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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.

This chapter explores how integrating vital understandings of beauty and natural metaphors into negotiation can change our embodied experiences of processes, each other and negotiation outcomes themselves. We also suggest related ways to deepen our capacity for reflexive negotiation practice. Specifically, we focus on how to better build awareness — of ourselves, of other negotiators and of the context within which negotiation interactions unfold. By developing greater awareness among these multiple levels and dimensions, negotiators can better navigate the emergent and complex nature of the negotiation process itself.

Throughout, 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 1999; BenZion 2010). This significant shift in thinking has profound implications for our approach to negotiation and conflict resolution. It connects via astonishing parallels to much older ways of knowing, such as the process of alchemy.

Alchemy has a long history, appearing in the myths and legends of ancient China and texts from Egypt dating back to 1900 BCE (Alchemy Lab). Western ideas of alchemy trace their origins to the Egyptian adept king, Hermes Trismegistus, with whom the Emerald Tablet is associated (Conniff

2014). Centuries later, the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung associated alchemy with the process of individuation, involving integration of inner and outer aspects of our beings (Jung 1980). He envisioned four elements symbolically associated with differentiation and transformation—earth, water, fire and air (Jung 1980). In this chapter, we draw on these elements and Jung’s teachings to open a path towards a deeper, more wholistic and aesthetically-grounded understanding of negotiation.

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 complimentary 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 unessential, may serve utilitarian functions. However, as indicated earlier, science has seismically shifted, revealing evidence that supports arts-based approaches to decision-making, conflict resolution and negotiation, and invites beauty and nature into our thinking.

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 their graduate coursework in negotiation, I have 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 more subtle 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 canvass on which dialogue about the roles of fear, uncertainty and risk in negotiation are engaged with increasing nuance.



Anish Kapoor, *At the Hub of Things*, 1987.

Studies in neuroscience explain the contagion of the sensed and felt experience, and how feelings can move between us without us 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 et al. 2004; Singer 2006). Through the activation of so-called mirror neurons, these “shared representations” allow us to vicariously experience 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.

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. (as quoted in Brooks, 2016)”

Meaning, or the knowability of a situation typically depends on what is represented, how it is framed and by whom (Scarry 2001). 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 political arguments made against beauty in recent decades, 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 and 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. 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 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 accent 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. Logical analysis can be located in a wider, more useful map when negotiation is seen through a mimetic lens. Benjamin, 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 definition, the mimetic incorporates the aesthetic, emphasizing that there is always a gap between a phenomenon and a representation of a 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 accents ambiguity and the elusive nature of truth. 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” (Barr 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.

Grounding 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 salient, necessary and possible—and the issues involved. Fundamental gaps also exist between the negotiators themselves. When we encounter gaps, the four elements of alchemy can function as resources to help us bridge them. 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 triggered 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 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 negotiation process, heightening imagination and possibility rather than the more bounded rational thought that is usually accented. 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. One powerful aspect of natural beauty is the resonance it evokes.

Aesthetic engagement and attunement

Resonance is a physical phenomenon imaged by religious scholar Christopher Bache as “lateral bands of colored light stretching horizontally across a room” between people (Bache 2000: 178). Bache postulates that resonance is “always trying to happen” between people, giving examples of phase locking from chaos theory. “Phase locking,” he writes, “occurs in nature when individual oscillating systems shift from a state of collective chaos to integrated resonance” (Bache 2000: 178). For example, when individual cells from the heart of a chicken embryo are separated, they beat erratically. If a number of the cells are brought back together, they begin to beat coherently in what is called phase lock. In humans, this phenomenon is obvious in choir singing, but also happens in more subtle ways such as the synchronization of women’s menstrual cycles when they live together.

When negotiation works well, do the parties come into resonance approaching phase lock? What role does attuning have in fostering collaboration? Two points here, from opposite directions. The U.S. military is well aware of the power of music and has used it frequently in recent engagements. Marco Accattatis explores relations between music and violence, commencing with the Homeric legend of the sirens, whose song killed anyone who heard it (Accattatis 2014: 2). He goes on to detail the use of round-the-clock hard rock and heavy metal music directed at the Papal refuge of General Manuel Noriega, Panama’s military dictator who had fallen out of favour with Washington. Several other examples of the use of loud music to irritate, disorient and intimidate range from its use in the Branch Dividian seige in Waco, Texas to interrogations of detainees in Guantanamo Bay. In these instances, music is pressed into the service of destroying resonance within and fragmenting connection and coherence by preventing phase lock with others and disrupting connection with positive sensory anchors.

On the positive side, music was used in one of my negotiation classes by collaboration expert Hussein Janmohamed who taught a group of twenty five lawyers and other professionals a vocal round of devotional songs from diverse world religious traditions. We had spent four days studying and dialoguing together and the atmosphere had been warm and positive. At the end of thirty minutes with Hussein, something new had constellated. The music had brought an entirely different dimension of attunement, opening us up to the ground of our shared humanity, alive with the quality of wonder and shimmering with awe at the beauty generated through song.

The solid ground we stand on as negotiators, then, can be strengthened and made more robust by aesthetic engagement. While it may be difficult to imagine parties singing together in advance of or during a negotiation process, the imaginal challenge is worth taking. Perhaps a better question is to ask which aesthetic form would resonate most powerfully for a given audience in any particular context. A recent issue of the United States Institute of Peace *Insights* newsletter discusses arts in peacebuilding and negotiation as an idea whose time has come. The lead article advises negotiators with Russian counterparts to stop reading “jargon-filled scholarly analysis from those political science journals” and to turn to works by Russian literary giants, such as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and Solzhenitsyn (Wood 2015: 1). According to the author, literature is the way to understand Russians and their leader, Vladimir Putin, because these artists illuminate Russia’s worldview, nationalism, and endurance like nothing else can. Quoting Four Star American Admiral Stavridis, the article asserts that “[l]iterature is the true lens. If you want to understand the Russian mind, remember that no other culture esteems its writers more than Russia. Every Russian can—and frequently does—quote Pushkin, Tolstoy and Gogol; whereas you would be hard pressed to get a line of Whitman, Hemingway or Toni Morrison out of a typical American.”

As a political prisoner, Nelson Mandela turned to the arts to incrementally build and nurture a collaborative negotiation spirit with his jailers, the then-apartheid government in South Africa. During his 27 years in prison, Mandela learnt not only the language of his oppressors, he also familiarised himself with their poetry, their literature, their music and their rugby. He got to know the prison guards and—in some cases—their families. He learnt their stories. Negotiations ultimately led to his release from Robben Island prison and facilitated his rise to power as president of South Africa in 1994. Through the beauty of empathy and genuine engagement, Mandela was famously able to negotiate a new inclusive political climate for his country and avoid the bloody civil war that so many had assumed would be inevitable.

Arts practices are universal, though different forms are accented in different cultures. Throughout the South African struggle, for example, the arts played vital roles in galvanizing people and transforming unfairness. South African Constitutional Court judge and anti-apartheid activist Albie Sachs explains the importance of guarding nuance and complexity in art: “In the case of a real instrument of struggle, there is no room for ambiguity: a gun is a gun is a gun, and if it were full of contradictions, it would fire in all sorts of directions and be useless for its purpose. But the power of art lies precisely in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions - hence the danger of viewing it as if it were just another kind of missile-firing apparatus” (Gerhart and Glaser 2010: 696; Allen). This passage reminds us that when art is instrumentalized, it can lose its power. Sachs also writes: “What are we fighting for but for the right to express our humanity in all its forms, including our sense of fun and capacity for love and tenderness and our appreciation of the beauty of the world?....Let us write better poems and make better films and compose better music” (Sachs 1990: 21).

From Sach’s invitation, we take this: that we should not only infuse negotiation with aesthetic sensibilities because it will work better and more wholistically (though we do believe this is true), but also for the sake of pleasure. If, as negotiators, we feel more fully alive and spacious in our capacities to relate one with another, our negotiations will be better, too. Connections between spaciousness and negotiator identity are explored further in the context of the element, air, below. In addition, we will be better able to adopt another piece of South African wisdom, the idea of *ubuntu*. Judge Sachs pleaded eloquently for mediators and negotiators to recognise the importance of “ubuntu” – an African concept referring to the essence and interconnectedness of being human.

“Ubuntu” can look very different in diverse contexts, but always involves engaging the senses (Sachs 2010).

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” 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 as one interacts with one’s surroundings. It also means making sense of an experience beyond one’s 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 might be how I arrived to understand it in the way that I do (in context), and this is one of the ways that I can modify it or change how I will interact with it moving forward (Alexander et al, 2015; .Lam et al, 2007; Cunliffe, 2002).

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 centre. 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 who we are negotiating with 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. As well, doing so can contribute to new language and new ways of talking about issues, paving the way for creative ideas 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 build foundations for identifying, understanding, and beginning to bridge, the inevitable negotiation gaps.

Not only can these approaches help bridge 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?

Water is associated with the alchemical operation of *solutio*, turning a solid into a liquid. In many negotiation processes, this operation arises. Consider two people whose positions are very far apart. They come in feeling 'solid' and 'attached' to their way of framing the issues and their preferred outcomes. 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. Along the way, resentments and enmities may dissolve, another aspect of *solutio*.

The ability of water to appear in different forms, namely gas, solid or liquid forms, resembles the variety of the human condition in conflict. Human responses to conflict may appear as:

- solid, fixed, entrenched positions which compete against one another (solidified water, ice);
- invisible ways of avoiding conflict or accommodating someone else's entrenched position (water as steam or gas);
- fluid responses characterised by flow, exploration, connection, movement (liquid water).

Of course, these responses are not static. As scholars Kupfer Schneider and Jennifer Gerarda Brown demonstrate with their Dynamic Negotiating Approach Diagnostic (DYNAD) (Schneider and Brown 2013), 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. Controversial research shows that the structure of water changes according to external influences including emotions (Emoto 2007). According to Masaru Emoto's work, positive emotions facilitate the creation of exquisitely structured water molecules that generate beauty. Negative emotions generate broken, weak, unattractive molecular patterns. It seems that the molecular structure of water can and does continually change. Parallels to the neuro-scientific concept of emotional contagion, discussed previously, are immediately apparent.

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 structure 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 his or her 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. 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 beauty – on both a molecular and mental level.

***Solutio* as an aesthetic dimension in negotiation**

This operation of *solutio* does not happen in every negotiation; sometimes parties come to an agreement or fail to do so, and leave with their “ground of being” unaltered. But negotiation is essentially about change, about finding a meeting place that dissolves some amenable aspects of our positions while still leaving us a reliable place to stand. It is also about affective change, yielding a fluidity of being that allows all parties more space and flexibility going forward, especially when there are ongoing family, business or community relations. As negotiation educators, we can help others see that all things are in flux, and the opportunity to come to agreements and closure is to participate in that flux rather than merely standing on the edge of the flow. The words of a man who experienced *solutio* in a marital negotiation are illustrative: “I am at the centre of a great city watching a vast stream of humanity pass by—individuals of every type and description. It’s like the flow of a great river. I am fascinated.” This man’s experience of touching into a bigger grid in negotiation is classic *solutio*.

The operation of *solutio* is also germane to addressing impasse in negotiation. When things are stuck, referencing aesthetic experiences may be helpful. Once, when working with members of a group who needed to renegotiate their ways of working with each other following a reorganization, I invited everyone to draw their experience of their present relations. Pictures ranged from a sinking ship to a collapsing building and a placid lake with monsters beneath the surface, viscerally representing the intensity of upheaval shared by group members. Speaking from the pictures, participants framed their concerns aesthetically, inhabiting the gap between their frustration and their images of how to move forward. While concrete, the sensory images also introduced fluidity as all of them depicted movement and many of them included water. This opened conversations about how to craft new systems and reclaim an experience of flow in the midst of unfamiliar configurations.

Later, while addressing leadership questions in the same organization, I invited people to find a physical, aesthetic way of representing their experiences. From a table full of various media and assorted materials, they chose multi-coloured yarn which they wound around their leader to represent their experience of him being unavailable, immobilized by the demands of his new role. Seated in their midst with yarn spun all around him, he was viscerally able to articulate his experience of trying to negotiate new sets of relations and job requirements while feeling tied down and held back by conflicting expectations and the challenge of creating a new, hybrid culture out of two distinct group norms and patterns. Everyone understood that the leader’s main need was mobility, and they were then able to problem-solve ways that his maneuverability could be enhanced and made more available and fluid. The aesthetic engagement helped everyone frame the problem into something focused and amenable to action.

***Solutio* and movement in negotiation**

In negotiation, movement is fundamental. Without it, parties are hard-pressed to reach agreements. Water flows around whatever is in its path; it takes the shape of whatever container it is in, yet does not lose its coherence. Movement-based experiences can therefore be useful in assisting negotiators to apprehend and incorporate flexibility, flow and clarity into their approaches. They can help parties

literally learn, in embodied ways, how to move across continua or paradoxes. Finally, they provide powerful anchors for mutuality and reciprocity, both of which are central to aesthetic collaboration. Over the past several years, we have worked extensively with movement in negotiation education, finding that learners report dramatic shifts in their capacity to work with others arising from their experiences (LeBaron, MacLeod and Floyer Acland 2013).

Recent scientific discoveries bolster the case for movement as a way of teaching negotiation as they highlight the interconnection between physical and verbal expression. Both activities are located in Broca's area of the brain, where speech neural pathways overlay sensorimotor circuitry; apparently, linguistic forms of expression arose later in human brain evolution and are intricately interwoven with physical experience (Beausoleil and LeBaron 2013). These findings point to movement and gesture as early pre-verbal forms of expression, cognition and communication. And so we ask whether, "[w]hen we fell out of animal presence,...dance [was] our first language?" (O'Donoghue 2003: 129). In evolutionary terms, we have vastly more experience with movement than with words, yet academic study has traditionally focused on the part of the brain with which life on Earth has had least experience; namely, the rational brain (or neo cortex). This focus has led our attention away from our bodies, cemented in place by Cartesian dualism that privileges cognitive ways of knowing over physical wisdom.

Given millions of years communicating kinaesthetically, It's not surprising that humans read body language better than verbal language. It's easier to for others to lie to us with words than with their bodies – because we intuitively and accurately read body language, detecting authenticity or a lack of it in our negotiation counterpart. We know this on a kinaesthetic level, often below conscious awareness, when we experience intuition or the weird feeling in our stomach that something isn't quite right, although we can't think of a logical reason not to believe what they say.

Similarly, it must come as no surprise that babies communicate with body language long before they acquire the capacity for words. How does an infant summon the capacity to shrug her shoulders to communicate "I don't know" (or "I want you to think that I don't know") or to hide something from you by putting it behind her back and distracting you with cute smiles and innocent blinks of the eye? These highly complex messages are physically practiced, refined and mirrored from before birth. What experience and wisdom must then repose in our collective corporeal selves! For movement is not the wisdom of one person but the pooled kinaesthetic know-how and know-why of our genetic evolution.

Aesthetic engagement and attunement

So how can we access this kind of knowing and put it to work for us in negotiation?

I

In a recent workshop for people working on conflicts with religious and political dimensions, dancer Margie Gillis used a number of physical metaphors in designing shared experiences. For example, she asked participants to explore "yielding" and "resisting" in various movement activities. Gillis also helped participants learn to understand and navigate the gaps between themselves and other parties, and to welcome them as generative. As we moved, we began to physically understand the concept of "negative space" between and around us.

Italian architect, Carlo Scarpa became famous for his use of gaps in architecture. One of his more 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 explores why space is important, He 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. 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.

The ability to creating space allowing for movement and flow is an essential aspect of creativity and problem-solving. We now know that our brain is not a fixed piece of hardware but rather a malleable, adaptive living organ that has the ability to transform its own function and structure. Research in neuroplasticity demonstrates our beliefs can shift our biology and change our brain anatomy (Lipton 2008). At the heart of neuroplasticity is the principle that neurons that fire together wire together, while neurons that wire apart, stay apart (Beausoleil and LeBaron 2013). This means that we create patterns and develop habits as we repeat thoughts and behaviors. Over time, these become comfortable superhighways that we drive along without conscious thought. We turn to autopilot as we traverse the well-travelled terrain of neurons that have fired together countless times. These patterns are not easy to shift: in negotiations, such habits of thought lead us down the slippery slope of positional posturing towards blockages and impasse. Yet it is possible to bring movement into the brain. Here, the alchemic process of *solutio* is at work again. Through conscious practice, we can discover spaces that have fallen victim to our blindspots and link them into our active neuro-grid of highways, major roads and T-junctions. By seeking out opportunities to move our brains in a different way -- as simple as taking a different way to work every other day -- we can begin to break limiting patterns and create space for creativity to enter and thrive. Then, we notice that T-junctions turn into intersections, and intersections into roundabouts as previously unnoticed opportunities appear in front of us. Cul-de-sacs open up into new districts as we enter into a state of biological flow with mind and body connected, operating in concert.

So connected are brain and body that dance and other physical movement has the ability to release us from mental habits when we feel locked in negotiation impasse. For example, dancing or walking through breathtaking nature can resonate with us at emotional and unconscious levels, thereby accessing and shifting the neural processes of firing and wiring, referred to previously. Dance has been explained as highly complex, synchronized body work facilitating social bonding (Beausoleil and LeBaron 2013). Taking that walk through nature or going dancing one evening in the midst of negotiations can transport us to suprising spaces that help transform perspectives and attitudes,

surfacing insights and options not noticeable in the midst of conventional negotiations (Beausoleil and LeBaron 2013).

Another movement form helpful to negotiators is aikido. Aikido is increasingly used to assist learners to physically experience the differences between yielding and movement, and the counter-productive effect of resisting given its likelihood of eliciting a similar response in a counterpart (Ringer 2006; Palmer). Practitioners physically learn to cultivate and inhabit “flow”. Wendy Palmer, a well-known American aikido master, writes about the flow state as experienced via movement this way: “Most of us have experienced the phenomena often called the ‘zone’ or the ‘flow state’. This happens when we have the experience of efforting as we do an activity, then beginning to tire and backing off a bit, and suddenly the activity becomes easy, effortless. Often people will describe this as, “something was coming through me/us”. This phrase, “something was coming through me/us”, points to the idea that the energy or inspiration came from outside our body – it came from the space or environment around us. This idea presupposes that space is not empty and our bodies are not solid. From a scientific point of view, our bodies consist of trillions of atoms. Atoms are primarily space with very small particles within that space; from this we deduce that we are not as solid as we sometimes feel. Indeed, we might say that the feeling of being solid is more of a belief than a fact (Palmer).

This awareness of our bodies as spacious and fluid helps us image and then experience a state of flow. Recall a point in a past negotiation when things began to move with positive momentum. Efforting 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’Donoghue 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’Donoghue 2003: 129).

Here, O’Donoghue captures the transformative potential of water when it marries with 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. Here are some ways to apply these ideas:

- 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 analysing, 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 the alchemical elements of earth and water as sources of aesthetic wisdom for negotiators. And we have looked to notions of resonance and attunement to help us navigate the gaps between representations and meaning. As illustrated previously, gaps exist—and can be bridged—between individual negotiators. However they also exist within individual negotiators.

This brings us to the element of air and the spaciousness of identity. We explored spaciousness in our previous section, noting how it helps us to (a) ground ourselves and enlarge the grid of our interactions, (b) feel alive and increase our capacity to connect with others, and (c) enter a state of flow. Here we ask who we are as negotiators, and as human beings engaging in negotiation. 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 briefly describe your identity, 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 Krishnamurti points toward the multiple levels of identity 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.”

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.

German communication psychologist, Friedemann Schulz von Thun, refers to the multiple voices within us as members of our “inner team” (Pörsken and Schulz von Thun 2014: 92). He explains that, as in any collaborative group, the members of each person’s individual inner team represent different views, perspectives, interests, characteristics and values. For example, I may have a strong value for loyalty, but this value can come into conflict with self or ethical interest. Do I break confidentiality after a colleague in my law firm who is a valued member of a negotiating team

confides in me about her drug addiction? If I don't, our clients, our firm and others may suffer. Yet, doing so requires me to violate my value of loyalty. Thus, negotiating amongst members of the inner team is a primary act, a precondition to effective negotiation with another. MC Richards puts it this way:

“[It is important to get to know] one's inner family: for example, the fearful child, the scornful brother, the sorceress, the fanatical seeker, the possessive parent, who stand in the shadow and create difficulties (Richards 1998: 232)”

As members of our inner family or team interact with one another, and also with team members of other inner teams, encountering innumerable complex and emergent contextual factors, challenges necessarily arise. Richards advises that we learn to listen to all of these voices as far as we are aware and able, so that we find ourselves “peaceably at war, neither victorious nor defeated” (Richards 1998: 233). For it is in recognizing the insights of these different voices, in ourselves and others, that we are able to see more of a full spectrum.

A related concept to the inner team or family is intersectionality, which ‘acknowledges an individual's multiple social identities, thus reaching for a more complete portrayal of the whole [embodied] being’ (Wijeyesinghe and Jones 2014: 9-19). Intersectionality looks beyond the ‘additive’ nature of multiple identity characteristics and instead focuses on the ways that different aspects of identity simultaneously and repeatedly encounter one another, generating unique gaps in motion (Goodman 2014: 99-108; Alexander et al, 2015, 9.12). Recall the importance of gaps in the aesthetic domain. There will always be a gap between the experience that comes through “encounter” and the representations we create to understand and explain the encounters we have. Gaps create space for beauty to emerge, for truth to be experienced, for embodied ways of knowing and being to be embraced, and for us to know and engage the artistry of flow in negotiation.

Intersectionality explodes the illusion of separation – we cannot separate mind, body and soul nor can we separate ourselves from one another. As human beings, we are designed to dance, to interact, with one another as whole porous beings – taking and giving, pulling and pushing, always influencing, always flowing – like water. Daniel Goleman uses the term social intelligence to highlight the communicative nature of our senses – visual , auditory , kinaesthetic, olfactory and gustatory – all of which offer pathways to who we are at this moment and who we are becoming in the next. In other words, we are continually noticing and adapting our behaviour in relation to those around us. In part because of intersectionality, we are ineffective at predicting behaviour. It is virtually impossible to know how the complex inner and outer senses will interrelate in any one person at any one time. And, despite our beliefs to the contrary, we are not consistent from moment to moment or setting to setting. Robert J. Lifton and others have criticized the notion of a stable personality in which our senses always communicate in predictable ways, arguing that we are always changing and adapting within, with others and with our environments, in a condition he calls protean (Lifton 1992).

Imagine a tango. Each part of your body that interacts—embraces, melts, asserts—with each part of your partner's body generates an embodied relational identity experience that helps define you at that moment. The embodied nature of our emotional identity has been confirmed by numerous neuroscientists starting with Antonio Damasio (1994, 1999). What we come to experience as our

truest emotions or feelings are in fact interpretations of physical sensations or impulses to act generated through social interactions.

Intersectionality therefore offers a way to think about our essential interconnectedness and porousness as human beings and highlights the potential for rapid change as well as incremental shifts, both often beyond conscious effort. Peace scholar Louise Diamond once challenged a room full of graduate students to explain how change happens. Their explanations were somewhat ponderous, full of prescriptions and step-by-step progressions. After listening, she asked everyone whether they could recall a time in their lives when change happened very quickly. Perhaps it was associated with a pivotal event (either global or personal) or with a surprising shift in a relationship. The element of air reminds us that things can happen slowly or with great rapidity. The world readers will be in when this chapter is published may be a very different one than the world that exists as we are writing it.

Aesthetic engagement and attunement

One way of imaging effective negotiation, then, is as a state of attunement amongst members of our “inner team”. Attunement opens the possibility of infusing our negotiation identity and processes with more nuanced texture, depth, tolerance and flexibility. Remember that this attunement can shift quickly, either because of external events or the way a particular interaction stimulates an old wound. This is another reason that negotiators need beauty: beauty helps us “right” ourselves when we have been thrown off by what psychologists call a negative trigger. Consider, for example, the effect of a beautiful song when you have been feeling less than clear or anxious. It can bring you back into your body’s home and back into attunement with your “inner team”.

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 centre 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.

Recall a time when 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 behaviour 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 (Whalen et al 1998). Unfortunately, while emotional hijacking can occur very quickly, it takes longer to recover from such a release of hormones — more than 20 minutes is 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 the 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: 234-237). As these loops are engaged, attunement and synergistic intersectionality are again open as possibilities.

Connecting attunement and intersectionality, we recall the element of air. Both of these phenomena cannot be seen, yet they are powerful forces, 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 a past 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 team is locked in positional battle, is there space to breathe? Is there a pathway open to my grounded centre? Can I see beyond my narrow trajectory? Do I have peripheral vision, and 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 recognises that it is at once grounded in a sense of self at and the same time continually evolving as it moves into hitherto uninhabited spaces that connect us with one another and more deeply with ourselves.

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

- To increase awareness of self, 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. 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 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 recent example 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 who, 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).

Aesthetic engagement and attunement: constellations at work

Another manifestation of the element of fire with its capacity to move quickly and shift the landscape, is the process of systemic constellation work as pioneered by Hellinger, Sparer and others. Just as fire consumes a territory touching everything in its wake, constellation processes become containers for dynamics to be seen and to shift in ways that are mysterious but very effective.

The theory and practice of systemic constellations offers an embodied approach to problem-solving that is fire-like in the speed and accuracy with which it unfolds. In this process, a person (client) who wishes to gain deep insights into a particularly challenging issue in a negotiation, selects any number of individuals (so-called representatives) to assist in creating a physical constellation that depicts the situation from the client's perspective. It is not necessary for the client to brief the representatives about the exact nature or details of the issue, although this may occur in some practices to varying extents. The client then physically directs the representatives to take positions in a way that depicts the current situation as he or she is experiencing it. The resulting constellation—the spatial arrangement of the representatives as a whole and the kinaesthetically-felt reactions of the representatives to one another—reproduce the structure and dynamics of the situation (system) the client is describing. Following the initial placement, a series of interventions may be undertaken by the constellation leader (host) or the client to rearrange the spatial scene until the representatives feel “better” in the constellation and the client perceives the new geometrical arrangement as coherent. Finally, the client has time to absorb the rearranged scene, which in turn, can lead to new insights, relationships and actions in relation to the negotiation itself.

One of the fascinating aspects of constellations is the importance of placing physical bodies in relation to each other in space. Over and over again, the system that representatives embody “catches fire” within them, and they report suddenly feeling something outside their own experience that relates to an element of the system or story they are representing. Through physical placement, constellation processes ignite representatives' embodied, affective experiences that reliably match the corresponding elements of a relational system, or the relevant parts of a client's story. Perhaps this phenomenon is less perplexing when we recall the scientific findings that debunk the two myths of separateness discussed earlier, the myth of separateness of mind and body and the myth of separateness of human beings. As we have seen, though we speak of feelings and rational thinking as if they are mutually exclusive, nothing could be further from the scientific truth. Woven tightly together in the finest of cerebral tapestries, effective negotiators and smart decision-makers do not see them as separate. Similarly, though we imagine ourselves as contained individuals, mirror neurons and other relational processes mean that we cannot shut our minds and bodies off from those around us.

Increasingly, systemic constellation work is being used in a range of settings, from organizational development to family therapy. Both of us have experienced it, and felt its potency to ignite understanding. Here is an account from one of us of our first encounter with it:

I had heard about constellation practice in Europe and was keen to see how the practice worked in action. A friend of mine told me about a constellation session where I could offer to be a representative in a constellation. Intrigued and excited, I went along. After a short introduction by the constellation host, we got started. The first client outlined her situation very briefly and then was invited to select representatives. As the second person to be selected, I was placed in a particular position in the room. I was a little nervous; I still didn't really know what was expected of me. Everyone said not to worry; just to embrace it ... but I wasn't feeling really comfortable. Once all the representatives had been placed, the client hesitated. “She's not right”, she said pointing at me, “Can I swap her?” It turns out that I was so consumed with my own performance that I had forgotten to inhabit my body and maintain my open and curious focus on the constellation. The client was absolutely correct—I was all wrong. Yet how could she know? Sheepishly, I went and sat

down again. Someone next to me whispered that she had never seen a representative be replaced before. I wanted to disappear beneath the floor.

As the first constellation unfolded, I soon forgot myself and I was drawn deeply into its process. I saw vividly that constellation work asks us to be exquisitely present in our bodies and to our intuition, clearing our minds and hearts as we make ourselves available to the process.

Next time around, I was given another chance to be a representative. This time I was ready: relaxed, aware, and breathing deeply. At first we were told nothing about the client's situation, yet when asked what I was feeling, I could immediately talk about my physical sensations and the accompanying feelings of rejection and isolation that I was experiencing as a representative. "Yes", the client chimed in, "that's because of this incident and that relationship." How could I have known? It was as if I had breathed in spaciousness and embraced my porosity, thereby enhancing my capacity to connect like fire and inhabit a collective tableau. The constellation host invited the client to reposition me in the space; she came and guided me to another position with her hand on my back, this time not standing but sitting. The kinaesthetic impact was immediate and powerful. It felt amazingly different. I could hardly believe how the dynamic we were inhabiting had caught fire amongst us. As a fire burns through a forest, the constellation took on its own shape, showing itself as system that could shift in space and time. When we had finished, I could not explain the transformation that had occurred. The client reported that the changes made gave her many insights into how to work with the real situation; it was as if the foliage had been stripped away and she could see the underlying structure of the forest more clearly.

According to Insa Sparrer, the key to transformation in physical constellations may be something pre-verbal, in line with scientific hypotheses presented earlier. Sparrer goes even further, suggesting that this pre-verbal something is somehow known collectively, even though this knowledge cannot be formulated verbally. She calls this phenomenon transverbal language and explains that it exists among representatives and therefore goes beyond verbal and non-verbal language of individuals. It is not just about relational inter-representative insights, she explains; it is about relational systems as a whole, always more than the sum of their parts. While representatives may be asked how they are feeling and how rearrangements of the spatial geometry affect them, the perceptions they report relate to the client's situation rather than the representatives' subjective experiences. Somehow, in taking on the shape of the story, they literally inhabit it, in all of its affective, sensory dimensions. Constellations work makes the embodied wisdom of the collective accessible for the benefit of another.

So, the practice of constellations bring us closer to the ineffable gap we have been discussing and, therefore, closer to beauty. It literally offers a bridge between what we conventionally understand as knowable and unknowable. Future research will no doubt shed light on the principles by which this works. For now, it is enough to sit in the glow of its effectiveness and use it because it functions to illuminate and deepen our understandings. Just as negotiators drive cars to their sessions whose mechanical systems they may not understand, those seeking to improve their negotiation effectiveness can use constellation work without knowing or understanding exactly how it works.

In what other ways beyond constellation work 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. MC Richards was reaching for a wholistic way of writing about conflict, but 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 neighbourhood. Forced to evacuate, she and a neighbour 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 they were allowed to return, Mary Catherine 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 colour is deepened.” As the pots stood in intensity of the fire, their colours came out more strongly and with more nuance than before. From this dream, MC 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 colour deepens, it adds both darkness and light to itself; it contains more colour. Goethe said that colour 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 coloured 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?

MC 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 through the elements of alchemy, the more challenging it becomes to separate concepts of self, other and context. As constellation work demonstrates, we have the ability to move beyond metaphors and literally put ourselves in another negotiator's shoes. But it is more than this: we have the capacity to enter a collective embodied space. So the self finds itself in the other and then connecting to the wider contextual world in effortless and immediate transformation.

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 colouring? Does it reveal darker, less attractive sides of us? Take 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. Be on the lookout 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 make us as individuals and a society unwell.

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 for a driving under the influence of alcohol and 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; James 2007). Even when economies are doing well, Australian writers [Clive Hamilton](#) and [Richard Denniss](#) remind us they we are not becoming happier. They explain how affluenza leads to "psychological disorders, alienation and distress," with the result that people to "self-medicate with mood-altering drugs and excessive alcohol consumption" (Hamilton and Denniss 2005: 170 and 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" (Koh 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. 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 maximising towards minimising; 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. For what should we teach and what should we learn if not truth, beauty and goodness (Gardner 2011)? In relation to beauty, Gardner suggests that beauty is about experiences, primarily of nature and the arts. He explores what makes an experience beautiful and concludes 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 an contemporary urban landscape and another with an endless desert plain? Why does the face of a family member evoke beauty for their relations 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 of alchemy.

MC Richards cautions us that the alchemy of our beings and our relations as they show up in conflict, are largely outside conscious awareness (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 and intersectionality, 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 alchemical wisdom they offer. The arts and, in particular, embodied art forms and practices, open up ways for us to more deeply know ourselves and negotiate our relations with others.

Conclusion

We give the last word to MC Richards, who writes eloquently of the alchemy 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).

Art and beauty, kinetic and fluid in sustaining human belonging, are thus vital to negotiation.