values and experiences of others. The art critic Frederick Turner wrote that beauty is "the highest integrative level of understanding and the most comprehensive capacity for effective action. It enables us to go with, rather than against, the deepest tendency or theme of the universe (Brooks 2016)."

Meaning, or the knowability of a situation, typically depends on what is represented, how it is framed and by whom (Scarry 2001). Elaine Scarry argues that beauty is essential to understanding the power of framing, and to seeing the differences and the gaps that inevitably exist among negotiators. Dismissing arguments made against beauty in recent decades as being too subjective and unwieldy, she contends that beauty presses us toward a greater concern for justice. Taking inspiration from a wide range of thinkers from Homer to Simone Weil to Iris Murdoch, Scarry argues for the revival of beauty in our intellectual work as well as in our engagement with each other.

Responses to beauty, according to Scarry, are events of profound significance for individuals and societies because they make diffuse concepts like fairness and justice available to the full spectrum of our senses. Beauty, she asserts, stops and transfixes us, filling us with a "surfeit of aliveness." In this process, we are transported from a focus on ourselves, and our attention encompasses others and the wider world, including ideas of ethical fairness. We experienced this phenomenon when we asked a group of experienced negotiators to draw "home". The drawings conveyed nuanced feelings and sensory components of home that would have been impossible to capture in words alone and grounded our ongoing work in potent shared images.

This is the essence of reflexive negotiation practice. We literally find ourselves standing on new, more stable ground as we reflect and grow, as stability is generated by awareness of interdependence and of the effects of our actions on others and our social world. Taken together, these levels and dimensions of awareness help us as negotiators to open up to the multiple subtle sources of information that lead to deeper insights and more successful outcomes (Scarry 2001).

Infusing arts engagement into negotiation education does not mean ignoring or neglecting other aspects of negotiation theory. Traditional approaches to negotiation and negotiation education are filtered through concepts that accentuate logic and reason. Logic and reason are useful in negotiation, but are not reliable maps of the entire territory. They are always culturally situated, and—in traditional approaches to negotiation—actually distort understandings when they are taken as complete and sufficient. It is for this reason that we have advocated in previous writing for experiential, aesthetic components to be integrated into problem-solving education and practice. This integration can accent either problem-solving or aesthetics, but is more potent than when the two are separated. For example, an activity as simple as introductions in a new learning setting can be infused with aesthetic dimensions by asking each person to use gesture to embody their attitude to conflict. At the end of an intensive day, learners can be invited to give a "weather report" that conveys something of their current state. From the "weather reports", a wealth of information proceeds: are group members calm or agitated; are they feeling open and relaxed, or defended against what might feel threatening? Are they in a fog or does the atmosphere they bring into the room with them feel spacious and clear? This information can be used to fine-tune teaching and learning plans, and it gives learners the opportunity to convey a range of sensations associated with learning that do not confront or risk losing face, yet do communicate multiple layers of experience. Another way to

describe this approach is that it combines the mimetic with the rational.

Logical analysis can be located in a wider, more useful map when negotiation is seen through a mimetic lens. Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and others define mimetic activity in social practice and interpersonal relations as something that goes beyond rational models to emphasize the body, emotions, the senses and temporality (Kelly 1998: 234). In this sense, the mimetic incorporates the aesthetic, emphasizing that there is always a gap between a phenomenon and a representation of that phenomenon.

Aesthetic approaches to negotiation draw our attention to the gap itself, to what is not known and therefore is not reducible to a framework or rational analysis. This is one aspect of the potency of art in negotiation education: it presents gaps and diverse interpretations; it accentuates ambiguity and the elusive nature of truth. An example comes from an exploration of the nature of fairness designed by one of us. Economists, lawyers and other scholars had traveled from around the world to negotiate understandings of the elusive concept of fairness. One of the activities involved participants working silently in small groups to create fairness installations. Each group had a range of natural materials from the forest and the beach: feathers, small stones, moss, twigs, beach glass, stalks of bamboo, shells. They negotiated in silence, composing sculptures from the elements they had been given that somehow spoke to the fairness theme. Once the pieces were complete, we all walked around to view them in silence. Only then was the group assigned to select an item from their installation to trade with another group, and to designate a representative to negotiate the trade. One group assigned "Pat", the only African American scholar in the group of white European-origin scholars to try to trade a small pebble for the only eagle feather in the room, which crowned another group's sculpture. Pat was unsuccessful, and the experience led to a very emotional dialogue about the unconscious choice made by the group to ask the only person of color in the room to try to trade something trivial for something substantial. Power, historical disadvantage and unconscious positioning to maintain privilege were all discussed in ways made far more nuanced by the gap in realization that had just played out.

Just as Picasso said, "We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand", those attending the fairness atelier left with new realizations about the truths of unfairness and fairness that remain wired in our consciousness (Picasso Speaks 1946: 270-271). Beauty, on the other hand, was famously equated with truth by John Keats in his poem *Ode to a Grecian Urn*. Perhaps it is this capacity of beauty that art reaches for.

To ground our understandings of negotiation in the aesthetic domain is to be aware of the importance of gaps. In art, truth—insofar as truth exists—is the gap between the map (the artwork) and the territory (what has been painted or represented). In negotiation, gaps exist between one negotiator's perceptions and another's; between one model of best practice and an alternative way of constructing effectiveness. Gaps also exist between each person's particular construction of a negotiation—what is seen as salient, necessary and possible—and the issues involved. Fundamental gaps also exist between the negotiators themselves. When we encounter gaps, the four classic elements of earth, water, air and fire can function as resources to help us bridge them because they are themselves carriers of beauty just as landscapes and seascapes are beautiful. These elements deepen our journey of discovery with beauty and its potential to transform our embodied experiences of negotiation. We begin, as mortals must, on the ground.

Earth: The Grounded Negotiator

What is the first thing a negotiator does when preparing to engage with another? Some would say we should first "ground" ourselves, clearing the mind of other tasks and generally coming into our physical center. When an electrical current is grounded, it protects users from dangerous exposure if electrical insulation fails. Grounding gives the current a place to go, a place that absorbs its energy without damaging things around it. Humans ground using variable means including physical and imaginal practices that may produce some of the same protective effects. To be grounded is to feel a connection with our core, to have a strong and rooted sense of ourselves. By extension, as we ground, we may also feel a connection to the earth, with its powerful properties of stability, creativity and coalescing. When we are in a grounded state, we are less susceptible to being upset by unpleasant emotions or unexpected tactics; we react with more equanimity.

Earth as an Aesthetic Dimension of Negotiation

When we ground ourselves before entering a negotiation, we literally embrace a bigger sensory world, one that widens our apertures and increases our perceptive and reflexive abilities. Doing so embeds a spirit of inquiry into negotiation processes by importing vitality into the often-narrowed worlds in which negotiations occur. For example, imagine that prior to negotiating, parties were invited to walk silently in a nearby woodland, to notice and later share an image from their walk that speaks to their aspirations for the process. As they share, aesthetic pleasure associated with these images infuses the negotia-

tion process, heightening imagination and possibility rather than the more bounded rational thought that is usually accented. Such an approach is reflected in Lee Blessing's 1988 play, *A Walk in the Woods*. It tells the tale of two arms negotiators who develop a personal relationship while searching for a breakthrough in the formal talks, while walking "informally" through the woods during year-long negotiations in Switzerland. And so it was that the scholars who designed the Oslo negotiation process to bring together Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in the 1990s chose a remote, rural Norwegian setting. They built in time for nature, such as walks in the woods, and time and space for contemplation surrounded by natural beauty. Through these walks, they experienced what South Africans call *Ubuntu:* seeing in others a reflection of self and of our interdependence. We literally exist *through* each other.

How might the element of earth help negotiators practice *Ubuntu* and infuse aesthetic sensibilities into processes? Do our negotiating experiences engage the senses in beautiful ways? If we struggle to imagine this, then what would need to happen for beauty to be a part of the landscape of our negotiations? A few suggestions follow.

Applications for Reflexive Negotiation Practice

By invoking natural images and their associated beauty as we "ground" ourselves before negotiation, we may experience not only more self-awareness, but increased resonance with others and nature itself. This builds the foundations for reflexive practice. Reflexive practice involves being attuned and able to make sense of complex and dynamic experiences in interacting with our surroundings. It also means making sense of an experience beyond our own worldview, with awareness of the social, political, theoretical, intellectual and psychological context in which experiences occur. It is both a meta-analysis and a micro-focus, reflecting on reflecting, or thinking about thinking—this is what happened, this might be why it happened (in context), this is how I came to understand it in the way that I do, and this is one of the ways that I can modify it or change how I will perceive it in the future (Cunliffe 2001; Lam et al. 2007; Alexander, Howieson and Fox 2015).

Drawing upon the element of earth, we can become more grounded as negotiators and increase our capacity to contribute to successful negotiation outcomes in these and other ways:

- Invite nature into negotiations. Choose a natural setting such as a park or rural setting. Integrate time for engaging with nature into the negotiation. Something as simple as a walk after lunch can help to reconnect us to our centers. It can also sow the seeds of transformation from an "us and them" to a

collective "us" as we share the experience of enjoying the gifts of nature.

- In preparing for negotiations, we can deepen our understanding of our counterparts and how they view the subject-matter of the negotiation by getting to know their art—visual art, stories, music or dance. Aesthetically-inspired preparation for negotiation broadens and deepens our perspective of the negotiation landscape and those inhabiting it. Equally, doing so can contribute to new language and new ways of talking about issues, paving the way for creative inspiration to infuse talks.
- Look to a variety of art forms—music, painting, dance, song and others—to strengthen the common ground we stand on as negotiators, and to build foundations for identifying, understanding, and beginning to bridge the inevitable negotiation gaps.

Not only can these approaches help connect across gaps, they can bring everyone involved to deeper presence with each other. As scholar and filmmaker Cynthia Cohen points out, aesthetic experiences are "intensely felt human apprehensions of the world, engendered by nature and certain human-made forms and processes" (Cohen 2015). Cohen elaborates that these experiences are rooted in reciprocity arising between the forms and the perceptual capabilities and sensibilities of perceivers. As an essential component of aesthetic experience, reciprocity is both a justification for linking aesthetics to negotiation, and a resonance between the two. Neither form works well without it.

The importance of reciprocity and mutuality across aesthetic experience and negotiation leads us to the next element: water. Water connotes flow, fluidity and clarity, all of which involve reciprocity.

Water: The Fluid Negotiator

If negotiation is grounded in an aesthetic ethic, how does a process unfold? Which possibilities arise that are not visible from more traditional vantage points? A reciprocal negotiation process creates a flow between the parties as they encounter a more comprehensive standpoint—perhaps a perspective larger than their own—and find a way to dissolve into it. When it works, parties find themselves holding a larger world, putting things on a bigger grid, and trying in partnership to find a way into a positive momentum or flow.

Of course, negotiation is never static. As Andrea Schneider and Jennifer Brown (2013) demonstrate with their Dynamic Negotiating Approach Diagnostic (DYNAD), negotiation styles are always in motion. Competitive, entrenched positions may transform into

collaborative flow. Avoidance may shift into competition. These shifts tend to follow the "emotional tenor" of a negotiation (Schneider and Brown 2013). The parallels to water are startling. Not only does water have the ability to change external form from liquid to gas or solid, water in its liquid form also has the ability to change the structure of its molecules. Research (which remains controversial) suggests that the structure of water changes according to external influences including emotions. According to Masaru Emoto's work, positive emotions facilitate the creation of exquisitely structured water molecules that generate beauty (Emoto 2007). Negative emotions generate broken, weak, unattractive molecular patterns. It seems that the molecular structure of water can and does continually change. Parallels to the neuroscientific concept of emotional contagion, discussed previously, are immediately apparent.

Water as an Aesthetic Dimension of Negotiation

Our discussion about water and the human condition moves beyond a mere analogy once we contemplate the fact that our bodies consist primarily of water. We are water. We can freeze and be blocked; we can pretend to disappear like gas; or we can flow into one another as liquid water does when the river meets the ocean. As the structures of water molecules alter, adapting to their surrounding environments, so do we. Positive, constructive, and empathetic emotions from our negotiation counterpart may increase our receptivity to their interests and help us generate new, elegant neural pathways, which in turn, yield new ways to problem-solve not previously imagined. This is the social brain in action, examined in more detail below as well as elsewhere in this book. [NDR: Crampton, *Social Brain*] The social brain has the qualities of water—fluid yet robust; strong yet yielding; open to connection yet stable in its own identity. It has the capacity to know, and fill, the gaps. The openness and vulnerability of the social brain might just help us and our negotiation counterpart get closer to filling gaps with beauty—on both molecular and mental levels.

Italian architect Carlo Scarpa became famous for his use of gaps in architecture. One of his notable 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 a different sense of "space". Designer Alan Fletcher, exploring why space is important, writes: "[s]pace is substance. Cézanne painted and modelled space. Giacometti sculpted by *'taking the fat off space'*. Mallarmé conceived poems with absences as well as words. Ralph Richardson asserted that acting lay in pauses… 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

which gives shape to the whole. In the West we have neither word nor term. A serious omission" (Fletcher 2001: 370).

It is enlightening to apply this "philosophy of gaps" to the world of negotiation. In the West, we are preoccupied with filling up space, and tend to over-rely on words to convey meanings. As negotiators, we use talk to convene, structure, order and identify issues and uncover common ground. The work of these artists and architects highlights the potential power of using gaps to create spaces in which both negotiators, relieved of pressure to fill spaces, can explore, innovate and diversify. When gaps are filled in a synergistic way, we speak of entering a state of "flow". When we enter this state, it is as if unpredictable beauty has taken over. Beauty has been invited into the room.

This awareness of our bodies as spacious and fluid helps us imagine and then experience a state of flow. Recall a point in a past negotiation when things began to move with positive momentum. Effort was reduced, and things fell into place with relative ease. Now reflect on the precursors of that flow state. What helped it come about? What aesthetic textures accompanied it? Did it feel smooth, soft, elastic or fluid? What experiences can you imagine that would help you touch into and then incorporate a route into a flow state so that you can access it more easily?

The above questions are designed to take your attention into your body, where memories and feelings are experienced as physical sensations. Often, these physical sensations are just below conscious awareness; they only grab our attention when they turn into pain or irritation. But tuning into them is a very helpful thing to do in the midst of negotiation; they give us important clues about our state, our comfort level with the way things are proceeding, and what we need to feel safe and engaged going forward.

The flow state can emerge from two elements meeting each other. There is a complementarity, a fusion of beauty that draws many people to the seashore, for example. Irish philosopher John O'Donohue wrote about this meeting place this way: "Unlike the land, which is fixed in one place, the sea manifests freedom: she is the primal dance, a dance that has always moved to its own music. The wild divinity of the ocean infuses the shore with ancient sound. Who can tell what secrets she searches from the shoreline? What news she whispers to the shore in the gossip or urgent wavelets? This is a primal conversation. The place where absolute change rushes against still permanence, where the urgency of Becoming confronts the stillness of Being, where restless desire meets the silence and serenity of stone. Beyond human seeing and knowing, the meeting of ocean and shoreline must be one of the places where the earth almost breaks through to word" (O'Donohue 2003: 129).

Here, O'Donohue captures the transformative potential of water when it meets earth. Related to this idea, John Paul Lederach reminds us that we can imagine a range of different results in any negotiation process, and that our capacity to do so increases when we see ourselves as a part of a web of relations (Lederach 2005). Recognizing interconnections with other bodies—and constellations of felt experiences within and amongst them—is an important step toward empathy, requiring both fluidity and a grounded sense of our own identity.

Applications for Reflexive Negotiation Practice

Reflexive practice requires an awareness of the fluid nature of one's experiences and the ways that meaning evolves through interaction with others and in the negotiation context. As negotiators, we can increase capacities for reflexive practice in these ways:

- To increase awareness of self, ask: How am I attuned to my physical sensations and spatial relations (physiological dimension of awareness) within my own body (proprioception)?
- To increase awareness of others, ask: How attuned am I to the quality of physical presence of my counterpart in relation to me?
- To increase awareness of context, notice: What is the atmosphere like when the negotiation flows? How fluid are the roles and relationships (including power relations) among the parties and others within the larger network of relations and social contexts? Reflect on the role that culture might play in this. Movement is an excellent way to shift uneasy intercultural dynamics when things feel stuck.

To shift from a stuck place to flow, shift modes of operating. If analyzing, check what is being sensed. If sitting still, take a walk. If stuck on one issue, try another. If trying hard to see, listen. If locked in the business mode of the office, move way from a "business as usual" location. If overwhelmed by talking, take time for silence, breaks and meditative time. If stuck on the horns of a dilemma, focus on a different part of the beast. If taking issues too seriously, infuse sessions with an appropriate amount of playfulness. And, for those of us who still listen to LPs, we know that when the needle gets stuck, we need to move it either back or forward to the beginning of the track or to another song. When we do this, the air is again filled with music. This brings us to the third element: air.

Air: The Spacious Negotiator

So far, we have explored the interplay of earth and water as sources of aesthetic wisdom for negotiators. And we have looked to how aesthetic elements to help us navigate the gaps between representations and meaning. As illustrated previously, gaps exist— and can be bridged—between individual negotiators. But they also exist within individual negotiators. [NDR: Deutsch, *Internal Conflict*] This brings us to the element of air and the spaciousness of identity. Before examining identity, let's consider how the element of air relates to spaciousness.

Air comes from the Latin word meaning "high". The element of air reminds us that we can get above a problem, seeing it from a bigger view or in a more spacious way. In air, we have the possibility of ascent to a vantage point above the confining entanglements of practical existence with its many challenges. Air releases the hidden spirit in matter; it opens the possibility that we are more than we think. This brings us to a discussion of identity.

Air as an Aesthetic Dimension of Identity in Negotiation

Why do we relate identity to the element of air? Because identity is ephemeral; it changes and is difficult to fully describe or understand. Think of it this way: if you had to describe your identity briefly, how would you do so? If you were asked to convey something about your identity to someone you had just met without using words, what would you do? If you were communicating your identity to someone from your own group (according to factors like religion, demography, gender, ability, sexual orientation, etc.), how would you do so differently than if you were describing your identity to someone from another group? Identity is something that seems clear until you try to capture it; then it can slip through your fingers like air. The quote below from Jiddu Krishnamurti points toward the multiple levels of identity within and beyond in each human being:

> "The distance to the stars is much less than the distance within ourselves. The discovery of ourselves is endless, and it requires constant inquiry, a perception which is total, an awareness in which there is no choice. This journey is really an opening of the door to the individual in his relationship with the world" (Krishnamurti 2012, 243).

Walt Whitman poetically addresses this theme, asking, "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes" (Whitman 1891). Through the element of air, we can

clearly see where there are gaps, the ways that paradoxes and polarities co-exist, and when authenticity is present. As negotiators, we get a little bit closer to finding what it is that moves and motivates us. We may get a glimpse into our souls: those places where our bedrock of being has its foundation, even as we see only its manifestations in the air of human interactions.

While we often think about identity in a static sense, nothing could be further from the truth. Identity moves. It darts and ducks. It slides and shifts, eliding in the thin air of our awareness. Our identity calibrates and calculates with every moment of every encounter. There are many aspects to identity—race, gender, socio-economic class, regional and educational background, religious and philosophical beliefs, and numerous kinds of intelligences and abilities, to name but a few. Each of these characteristics plays a part in shaping how we view ourselves, how we as negotiators perceive, experience, make sense of and react to one another, and how we experience ourselves contextually.

Of course, no single inner identity characteristic operates in isolation. When different aspects of our identity clash, these contradictions can generate an inner impasse. This state of stasis, with associated emotional and embodied tensions, can block our ability to negotiate at the level of mastery, or beauty. When it is particularly intense, neuroscientists label such a blockage "emotional hijacking", in which the rational and emotional parts of our brain cease operating in concert as team players, and input from the rational brain center is inhibited. Clear thinking is hijacked and cortisol is released into the blood as a way of managing the physiological experience of stress, while emotions flood the brain and trigger flight-or-fight responses. [NDR: Jendresen, *Creativity*, and NDR: Lee & Shanahan, *Martial Arts*, in this volume.]

Recall a time when a negotiation was not going well, when your anxiety or discomfort was increasing. Although it might not be comfortable, try to remember what it was like for you. How did you feel physiologically: Were you flushed or perspiring? Was your heart pounding? Did you feel a knot in your stomach or a pain in your neck? How would you describe your emotions—anxious, angry, disappointed? Were you thinking negative thoughts about yourself or others, such as "You idiot, I knew you weren't up to it"? What did you say? How did your internal dissembling affect your behavior and the course of interactions?

In confrontational and stressful situations, we are all susceptible to a flood of emotions and an overdose of cortisol. It is therefore crucial to be mindful of your body's emotional warning signs that tell you that you are hurtling towards a heightened state of tension, frustration or anger. Some people will experience an increased heart

rate and flushed face; others will report muscle tension or abdominal discomfort associated with changed blood flow.

So, when you are engaged in a negotiation about something that has negative associations for you, be on your guard for emotional hijacking. When emotions are triggered through neural pathways associated with extremely vivid experiences recalled in great emotional and somatic-sensory detail, this activation can occur very rapidly. Before we know it, our bodies and our minds are stuck right back in the argument from last week or the childhood trauma. Neuro-imaging studies show the speed of emotional hijacking, which can happen below conscious awareness—33 milliseconds are all that is needed for our brains to respond to emotional stimuli (Allen, Fonagy, and Bateman 1998: 120). Unfortunately, while emotional hijacking can occur very quickly, it takes longer to recover from such a release of hormones—more than 20 minutes may be needed to recover a state of inner attunement (1,200,000 milliseconds).

Defusing action is needed because the embodied aspect of emotions cannot be wished away. When we hurt emotionally, we hurt physically. Brain imaging has also demonstrated that the degree of perceived unfairness we feel (for example, feeling unappreciated at work or unfairly treated by your supervisor) correlates with increased neural activity in the insula cortex region. This is same area of the brain that is activated when we feel pain. Ouch! In other words, unfairness hurts. Experiencing unfairness, and emotions generally, is a whole-body phenomenon. Scientifically, what is needed at these moments of heightened, self-protective activation is to engage negative feedback loops to reduce stress-associated brain activity (Spencer, Fox and Day 2004). As these loops are engaged, attunement and synergistic are again open as possibilities.

Attunement cannot be seen, yet it is a powerful force, just as the wind is powerful. Negotiation is more beautiful when we are aware of our inner terrains and notice when we or others are blown off course. It is almost always unproductive to continue engaging when tempers escalate and blaming, negative words hang in the air. Take a break, name what is happening, do some deep, meditative breathing, or find another way to change the climate of the negotiation. When you are able to do so, stress-associated brain activity will gradually lessen. In a state of calm, perspective returns, and the beauty we associate with proportionality and balance is again possible.

Finally, we explore how the properties of the air element can infuse negotiation processes with more beauty. Air, with its association with clarity and quickness, reminds us not to cloud the atmosphere amongst negotiators with judgments and preconceptions. Staying open to the needed sustenance of oxygen, we infuse our work with the resources of respect and curiosity, thus facilitating more

rapid and satisfying progress. Aware of the physical ways our intuition communicates to us, we learn to be more aware of what exists that we cannot touch. As we hone our intuition, we increase our capacity to discern unseen dynamics and to act in ways that respond to the unseen essence of disagreements.

Applications for Reflexive Negotiation Practice

When reflecting on past negotiations, it's useful to ponder an experience of getting stuck in an impasse. Connecting air with identity, ask: How often have *I* posed the greatest obstacle to moving a negotiation forward? If my inner identities are locked in positional battle, is there space to breathe? Is there a pathway open to my grounded center? Can I see beyond my narrow trajectory? Do I have peripheral vision; do I feel very small? If so, then no matter how much I might try to make myself bigger including loud posturing or shouting, I remain small. The greatness of a negotiator lies with her ability to step into and embrace the vastness of her identity—an identity that recognizes that it is at once grounded in a sense of self, and at the same time continually evolving, as it moves into hitherto uninhabited spaces connected to others and to our inner worlds.

Drawing on the element of air, we can improve our capacity for reflexive negotiation practice in the following ways:

- To increase self-awareness, ask: What do our responses to beauty reveal about ourselves?
- To increase awareness of others, ask: Which experiences have I had with my counterpart that have shown me her complexity, or ways that she sees beyond what is in front of us?
- To increase awareness of context, ask: Which aspects of what is around me are beautiful? How can I bring more beauty in our midst? What could be different about this situation?

Drawing upon the element of air, we can become more intuitive as negotiators. [NDR: Schneider & Ebner, *Social Intuition*] Applying intuition can be lightning quick, revealing a close sister to the element of air in negotiations: fire.

Fire: The Dynamic Negotiator

Fire illuminates and cleanses. Replete with kinetic energy, it is dynamic, unpredictable and often beautiful. It can also be destructive, leaving charred remains in its wake. Fire is also contagious: when it occurs in one area, it easily catches nearby. Fire is often invoked by those describing negotiations, and not usually in positive ways.

Fire as an Aesthetic Dimension of Negotiation

How can negotiation be as dynamic as fire, and as energized, without causing great damage? How can we harness our passions for justice, fairness and possibility, even in the face of potentially dangerous consequences if we do not? One example, recent at the time of this writing, gives us some guidance. The 2015 Paris climate talks were multi-party negotiations where a lot was at stake. Now that we know unequivocally that human actions are causing potentially catastrophic climate chaos, there is international urgency to negotiate coordinated action. Yet complex negotiations between parties some of whom, in other contexts, may literally be firing weapons at each other, is difficult indeed. One of the ways that negotiations were successfully concluded was via an African process called an indaba. In this process, parties work in small groups, naming their bright-line boundaries not to be crossed, but also tasked with naming places where progress is possible. During the Paris talks, multiple indabas occurred all through the days and nights, ultimately generating a contagious flame of momentum that led to a successful agreement (Rathi 2015).

In what other ways does fire connect negotiation with beauty? Mary Catherine Richards had some powerful insights into this question as she, a few years before her death, was writing a chapter on conflict called *Separating and Connecting: The Vessel and the Fire* (Richards 1998). She encountered great difficulty in writing about conflict, which surprised her because her work as a potter and educator had put her in the midst of many conflicts. She felt challenged to write about conflict in a way that was not watered down, but addressed its true dynamism, complexity and paradoxical gifts as an engine of change and a possible vehicle of destruction. Though Richards was reaching for a holistic way of writing about conflict, the words seemed too wooden, too thin. Then, one night, she had a dream. In the dream, there was a large fire on the horizon, spreading toward her neighborhood. Forced to evacuate, she and a neighbor gathered up a few of the most precious of her pots and drove away. As they were leaving, they encountered a man they knew who came into the room with her pots and just stood there. Though they admonished him to leave, he remained.

Days later, when—in her dream—they were allowed to return, Richards went immediately into the charred remains of the room with her pots. To her surprise, they were still there intact. The only difference was that they were more beautiful than when she had left. And the man was also still standing where they had left him. When they asked him how this was so, he said, "Everything is still here. Only the color is deepened." As the pots stood in intensity of the fire, their colors came out more strongly and with more nuance than

before. From this dream, Richards found a way to describe one of the paradoxes of conflict: that if we can withstand its ferocity, it can burn away those things within and between us that keep us attached to "being right" rather than living in peace. As she writes:

> "When color deepens, it adds both darkness and light to itself; it contains more color. Goethe said that color is "the sufferings of light". *The sufferings of light!* That is, what light undergoes, we undergo; as vessels, we are deepened by our capacities for darkness and for light. It is an inner light that wakes in the lustrous stone. It is our darkness, our guilt and guile and greed and hopelessness that, undergone like a fire, may flame through our consciousness, through our sense of ourselves, deepening our capacities, changing into colored light. Though we may feel annihilated in the process, we are intact" (Richards 1998: 234).

As human beings, we have an incredible capacity to emerge out of the ashes of conflict's blaze, shaken yet somehow stronger. Could it be that our capacity for resilience is related to our ability to tap into the soul of our collective humanness, which after the shared experience of savage conflict, is left exposed, raw, vulnerable and accessible, in new ways? (See Jones 2004, describing how *some* children recovered remarkably well after horrifying experiences in the Bosnian civil war.)

Richards' work points to another Jungian idea, that of the shadow, defined as "the guardian of the threshold" (Richards 1998: 232). Individually and collectively, we have shadows—those parts of ourselves or our group that are dark and often unacknowledged. Worse, they can be projected onto others. In negotiation, when you accuse the other side of inflexibility, stop and ask whether that intractability is reciprocal. When you associate the other with negative traits, ask what you are not acknowledging about yourself that might be keeping the process stuck. Psychologically, we tend to perform largely unconscious mental and emotional gymnastics to situate ourselves positively and others in alternative, negative positions. But this human tendency may get in the way in negotiation rather than facilitating progress. The wise negotiator is willing to take a full spectrum look at herself and others, recognizing that all of us are vessels for darkness *and* light. Illuminated by this thinking, negotiation becomes a process where the sufferings of light can show a way forward.

Applications for Reflexive Negotiation Practice

So far we have been speaking of reflexive practice as comprising three elements:

- Awareness of self;
- Awareness of other; and
- Awareness of context.

Yet the further we journey, the more challenging it becomes to separate concepts of self, other and context. Drawing on the element of fire, we can enhance our reflexive capacity as negotiators through these and other practices:

- Reflect on personal responses to fire, escalation, intensity. What do they tell us about ourselves? Use a negotiation diagnostic instrument such as the DYNAD referred to earlier to map your emotional shifts as conflict heats up.
- Does the fire of conflict deepen our coloring? Does it reveal darker, less attractive sides of us? Have the courage to explore negative characteristics that surface in conflict. How do these aspects of ourselves inhibit the flow of relations and the spread of ideas in negotiation?
- Be on the lookout for the conditions that may ignite a fire of connection. For example, take a risk and share a personal vulnerability with the other negotiators, or suggest constellation work for the group.
- Fire moves quickly, as do opportunities for change. Watch for opportunities associated with intense dynamics in negotiation. How can I step in to a fire and be a catalyst for constructive contagion?
- When the destructive path of fiery conflict has seemingly destroyed all hope of resolution, pause for a moment and take stock. Am I still intact? And the others? What has changed? Has the torching and scorching of my assumed order of things introduced more nuanced hues into the negotiation landscape? Can I see things that were previously hidden to me? Have power relations shifted and if so, how?

Getting Closer to Beauty

In his book, *Self and Soul*, Mark Edmundson argues that as children we dream of ideals such as goodness and beauty and that, as adults, we still yearn for these aspirational qualities (Edmundson 2015). Why, then, do these qualities not imbue more negotiations?

It seems that we gradually lose the child-like art of play and inquiry, finding ourselves increasingly disconnected from beauty, replacing it with glamour or a more utilitarian focus. As Morgan reminds us, "Beauty is not glamour … Glamour is a highly fickle and commercially

driven enterprise that contributes to … "the humdrum". It appears and disappears … No one ever catches up to glamour" (Morgan 2003: 15). And it's this never-ending pursuit of glamour that makes us unwell as individuals and a society.

Contemporary writers from diverse disciplines bemoan what they see as a societal slide into complacency, conformity and consumerism. A condition called affluenza has been the subject of numerous books and a high-profile US court case, where it provided a successful defense in a case involving driving under the influence of alcohol, causing death (Dart 2014). In their book, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*, John de Graaf and his colleagues define it as "a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more" (De Graaf, Wann, and Naylor 2001). Even when economies are doing well, Australian writers Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss remind us that we are not becoming happier. They explain how affluenza leads to "psychological disorders, alienation and distress," with the result that people "self-medicate with mood-altering drugs and excessive alcohol consumption" (Hamilton and Denniss 2005: 170-180).

Edmundson describes how Americans abandoned the virtues of beauty and truth in exchange for pragmatism and small-mindedness. In a similar vein, Singaporean diplomat, lawyer and professor Tommy Koh opines that "Singapore has raised pragmatism to the level of a philosophy […] Singapore stands against the beauty of ideas in favor of what works." (Kaplan 2014: 93)

But what if we envisaged the aspiration of beauty as essential to negotiation; couldn't beauty and pragmatism delight in each other's company? On the practical benefits of beauty, Edmundson suggests that "by committing to ideals, men and women can escape the alternating peaks and low points that the life of desire creates and live in a more continuously engaged and satisfying way"—and—we would add —in a more grounded way. (Edmundson 2015: 102) Because beauty is related to deeper needs for aesthetic meaning and belonging, it can be an antidote to affluenza. Reflecting on Australian society, Hamilton and Denniss describe a related antidote, "downshifting"—shifting priorities away from maximizing towards minimizing; away from consuming towards conserving; away from complacency towards caring. It's a move away from temptations of glamour and towards the call of beauty.

Howard Gardner makes an impassioned plea to bring beauty back to the classroom, asking what we should teach and what we should learn, if not truth, beauty and goodness? (Gardner 2011) Gardner suggests that beauty primarily arises from experiences of nature and the arts. He explores what makes an experience beautiful and con-

cludes that it's not just about what you like. Rather, getting close to beauty is about studying yourself, what you value and why. For example, why might one person resonate with a contemporary urban landscape and another with an endless desert plain? Why does the face of a family member evoke beauty for their relatives, but not for others? According to Gardner, we could all do well to notice how we perceive beauty, in order to get to know ourselves in a richer, deeper way. He suggests that teachers can ask students to curate a portfolio of beauty based on their own lived experiences. As negotiation educators, we encourage students to create portfolios of beauty from their negotiation experiences, drawing on each of the four elements. This will not only infuse negotiation learning with aesthetic vibrancy; it can also help surface what is outside our conscious awareness.

Richards cautions us that outside conscious awareness can easily trip us up in conflict (Richards 1998: 234). She goes on: "With mixed feelings we may discover that the part we play in Art and Beauty and Love is Lucifer's mask." (Richards 1998: 235) What, then, are we to do as we seek to implement the ideas outlined in this chapter in ways that are honest and beautiful? Richards suggests engaging negotiation, and building capacity to negotiate, as an ongoing, emergent process. Conflict itself is a process through which our human natures may develop and mature. It is a tension between contrary impulses within and between us. As we learn to respect the intense fire of disagreement, introducing fluidity to our fiercely defended egos and embracing our quicker-than-air intuition, we find ourselves standing on new ground. It is the ground not of arrival, but of *becoming*. It is a ground of being that we can rely upon, for its composition is better understood than ever before in human history.

Combining the powerful new understandings of neuroscience with political awareness of standpoints, we move into self-reflexive possibility. Understanding ourselves as both actors in human systems and negotiators means acknowledging the multi-sensory encounters within and between us, and the elemental wisdom they offer. The arts and, in particular, embodied art forms and practices, open up ways for us to know ourselves more deeply and to negotiate our relations with others.

Conclusion

Richards writes eloquently of what we are reaching for:

> "Nature tells us that we are self-directing, self-correcting organisms, who function therefore by a dynamic of polarities: in-breathing and out-breathing, sleeping and waking, expanding and

> contracting, seeking balance. Our inner development as persons comes about as we are able to bear the wholeness of these opposites, to experience them as mutually completing, as interdependent and interpenetrating, in some sense simultaneous. To see them, in other words, as *alive, moving and interweaving*, like the distinct yet interflowing rivers that course through the oceans." (Richards 1998: 233)

As Richards describes, beauty arises from integrating the elements that animate, connect and divide us. As we embrace beauty as central to negotiation, we gain a more dynamic understanding of our work that points the way to virtuosity and pleasure, and to more satisfying, full-spectrum outcomes. As aesthetic ingredients in negotiation are awakened, our negotiation processes will pulse with essential and beautiful texture, nuance and multi-dimensional possibilities.

References

Alexander, N., J. Howieson, and K. Fox. 2015. *Negotiation: Strategy, Style, Skills*. Sydney: Lexis Nexis 2015.

Allen, J. G., P. Fonagy, and A. W. Bateman. 2008. *Mentalizing in Clinical Practice*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.

BenZion, G. 2010. Overcoming the Dyslexia Barrier: The Role of Kinesthetic Stimuli in the Teaching of Spelling. In *The Neurocognition of Dance: Mind, Movement and Motor Skills*, edited by B. Bläsing, M. Puttke and T. Schack. London: Psychology Press.

Brooks, D. 2016. When Beauty Strikes. *The New York Times, January 15, 2016* p. A31. Available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/15/opinion/when-beauty-strikes.html?_r=0 (last accessed August 3, 2016).

Cohen, C. 2015. Arts and Building Peace: Affirming the Basics and Envisioning the Future. *United States Institute of Peace: Making Peace Possible*. Available online at http://www.usip.org/insights-newsletter/arts-and-building-peace-affirming-the-basics-and-envisioning-the-future (last accessed August 3, 2016).

Cunliffe, A. L. 2001. Managers as Practical Authors: Reconstructing our Understanding of Management Practice. *Journal of Management Studies* 38: 351–371

Damasio, A. 1994. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. New York: Putnam.

De Graaf, J., D. Wann, and T. H. Naylor. 2001. *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Dart, T. 2014. Texas Teenager Suffering 'Affluenza' Avoids Jail for Second Time. *The Guardian, February 5, 2014.* Available online at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/06/texas-teenager-affluenza-escapes-jail-second-time (Last accessed August 3, 2016).

Edmundson, M. 2015. *Self and Soul: A Defense of Ideals*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Emoto, M. 2007. *The Miracle of Water*. Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing, Inc.

Fletcher, A. 2001. *The Art of Looking Sideways*. London: Phaidon Press.

Gallese, V. 2005. "Being like me": Self-Other Identity, Mirror Neurons, and Empathy. In *Perspectives on Imitation: From Neuroscience to Social Science*, edited by Hurley, S and Chater, N. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gardner, H. 2011. *Truth, Beauty and Goodness Reframed: Educating for the Virtues in the Age of Truthiness and Twitter*. New York: Basic Books.

Hamilton, C., and R. Denniss. *2005. Affluenza: When Too Much Is Never Enough*. Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Jones, L. 2004. *Then they started shooting: Growing up in wartime Bosnia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kapoor, A. 1987. *At the Hub of Things*. Available online at http://anishkapoor.com/66/at-the-hub-of-things (last accessed August 3, 2016).

Kelly, M (ed). 1998. Mimesis, *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, vol. 3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kaplan, R. D. 2014. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*. New York: Random House.

Krishnamurti, J. 2012. Choiceless Awareness 1. From Madras, 7th Public Talk, December 1959. *Collected Works*, XI.

Lam, H, E. W. Deutsch, J. S. Eddes, J. K. Eng, N. King, S. E. Stein, and R. Aebersold. 2007. Development and Validation of a Spectral Library Searching Method for Peptide Identification from MS/MS. *Proteomics* 7: 655-67

Lederach, J. P. 2005. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press.

O'Donoghue, J. 2003. *Divine Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*. Great Britain: Bantam Press.

"Picasso Speaks" *The Arts*, New York, May 1923. Reprinted in Alfred Hamilton Barr. 1946. *Picasso, fifty years of his art*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

Rathi, A. 2015. This Simple Negotiation Tactic Brought 195 Countries to Consensus. *Quartz, December 12, 2015*. Available online at http://qz.com/572623/this-simple-negotiation-tactic-brought-195-countries-to-consensus-in-the-paris-climate-talks/. (last accessed May 3, 2016)

Richards, M. C. 1998. Separating and Connecting: The Vessel and the Fire. In *The Fabric of the Future: Women Visionaries Illuminate the Pathways to Tomorrow*, edited by M. J. Ryan. Berkeley, CA: Conari Press.

Scarry, E. 2001. *On Beauty and Being* Just. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Schneider, A. K. and J. G. Brown. 2013. Negotiation Barometry: A Dynamic Measure of Conflict Management Style. *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* 28(3): 557-580.

Singer, T. 2006. The Neuronal Basis and Otogeny of Empathy and Mind Reading: Review of Literature and Implications for Future Research. *Neuroscience and Behavioral Reviews* 30: 855-863.

Spencer, S. J., J. C. Fox and T. A. Day. 2004. Thalamic Paraventricular Nucleus Lesions Facilitate Central Amygdala Neuronal Responses to Acute Psychological Stress. *Brain Research* 997(2): 234–237.

Whitman, W. 1891. Song of Myself. In *Leaves of Grass*. Available online at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/poems/27 (last accessed August 4, 2016).