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Facing the Fear of the Other

Some Issues In Cross-cultural Conflict Resolution

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or even between individual humans
–but runs down the middle of every human heart.
Alexander Solzhenitsyn

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We come to our understanding and evaluation of other cultures with our own cultural (and emotional) baggage. And with it, often come ethnocentrism, and the belief in the superiority of one's own culture over those of other communities, nations, peoples, and races. Difference and the instinct to congregate with like-minded individuals and groups are the default condition of humankind. And humankind can be mightily intolerant of difference in all its manifestations.

The comfort zone of conformity is a keystone of community, be this the family at one end of a continuum and the nation state at the other, or transnational foci of identity and belief such as religion or ethnicity.[1] This is particularly so with respect to the majority attitude to social and ethnic minorities in their midst. And never more apparent than in times of political, social and economic uncertainty when there is widespread and contagious concern, unease, and anxiety (and a corollary jealousy, suspicion, fear and resentment).

Assailed by enemies, real or imagined, within or without, challenged and maybe threatened, it is not uncommon for communities to adopt a worst case bias, and accept the stereotypes that present *the enemy* as something quite different. When there is a perception that there is only so much of something to go around, it is not unusual to believe that 'your share' is threatened by - or going to the undeserving, the late comers, the ungrateful, or the unproductive. The target of vilification, discrimination, oppression, repression, and worse, pay the price of different-ness and separateness. They are *the Other*.

And on the fault line where *Us* and *Them* butt up against each other and collide, conflict, latent or actual, is all too often the outcome.

Denis Postle has written:

What we do not understand is what we fear, and what we fear, we generally run away from or attack. It's the timeless "fight or flight" response.[2]

Conflict, it is often said, brings out the worst in us. There is some truth in this, but it is more likely to bring out the ***past*** *in us. When challenging or threatening conflicts arise, they tend to echo similar situations in the past, provoking a variety of defensive reactions.*[3]

Conflict under any circumstance provokes anger, anxiety, distress, fear, and aggression. It breaks down relationships, hinders communication, and obstructs problem solving. Particularly so in conflict that has it's genesis in the *Fear of the Other*, and the face-off between *Us* and *Them.* Such is the emotional intensity of such conflict, that it triggers instinctive and apparently irrational behaviours that can trigger an ineluctable spiral towards intractable conflict and render resolution all the more problematical.

How then can we as individuals and as communities identify, confront, and come to terms with *this Fear of the Other*? How do we endeavour to learn to understand, and in understanding, to accept into our societies, our polities, people of other nationalities, races, cultures? How do we bridge the difference between *Us* and *Them*?

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[1] With respect to religion, Catholicism and Islam come to mind. As for ethnicity Pan-Arabism and Slav nationalism, to name just two
[2] Postle D, <u>The Mind Gymnasium</u>, McGraw Hill 1988 at 186
[3] id. At 22

Part One: *Us* and *Them*

We do not first see and then define, we define first and then see.
Walter Lippmann 1922

Self and Society

…*the tendency for human beings, individually and in groups, to establish, maintain and protect a sense of self-meaning, predicability and purpose*[1].

Self and social identity is inextricable. People perceive themselves as members of a social category, and being so perceived by others. Our tendency to categorise ourselves and others, and the effect this has on human interactions, must also extend to how others perceive us.[2] Moreover, our sense of self-worth (the image we project to the world) is influenced by how we believe others see us, and how much we value ourselves, how much other people seem to value us.[3]

At the centre of the sense of self, of "identity" are beliefs. These cannot be changed significantly without disturbing the very roots of our being[4]:

And what you believe is coloured by what you have experienced, what you have learned, how you have been treated as you go through life…the perceptions, the prejudices…the giving and the receiving end of human interactions, discriminating and being discriminated against, judged and judging, victimiser and victim, patient and nurse. [5]

Identity, both self and social, together with the beliefs that bind it, are inevitably transposed upon the groups, organizations, and communities to which we belong.

…*individuals carry a personal past which can exert its own special emphasis on the social meaning process. Separating the dancer from the dance may well be extremely shortsighted; separating the dancer from past dances could be a sin of equivalent order.*[6]

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni:

My definition of community has two components. The first element is a bonding, not one on one, but a group of people to each other. The second is a shared set of values and culture - it's much more than interests.[7]

And it is much more than sharing – it is a need. Leslie Savan:

We want to see our individual selves turned into a multitude - a thousand other people who cherish The X-Files, do eco-design, or make a killing in online investments. We're not alone; our identity is validated.[8]

And embracing all, our culture.

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[1] Terrell A Northrup, <u>The Dynamic of Identity in Personal and Social Conflict</u> in: Kriesberg L, Northrup T, and Thorson S: <u>Intractable Conflicts and There Transformation</u> (Syracuse University Press), at 63. Belgian-American writer Luc Sante provides a cogent definition of identity, of roots: *A matter of sediment, of accretion, of chance and juxtaposition.* And the loss of identity, the breaking of roots? In his memoir, Sante writes of how his immigrant family clung to their European roots although these were disappearing fast: We *lost connection to a thing larger than ourselves, and as a family, failed to make any significant connection in exchange".* In the end, *We were left aground on a sandbar barely big enough for our feet.* Luc Sante, <u>The Factory of Facts (</u>Granta 1999)

[2] How one is defined by others both influences our self-identity to some degree, and has group affiliation effects in its own right (i.e. independent of one's self-definition. Nkomo S &Cox T, <u>Diverse Identities in Organizations</u>, in Clegg S, Hardy C, & Nord W, <u>Handbook of Organization Studies</u>, Sage Publications 1996, at 341

[3] Postle op cit. at 47

[4] When beliefs, or core constructs, as Northrup describes them, begin to be invalidated by incoming information, the individual experiences threat. This information will be rejected or redefined fit the existing, rather impermeable constructs. And the reaction is often likely to be emotional and urgent! Northrup op cit. at 65

[5] Postle op.cit. at 102

[6] Fineman S, <u>Emotion and Organizing</u> in: <u>Handbook of Organization Studies</u> op cit. at 551, elaborating on the work of *Sarbin 1986; Franks and Gecas 1992.*

[7] Savan L, *Did Somebody Say "Community"?* ,e-zine <u>Stay Free,</u> Issue 15, Fall 1998. http://www..stayfree.com

[8] ibid.

American Philosopher Edward Casey wrote: *A placeless world is as unthinkable as a bodiless self.* All human activity takes place in an environment. David Augsburger:

Culture embodies the authenticity and unique purposes of each community. Each culture seeks to express a people's values, sensitivity, and spirituality…Continuity and congruence with their cultural history connect persons and groups to their own particular depths, their own unique wisdom, and their own particular configuration of human archetypes, religious symbols, and central values.[1]

We recognize the critical central role of beliefs and values, both personal and shared. And with these come emotions. Emotions run through everything, colouring what we think and what we do, how we interact with others. Emotions and feelings are part and parcel of perception: how we interpret and 'feel' about things.[2] When we accept, adopt the values of our organization, our community, or society, or conversely, go against them, our adherence or otherwise has an emotional content.

Loyalty to one's group, organisation, or community is likewise highly charged with emotion. And loyalty too is about core values and beliefs. When we are loyal, we agree, we feel, we empathise, and we personalise and internalise those values and beliefs. Fineman: the feelings and emotions that underscore loyalty and commitment …*put the sensed **imperative** into social duties, the **ought** into morality, the **feeling** into respect, the **sting** into conscience, the **deference** necessary for social hierarchies.*[3]

Community has its dark side. It can be very intolerant of difference, and in difference is disbelief. Augsberger again:

<p align="center">*One culture's belief system is another's disbelief system.*[4]</p>

As noted in the Introduction, difference and the instinct to congregate with like-minded individuals and groups are the default condition of humankind. And the desire on the part of some to constrain and control the expression of difference has likewise been ever present.[5] A group or community's culture is essentially defined by those who control it,[6] and these define what is in fact "diversity". It means, in effect, *different to us,* the *in-group* Conformity and innate deference to some higher authority or order or class, and, at its most extreme, domination, has been covertly woven into our individual minds and hence into the social fabric. Obedience with respect to authority and to authority figures, is often second-nature.[6]

Many believe that the will of the majority should prevail, and that they are, at the end of the day, reluctant to go against their group's decision, notwithstanding that they may disagree with that decision and may have express vocal opposition to it. And there is, after all a strength in numbers that can be as much psychological as physical - the sense of warmth and belonging that comes with being part of a greater whole.

But there are drawbacks which are not necessarily realised by participants. Consider, for example, *Janis's Eight Symptoms of GroupThink*[8]: illusion of invulnerability; collective rationalisation; belief in the group's inherent morality; stereotypes of out-groups; direct pressure on dissenters; self-censorship; illusion of unanimity; and, use of self-appointed mind guards.[9]

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[1] Augsberger DW <u>Conflict Mediation Across Cultures</u> (WJK 1992) at 7
[2] Fineman, op cit at 550: *We have feelings about what we want, and what we want is infused with feelings; and that is intrinsic, not residual, to individual, interpersonal and group functioning[2].*
[3] id. At 551, quoting Wentworth and Ryan, 1992.
[4] Augsberger, op cit. at 90
[5] Sliker G, <u>Multiple Mind</u> (Shambhala, 1992) at 132. *For families, as well as in all human life, the equilibrium of opposites is an elusive goal. The seeming contradiction between individual needs and group functions produces tensions and anxiety. The right to differentness of the individual must be balanced with a certain amount of sameness among members of the group that allows them to function together.*
[6] Nkomo & Cox op.cit. at 349. They write: *Oppositional thinking implies not only difference but also hierarchy where one group is usually superior and the other inferior.* The dominant group in fact derives its privilege from the curtailment or suppression of the opposite
[6] Refer Postle op.cit. at 106, for the various elements of the old paradigm: the belief that dominant and subservient behaviour is "natural" probably originates in our childhood experience of being dependent on our parents. Surviving as a child often meant deferring to superior force, and this submissiveness is often carried over into adult life. It has been built into the structure of the institutions we live through – the family, the church, education, medicine, and politics. Through these institutions, domination is legitimised, and since it is usually covert, and subliminal, it appears all the more natural and inevitable. Refer also to Edward de Bono's argument for moving from the dominant paradigm of 'rock logic' to a more perceptive, creative, constructive 'water logic' in <u>I am Right You Are Wrong</u> (Penguin 1990).
[8] Tenbrunsel, Galvin, Neale, and Bazerman, op.cit at 326.
[9] And at It's most extreme, Group psychosis: fear, habit, the cult conversion process, and dependence on the group and upon its leader. Isolation, desperation, dependence, and control.

When in Rome

Western society has come a long way since the days when witches and heretics were burnt at the stake for daring to be different. A short distance since Jews and Gipsies were persecuted for their separateness (itself due in a large part, to having been banished to the fringes of society because of their different-ness). Or has it? How often have we heard: *They are not like us*. or that throwaway adage of ethnocentrism: *When in Rome, do as the Romans do*. Eugene Pascal:

We do not expect a cat to bark, a dog to meow, a bird to moo, or a cow to chirp. But, strangely enough, we assume that all other human beings will always and everywhere express optimal and highly differentiated functions of feeling, thinking, intuition and sensation, as well as thoroughly developed attitudes of introversion and extraversion. In short, we expect others to be perfect – in their relations with us. This flagrant expectation is highly delusional and unrealistic, to say the least.[1]

Colin Tatz has written that be different may mean to be both *other* and *unlike*, or to be *unlike* only. *Otherness* is a difference in entity; *unlikeness* is a difference in quality.[2] And:

Aborigines became not just different, or a people 'unlike us', but a people 'other than us'. This geographic, religious and legal 'otherness', this quality of being 'other' than us and, therefore other than human, was the first step along the road to the various forms of genocide.[3]

Us. The dominant culture, with its' moral superiority, historical supremacy, religious rightness and self-righteousness.

One doesn't have to be a Stuart Littlemore to understand the language of the occupying power[4] (the phrase belongs to the late Denis Potter who knew a lie when he saw one). Witness the media's treatment of reports relating to Australians of Middle Eastern, Asian or Indigenous extraction. It is not just a matter of race and ethnicity or county of origin. It extends to appearance, to dress and customs, and deeper, to religious beliefs and convictions. One man's faith is another man's cult![5]

All Arabs are terrorists. All Vietnamese are drug-dealers. All Muslims are fundamentalists.[6] How easy it is to whip up the suspicions and the preconceptions, the envies and enmities, the fears and the prejudices.[7] The rantings of shock jocks – reflecting their various moral panics (tarted up as information and education – the public's *right to know*). Wedge politics draw the line between *Us and Them* in the way the media reflect and represent the news, highlighting the idiosyncrasies of minority sects and cults and attributing to them motives and behaviours that range from the silly to the sinister.[8]

If they hold views, beliefs, value-systems, worldview, social systems that are different to our own conventional, acceptable, commonplace institutions, they are easy game.[9] And too often, mere appearance will provoke if not

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[1] Pascal E, Jung To Live By, Warner 1992 at 40

[2] Tatz C, Relections on the Politics of Remembering and Forgetting, Centre for Comparative Genocide Studies, Macquarie University, 1995, at 17. Judaism as *otherness* is far more comprehensive, he writes, than merely a difference in religion. He quotes the Jewish philosopher Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan*: It includes that nexus of a history, literature, language, social organisation, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, and aesthetic values, which in their totality form a civilisation*. Tatz writes *: It is their own unique history, perhaps more than any other factor or ingredients, that makes so many victim minorities both other and unlike the mainstream societies that surround them*

[3] id. at 18

[4] See Appendix 7, *Challenging A Dictatorship of the Word*.

[5] For a walk on the light side, see Appendix 5 *: Why Following The Jedi Faith Makes Perfect Census*.

[6] All Jews are greedy. All ferals are bludgers…All Indians/Aborigines/Niggers/Paddies are dirty. The list goes on, often subliminally underscored by the *Irish Jokes* school of humour to which even the most liberal and tolerant are partial.

[7] See Appendix 1: *The Story of Allende's Desk, A Parable*

[8] We accuse 'cults' and 'sects' and religions that are culturally alien to ourselves of controlling and manipulating the minds, lives, and behaviours of their members. And yet our perceptions, our understanding, or prejudices are also being manipulated, and hence controlled, by those who shape our ideas and opinions – our media, our government(s). These days, the line between the two becomes increasingly blurred as public relations specialists and 'spin doctors' massage the messages and provide *news* that is in effect sanitised press release.

[9] The weeklies speculate that the demands of Scientology drove the wedge between Mr and Mrs Kidman, Australia's favourite couple. The *Children of God*, ostensibly a fringe millenarian sect, like thousands of other chiliastic groupings, ends up accused of mind control at best and child abuse at worst. Pentecostal fundamentalists are pilloried for creationism and are excoriated for bankrolling far right political organisations. And lets not forget matter of Azaria Chamberlain and the emphasis the media b put upon Lindy's apparently unusual behaviour and unorthodox religious beliefs (that she didn't publicly go to pieces, that she was an SDA - it was as if these pointed to he apparent guilt).

exactly fear of the other, the at least, ridicule, suspicion, or condescension: Goth-gear, bikie leathers, or baseball caps worn back-to-front. Idle youths hanging around on street corners. *They must be up to no good.*[1]

Men wearing red and green and weeping in the streets is *dinky di*. Women wearing the hijab is not. The ringing of church bells is True Blue; the call of the Muezzin is not. The former are described as *poignant*, the latter *exotic*. The former are *lyrical*, the latter is a *wail*.[2] Stuart Littlemore recently referred to a press report that went something like this: *The drive-by shooting incident was within half a kilometre from the Lakemba Mosque.* It failed to mention that it also occurred within half a kilometre of the Catholic Workers Club, the Anglican Church, and the Lakemba nick.[3]

A recent film [4] argues that socially dominant groups do not have to worry about misrepresentation based upon the errant behaviour of the few. If an offender is perceived as being *of Caucasian appearance*, it doesn't mean that all Caucasians are immediately suspect. But being *of Middle Eastern appearance* provokes a negative impression. The same could be said of any *out*-group. Kooris. Ferals. Punks. Youths. All at one time another, in one place or another, provoke the same fear and suspicion directed towards young Middle Easterners.[5]

Charges are often unproven and unfounded. But don't let the facts get in the way of a good story. Accentuate the negative, sharpen the difference, whip up fears, suspicions, prejudices, and hatreds. *Why can't they be more like us? Why can't they try to fit in? Whose country is it anyway?* It is the easy way out.[6] For, as Pascal noted,

…*whatever we misunderstand, we tend to fear; whatever we fear, we easily hate; and what we hate becomes an incredibly magnetic hook for our wildest and most hideous shadow projections. We most likely see in others of different religions our own fanaticism and our own repressed devils.* [7]

The Jungian collective shadow emanates from collective consciousness and is a manifestation of the dark aspect of the self that is capable of being projected onto minority groups within a particular culture or even onto whole nations. Today, Cabramatta, tomorrow the world. Genocidal wars are all based on the same principles of negative shadow projection which…*only leads to hate, anger, resentment, and of course, to unhappiness and even despair.*[8]

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[1] And it was always thus. Beatniks and Teddyboys, Bodgies and Widgies, Mods and Rockers, Skinheads and Punks, Hippies and Goths Why do kids join gangs? Anomie. Dislocation. The need for belonging, for peer-approbation. The need for leaders and/or father figures? The alternative, tribal authority structure. "badges", clothing, speech, slang, initiation ceremonies, and rites of passage – latter day substitutes for what was custom and customary in earlier, less complex, times.

[2] Similarly, getting pissed in public on St Patrick's Day is part of our heritage (albeit in reality, a very recent import). Fasting during Ramadan and feasting at its end, on *Al Id Al Fitr*, is not. Demonstrations by angry farmers or loggers are an exercise of legitimate democratic rights. Serbs protesting the bombing of Belgrade, or Kurds demanding the release of Okulan are trouble-makers endeavouring to import the conflicts of their homelands into *Australia Fair*.

[3] *Littlemore*, ABC TV, 12th March 2001

[4] Paula Abood's Of Middle Eastern Appearance. Five young males of Arabic background walk down a busy street, carrying a soccer ball as they stroll through their neighbourhood. A woman locks her car door as they pass. There are hostile stares. Abood told the SMH: *White boys walking down the streets of Killara don't get hassled by the police. People don't lock their car doors when they go by, do they? But if you're a young Lebanese male, people do. That's the simple difference in Sydney. Race and power. They are outsiders in a public space, subtly marginalised; crime has been given a colour, and it isn't white.* Of Middle Eastern Appearance by Sharon Verghis, Sydney Morning Herald, 4th April 2001. **See Appendix 3**.

[5] A very wide tem of reference for over a hundred Arab speaking countries and an appearance that takes in a range of ethnic types from Spain and Morocco in the west to Pakistan in the east, embracing the Sephardim of Israel, the Caucasians of Iran and Afghanistan, the blue-eyed, fair complexioned Circassians of Syria and Jordan, polyglot Turks, Muslims of many sects, Christians of many churches, Jews of many nations and degrees of orthodoxy.

[6] On a lighter note, American journalist Carrie McLaren critiques Harvard Professor of Psychology Ellen Langer in *Mindless in America.* In Mindfulness, Langer seeks to dramatise the rigid conditions and mindsets that often produce a pervasive state of automatised stupidity. She defines *mindlessness* as the human tendency to operate on autopilot, whether by stereotyping; performing mechanically, by rote; or simply not paying attention. Although exceedingly common, few people (realise the extent to which they live mindlessly. There are of three categories of mindlessness. There is *categorical thinking whereby* everyone experiences the world by creating categories. For example, all foreigners look alike. The second source of mindlessness is *acting from a single perspective*, blindly going with the flow rather than thinking *out of the box*. Mindlessness, in this case, is the path of least resistance. And then there is the mindlessness related to repetitive tasks or habit. Many actions considered intelligent can be automatically performed. Once actions become automatic, thinking can actually get in the way. *Stay Free,* op cit. Issue 16, Summer 1999

[7] op cit. at 135

[8] id. at 124 and 125

Paul Hemphill, Newtown, May 2001

The View From The Other Side

It is very difficult for those of the dominant culture to put themselves in the shoes of the minority. How can they really understand what it feels to be discriminated against, vilified, dispossessed, oppressed, or destroyed? Witness the difficulty of reconciliation, apology and forgiveness in our own and other societies. The implications of the 's' word for both the dominant and the dominated. [1]

People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel. People want to be treated justly. Perceived injustices create enmity and enmity is the beginning of the slide towards intractable conflict. Tatz:

To ask victim peoples to surrender their historical memory is to misunderstand their psyches, souls and sociologies. [2]

The sides have some distance to travel towards each other as witnessed by the contrasting perceptions, for example of seminal events in the history of their relationship. Every May, Israelis celebrate Independence Day. Across the divide, in the Occupied Territories, in the Arab areas of Israel, in the Palestinian diaspora, this is Al Naqbah (Catastrophe) Day. Each January, Australians celebrate Australia Day, the anniversary if the founding of the first white settlement in 1788. To indigenous Australians, this is Invasion Day. And so it goes the world over. The Columbus Quincentenary, for example, fell flat on the insistence of indigenes that they had very little to rejoice about.

And once again, in the political, social and emotional fall-out of *otherness*, we have GroupThink this time, as experienced by *Them*. The illusion of invulnerability is often replaced by a persecution complex. But there often remains the collective rationalisation of their actions and the causes thereof, and belief in the inherent morality and rightness of their cause. Stereotypes of how they perceive other groups; and the tool of enforcing conformity in the common struggle against the 'oppressor': indirect pressure on dissenters, self-censorship, illusion of unanimity, and the use of self-appointed mind guards. And clinging to hopes of acceptance, equality, and prosperity - or at the other extreme, rejectionism, separatism, or the hopeless longing for some terra irridenta.

And on the fault line where *Us* and *Them* butt up against each other and collide, conflict, latent or actual, is all too often the outcome[3]. Augsberger encapsulates it perfectly:

Conflict exists in the tension between 'same' and 'other': Conflict arises from the competition of same and other; conflict erupts as those who are 'same' seek to control the 'other' (and reduce its otherness), subordinate the 'other' (and exploit its otherness), destroy the 'other' (and annihilate its otherness), and exclude the 'other' (escape from the threat of otherness). [2]

Part Two: The Conflict Spiral

And we are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night
Matthew Arnold, Dover Beach

Differing Realities

Conflict between *Us* and *Them* often relates to disputes over the jurisdiction or the relative rights of two (or more) communities, and questions of legitimacy and political power, no less than territory. And it is exacerbated by differences or nonconformity, particularly where one group is in the minority, or where groups have different values

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[1] Augsberger and Tatz consider this in some detail.
[2] Op cit. at 21
[3] This is not to say that conflict per se is the inevitable outcome. The reality is dependent on the circumstances – the pressures, the 'inputs' of the parties, and span the continuum from a disturbing *Whispering Our Hearts*, as Professor Henry Reynolds has described it, to out and out civil war.
[2] Augsberger, op.cit. at 16

and standards of behaviour - including standards of dress and physical appearance).[1] The context and the cause of particular conflicts are less important than the fact of a continuing historical conflict. Tyrell Northrup:

It is the mutual exclusivity of claims and interests that produces intractability. It cannot be easily negotiated away. Interests can be negotiated. Principles cannot. [2]

Deep-value conflict is usually part of such situations. Inter-ethnic conflicts of this kind involve complex issues of national identify and history, of language, religion, and culture, of past and present territorial divisions and political systems. They go to core of identity and belonging.

Our society has mechanisms only for resolving conflicting interests, not conflicting views of reality.[3]

It is indeed these conflicting views of reality that define the tensions of the interface between *Us* and *Them*, that instil and exacerbate the *Fear of the Other.*

Conflict does not only come about when values or needs are actually, objectively incompatible, or when conflict is manifested in action; it exists when one of the parties perceives it to exist. Much conflict arises from assumptions about what might or will happen if or when one party does something.[4] Perception and prejudice, particularly when this leads to the identification of threats and/or enemies can provide a powerful motivation to seek out opportunity for conflict.[5] Perceptions that members of another group are hostile, dangerous, threatening, unreliable, and untrustworthy establishes the basis for a relationship in which conflict is inevitable. Such perceptions are often based on a history of conflict and hostility, and the perpetuation of myths and images of the enemy among the group's members. It is assumed that the enemy is the manifestation of all things that are bad, little purpose will be seen in talking to them, as opposed to fighting with them.

In almost any extended, protracted conflict between two parties, both sides are always right, the other is hostile, the other has negative feelings…And both sides would be right in their perceptions because they have set up a mutually vicious, mutually confirming expectation. Each is treating the other badly because it feels that the other deserves to be treated badly because the other treats it badly and so on.[6]

As anxiety rises, mis-perception and biased perception increase. Anxiety exists also in the need for, the urgency of victory over the other party. Perceptions become distorted, then frozen into stereotypes; persons no longer respond; they react to each other in fixed reflexes; positive relationships become alliances, then collusions; problem solving attempts become blaming, and negative conflict spirals escalate.[7]

Moreover, there are often hidden dimensions to conflicts, evident in relatively minor disputes leading to extreme, emotional reactions, if an objectively minor problem seems incapable of solution, or if a relationship is characterised by repeated minor disputes[8]. Participants may be unwilling to deal with, or even recognize, a deeper dimension, particularly if consciously or unconsciously they feel that it is overwhelming and threatening. Irrational and yet instinctive behaviours come into play distorting attitudes, perceptions, and expectations.

We project hidden fears and desires, we play out hidden agendas' we lie to ourselves and others about what the real and underlying causes of the conflict are. Seemingly unconnected issues take on sometimes an importance way out-of-proportion as causal factors in the breakdown of relation/relationships, in the colouring of perceptions, memories, of past events, be these historical or experiential. Add to these a range of defence mechanisms and dirty tricks, and what may have beckoned, as a straight and narrow path becomes muddy and crooked.

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[1] Tillett G, Resolving Conflict, A Practical Approach, OUP 1991at 120
[2] op cit. p 63 Tractable or Constructive conflict, on the other hand, appear to define the basis for "principled negotiation".
[3] Lovins, quoted in: Susan Hunter, The Roots of Environmental Conflict In The Tahoe Basin in: Kriesberg L, Northrup T, and Thorson S: Intractable Conflicts and Their Transformation (Syracuse University Press), at 26
[4] Tillett op cit. at 8. Much interpersonal hostility in relationships, for example, is a result of unspoken assumptions about the actions of the other, or the meaning of those actions.
[5] eg. stereotypical perception of police officers by bikies, and of bikies by police officers, is likely to establish a sense of two groups in natural conflict, and opportunities for the manifestation of this conflict are likely to be found.
[6]Augsberger op cit. at 55, quoting Deutsche
[7] id. at 154
[8] id. at 14

Escalation

And conflicts sometimes seem to take on lives of their own so as to exist almost independently of the participants. People come and people go, taking positions in the conflict, which seems to continue irrespective of their involvement.[1] As conflict rituals produce increased tension, suspicion, and powerlessness, unchanneled and undirected conflict may tend towards becoming self-perpetuating, vicious cycles, and as the cycle intensifies, it escalates until the conflict becomes detached from its original causes and becomes it own self-energising cause, its own raison d'etre.[2]

Northrup identifies these hidden dimensions in the development of intractable conflicts,[3] as does Augsberger in his comparison between constructive and destructive conflict.[4] Their findings are summarised in Table 1. Particularly evident is the degree which seemingly irrational or neurotic (in the clinical sense of self-defeating) behaviours set the stage for the escalation of conflict towards intractability. And the very irrationality of these behaviours render resolution all the more problematical.

Northrup charts a series of sequential stages, each contributing to the creation of the next stage. As a conflict moves through each of these stages, de-escalation becomes less and less likely (Table 2). The Colorado Conflict Consortium observed that the framing of an intractable conflict by the parties is a complex and often muddled process in which vague but intense feelings of frustration are transformed into passionate crusades for particular positions. Juxtaposing this with the common, worst-case bias that people tend to have toward their opponents, and often, a lack of basic communication skills, conflicting parties can fall victim to a number of pathologies that contribute to misunderstandings.[5] Table 3 illustrates this as a series of scenarios and syndromes.

Hark back to Janis's Eight Symptoms of GroupThink as presented by all sides of the divide.[6] These can lead to deficiencies in the decision-making processes of groups, poor analysis of alternatives and objectives, poor information search, biased processing of information, and the failure to work out contingency plans. In short, locked into to those apocalyptic syndromes of Table 3. Contrary therefore to conventional views that cohesion and solidarity can produce decisiveness and effectiveness, GroupThink within highly cohesive groups can interfere with rational decision-making.

Misunderstandings lead to misinformed decisions, and also contribute to the even more destructive processes of escalation and polarisation. Few people communicate effectively when they are angry. They say things they don't mean, or things they would regret if they had been thinking carefully before they spoke. At the same time, they tend to misinterpret (usually for the worse) things their opponents say. Put together, these tendencies cause people to overreact and assume their opponents are far more sinister than they really are.

The cycle of misperception and mis-communication, provocation and counter-provocation, eventually results in the replacement of substantive debate with increasingly hateful and sometimes violent confrontations, directed more at hurting opponents than advancing interests. This process plays a crucial role in the long slide toward war and the crossing of taboo lines which normally restrain our most inhuman impulses. It can also lead people to take ever more extreme and unjustifiable positions.

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[1] The University of Colorado's Conflict Research Consortium defines these deeper dimensions as *conflict overlays* – problems in the conflict process that get "laid over" the core, making the core issues harder to identify and address. See: Burgess G and Burgess H Constructive Confrontation Theoretical Framework at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/hwlt96-4.htm. This is particularly the case in workplace, inter-group and international conflicts of long duration.

[2] Augsberger op cit. at 53

[3] Northrup op cit at 63

[4] op cit. at 47-48 Augsberger juxtaposes Destructive and Constructive conflict with Competitive and Cooperative conflict. In his analysis, cooperation is a both-and process or, at its best, a neither-nor process (at 51). Competition is viewed as an *either-or, win-lose* process; it stimulates either-or communication, either-or solutions, and either-or attitudes and actions. Either-or conflicts are characterised by the intensity of feelings instigated, aroused, engendered, stimulated, inflamed, and perpetuated. Destructive processes are exaggerated by the cluster of what he defines as emergency behaviours that accompany competitive confrontations (negative modelling of conflict that is present in most person's behavioural repertoire from early childhood (at 70). Instead of being able to discus what is going wrong with more insight than feeling, when there is more commitment to mutually satisfactory solutions than winning at the other's expense, where the endavour to individual and joint fulfilment serves to increase self-esteem, deepening trust, and greater satisfaction with the relationship, we feel sucked into a conflict style that continues in spite of all efforts to change it, ie. a relationship that is out of control.

[5] op cit. at http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/hwlt96-4.htm

[6] Page 3 and 6 above.

How then can the often ineluctable spiral into intractable conflict be broken? How can the negative impulses and behaviours that divide and polarise, confuse and confound, be countered. What can be done to enable individuals and groups to come to terms with the *Fear of the Other* and bridge the chasm that often divides *Us* and *Them*?

Table One:	Features of Tractable and Intractable Conflict	
Tractable **Northrup**	**Constructive** **Ausgberger**	**Cooperative** **Augsberger**
• Communication is generally open between parties. • Parties are usually flexible in ability to formulate issues and possible solutions. • They accept the legitimacy of the need and interests of the other party. • There is a degree of goodwill between them. • Perception of conflict as a common problem to be worked out. • Desire to find a solution that meets the needs and interests of both (or all) parties.	• Participants satisfied with the outcome and feel that they gave gained as a result of the conflict • Narrow the conflict in definition, focus and issues in dispute • Limit it to issues of origin, resisting introduction of secondary issues • Direct it towards cooperative problem solving and controlled competition • Trust leadership that stresses mutually satisfactory outcomes	• Focus on desired goals, positive needs, chosen ends • Less intense feelings, or attachment • Conflicts defined narrowly and neutrally with specific issues and cases • Conscious conflicts clearly expressed, openly discussed, frankly owned, heighten the positive bonding qualities of mutual trust, openness to hear, freedom of choice, caring for joint solutions satisfactory to both parties • Assumes the existence of a mutually beneficial solution, a commitment to working jointly towards this goal • Emphasis on persuasion, debate, negotiation, and compromise, consulting, joint problem solving, cooperating in search of creative solutions, conciliating in resolution of differences.
Intractable	**Destructive**	**Competitive**
• May have features unrelated to the issues in contention that may escalate conflict. • Poor or non-existent communication. • Rigidity in positions. • High level of hostility. • Inability to move from initial positions. • Conflict conceptualised in "win-lose" terms. • Little participation on creative problem solving or exploring alternative solutions.	• Dissatisfied with the outcomes and feel that they have lost as a result of the conflict • Expands number of issues, participants, negative attitudes, and self-justifications • Free conflict from initiating causes – it continues after these are irrelevant or forgotten • Escalate into strategies of power and tactics of threat, coercion and deception • Polarise into uniform opinions behind single-minded and militant leadership	• Often instigated by fears, stimulated by aversions, fed by negative feelings • The more intense the feeling, the more invested in and attached to the outcome, the more likely to turn competitive • The more closely attached to self-esteem, on which self-respect is dependent on winning, the more likely to turn competitive • Defining conflicts as issues of principle, the more likely to turn competitive • Unconscious conflicts rising from unexplored feelings, the more likely to turn competitive • The slippery slide of perceptions, distortion, self-deception, unwitting involvement, unaware fears, the need to win and see the other lose
Sources: Augsberger DW <u>Conflict Mediation Across Cultures</u> Terrell A Northrup, <u>The Dynamic of Identity in Personal and Social Conflict</u> in: Kriesberg L, Northrup T, and Thorson S: <u>Intractable Conflicts and There Transformation</u> (Syracuse University Press) at 63.		

Table 2:	The Conflict Spiral	
Threat	• an event that threatens to invalidate the core sense of identity.	• threats may be real, may be imagined • perception is all. See Ury et al re perspective
Distortion	• a psychological response to threat: incoming information is distorted or mis-perceived in order to maintain the core sense of identity • emotional responses are important particularly when communication is poor	• few people communicate effectively when they are angry. They say things they don't mean, or things they would regret if they had been thinking carefully before they spoke • they tend to misinterpret—usually for the worse—things their opponents say • put together, these tendencies cause people to overreact and assume their opponents are far more sinister than they really are
Rigidifcation	• developing increasingly rigid interpretations of the world • a process of crystallising and hardening what is construed as self and non-self • putting distance between the self and the threat • putting distance between the self-group and the other group • the self-group increasingly construes the other party aggressively	• this is manifestation of the *Us* and *Them* divide in a latent a or actual conflict situation • the identification and demarcation of the *Other* • the behaviours and demands of the threatening party, are viewed aggressively • beliefs and even unrelated to the original threat may over time become interpreted as threatening
Projection	• parts of the self that are projected serve to keep distance from the other party (distance between the self and the threat) • a means of avoiding the possibility that you will come to regard the other party as "like-self" • movements towards construing the other as "like-self", such as conciliatory gestures, are highly charged and difficult processes once construct systems become rigidified.	• closely related to rigidification • perceived differences tend to be exaggerated while intragroup differences are minimized • With mis-communication between parties, the situation can deteriorate, • accentuated by the *worst-case* bias that people tend to have toward their opponents (see Table XX)
Stereotyping	• special cases of categorisation which accentuate similarities within groups and differences between groups • stereotypes are a rich resource for making sense of the world. • people use stereotypes when they seem to have explanatory value, give information, provide motivation, or comply with social norms.	• stereotypes aid and abet prejudice • this can lead to the identification of threats and /or enemies • it can provide a powerful motivation to seek out opportunity for conflict. • perceptions that members of another group are hostile, dangerous, threatening, unreliable, and untrustworthy establishes the basis for a relationship in which conflict is inevitable. • such perceptions are often based on a history of conflict and hostility, and the perpetuation of myths and images of the enemy among the group's members • it is assumed that the enemy is the manifestation of all things that are bad, little purpose will be seen in talking to them, as opposed to fighting with them. • put together, these tendencies cause people to overreact and assume their opponents are far more sinister than they really are

Polarisation	• Separation and isolation increases the mis-perception, distortion and stereotyping as the out-group becomes not merely the other but also, potentially, the enemy • Perceptions that members of another group are hostile, dangerous, threatening, unreliable, and untrustworthy establishes the basis for a relationship in which conflict is inevitable. • Such perceptions are often based on a history of conflict and hostility, and the perpetuation of myths and images of the enemy among the group's members • It is assumed that the enemy is the manifestation of all things that are bad, little purpose will be seen in talking to them, as opposed to fighting with them	• Stereotypical beliefs about members of the other community on the basis of what it did, or is alleged to have done, in the past, and on generations of stories and legends, and large quantities of propaganda from both sides, establishes a perception of the enemy which makes conflict virtually inevitable, and conflict resolution very difficult. • This is a process which greatly expands the scope of the conflict by forcing people to choose sides in an attempt to build the strongest coalitions possible
Collusion	• As the separation becomes more extreme, the conflict itself takes on greater importance to both parties. • In a sense they hence collude in prolonging the conflictual relationship. • The conflict, or salient aspects of it, become, in sense, a part of their identity. *We fight therefore we are* (Menachem Begin)	• Collusion may be manifested in various ways that serve to formalise and crystallise the conflict, rituals which sanctify the struggle, celebrate the victorious and the nobly defeated: Kosovo, Galipolli, etc. • It is possible the actual causes of the conflict may be l lost or forgotten in the overlays
Escalation	• this is perhaps the most destructive conflict dynamic • Its' explosive cycle of provocation and counter-provocation eventually results in the replacement of substantive debate with increasingly hateful and sometimes violent confrontations directed more at hurting opponents than advancing interests	• Escalation alone is sufficiently powerful to transform what should be a tractable dispute into one that is virtually impossible to resolve • This process plays a crucial role in the long slide toward war and the crossing of taboo lines which normally restrain our most inhuman impulses. • It can also lead people to take ever more extreme and unjustifiable positions

Sources:
Terrell A Northrup, The Dynamic of Identity in Personal and Social Conflict in: Kriesberg L, Northrup T, and Thorson S: Intractable Conflicts and Their Transformation (Syracuse University Press).

Table 3:	Scenarios & Syndromes of Intractable Conflict	
The framing of an intractable conflict by the parties is a complex and often muddled process in which vague but intense feelings of frustration are transformed into passionate crusades for particular positions.		
Syndrome	**Symptoms**	**Possible Remedy**
Primal scream syndrome	People can simply get so angry that they fall victim this syndrome - they simply vent their frustrations without seriously considering what it would really take to achieve their goals	Techniques which help people think more objectively and clearly about interests even though a win-win solution may not be possible.
Into the sea framing	The parties may pursue this with the objective of making an opponent figuratively or literally disappear from the face of the earth - this unrealistic and immoral goal leaves adversaries with no choice but all-out confrontation.	A solution would require the parties to frame the conflict in ways that would at least provide their opponent with an outcome they could live with.
Unnecessary zero-sum framing	The parties incorrectly assume that a conflict (or sub-conflict) has an irreducible win-lose character when it does not.	Where a tractable conflict can seem quite intractable, standard mediation techniques may guide the parties towards a more realistic outcome
The *worldview* problem	This arises when disputants assume that their opponents see the world the same way that they do. Because disputants then see their opponents as taking an utterly unconscionable position, the only possible explanation is that they are fundamentally evil. In reality opponents' perceptions of the world are usually dramatically different and this different worldview gives them a reasonable, though certainly different, reason for reaching the conclusions that they do.	Joint clarification of the parties' assumptions, beliefs, concerns, and fears, along with their interests, needs and positions, can be helpful in clarifying why people feel (and act) the way they do,
the *recreational complaint* syndrome	Other problems are exacerbated this syndrome—the common practice of gossiping with one's friends and allies about how one's opponents are the source of all evil, while one's own group, of course, is the source of all virtue. The ability of many radio talk shows to exploit this phenomenon underlies both their success and the highly inaccurate images of the world that they often give to their listeners.	This and the next three syndromes can be countered by such communication-improvement techniques as active-listening skills, facilitated dialogues and meetings, rumour control teams, enhanced public speaking skills, and the use of telecommunications technologies to facilitate rapid, accurate, and widespread communication.
the *extremist bias*	This results from the fact that moderate, reasonable people are dull. More interesting, and what the media tends to focus upon, are extreme people and events. This often leads readers and listeners to conclude that these extreme events fairly characterise the opposition and that extreme responses are therefore justified.	Slowing down the pace of events can be beneficial since it provides time for the parties to collect all relevant information and plan a constructive response, rather than reacting to rumours and misinformation without the time to think things through.
I already know syndrome	This problem discourages them from re-evaluating an issue, changing their mind, or even listening to opponents once they have decided what they believe. As a result they are likely to cling to unrealistic stereotypes and not be alert for changes in their opponents' positions or behaviour.	
Communication crises	When people are overtaken by events and simply run out of time to talk and listen.	
The *riding the tiger* strategy	Despite the dangers of escalation, advocates frequently escalate a conflict intentionally—thinking that they can harness to power of escalation to mobilise support for their side. While this may appear to work, it is also likely to build support for the opposition. The common result is the intensification of the conflict, not victory.	De-escalation strategies may be applied to escalation scenarios, including restructuring communication so that it ceases to be perceived as hostile, the use of independent observers, cooling-off periods, magnanimous gestures, and amnesties.
Source: Adapted from: University of Colorado's Conflict Research -.Burgess G and Burgess H Constructive Confrontation Theoretical Framework at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/hwlt96-4.htm		

Part Three: Towards The Constructive Middle

The people of the world respect a nation that can see beyond its own image.
John F Kennedy

The answer lies not in the *Other* fitting in or fleeing. But is it is can be found in *acceptance*, in *including* the stranger, the parvenu?

In *Getting Together*[1], Fisher and Brown laid out six basic steps for initiating, negotiating, and sustaining enduring relationships. These are the basic rules of Conflict Competence that are common to all the writing on managing conflict situations (see Table 4, overleaf).

1	Rationality	balancing emotion with reason
2	Understanding	learning how others see things
3	Communication	always consulting before deciding
4	Reliability	being wholly trustworthy, but not wholly trusting
5	Persuasion	not coercion, negotiating side by side
6	Acceptance	deal seriously with those with whom you differ

Rationality

We often assume that parties are able to handle conflicts and the resolution processes in a rational manner, and that a central factor in dispute resolution is therefore that of clearing up mis-perceptions, by for example, improving communications, increasing information availability, cooperative problem solving, rational, integrative, or "win-win" solutions. But in conflict, and particularly cross-cultural conflict, there is not one meaningful system of "rationality" that is achievable by all parties through productive communications. Instead, there are different "rationalities" or systems of thought that are the result of cultural or other social experiences.

Different cultures have different words, different idioms, they bring to conflict situations their own cultural values. As we have seen in our earlier discussion on the development of intractable conflict, parties operate from different rules and from different basic assumptions about the nature of people and life. People interpret and attribute meanings to events as individuals and as members of groups, and these will be coloured by beliefs based on folk memory, historical precedent, and prejudice. Moreover, they may have different definitions of conflict, and different values concerning how, when, and by whom, and even if conflict should be resolved, as well as different existing formal and informal structures for dealing with conflict[2].

In any conflict, emotions get in the way of rational thinking. We may be lost in our feelings,' fall victim' to our feelings, get stuck in feeling traps, get overcome by our feelings. Become hostage to our feelings and those of our group or cultures. And emotions challenge, interfere with, and intertwine with rationality, that process of thinking, cognitive, cool calm and collected calculation. Impulsive, emotional, desiring, needful qualities are antithetical to rationality and cognition. Sometimes it is hard to work out where one ends and the other takes over! And so, we may fail to 'think straight' when feeling threatened, when under stress, when over-wrought. We may rush into defensive actions, justifying previous behaviours, rational thought and action be obfuscated by the unwitting defensive reactions of anxious, emotional actors.[3]

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[1] Fisher, R. & Brown, S. <u>Getting Together: Building Relationships As We Negotiate</u>, Penguin Books 1988

[2] Augsberger provides a cogent analysis of differing conflict behaviours. He writes how some cultures prefer directness, specificity, and frankness in stating demands, confrontation and open disclosure. Others tend towards indirect, ambiguous, caution, non-confrontational, and subtle ways of working through communication and relational tangles. Tactfulness and indirect speech may be preferred in one culture whilst openness and directness are preferred in another. ibid. (at 28). The use of assertiveness, even if balanced with an equal affirmativeness, may in many settings be counter-productive since a much more cautious, flexible and affiliative approach may be demanded by cultural values and practises. id. at 39

[3] In a conflict situation, particularly if it involves violence, feelings are likely to be more important than thoughts, and when armed conflict is involved, obstacles to joint-problem solving are all but insurmountable, disputants seldom being offered the opportunity to explore each others' interests or jointly to explore options. Fisher R, Kopelman E, & Kupfer Schneider A. <u>Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict,</u> Penguin Books 1994 at 24

Table 4.	Rules of Conflict Competence

1. Open lines of communication and keep them open
2. Be objective
3. Show empathy
4. Take their side
5. Bridge the differences
6. Make it hard for them to say no
7. Enlist their support
8. Convince rather than threaten
9. Keep choices open
10. Don't get emotional ie. have better control over your emotions

Remain objective
- Stay Centred ;do not polarise
- Stay creative: do not negatives
- Stay calm; tolerate ambivalence
- Do not homogenise
- Do not regress under stress
- Challenge the intrusion of *either-or* thinking
- Resist stereotypical and reductionist explanations of the other's motives
- Stay focused on your goals
- Recognise the other person's tactics
- Be aware of your emotional reactions
- Be aware of the other person's emotional reactions
- Stop before you speak

Taking their side
- Actively listen
- Paraphrase/reflect
- Express your thoughts/viewpoint in a non-provocative manner
- Use open questions
- Use "I" to express your feelings, and "We" to indicate common purpose
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Acknowledge their viewpoint
- Agree where possible
- Apologise if necessary/where warranted (a sign of strength and confidence)
- Project confidence

Show Empathy
- Show concern
- Acknowledge their POV
- Press your own non-provocatively
- Agree where possible

Open lines of communication
- Keep them open
- Do not withdraw
- Do not cut the relationship
- Attempt dialogue rather than isolating from or fighting the other party

Freely adapted from:
Fisher, R. & Brown, S. Getting Together: Building Relationships As We Negotiate, Penguin Books1988
Fisher, R. Kopelman, E. & Kupfer Schneider, A. Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict, Penguin Books 1994
Fisher, R. & Uri, W. Getting to Yes, Arrow Books 1997
Tillett.G. Resolving Conflict- A Practical Approach, OUP 1997
Toporov, B. The Complete Idiot's Guide To Getting Along With Difficult People, Alpha Books 1997
Ury, W. Getting Past No (Bantam 1993)

Understanding

Assuming we are able to jump the hurdle of rationality, we hit the wall of empathy.

To see your fellows as ordinary human beings like yourself, you have to have self-confidence. If you have self-confidence, you do not have to do things to build yourself up when you feel weak and vulnerable. When someone casts you in the role of enemy, they turn you into an object. They close their minds to seeing you as a person. But create opportunities to show yourself as human, as reasonable, and this almost always reduces hostility: personal contact promotes understanding. [1]

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[1] Augsberger, op cit. at 63: The more secure one group experiences and expresses creatively, the more secure are its neighbours, the clearer and more positive the identity of one people, the more clearly they perceive and experience the identities of those who adjoin them. ie. if you are comfortable with yourself, you are more tolerant and understanding of others – you have less Fear of the Other! Hence the so-called Chardonnay Set are more giving/understanding re. Reconciliation, saying *Sorry*, than those who see themselves as missing out, forgotten, left-behind by multiculturalism, globalisation etc. Are tolerance and understanding virtues that some people cannot afford?

Paul Hemphill, Newtown, May 2001   15

In discussing the transformative nature of reconciliatory forgiveness, Augsberger refers to I-It *relationships where in regard the other party as an object, a thing (the concern is with the self, not the other or the relationship) and* I-Thou *relationships.*[1]

…seeing the self from the other's perspective, so decentring of the self, reversal of one's past behaviour in repentance and reciprocity in relationship become possible.[2]

Releasing the straitjacket of GroupThink is easier said than done. Teacher Jane Elliott's films are confronting and confrontational exercise in the art of putting oneself in another's shoes, roles plays in which school children in the fist instance and later, adults are forced to spend a day in the life of the under-class – in Elliott's work, African Americans in a white-Anglo-Saxon society.[3] But this was an extreme, controlled, exercise, not readily available to parties in conflict. We are not innately equipped to walk a mile in another's shoes. Writing about attendees at her *Managing Differences* Course, Professor Amanda Sinclair noted that:

For many of these students, learning about differences meant learning the habits of 'others', not learning about themselves and how they react to difference.[4]

Not for us Douglas Adam's extremely useful artefact:

There's a whole new thing that wasn't in the book – the Point of View Gun, a vicious looking weapon, and when you shoot it at somebody, they suddenly see things from your point of view. Enormously confusing – it's so logically complicated to make that work on a gun battle with everybody firing away.[5]

So it is a tough call. Education may be a practical first step, for as Pascal notes, *Fear and hate, deadly self-destructive psychological poisons, are both products of ignorance.*[6] And: *If ignorance is the cause of all suffering, then the antidote must be knowledge.*[7] Augsberger puts this into a cross-cultural perspective:

Who knows but one culture, knows no culture. We come to knowledge at the boundary. Who knows only one way of dealing with disputes knows little about conflict. We come to under stand human relationships by encountering the other, by going beyond our own familiar ways of working through confusion, conflict, and change to see new pathways, new patterns, and perhaps, new ways of creating peace.[8]

But in a conflict situation, it is a bit too late to be going back to school.

Making Contact

The first steps: rationality and understanding. And then, opening lines of communication and keeping them open. And in an *Us* and *Them* situation where conflict is latent or actual, these are perhaps the most difficult steps of all.

You have to move away from the perception of the *Other* as *It*, towards recognising the Other as a partner in an endeavour to establish relations on a satisfactory footing. Then you have to begin the painful and gradual process of building trust and good will upon a foundation of emerging mutual understanding of each others positions, interests, needs and expectations.

To make these first steps, one must break the grip of subjectivity, the trap that is one's own perception of history, of events of the conflict itself.[9] Objective reality is unlikely either to be the cause of the problem or the source of a

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[1] ibid. at 279-282

[2] ibid. at 280

[3] *A Class Divided* and *Blue Eyed*

[4] Australian Financial Review 5th Jan 2001 Sinclair is Professor of Management, Melbourne Business School, Univ of Melbourne.

[5] A last interview with Douglas Adams (of *A Hitchhiker's Guide to The Galaxy* fame), Sydney Morning Herald 19th May 2000

[6] op cit. at 22

[7] id. at 43

[8] op cit. at 8

[9] See: Fisher R. & Uri W Getting to Yes, Arrow Books 1997.: the parties see the world from their own vantagepoint. People tend to see what they want to see (at 23) and frequently confuse perceptions with reality. Misunderstandings reinforce prejudice and lead to reactions that produce counter reactions in a vicious circle (at 19). *Ultimately, conflict lies not in objective reality but in people's heads. Truth is simply one more argument – perhaps a good one, perhaps not – for dealing with the difference. The difference itself exists because it exists in their thinking, Fears, even if unfounded, are real fears and need to be dealt with. Hopes, even if unrealistic, may cause a war. Facts, even if*

solution because so much of what is behind a conflict is based on the parties' perceptions of it. We often handle conflict poorly because we are each prisoners of our own thinking. We selectively remember what we want to; we selectively recall what we remember; and we revise our memories to fit our preferences. Coping with conflict, therefore, means coping with the way people think and feel. And in a conflict situation, particularly if it has involved violence, feelings are likely to be more important than thoughts. And when emotions are high, objectivity is absent: angry people often fail to hear what others have to say.[1]

And under stress, we regress to earlier learnings, and since defensive conflict behaviours were often learned in fragmented, distorted fashion for experiences of high anxiety and tension, they may be our least functional behaviours. Regression to the conflict patters that did not serve us well, even in our own culture, is no solution for coping with new conflicts in a foreign situation. Cues get mixed, signals scrambled, people become angry, embarrassed, or reduced to inaction by the failure of scenarios to come off as planned. [2] And angry people often fail to hear what others have to say.[3] Hence, the need to break the grip of subjectivity and emotion, to try and make sure we are getting at what is real on the minds of the parties to the dispute, and not at what we think should be on their minds.[4]

Communication is more than just meeting and talking. It is more than consulting before deciding. It also about reading the signals, understanding messages. It is both verbal and non-verbal. It is physical, and it is also neurological. Each culture has its own way of saying things, expressing things in both words and gestures, going about things, and indeed, thinking about things - linguistic groups are understood to possess different thought processes too.[4] In short, effective communication ensures that *what is meant is said*, and *what is said is meant*; *what is said is heard*, and *what is meant is understood* (Table 5). And here, we face the all too human difficulties of hearing what is said, understanding what is meant, saying what you feel, what you want.[5]

Without communication, there is can be no negotiation; and if the parties are not hearing what the other side is saying, there is no communication.[5] Each must try to understand the message as the other side hears it. Assumptions must be questioned and perspectives reframed to enable the other side to understand. And in cross-cultural conflict, this is particularly difficult. The emotional, verbal, and behavioural cues for signalling conflict are so different between cultures that outside observers may easily misjudge the intensity and character of conflict in interpersonal, inter-groups, and inter-cultural relations.[6]

Getting the parties together and talking to each other is the end of the beginning rather than the beginning of the end of the conflict resolution process. Are the parties indeed ready to "go to the table"? Sometimes, hostility may be so intense that communication would be unproductive. Some may prefer to maintain or escalate the conflict to

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*established, may do nothing to solve the problem (*at 23) Don't deduce their intentions from your fears. It is all too easy to fall into the habit of putting the worst interpretation on what the other side says or does.
And, in p20: *Objective reality is unlikely to be either the cause of the problem or the source of a solution*.

[1] Beyond Machiavelli, op.cit. at 21-24

[2] Augsberger, op cit at 24: *It has been written that every social encounter is an imminent disaster. Cues get mixed, signals scrambled, people become angry, embarrassed, or reduced to inaction by the failure of scenarios to come off as planned.* All these multifactorial, multilevel, multiple meaning signals, cues, and behaviours leave the knowledgeable participant confused and the outsider confounded. Attempted intervention or mediation by one external to the culture inevitable misses cues, scrambles data, and confuses primary and secondary issues at best. At worst, such an outsider utilises tactics least likely to facilitate an opening of communication that will clarify differences and enable conciliation. at 25

[3] Beyond Machiavelli op cit. at 24

[4] Augsberger, op cit. at 27 He writes, at 41: *Through exploring the emotions and motivations leading to a conflict, we can increase our understanding of whare the perceptions come from. We can appreciate the basis for their positions and judgements. Becoming aware of the interests that lie behind their positions can focus our attention on the possibility of meeting some of those interests. Such awareness can also give us insight into where there may be room for accord.*

[4] See Appendix 6: *Stereotype or Negotiating Style?*

[5] How often have we heard, in the midst of conflict, when it dawns on the parties that there may indeed be another side to the argument, the words *I didn't know* or *I didn't realise*. The is a scourge of modern life, a kind of fast-food MacWorld of individualism, anomie and isolation wherein we are so preoccupied with our own passions and problems that we fail to see what is going on about us, and are deaf and blind to the needs, feelings, interests and views of others. Out of ignorance and/or pre-occupation, we take the line of least resistance into dispute and estrangement. Once we take the time to understand, to listen, to hear the other's point of view, the scales fall from our eyes. Hence, Table 5.

[5] Getting to Yes, op cit at33-34

[6] Augsberger op cit. at 39. quoting J Krauss. He writes that there exists always the problem of cross-cultural relativity in the perception of conflict. Harmony may be observed where there is, in fact, deep-seated antagonism. He notes also how the differing concepts of honour, dignity and face exert a powerful influence over how different cultures address conflict and its resolution, eg. in Asian and Middle Eastern societies, and the powerful drivers of such concepts as manhood and manliness, and of communal and national pride. He notes also how cultural diversity is often reinforced by economic gaps and power disparities (at 7). So, when two individuals, or groups in conflict prefer employ contrasting modes of verbal and non-verbal communication, differing styles of reasoning, and embrace differing interpretations of self, society, the world, and the cosmos, there will inevitably be greater potential for misunderstanding and discontent with each other. (see 33-35) In short, what is acceptable or expected behaviour in a conflict situation in one culture will be inappropriate, ineffective and maybe even inflammatory in another.

heighten public awareness of their plight! This is particularly the case with disempowered groups trapped in an unjust status quo. Is there indeed a deep felt desire (as opposed even to a need) for a peaceful resolution.

But, once the parties have come to terms with their emotions, endeavoured to learn how the other side see things, and are beginning to communicate, how can they now establish and consolidate trust and goodwill? How can communication breakdown be pre-empted?

TABLE 5: Communication...Saying and Meaning… Hearing and Understanding …and Active Listening.

❑ Communication works. Keep people informed and up to date. Bring them into the picture.

❑ Its is not what you say, but how you say it.

❑ Language can provoke conflict. It can also encourage its resolution.

❑ Effective communication: what is meant is said, and what is said is meant; what is said is heard, and what is meant is understood. Conversely, what is understood is actually what is meant.

- The message that is sent may not be the one that was intended.
- The sender may distort the message, either consciously or subconsciously.
- The message may not be clear. It may be vague, and it will be distorted.
- The receiver may receive the message, but not the message intended.
- Resulting conflict may appear to the receiver to have been provoked by the sender.
- The receiver's assumptions, perceptions, expectations, and projections may distort the message.

❑ Saying and meaning, hearing and understanding are effected and distorted by a number of factors, both external and internal to the participants. Noise, interruptions, the presence of others…fear of conflict., eagerness to engage in conflict, anxiety to avoid conflict…all can ensure that messages sent and received are distorted or incomplete. These also depend on the education and literacy of the listener, and also the social, political and cultutral baggage that both the speaker and listener carry..

❑ Active listening: ensuring that the message received is the message intended to be sent, that what is said is what is meant, and that what is meant is understood.

❑ To be effective, communication should involve motivation to communicate, effective disclosure, clear, precise messages, assertiveness, clarity of thought and language, empathy, effective listening, and an appropriate environment. (p29)

❑ Clearly communicate and clearly understand communication.

❑ Identify the goal of the communication.

❑ Identify the key message(s)

❑ Set practical and attainable goals.

❑ Avoid complex messages.

❑ Beak it down into smaller pieces if necessary.

❑ Reflect how the receiver of the message may feel – that is, be empathic. Put yourself in their shoes.

❑ Watch out for barriers to communication and barriers to meaning

- noise
- distractions
- listeners/observers
- interruptions
- physical discomfort

❑ Verbal and non-verbal communications that prevent their listener's understanding of what is meant: criticising, name-calling, ordering, threatening, moralising, avoiding, and diverting.

❑ Consider what a person does not wish to communicate, and how this person might be motivated to do so.

Freely adapted from:
Fisher, R. & Brown, S. Getting Together: Building Relationships As We Negotiate, Penguin Books1988
Fisher, R. Kopelman, E. & Kupfer Schneider, A. Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict, Penguin Books 1994
Fisher, R. & Uri, W. Getting to Yes, Arrow Books 1997
Tillett.G. Resolving Conflict- A Practical Approach, OUP 1997
Toporov, B. The Complete Idiot's Guide To Getting Along With Difficult People, Alpha Books 1997
Ury, W. Getting Past No (Bantam 1993)

The Constructive Middle

Laurence Susskind encapsulated this in a discussion of reconciliation and apology[1]…

When you and your neighbour have a terrible fight, and you are still going to be living next door to each other, you'd l[...] to take some logical steps to restore the relationship. What is the first thing you do in that situation? You apologise. Y[...] say: "Listen! I'm sorry things got out of hand. I don't think it was all my fault, but things got out of hand. We have to beg[...] to out things back together".

You begin with an apology. Next thing, you say: "Look, I understand your concerns. Do you understand mine? Le[...] make sure we each speak the other's concerns". Without that engagement, without that step, there will be [...] reconciliation. Next, we need to engage in a series of small steps – we say confidence-building measures. You ca[...] unilaterally say: " am going to help you trust me; and I am going to propose the steps I am going to take to help you tr[...] me". You can't do it unilaterally!

This is about dialogue. And the dialogue begins with apology. It is followed by each speaking their concerns to the oth[...] to attempt to establish trust. This is followed by a collaborative effort to name some small steps. It is followed then [...] partnering with regard to implementing things jointly.

And you must be consistent in word and deed. He continues*: If you say you mean it but then you don't act upon it, th[...] doesn't get you anywhere. If you say "believe me, I care about reconciliation" on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, bu[...] is Tuesday and you are going to take an action that is inconsistent with that – then you are not even at step one!*

But, he concludes: *I am assuming that people of goodwill will want reconciliation.*

And therein lies the rub! You can take a horse to water…

In the same interview, the host, Kerry O'Brien, asked Susskind his views on the breakdown of communication betwe[...] a major institution and the broad public, - how once the banks were seen as part of the fabric of the community, and a[...] now on the nose, seen as greedy, more concerned about profits rather that about their place in the community. T[...] banks, he said, protest that they have to work in a competitive environment, have to cut numbers, services, branche[...] that they had a responsibility to there shareholders. Susskind replies:

You have an industry, the banking industry, that's acting on the following principle: Decide. Announce. Defend. It i[...] recipe for a worst reaction to what you have to do than almost any prescription you can come up with. The alternative [...] Consult Before Deciding! You have a community where you (the bank) thinks a bank branch isn't viable. Se[...] somebody to sit and talk with that community and say: under what circumstances could this bank branch or regio[...] version of it, become sufficiently profitable for the bank to keep it. Before you make a decision, hunker down, a[...] defend it, engage in a dialogue!

Susskind guides us through those six stages[2] to negotiating side by side, in effect transforming the conflict, by enabli[...] communication, and thence building cooperation, trust, mutual respect, and break down the walls that divide us.[3] Bo[...] Northrup and Augsberger have charted this transformation of conflict from intractability to tractability. Their respecti[...] theses are summarised in Table 6.

And the key to transformation is overcoming the polarising pathologies that we have identified earlier. Susski[...] encapsulates it thus: When two sides are locked into an apparently intractable conflict, he maintains,

You must engage the constructive middle. When you lose the constructive middle, extremists on all sides a[...] empowered.[4]

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[1] *7.30 Report*, ABC TV, 22nd March 2001

[2] Page 13 above

[3] Augsberger op cit. at 63 quotes Axelrod's *five factors* for build cooperation, trust, mutual respect, and break down the walls that divide us: 1.Enlarge the shadow of the future – making the future worth working for, more worthwhile; 2. Change the pay-offs – incentives for cooperation; 3.Teach people to care about each other, to value the welfare of others; 4.Teach reciprocity; and 5.Improve recognition abilities…recognise other persons, recall other interactions, appreciate individual identities, welcome future cooperation opportunities. In short, moving from I-It to I –We.

[4] *7.30 Report*, ABC TV, 22nd March 2001

Augsberger too: *Harmful and dangerous elements drive out those who would keep the conflict within bounds*.[1]
Only he refers not to extremists as such but to extreme feelings, perceptions and the like.

Table 6:	The Transformation of Conflict

AUGSBERGER : Building cooperation, trust, and mutual respect,

1. Transforming attitudes: by changing and redirecting negative perceptions, by each committing to see the other with goodwill, to define the conflict in terms of mutual respect, and to maintain attitudes of collaborative and cooperative intent.

2. Transforming behaviour, by limiting all action to collaborative behaviour; seeking non-coercive processes of communication, negotiation and dispute resolution; by commitment by parties to act with restraint and mutual respect, and to change the dynamics of the negotiation from mistrust to trust.

3. Transforming conflict by seeking to discover, define and remove incompatibilities by creative design, invent options for mutual gain. In negative conflicts, incompatibilities are seen as essentially problematic, so attitudes become destructively negative, and behaviour is divisive and alienating. Such negative modelling of conflict is present in most person's behavioural repertoire from early childhood (but each element can be relearned and reframed into a positive metaphor and re-experienced in mutuality)

NORTHRUP :The transformation of Intractability to Tractability

1. Level One
- Settlement versus Transformation.
- Changes that are peripheral to the identities of the parties.
- Peripheral changes have minimal impact on the central problem, which is that the parties' identities are enmeshed in the conflict itself.
- Such changes have little or no impact on future relations between the parties.

2. Level Two
- Changes less peripheral, though not core to the identities of the parties, but nevertheless involve changes to the dynamics of the relationship between the parties – but no immediate change in their actual identities.
- The experience of relating in some significantly different way can, over time, create change in identity.
- In recognition of each other, the parties may be forced to legitimise each other and recognize the existence and importance of each other.
- This may result in a redefinition of the self/other construct in the relationship with the former enemy.

3. Level Three
- Changes that occur in the identities of the parties, in the core self of one or both contenders, particularly if the change involves core aspects of identity that are directly related to the conflict.
- This could in the long-term result in changes in behaviours.
- Often change is brought about by the behaviour of dissenters within one of the conflicting parties. When level three change occurs, there is a sense of shared existence and common identity.
- A sense of "we" replaces the "us/them"split.
- This doesn't necessarily imply that the parties become like each other, but that they accept their difference, possibly even value them.
- But these changes are not likely occur quickly, and generally are considered to require long-term effort.

Sources:
Augsberger DW Conflict Mediation Across Cultures
Terrell A Northrup, The Dynamic of Identity in Personal and Social Conflict in: Kriesberg L, Northrup T, and Thorson S: Intractable Conflicts and Their Transformation (Syracuse University Press), at 63.

This constructive middle, representative of the conflicting parties, keeping its emotions and perceptions in check, must get together, often in an informal dialogue, producing detailed proposals on all the substantive issues that are to be addressed (even if these do not become part of the formal negotiations. The key is establishing and keeping open communications, ongoing dialogue, collaborative addressing of issues and working on possible solutions. Those transformative, confidence-building, small steps taken jointly, hastening slowly.

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[1] op cit. at 48

However, the difficulties of direct, face-to-face, unmediated, negotiations are many.

Power differentials between parties are heightened, with respect to the resources (political, economic, social) available to each, and the negotiating skills, education, and articulateness of the individuals involved. The decision making process rests wholly upon the principals with all the polarisation and subjectivity that may involve. If intense confrontation is possible, it is likely one party has sufficient power to coerce the other. If a power-induced decision is reached, the likelihood of it being maintained is low and chances of a boomerang effect, high. A compromise out of painful confrontation may be an escape from tension rather than a satisfactory resolution and may become the basis for future conflicts. And direct negotiation tends to continue the flight, extend the coercion, support the manipulation, and merely transform the conflict from covert to overt modalities.[1]

Edward de Bono writes that disputants are in the worst position to solve their own dispute, the least equipped to design a solution to the tensions of hostility, the loss of trust, the resulting suspicion, the impulse to secrecy, the biased communications, and the concretisation of position-taking.[2] The repetition of patterns and explanations that have become habitual, familiar, and twisted can render the disputants impotent.[3]

Given the difficulty of overcoming the psychological and logistical problems associated with resolving conflict between parties from different cultures, the idea of bringing a third party to mediate is an attractive one in intractable conflicts.

The Promise of Mediation

Third party interventions can contribute to problem-solving by making sure that disputants attack the problem rather than each other, and by keeping the focus on interests rather than on positions.[4] If the parties have unrealistic assessments of their situation should the negotiations fail, a neutral evaluation of the walk-away alternatives may be indicated.[5] Augsberger writes that a competent mediator can assist parties in many ways.- in breaking open the conflict, untangling the issues, the behaviour going on between the parties, the conflict that enmeshes them, separating people (and their attitudes and actions) from the problems (the conflict situations): supportive of people as they clarify their own views and values whilst being confrontational with the conflict situation itself ie. hard on the issues soft on the people! Table 7 summarises the promise that mediation offers in cross-cultural conflict, drawing upon Augsberger and Susskind.[6] It also highlights the difficulties facing cross-cultural mediation, also the skills required.

Table 7:	The Promise of Mediation
A third party may be necessary	**The 3rd Party**
• because parties are bogged down by tradition, training and complacency in the argument mode of thinking. • the parties may not be able to carry out certain thinking operations because these would not be consistent with their positions in the conflict. – anger and frustration can cloud good judgement • They may fail to focus on the issues by adopting adversarial positions • Disputes may have become internalised and	• third party interventions can contribute to problem-solving by making sure that disputants attack the problem rather than each other, and by keeping the focus on interests rather than on positions • may offer information or introduce an intervention in the dispute to break a negative cycle – or to turn it to positive ends • can seek to achieve a balance in the power situation of the parties. Any power differential will undermine trust and inhibit dialogue…symmetry in situational

[1] id. at 193-194

[2] Edward de Bono Conflicts (Penguin 1992) at 92

[3] Augsberger op cit. at 156

[4] Beyond Machiavelli, op cit. at 123

[5] id. at 125

[6] *Multi-Party Public Policy Mediation: A Separate Breed*, Lawrence Susskind. American Bar Association website http://www.abanet.org/dispute/magazine/f97suss.html

• personalised • both parties must be self-motivated to enter into give and take negotiation • if the parties have unrealistic assessments and expectations of their situation with respect to positions and outcomes, and, should the negotiations fail, a neutral evaluation of the walk-away alternatives may be indicated • the parties may be bogged down by positions– by issues, personalities, and history - rather than impelled by interests •	power: attempt to guarantee equity, favour the least articulate • help achieve a balance in the reciprocal confrontations between the parties – so the at apparently premature actions by either will not be misinterpreted • listen and communicate, and be non-judgemental in both • facilitate communication to enable clear deciphering and interpreting of each other's messages • assess the degree of openness in the dialogue and introduce processes to free the interaction… • maintain an optimum level of tension in the negotiations • be neutral on content and outcome and be hard on process and soft on content
Mediation • offers an external agent with alternative and additional information, experience, and expertise, who can provide resources and motivation • offers a neutral who can facilitate, educate, and guide the parties through a structured resolution process • can provide alternatives beyond those which the parties themselves can generate • keeps in focus the visible prejudices, values, stereotypes, fears and needs of both parties and their communities in a way either is able to do for him/herself • invites and often ensures full participation and full communication between the parties • can equalise power differentials and provide maximum opportunities for both parties • gives freedom for both parties to express and explain their sides of the dispute without limits on the style or content • decreases confusion, cultural misunderstandings, and individual limitations to make the proceedings intelligible to all • aims to reduce largely psychological obstacles that prevent hostile parties coming together for constructive negotiation	**Mediation allows disputants and their supporters to** • talk to each other in a verbal style that is natural, comfortable, and mutually intelligible to all parties • ventilate anger and frustration in a free and appropriately open and therapeutic fashion • receive an increased sense of power and personal worth • gain access to a readily available, quick and inexpensive forum • equalise or re-align status and interpersonal power struggles by promoting an egalitarian ethic • re-establish and realign the persons, place, and sense of belonging in the relevant social group • learn about other parties' cultures and perhaps learn to understand and to tolerate them • learn to work together side-by-side in joint effort and joint problem- solving • get their rights recognised as legitimate by the very fact of being 'on the table' and often, the public record • develop problem solving skills in general and dispute resolution skills in particular
The mediator • remains outside the conflict itself, refusing to slip in to the role of judge, adviser or advocate on content or policy issues • acts as a cultural bridge between the conflicting parties, reframing value-laden concepts in a non-judgemental, non-provocative manner • if competent, can assist parties in breaking open the conflict, untangling the issues, the behaviour going on between the parties, the conflict that enmeshes them, separating people (and their attitudes and actions) from the problems (the conflict situations • is supportive of people as they clarify their own views and values whilst being confrontational with the conflict situation itself ie. hard on the issues soft on the people! • maintains caring neutrality – the commitment not to a particular outcome but to end the suffering of both	**The mediator must be able to** • identify who are the stakeholders, and endeavour to include them in the mediation • determine the preferred process, eg. formal or informal; face to face or shuttle, and establish the right conditions, paying due deference to cultural norms and protocols • see and perceive with a measure of creativity and objectivity, including being aware of nuances of speech and body language (active listening and perceiving) • be non-judgemental and avoid provocative, value-laden language • define and clarify, to separate and discern • link and focus the parties and reconcile opposites • contribute creative skills eg. offer • a probe (question, observation, proverb, quotation)

• parties • seeks to progressively sharpen his/her basic skills of empathy, active listening, sensitivity to the needs of the parties, sense of timing, verbal and nonverbal communications skills, capacity to maintain neutrality while remaining in contact, and ability to understand the stages of negotiation and conflict resolution	• a provocation (reversal, exaggeration, paradox, contradiction) • a picture (metaphor, story, case, image) • a principle (basic assumption that the parties hold in common, goal they now share, value they have both affirmed) • pirate and promote ideas • review issues and concepts, provide an overview enabling parties to broaden their perspectives • develop a sixth sense for timing
Difficulties facing Cross-cultural Mediation • defining the role of the mediator –how the mediator is viewed by the parties – as a neutral? An equal? A judge? a participant? a party, even? (in some cultures, a mediator can indeed be part of the dispute, his/her reputation or face dependent on the outcome). • there are almost always great many parties, and not all of them are obvious • it may be hard to know exactly who the stakeholders are and who can speak for them. • bringing these groups together to resolve differences is a laborious task • ground rules have to be negotiated anew in each such situation • participants are likely to have diametrically opposed views of what will happen if negotiations fail • mediation may have to be handled by teams of mediators – too much work, too many parties • things that can go wrong when attempts are made to bring made parties together to tackle a complex issue • the impatience of many convening authorities • mediators may bring **their** cultural and other baggage to the table • it may be necessary "to go slow to go fast." - unless all the pre-negotiation logistics are handled with great care (to give the overall effort the necessary credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the stakeholders), the entire process is likely to falter before it is completed • one or more parties may resist a consensus building effort • the parties may be confused about what the process entails • a key party may not accept the basic premise that mediation is voluntary, and remains so right up until the final agreement is signed • mediation is very dependent on the environment, the pressure to resolve the dispute, the motivation of the parties, and the resources available • perceptions relating to neutrality and power are problematical for all mediations • there may be a perception that the process may be just an exercise in middle class or first-world patronisation or manipulation • these difficulties hinder the development of legitimacy and credibility for dispute resolution processes, and work against the adequate understanding, acceptance and commitment to these processes on the part of the stakeholders	**Skills required for cross-cultural mediation** • mediators need to know something about the substantive milieu in which they are working and be aware f the cultural assumptions of the parties • mediators must be aware of the temporal realities of the milieu. In some contexts, time is not an issue • mediators must be extremely sensitive to the larger context of their work • attempted intervention or mediation by one external to the culture inevitably misses cues, scrambles data, and confuses primary and secondary issues at best. • a mediator unfamiliar with the culture may utilise tactics least likely to facilitate an opening of communication that will clarify differences and enable conciliation • mediators must be highly eclectic in their approach to problem solving. • a passive mediation style in a situation that requires a high level of mediator activism may result in failure • But an activist mediation style can overwhelm or put off a group of participants who expect the mediator to play a low-key role. • mediators must match their approach to the demands of the situation • mediators must be attuned to the contracts and continuities across cultures. • mediators must give equal attention both person and problem, to relationships and goals and to private interests as well as public positions
Is mediation the answer	**Even if mediation fails, there are still gains**

• parties may not be ready for mediation, may not want it, and may have to be brought gradually to to the idea by a gradual, educational process • parties may want to be directed, to have their conflict arbitrated and adjudicated • what of the necessity of redressing power imbalances? If this is achieved, it is often fleeting, temporary, illusory even, if the status quo ante merely re-asserts itself once the mediation is over and the parties have departed from the mediation environment • parties are empowered during the process, but return to the real world with their powerlessness. Why the need to redress power imbalances that cannot in reality be redressed? Perhaps these should be merely acknowledged and taken into account in the process	• even where the dispute is not fully resolved, mediation might provide other benefits. For example: • parties discover each others concerns and interests • venting of emotions in a positive environmental the consequent lowering of hostility and antagonism • defining the dispute more clearly • prioritising the issues in dispute • generating a range of optional 'solutions'; agreeing on procedures or methods to resolve substantive issues • forcing the parties to confront the conflict and not abdicate responsibility of settlement decisions • providing a model for constructive problem-solving for use in subsequent disputes • the demonstration of empowerment and equality of a weaker party can have a downstream, heuristic influence on both parties as they take away with them the experiences and lessons of the process

Sources include:
Augsberger DW Conflict Mediation Across Cultures
Multi-Party Public Policy Mediation: A Separate Breed, Lawrence Susskind. American Bar Association
Boule L, Mediation –Principles, Process, Practise, Butterworths1996

Letting Go…

In the preceding pages, we have considered aspects of the nature of conflict that arises out of *the Fear of the Other*. We have focussed particularly on the behaviours that arise in deep-value conflict, often resulting in a spiral of polarisation and escalation, and discus the difficulties that these create for conflict management and resolution. We observe that that the difficulties of direct, face-to-face, unmediated, negotiations are many, and that given the difficulty of overcoming the psychological and logistical problems associated with resolving conflict between parties from different cultures, the idea of bringing a third party to mediate is an attractive one in intractable conflicts.

Mediation does indeed hold out much promise in the resolution of conflict – whether between individuals, groups, communities or cultures. But the pitfalls are many and various, and the outcomes, unsure, as Table 7 illustrates. But, even if ostensibly unsuccessful, even if outcomes are inconclusive, a mediation process may actually achieve goals of bringing people together to resolve their differences, of improving communications, and of increasing their awareness of their own and others' needs and interests.

But it must be stressed that all third party interventions in conflicts are about change and changing – asking people to change how they think and feel about each other, about resolving what has happened, and about moving onto what will happen. Ideally, there will be a degree of closure, an intention to put the past behind, to let go, to move forward.

But in reality, this is not a realistic expectation, particularly when there is too much to abandon, forgive, forget. Sometimes the wounds are just too deep, and can never fully heal. There may always be an itch that cannot be scratched, residual bitterness, enmity, and hurt. Hence the conflict is never fully resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, and whilst people may be prepared to bury the hatchet under immediate circumstances and pressures, there are some among them who will always remember where it is buried. The globe is littered with intractable conflicts that have resisted closure for these very reasons, notwithstanding years of negotiation and mediation. All display the tattered colours of their history, the bane of blood and soil, the hatreds born of oppression and betrayal, the hopes and the fears of passing and future generations. [1]

Hence the importance of the *management* of conflict as opposed to *resolution*. Hence the emphasis on gradualism, on a step-by-step transformation as advocated by Northup, Augsberger and Susskind. Hence the need to focus on the objective, the achievable, the here and now: tangible goals, tangible outcomes, as opposed to subjective outcomes and wish lists. And particularly, given the nature of conflict that has its genesis in the *Fear of The Other*, at the interface between *Us* and *Them*. Hence the need to recognise the importance of feelings and emotions, and the

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[1]The list is endless. For example, the multiple flashpoints in the Middle East (Palestine, and the Israel-Syria stand-off); the perennially volcanic successors to the former Jugoslavia and the Soviet Union; incipient fragmentation in Indonesia; civil strife in Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe, and South Africa; the arduous road to reconciltion between White society and indeginous peoples in Australia, New Zealand, and North America.

ability to pacify them, when getting an outcome demands a degree of suppression of feelings, and indeed their sublimation. It is part of the process of 'letting go, a recognition that the past cannot be un-made, that bygones are indeed bygone.[2]

*Sorry is just a **little** word, but it is a **very powerful** word*
Desmond Tutu

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[2] Augsberger providies a very cogent and poignant conclusion to his book with his last chapter: *Reconciliaton: The Many Faces of Foregiveness*. Forgiveness is the completion of the journey from *I-It* to *I-Thou.*

Paul Hemphill, Newtown, May 2001   25

Appendices

A sampler of articles gleaned from Australian Newspapers that illustrate and/or call out the fear and loathing implicit in the genesis and exacerbation of the *Fear of the Other*

1. The Story of Allende's Desk: A Parable
2. It All Depends What You Mean By Sorry
3. Of Middle Eastern Appearance
4. Bush Plays Foreign Card To Justify His Gift To Big Oil
5. Why Following The Jedi Faith Makes Perfect Census
6. Stereotype or Negotiating Style?
7. Challenging A Dictatorship Of The Word

The Story of Allende's Desk: A Parable

To rephrase Euripedes, those whom the state wishes to destroy, it first demonises[1].

When the president of Chile was killed in the military coup d'etat that brought Augusto Pinochet to power in September 1973, ex post facto justification for the bloody coup and its equally bloody aftermath was provided by the content of the drawers in the dead presidents desk. Though never corroborated, there were alleged to contain proof of an imminent communist takeover, and evidence of drug taking and black magic.

Cut to Panama in December 1989, and the US invasion of Panama, ostensibly to take out strongman and erstwhile ally Emmanuel Noriega. There, in the ruins of the city, was Allende's desk. The same communist literature, the drugs, the voodoo[2].

Cut to Mogadishu, Somalia, December 1992. US marines led a doomed UN intervention to take out the warlord. Mohamed Farah Aideed. And although the villain decamped unscathed, guess what he left behind? Yes, Allende's desk, contents intact. Actually, the desk had transformed into a bedside table, but the contents now included, shock horror, red silk pyjamas!

Communism, Drug taking. Black magic. And the sheer, un-American decadence of red silk pyjamas. The State Department presses the hot buttons of white, Christian US morality to garner domestic support for its military adventures. The desk never came to light after the fall of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000. President Kostunica has no doubt kept is existence hidden. Most likely, it is somewhere in one of Saddam Hussein's many palaces.[10]

And it was never found at Waco[3] because it was no doubt destroyed in the fire of state retribution. But David Quraysh, self-proclaimed millenarian prophet, with his apparently indoctrinated and deluded followers, his harem, and his guns, was singled out for treatment very different to that meted out to scores of likeminded and heavily armed fringe dwellers scattered across the USA.

To paraphrase Colin Powell, they were demonised, they were isolated, they were destroyed. And on prime time television too. In that land of paradoxes, few eyebrows were raised when gun-toting members of the KKK offered to assist the DFDA and FBI in their assault on the besieged compound

First select your enemy. Give him horns and a tail. The latter day manifestation of the Judeo-Christian personification of the evil *Other,* the *Dark Side* of us all, and the public swallows and follows…Because it supports their own value system, their own perception of self, their own identity, and thereby, they're own interpretation of what is and what is not appropriate behaviour.

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[1] *Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat : Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first drive mad.* Euripides 480-406 BC
[2] *The Panana Deception* (1992) Produced by Barbara Trent, Winner of 1992 Academy Award for best Documentary
[10] See Appendix 4*: Bush Plays Foreign Card To Justify His Gift To Big Oil*
[3] *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* (1997) Dir. William Gazecki , Prod. Dan Gifford

It All Depends What You Mean By Sorry
Peter Ruehl

We seem to have come through the EP-3 spy incident without a world war and one of the reasons was probably the Chinese realised they don't have enough stuff just yet to put it in prime time. The Americans knew they had enough stuff but then they noticed who was in charge of it and cooler heads, as they say, prevailed.

If I've got this right, the US said: "We're sorry ... but not that sorry, if you catch our drift." Then the Chinese said: "That sounds sorry enough for us." It was basically the kind of apology you give to your neighbour after your son accidentally burned his house down, leaving you with an ocean view.

I also love the diplomatic language that gets used in these situations. They've got this code in which something like "frank and open discussions" can mean anything from frank and open discussions to 'Yo' mama looks like Puffy Combs, nuke breath". It gets even more complex when, say, you're translating this from Chinese into English because the Chinese have about 75 versions of "sorry", covering everything from waking up with somebody else's wife to bombing Chicago. And in the Chinese's case, they would have been aiming at New York if the way their pilots fly is any indication of their expertise in this general area.

And yeah, I don't believe the Beijing line about the crash for a minute. I mean, we lie all the time, too, but we're not in the same league as those boys, plus it's kind of hard to believe anybody would pit a mule like the EP-3 up against an F-8 fighter in a game of gotcha-last. There were also 23 other crew on board with 23 reasons to rat on the pilot who'd try something like that because being dead really hurts your chances of promotion.

You have to feel some pity for the Chinese pilot, Wang Wei, who died even if he did cause an international incident by screwing around. Beijing is trying its best to turn him into a hero even if he sounds like Evel Knievel on amphetamines. The Xinhua news agency said he was "endorsed as a martyr by the Navy Committee of the Communist Party of China", a group that sounds like it throws some pretty wild parties in between martyr hunting.

The Pentagon is now saying the crew was able to complete the "major portion" of its destruction check list before it landed, meaning some "sensitive" material might be in Chinese possession. But when they talk about the other side getting valuable intelligence, you're never too sure how this works because it never seems to change anything in terms of the big power play. That FBI guy who was selling stuff to the Russians for years didn't exactly help them hold on to Lithuania, plus knowing what the CIA thinks of things has never exactly been a key to good living. In the 1950s, the Soviets recruited half the British upper class to work as double agents, the result being the Soviets found out the British also had double agents and the upper class was as crazy as the Soviets initially thought.

An offshoot of the EP-3 incident is it's roused all the usual anti-US dingbats out with the hegemony script, like somehow America is supposed to pretend it's Denmark. I was at a party the other night when a woman, whom I've known for some time, came out with one these trash-the-Yanks routines from the Eisenhower era, but we'd all been drinking and I was too hammered to do anything but have a good time. In addition, Dubya's only been in office for a few months but so far he's trashed Kyoto and North Korea and goosed the Star Wars program, which really annoys the Chinese because apparently they think it might work. If so, they know more than most Americans.

The problem is, you can never satisfy these people because if America changes its foreign policy, then you get an earload about the US being isolationist. Me, I'm just a capitalist running dog looking for a gin and tonic

Australian Financial Review April 17 2001

Of Middle Eastern Appearance
Stories of How Crime is Coloured In

"White boys walking down the streets of Killara don't get hassled by the police. People don't lock their car doors when they go by, do they? But if you're a young Lebanese male, people do. That's the simple difference in Sydney. Race and power."

The film-maker Paula Abood is angry. Her debut short film, *Of Middle Eastern Appearance*, opening this week at the Sydney Arab Film Festival, seethes with it. Five young males of Arabic background walk down a busy street, carrying a soccer ball as they stroll through their neighbourhood. A woman locks her car door as they pass. There are hostile stares. They are outsiders in a public space, subtly marginalised; crime has been given a colour, and it isn't white, says Abood, 38.

This year, the community worker will be part of a group of Arab-Australian film-makers showcasing work at the film festival, a program of 24 films running with the *East of Somewhere* exhibition at the Casula Powerhouse.

She will use the opportunity, she says, to tell a story of Sydney's south-west, its politics and people, policing and fear. The Lebanese-Australian community, in particular, is under siege, Abood says, Lakemba itself now a kind of undesirable code word in the public debate on race and crime.

When shots were fired at a Lakemba police station in 1998, a whole community also came into the crossfire, she says.
"I made this film to look at racial politics and public space ... [because] in a sense, we lurch from crisis to crisis," the writer and director, from Sydney's south-west, says.

"I made it last year, before things really [exploded] and I wanted to look at racial profiling by the police, what the term "of Middle Eastern" appearance really means if you're looking for a suspect. I suspect no-one really knows. So why use it at all, instead of just a description of physical features?"

Abood and a festival curator, Lena Nahlous, say public hostility towards the Arab-Australian community has surged in the past year, fuelled by comments on ethnicity and crime by the retiring Federal Police commissioner, Mr Mick Palmer. While police and politicians have repeatedly stressed that the acts of a few individuals do not taint entire communities, many in the public have failed to make that distinction, says Nahlous, a western Sydney community worker. The local Arab community council has received a bomb threat and young people in the area are reporting greater levels of harassment and verbal abuse, she says.

"[That's why] I think many of the homegrown films will really challenge stereotypes, be really succinct and powerful ... It doesn't feel good when you say you're Arab and people immediately make associations with crime and violence."

Anna Bazzi Backhouse hopes her film *Liberation South Side: From South Lebanon to South Sydney* will show a different side. "I want to show us joyous, celebrating as citizens of the world. It's as different as possible from the images of [us] you normally see."

Sharon Verghis
Sydney Morning Herald, 4th April 2001

Bush Plays Foreign Card To Justify His Gift To Big Oil

George W. Bush's new energy policy has been roundly reviled for many reasons but he has managed to get away in broad daylight with a breathtaking furphy. He couldn't conceal the fact that the core of his policy was a gift to the energy industry. He hung environmental baubles over it, but it was plain to all that the underlying essence is a Christmas tree for Big Oil.

His plan always faced stiff congressional resistance and that has only become more difficult after the planned defection of Senator Jim Jeffords from the Republican camp, swinging Senate control to the Democrats. And even before that, Bush didn't succeed in selling his line that America is in the grip of an "energy crisis". People aren't stupid. They can see there are no queues at the service stations, no rationing as there was in the 1970s.

Some complain that their gas (petrol) prices are up, but there has been plenty of media commentary pointing out that the inflation-adjusted price is still low by historical standards - as low as it was in the 1960s before the first Oil Shock of 1973. And everyone knows that California's electricity shortages are, like the electricity surpluses in Texas and Pennsylvania, a local and not a national affair.

But Bush did get away, almost entirely unchallenged, with the other fundamental justification for his 105-part package of measures. He used it three times in his speech to launch the energy policy six days ago:

"If we fail to act, our country will become more reliant on foreign crude oil, putting our national energy security into the hands of foreign nations, some of whom do not share our interests."

And later he invoked national security more explicitly: "Over-dependence on any one source of energy, especially a foreign source, leaves us vulnerable to price shocks, supply interruptions and, in the worst case, blackmail."

Finally, he said that the hyper-sensitive Arctic National Wilderness Refuge, which he wants to drill for oil, "can produce 600,000 barrels of oil a day for the next 40 years". "What difference does 600,000 barrels a day make? Well, that happens to be exactly the amount we import from Saddam Hussein's Iraq."

The magic utterance of "national security", the sinister invocation of shady "foreign" sources, and the explicit naming of Saddam himself seems to have been enough to freeze with terror the critical faculties of the collective American mind.

First, let's take him at face value. How important is Iraq?

"Everybody harps on about how we depend on oil from Iraq," says an oil analyst at Salomon Smith Barney in Houston, Texas, Kyle Cooper. "But guess who our biggest suppliers are? Three of the biggest four are our closest neighbours - Canada, Mexico and Venezuela, and the other one is Saudi Arabia," a country aligned with the US. "Iraqi ranks next." It supplies 3 per cent of US needs.

So it's small, but still, if the President is concerned about it, does he propose displacing the Iraqi oil with domestic oil so the US no longer depends on Hussein? No. On the contrary, his administration is considering reversing a ban that blocks US firms from investing in Iraq. He is thinking about getting more Iraqi oil, not less.

But let's give him the benefit of the doubt for a moment. The US depends on imports to supply 52 per cent of its net oil needs.

Bush did not nominate an acceptable level of imports, but let's suppose he somehow manages to cut it to 42 per cent. Would that reduce US vulnerability to foreign blackmail? "Talk about reducing reliance on foreign sources is feelgood politics, not reality," says Cooper. "It doesn't matter whether it's 50 per cent or 40 per cent - if your foreign supplies are cut, you're still in a world of hurt."

Is it possible to reduce US dependence on foreign oil in any case without any effort to cut consumption? "Even if you opened up every area onshore and offshore for drilling, the US simply doesn't have enough oil reserves to even get close to ever supplying its needs," says oil analyst Wes Ralston of oil investment bank Howard Weil Labouisse Friedrichs. Cooper adds: "Even if we opened everything for drilling, our dependence on foreign oil would still be higher than it is now because production in the lower 48 States is declining and demand is increasing very quickly."

Paul Hemphill, Newtown, May 2001

And as Bush well knows, it has been tried before. After the 1973 OPEC oil embargo, Richard Nixon said the US would attain "energy independence" by 1980. A year later the administration decided this was impossible. Instead, since then dependence on imports has risen from 35 per cent to today's 52 per cent.

So Saddam is just a rhetorical device. Cutting foreign oil dependency wouldn't reduce US vulnerability anyway, and it can't be done in any case.

So even on his own terms, Bush's case just makes no sense.

But let's step back from the particulars of oil for a moment and look at the larger picture. The President runs the country that runs globalisation. And where Bill Clinton lost his nerve on free trade, Bush wants to advance the cause. He is pushing urgently an aggressive agenda to pursue new market-opening deals globally, regionally and bilaterally. The very day after delivering his energy policy, the President launched World Trade Week and pointed out the glories of free trade: "Exports have accounted for almost one-quarter of the United States' economic growth during the past decade ..."Trade also leads to more competitive businesses, more choices of goods for consumers and lower prices ..."Along with economic progress, open trade also helps build democracies and spreads freedom as it reinforces the spirit of liberty by spurring economic and legal reforms."

He forgot to mention money. The US depends vitally on foreign capital to finance its growth. It is running an annual current account deficit equivalent to 4 per cent of GDP. Without a steady supply of foreign capital, the US economy is in a recession so instant and so deep that any of the post-war slowdowns would look like a boom.

The US, in short, is vitally dependent on the rest of the world for its growth and its well-being in all these dimensions. Yet, when it comes to oil, Bush wants America to think it should be some sort of island and cannot rely on the world?

It is perhaps not surprising that a politician will use just about any argument to support his proposal. It is more surprising that the US media and political systems will let him get away with it.

Peter Hartcher
Australian Financial Review May 25 2001

Why Following The Jedi Faith Makes Perfect Census

In a galaxy much too close for comfort, dark figures are preparing to attack. Tim Ferguson hopes The Force may be with you.

The universe is a living entity where all things have a connection and affinity with each other. Following a path of peace, altruism, devotion and moderation is good. Giving yourself over to violence, genocide and hatred is evil. Peaceful cohabitation is better than totalitarianism. Sublimating ourselves to the higher power of universal love is the path to true happiness.

Is this the Christian faith? Buddhism? Islam? Scientology? Hare Krishna? No, they are the sentiments of the Jedi faith as outlined in the *Star Wars* saga. If the recent New Zealand census results are any guide, thousands of Australians will follow the suggestion of a widely distributed email to list Jedi as their religion on their census forms.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has chucked a wobbly at the prospect, threatening fines and prosecution for those who dare to raise their light sabres in defiance of the coming information bonanza. Bollocks to them. The ABS is all bark and no bite. Here's why.

The Christian churches base their faith on a book. A Good Book, sure, but just one book. The Jedi faith, however, is based upon more than 100 books, four films and countless story cassettes, music albums, pillowcases, money boxes, toys, stationery and a vast variety of fashion accessories. If we're comparing Christianity with the Path of the Jedi in terms of source material, Yoda and his brothers win three-fingered hands down.

The Path of the Jedi is known to countless millions. Its teachings do not incite violence or dissent. (No-one ever blew up a Belfast school bus in the name of Darth Vader. If they had, the telltale scorch marks of a Deathstar ray would give them away.) The Jedi do not discriminate against race, sex, religion or even species, unlike some. The Jedi Path is user-friendly, modern and free of ethnic rivalries and ancient hatreds. You could argue it's a better religion than most.

Your average Jedi follower could recite word for word the sayings of Yoda with greater accuracy than most Christians could recite Bible passages. How would a cross-examination of a Jedi follower unfold?

Q: You claim to believe in The Force. What is that exactly?

A: You might call it God, Allah or L. Ron.

Q: But this "faith" is simply the invention of one man's imagination.

A: Sorry, are you talking about Jesus, Muhammad or Buddha?

Q: And what about the ludicrous beliefs of your faith - that humans came from other planets, that they whizzed about in spaceships and conversed with alien races?

A: Uh, sorry, that's the government-recognised, non-taxpaying Church of Scientology you're talking about there.

And so on.

The lawyers advising the ABS must be laughing all the way to the spaceport. A magistrate must, by law, presume that defendants who nominate Jedi as their religion are telling the truth until the ABS proves otherwise. Good luck.

I should come out and say that, as a slightly embarrassed *Star Wars* fan and duster, hugger and plastic bag-wrapper of reportedly one of the largest *Star Wars* toy collections in Australia, I will not be nominating my faith as Jedi. While I have a vested financial interest in seeing my anal retentive treasures transformed into religious artefacts, I find the idea of religious faith a bit square. (As for you other lonely, friendless geeks out there, don't bother robbing me; the toys were hidden a long time ago in a warehouse far, far away.)

There is a deeper issue, one that will surface in the build-up to census day in August. As the Jedi shenanigans have shown, the information age is rife with possibilities for dissent and mischief. It is also a time when private information about all Australians is a source of intense auctioning between marketing companies.

The information gathered by the ABS will be worth millions. If you are satisfied that every single one of the people

working for the ABS is honest, fine. I am sure they are. If you believe in your heart that your private details, even something as deeply held and precious as your religious faith, are the Government's business, terrific. And if the mishaps of the last census collection (hundreds of forms lost, stolen or found floating in street drains) does not concern you, that's just great. Fill in your form with all the details of your life, content in the belief the information will not be misused, misplaced or emailed to countless millions. If you are not so sure, you may wish to make other arrangements and risk prosecution. May The Force be with you.

Tim Ferguson

Sydney Morning Herald *27th April 2001*

Stereotype Or Negotiating Style?

This is the transcript of the ACTUAL radio conversation of a US Naval ship and the Canadians, off the coast of Newfoundland, Oct 95.

Radio conversation released by the Chief of Naval Operations 10-10-95.

CANADIANS:
Please divert your course 15 degrees to the South, to avoid a collision.

AMERICANS:
Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the North, to avoid a collision.

CANADIANS:
Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

AMERICANS:
This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

CANADIANS:
Negative. I say again, You will have to divert your course.

AMERICANS:
THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS LINCOLN. THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET, WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS, AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH, I SAY AGAIN, THAT'S 15 DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTERMEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP.

CANADIANS:
We are a lighthouse. Your call.

Challenging A Dictatorship Of The Word
Katharine Ainger

By the end of the first day of the historic Seattle street protests against a World Trade Organisation meeting to decide the future of the global economy, almost every newspaper-dispensing box in the city had been graffitied with a single word: "Lies." Leafing through the newspaper reports the next morning, it wasn't hard to see why.

The editorial pages brimmed with the apoplectic outpourings of the planet's leading opinion-formers. Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times* called the anti-globalisation protesters "a Noah's ark of flat-earth advocates, protectionist trade unions and yuppies looking for their 1960s fix". Andrew Marr writing in liberal British broadsheet *The Observer* described their demands as "the Communist Manifesto rewritten by Christopher Robin". *The Wall Street Journal* joined in to jeer the "global village idiots ... bringing their bibs and bottles to [Washington] this week" when the movement targeted the World Bank last year.

The media have not been "pro-globalisation" so much as an integral part of the process. For most journalists neoliberalism is not an economic ideology whose fundamental assumptions can be challenged, but simply "reality". Though they are occasionally willing to cover isolated problems of market economies and corporate rule, they greet systemic critiques of the global power structure with derision and incomprehension. For as a wise person once said: "The first to discover water was unlikely to have been a fish."

When CEOs, heads of state and other luminaries met in Davos, Switzerland, in January for the "summit of business summits" the presence of the corporate media moguls came as no surprise. But also nibbling *hors d'oeuvres* with the architects of globalisation were a group of specially chosen "media leaders" - about 200 editors, producers and commentators from around the world, who not only took part in the meetings but also attended special closed sessions. Among them were Bill Emmot of *The Economist,* Will Hutton of *The Observer,* Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times* and Alan Yentob of the BBC.

Meanwhile volunteer journalists with the Davos Independent Media Centre were camped in the snow outside providing alternative reporting on the anti-globalisers' counter-summit. Many were harassed by armed Swiss police, others had their equipment confiscated. Clearly, if you're the wrong kind of media reporting on the wrong kind of meeting, you're not a journalist. You're a criminal.

Within the ranks of industrial capitalism, the globalising conquistadores of the 21st century are the media giants of cultural capitalism - Disney, AOL Time Warner, Sony, Bertelsmann, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi Universal. According to Subcomandante Marcos, spokesperson of the indigenous Zapatista rebels of Mexico, the global media "present a virtual world, created in the image of what the globalisation process requires".1 In a recent CNN discussion Gerry Levin, chief executive of AOL Time Warner, announced that global media would become *the* dominant industry of this century, more powerful than governments. US citizens now spend more money on entertainment than on clothing or health care - and the pattern is being mirrored around the developed world. Michael J Wolf, Davos schmoozer and adviser to the media moguls, says: "Entertainment - not autos, not steel, not financial services - is fast becoming the driving wheel of the new world economy." Forget the military-industrial complex - this is the media-entertainment complex.

The planet is encircled by an ever-expanding web of wires and cables and the paths of orbiting satellites, while new wealth is being made from words, ideas, knowledge, songs, stories, data, culture. The media corporations, too, are an extractive industry. As Jeremy Rifkin says, they are "mining local cultural resources in every part of the world and repackaging them as cultural commodities and entertainment".2

But information and culture are not just tradeable commodities to be bought and sold in the global market. Freedom of information is fundamental to democracy. Culture is the sum of the stories we tell about ourselves, stories that inform who we are and how we describe the world.

The true meaning of globalisation is not so much about Indian yogis checking share prices via their high-speed modems, or whether nomadic herders in the Gobi desert should watch *Baywatch.* Rather, it is about the undebated imposition of the *organising logic,* the "anti-culture", of the marketplace into every corner of our lives, onto every culture on earth.

The Latin root of the word "culture" means cultivating the land; "broadcast" was once an agricultural term meaning "to scatter seed". Just as agribusinesses corner the seed business by breaking the natural reproductive cycle to create genetically modified "terminator" seeds - which have to be bought rather than resown year-on-year - in every

country media corporations help to break our relationships to our communities, educators, collective cultures, experiences. They turn us into isolated consumers and then sell our stories back to us.

When US media critic Ben Bagdikian started tracking media ownership in 1982, there were 50 firms dominating the market. Now there are fewer than 10. While each country's media scene still varies enormously, the creation of a single global commercial media model is the ultimate aim of the WTO, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

And globalisation means that regional media - from Mexico to India to New Zealand - are following the same pattern of merging, converging, trying to compete with - and getting swallowed by - the big boys. Indian public-service channel Doordarshan has already sold Australian media mogul Kerry Packer a chunk of primetime TV. As a result of privatisation in the past decade 99 per cent of Hungary's 3,000 media outlets are largely controlled by Western business.3

While, self-evidently, tyrannical state control over the media is a profound assault on democracy and human rights in countries around the world, when a handful of corporations dominates the world's information this is called having a "free press". In the *lingua franca* of globaloney, freedom means the freedom to do business and because, by and large, they manage to entertain us, and because this is not a monolithic system of control, the profound lack of democracy at its heart goes unexamined. As Uruguayan novelist Eduardo Galeano says: "Never have so many been held incommunicado by so few." He describes this as "the dictatorship of the single word and the single image, much more devastating than that of the single party".4 We are creating a world in which a small and shrinking commercial monopoly gets to tell all the stories while the rest of us get to watch and listen.

If we are witnessing the creation of a single global empire under one market logic, the world-spanning communications networks are its Roman roads - channels both of the ruling ideology and traded goods.

The fibre-optic cables threading into your homes bring you telephones but also internet connections and cable TV. Liberalisation of telecommunications in 1997 delivered up control of these Roman roads in nearly every country to global companies - who in this digital age are increasingly the result of inter-breeding between telecoms, media and computer software transnationals. But as Noam Chomksy points out: "Concentration of communications in any hands (particularly foreign hands) raises some rather serious questions about meaningful democracy."5 And if you control both the content and the pipe, you can always price the competition out of the market. In an interview with the *Village Voice*, independent media advocate Anthony Riddle recalls the comment of a Russian man discussing control of the Soviet media: "All the wires ran through a switch on one man's desk. He could pull the switch at any time."

Today you can get news on your phone, listen to your newspaper correspondent on the internet and watch television through a computer and all from the same company. So AOL Time Warner with its range of in-house brands could give you news via CNN and *Time* magazine; its customer tracking could remember that Madonna album you downloaded last month and post a reminder for a concert on to your personal online calendar; while your medical records and bank balance are held by its partner companies. And you thought they just showed *Scooby Doo* reruns.

The databases that hold millions of detailed consumer profiles are a major corporate asset. According to *Fortune* magazine (another AOL Time Warner title): "Once captive, [customers] eyeballs will then be resold to advertisers and commerce partners."

In this entertainment economy, the definition of a media company is increasingly hazy - some have speculated that AOL Time Warner could buy Wal-Mart next; internationally, Vivendi runs Universal Studio theme parks as well as water companies privatised by the World Bank; Disney has entered the real-estate market as privatised towns with corporate governments catch on in America. Rupert Murdoch of News Corporation loses more sleep over Microsoft than over his traditional media competitors, while Nike sees itself in greater competition with Disney than Reebok.6

This is saturation capitalism, where almost every aspect of our lives is "mediated" by commerce.

The deepest irony of all this is that, as the economy globalises, we actually find out less and less about one another from the media. Increasing commercial pressure and cost-cutting means that coverage of international news in the West has dropped by an average of 50 per cent in the past 10 years. On a single British channel, ITV, it has dropped by 80 per cent since the onset of satellite competition. In contrast, viewers in the South are subject to a constant stream of cheap Western television formats that undercut local production and creativity.

Paul Hemphill, Newtown, May 2001

And where imagery leads, trade follows - among the first foreign industries to enter India after the liberalisation of the economy were transnational media and advertising corporations targeting wealthy elites.

Concerns over the torrential flow of information from North to South are hardly new. In 1980 the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) published *Many Voices, One World,* a study calling for a "new world information order" and the creation of an independent international news agency operating out of the South. In a move that laid bare the raw power politics of global communications, the US and Britain - under Reagan and Thatcher - called this an attack on "free speech" and pulled out of UNESCO completely. The proposal was quietly shelved.

Today, the exuberant technicolour extravaganza that is Bollywood actually churns out seven times more films than the US. But despite Bollywood's output, it does not have the economic might of Hollywood, which makes 85 per cent of films watched anywhere in the world. Partly as a result of this imbalance, film and publishing industries in most developing countries are actually in decline. Ninety-five per cent of Latin American films are produced in the US, and Africa - which makes 42 films a year - imports an even higher percentage.

Wolf describes how in the "underscreened, undermalled, still-waiting-for-cable world in China, India, the Islamic nations... new ventures are starting on an almost hourly basis ... So the entertainment economy is settling in new territories around the world".

Sure enough, a little way past the avenue of Arabian palm trees, and just across from the Hard Rock Cafe (motto: "In Rock We Trust"), a 500-acre Media City is rising out of the desert in Dubai. In this multimedia free-trade zone international corporations are setting up regional offices, 100 per cent tax-free. In India, the local personnel of call centres servicing Western consumers are being trained to speak with American accents. Callers need never know they are talking to someone in the suburbs of Delhi rather than Dallas.

This globalised world under a single market economy is incorporating every culture and every place within its ever-expanding frontiers. This is not the "new world information order" UNESCO dreamed of, but a universalising of the old world information order as it delinks from its own geographical and cultural roots.

In this context, regulating the media in order to nourish a diversity of viewpoints and cultures - goals of public-service broadcasting - is becoming an anachronism. Instead, as Gerry Levin of AOL Time Warner points out: "We're going to need to have corporations redefined as instruments of public service." Media companies are lobbying the WTO for a trade agreement that would spell the death of media regulation and public-service broadcasting - including the BBC. This is under negotiation, but according to leaked WTO documents "[e]nsuring pluralism and a media system based on free and democratic principles has already been ruled out as a legitimate government objective".7

Meanwhile the US trade department has tucked in its napkin, held aloft its knife and fork, and drawn up a menu to take to the WTO. Australia's limits to foreign ownership of media could be the starter dish, followed by Europe's subsidised film industry. Dessert might be Sweden's ban on advertising to children and Canada's requirement that a proportion of its media be made locally.

The industry argument is that media pluralism, special needs and cultural diversity will be served by digital technology and the new multichannels. The market will serve all the needs of society - all those who can pay, that is.

Fortunately, culture and media are among the most contentious of issues at the WTO. If the arguments escalate, this could create an opening to voice our defiance against the worlds both Orwell and Huxley described - for we can rely neither on states nor markets to serve our communication needs.

Already in different places around the world people are organising: to tell their own stories, expose lies and obfuscation, break up the monopolies. For we are more than just target markets for advertisers and eyeballs for the cheapest television they can get us, exhausted after a hard day's work, to watch.

Media activism is on the rise, and is not just confined to culture jammers in the North. When former Filipino president Estrada's cronies bought up newspapers to stem criticism of his rule, citizens helped to topple him by posting evidence of his corruption anonymously on the Guerrilla Information Network website.

And as corporations globalise, resistance goes transnational. Media activists are creating international networks, from Indymedia to the MediaChannel, which networks media-watch groups and communications NGOs from the US to Africa. Just as activists protesting corporate power have targeted agribusinesses over GM, more and more

people are not just creating alternative channels but targeting the mainstream media itself. Brazilian activists demonstrated outside the headquarters of their country's media conglomerates against their poor coverage of social issues. In India the National Alliance of People's Movements called for accurate reporting on how globalisation harms the poor everywhere - North as well as the South; while in the US protesters have demanded that the Federal Communications Committee "free the airwaves" for community broadcasting. French group MediaLibre piled a wall of television sets in front of France's Ministry of Culture and Communication in the name of public-interest media free from corporate and government influence; in Montevideo activists burned cardboard televisions as the agent of consumer culture. Media reform has also become a political campaign issue in Australia, New Zealand and the US. Anti-trust laws such as those used to order the break-up of Microsoft are political tools that must be defended and strengthened with popular support.

Just as in the 1960s political consciousness began to be raised about the degradation of the natural environment, there is a nascent movement working to protect the diversity of our cultural and information environment. The challenges of globalisation seem to have given even the much-chastened UNESCO a reason to sit up and take notice. It says that: "Over hundreds of millions of years, nature developed an astonishing variety of life forms which are tightly interwoven; the survival of all are necessary to ensure the continued existence of natural ecosystems. Similarly, 'cultural ecosystems', made up of a rich and complex mosaic of cultures, more or less powerful, need diversity to preserve and pass on their valuable heritage to future generations."8

We need to reclaim our stories, reweave the web of cultural diversity and create channels of information in order to understand the globalisation process. We need to do this in order collectively to imagine and articulate alternative futures for ourselves.

(1) Subcomandante Marcos, *Our Word is Our Weapon,* Seven Stories, New York, 2001.(2) Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access,* Penguin Putnam, New York, 2000. (3) *Communications Law in Transition Newsletter,* Program in Comparative Media Law and Policy, University of Oxford, December 6, 2000. (4) Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down,* Metropolitan Books, New York, 2001. (5) Noam Chomsky, 'The Passion for Free Markets: Exporting American values through the new World Trade Organisation', *Z Magazine,* www.zmag.org. <http://www.zmag.org. (6) Naomi Klein, *No Logo,* Flamingo, London, 2000. 7) Murray Dobbin, 'Trading away the public interest', *Financial Post,* Canada, June 26, 2000.(8) UNESCO, Culture, trade and globalisation, http://www.unesco.org/culture/industries/trade

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