The Moral Imagination

The Art and Soul of Building Peace

JOHN PAUL LEDERACH

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2005

Contents

The Moral Imagination

I

On Stating the Problem and Thesis

Akmal Mizshakarol painted the image found on the cover of this book following the tragic events unleashed in New York and Washington D.C., on September 11, 2001. Its title is that date. Tajik by birth, his studio is located in his house at the end of a street several blocks off Rudaki Avenue, the main thoroughfare in Dushanbe. On my regular visits to Tajikistan, where I have been helping to develop a national curriculum on conflict resolution with seven universities, I sought out contemporary artists and happened upon his studio. Over the course of time and visits, we became friends.

In the spring of 2002 I found Akmal completing the first of his pieces on the tragedy that hit the United States in the fall of 2001. A year later, he completed the one you find here. For Tajiks, a visitor in anyone's home always involves a process of attending well to the guest, announced or not. At Akmal's we often first visited his studio and looked at his latest paintings, then, sooner or later, we ended up in the courtyard veranda. Caged guinea hens cackled above our heads. Roses and apple and apricot trees blessed us with their aroma and shade. Even for a short visit the table was filled with nuts, raisins, breads, and juices. Conversation ranged from daughters (advice about how to marry well) to art (the loneliness and intensity of studio work), from local to international politics. His daughters, wonderfully polite and interested, hovered, listened, and occasionally helped with translation through their nearly perfect English. They are members of the rising new generation of Tajiks, more conversant with the outside world beyond Central Asia than their parents.

Akmal was trained at the Surikov Moscow Art Institute, one of the best Russian art academies. Near the end of his studies he wandered from the norms of his Russian mentors, exploring roots in himself and in his native Tajikistan. Speaking of his now growing internationally recognized style, he once commented, "It took some time, but I found my voice. At some point, even though it is totally uncertain, you have to take the risk of following your own intuition, your own voice." All direct quotations from my friends and colleagues have been reconstructed to the best of my ability from my notes, journals, and recollections.

We talked about the painting he titled *September 11*. From first sight, I was mesmerized by the combination of the painting itself, the context in which it was made, the color choices, the faces, and the implications of such an effort. A Tajik Muslim painter sitting just north of Afghanistan had reflected through his hands a response to the events that had taken place half a world away, yet that were close to home. When I inquired about what he was thinking when he painted the canvas, Akmal, in the fine fashion of most artists responded:

> I can't comment too much. The painting is the comment. But I remember that day. We watched with unbelief as the planes crashed. It was like we were all standing and looking at the sky. Wondering where it came from and what was falling into our lives. I used to have dreams of being on a plane, you know, one of those dreams where a plane is falling and you wake up just before it crashes. It was like this was too close to that dream.

He added: "This was the same feeling we had in our civil war. Every day, we would look toward the sky and wonder what was coming next. And hoping that we could find something better, something to stop it, something to end the bad dream."

I stood in Akmal's studio, looking at the painting. In it, five people circle in a courtyard, three women and two men looking upward, watching for what might be coming. One is obviously perplexed. Some are filled with wonder, and, it seemes to me, with a sense of looking for something beyond what is befalling them. Clearly they express concern, even anxiety. Yet the painting as a whole, maybe because of the colors chosen, engenders a hope. It is this kind of hope that links people half a world away and suggests the possibility of change, a concern not only for the tragedy that fell on some and the fear of what may befall us all, but also a concern for what we will create from and for this humanity we share. In the painting, I find a quality of transcendence, something that wishes to touch a stream of shared humanity beyond the violence. From the canvas and its creator's surrounding context I found a simple offer of mutuality and healing. I told Akmal that I wanted to use his *September 11* painting on the cover of a book I was writing because it captured so many elements of my work's title and thesis.

The academic community, unlike the artistic community, often begins its interaction with and journey into the world by stating a problem that defines both the journey and the interaction. The artistic community, it seems to me, starts with experience in the world and then creates a journey toward expressing something that captures the wholeness of that feeling in a succinct moment. The two communities share this in common: Ultimately, at some moment in time, they both rely on intuition.

While I have never been a big fan of problem stating, I have come to appreciate the art of posing a good question. The question this book poses is simple and endlessly complex: *How do we transcend the cycles of violence that bewitch our human community while still living in them?* I could call this the statement of the problem. I could suggest that it emerges from twenty-five years of experiences working in settings of protracted conflict and as such this question is the canvas of the human condition in too many parts of our globe. I have come to believe that this is *the* question that, at every step of the way, peacebuilding, this noble endeavor to break beyond the shackles of violence, must forcibly face.

Through this book I propose a thesis that I feel may be a start at answering that question: Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build the moral imagination. The kind of imagination to which I refer is mobilized when four disciplines and capacities are held together and practiced by those who find their way to rise above violence. Stated simply, the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence.

The thesis that a certain kind of imagination is within reach and necessary to transcend violence requires that we explore these four disciplines in two broad directions. First, we must understand and feel the landscape of protracted violence and why it poses such deep-rooted challenges to constructive change. In other words, we must set our feet deeply into the geographies and realities of what destructive relationships produce, what legacies they leave, and what breaking their violent patterns will require. Second, we must explore the creative process itself, not as a tangential inquiry, but as the wellspring that feeds the building of peace. In other words, we must venture into the mostly uncharted territory of the artist's way as applied to social change, the canvases and poetics of human relationships, imagination and discovery, and ultimately the mystery of vocation for those who take up such a journey.

We stand before the inquiry of what makes possible movement beyond ingrained patterns of protracted, destructive conflict. Our thesis requires us to explore the survival of the artist's genius and gift in the lands of violence.

2

On Touching the Moral Imagination

Four Stories

A Story from Ghana: "I Call You Father Because I Do Not Wish to Disrespect You"

During the 1990s, northern Ghana faced the rising escalation of ethnic conflict mixed with the ever-present tense undertones of Muslim-Christian relationships. In the broader West African region, Liberia had collapsed into chaotic, violent internal warfare, spilling refugees into neighboring countries. The chaos seemed simultaneously endemic and contagious. Within a short period of time, Sierra Leone descended into cycles of bloodletting and cruelty that were unprecedented for the subregion. Nigeria, the largest and most powerful regional country, walked a fine line that barely seemed to avoid the wildfires of full-blown civil war. In such a context, the rise of intercommunal violence, and even sporadic massacres had all the signs of a parallel disaster in the northern communities of Ghana.

These were not historically isolated cycles of violence. The roots of the conflicts between several of the groups, particularly the Konkombas and Dagombas, could be easily traced back into the era of slavery.[1] The Dagombas, a group with a sustained and powerful tradition of chieftaincy, have a social and leadership structure that loaned itself to negotiation with European slave traders. They were the most powerful and dominant group in the north of the country; their allies to the south were the people of the equally strong Ashanti Empire. *Chiefly groups* retained royalty, culminating in the paramount chief, whereas groups in Ghana referred to as *nonchiefly* no longer had or were not accorded a chiefly political structure.

The Konkombas, on the other hand, were more dispersed. Principally agriculturalists, "yam growers," as they at times were denigrated and stereotyped the Konkombas did not organize around the same social and royal features. They were a nonchiefly tribe, not necessarily by their choice. High chieftaincy in this part of the world brought benefits and a comparative sense of importance that translated into superiority. For example, the chiefly groups gained advantage from collaboration with the slave trade; the nonchiefly were fated to live the great travesty of dehumanization and exploitation incarnated in this trafficking of men, women, and children. Following the period of the slave trade, the chiefly groups again benefited during the period of colonization. They received recognition and their traditional power and sense of superiority were further ingrained. The seeds of division sown during the period of slavery flourished in the period of colonial rule.

In subsequent centuries their conflicts were played out over control of land and resources. The arrival of religiously based missionary movements added more layers of division to their relationships. While some groups remained animists, the Konkombas followed Christianity, and most Dagombas, including the powerful royal houses and paramount chieftancy, became Muslim. One unexpected result was that the Christian missions, with their emphasis on education, provided schools that gave access and entry to rising social status for the Konkombas. This would eventually have an impact on the communities and politics.

As Ghana gained independence, the country moved toward democracy based on elections. Politicians with aspirations for votes understood the existing divisions and fears and often exacerbated them in order to get the support of their respective communities during election campaigns. Electoral periods became regular cycles of repeated and ever-greater violence. Even little events, like a dispute between two people in a market over a purchase, could spark an escalation into violence, as was the case with the Guinea Fowl War.

In 1995 the cycle threatened to explode again. A dispute over land claimed by both groups in a small town in the north suddenly exploded into overt violence during the electoral campaign. The killing sprees spread rapidly, spilled well beyond the locale of the original dispute, and threatened the stability of the whole northern region. The images of recent chaotic collapse in Sierra Leone and Liberia were fresh in the minds of many people. This cycle of intercommunal violence in Ghana appeared on the verge of creating yet another destructive full-blown civil war. In response, a consortium of nongovernmental organizations working in the northern region of Ghana began to push for a peacebuilding effort. A small team of African mediators, led initially by Hizkias Assefa and Emmanuel Bombande, began the process of creating space for dialogue between the representatives of the two ethnic groups. Eventually this process would find a way to avoid the escalation of violence to civil war and would even create an infrastructure for dealing with the common

recurrence of crises that in the past had translated into deadly fighting. But it was not a smooth road.

In one of their early encounters those involved in the mediation observed a story that created a transformation in the process and in the relationship between these two groups and therefore changed the fundamental direction of the conflict. In the first face-to-face meeting of the two groups, the Dagomba paramount chief arrived in full regalia and with his entourage. There were designated persons who carried his staff and sat at his feet. In the opening moments of the meeting he assumed a sharp attitude of superiority. Taking the role of the paramount, he wasted no time in denigrating and verbally attacking the Konkombas. Given the traditions and rights afforded the highest chiefs, little could be done except to let the chief speak.

"Look at them," he said, addressing himself more to the mediators than to the Konkombas. "Who are they even that I should be in this room with them? They do not even have a chief. Who am I to talk to? They are a people with nothing who have just come from the fields and now attack us in our own villages. They could have at least brought an old man. But look! They are just boys born yesterday."

The atmosphere was devastating. Making matters worse, the mediators felt in a very difficult bind. Culturally, when facing a chief, there was nothing they could do to control the process. You simply cannot tell a chief to watch his mouth or follow ground rules, particularly in the presence of his entourage and his enemies. It appeared as if the whole endeavor may have been misconceived and was reaching a breaking point.

The Konkomba spokesman asked to respond. Fearing the worst, the mediators provided him space to speak. The young man turned and addressed himself to the chief of the enemy tribe:

> You are perfectly right, Father, we do not have a chief. We have not had one for years. You will not even recognize the man we have chosen to be our chief. And this has been our problem. The reason we react, the reason our people go on rampages and fights resulting in all these killings and destruction arises from this fact. We do not have what you have. It really is not about the town, or the land, or that market guinea fowl. I beg you, listen to my words, Father. I am calling you Father because we do not wish to disrespect you. You are a great chief. But what is left to us? Do we have no other means but this violence to receive in return the one thing we seek, to be respected and to establish our own chief who could indeed speak with you, rather than having a young boy do it on our behalf?

The attitude, tone of voice, and use of the word *Father* spoken by the young Konkomba man apparently so affected the chief that he sat for a moment

without response. When finally he spoke, he did so with a changed voice, addressing himself directly to the young man rather than to the mediators:

> I had come to put your people in your place. But now I feel only shame. Though I insulted your people, you still called me Father. It is you who speaks with wisdom, and me who has not seen the truth. What you have said is true. We who are chiefly have always looked down on you because you have no chief, but we have not understood the denigration you suffered. I beg you, my son, to forgive me.

At this point the younger Konkomba man stood, walked to the chief, then knelt and gripped his lower leg, a sign of deep respect. He vocalized a single and audible "Na-a," a word of affirmation and acceptance.

Those attending the session reported that the room was electrified, charged with high feeling and emotion. It was by no means the end of the problems or disagreements, but something happened in that moment that created an impact on everything that followed. The possibility of change away from century-long cycles of violence began and perhaps the seeds that avoided what could have been a full-blown Ghanaian civil war were planted in that moment.

This possibility of change continues. In March 2002, the king of the Dagombas, Ya Na Yakubu Andani II, was killed in an internal feud between the two clans of the Dagombas, the Abudu and Andani families. As long-time adversaries of the Dagombas, the Konkombas could have been expected to take advantage of the internal strife among the Dagombas. On the contrary, they met at a grand Durban of all their youths and elders and issued an official declaration on Ghana television. First they expressed solidarity with the Dagombas in the time of their grief and loss. Then they pleaded with the Dagombas to work together in finding a long-term solution to their internal chieftaincy dispute. They declared that Konkombas would not allow any of their tribesmen to undermine the Dagombas because of the internal difficulty they were experiencing. They concluded by suggesting that Konkombas who took advantage of the internal strife within the Dagombas to create a situation that may lead to violence would be isolated and handed over to the police.

A Story from Wajir: How a Few Women Stopped a War

The women of Wajir did not set out to stop a war.[2] They just wanted to make sure they could get food for their families. The initial idea was simple enough: Make sure that the market is safe for anyone to buy and sell.

Wajir district is located in the northeastern part of Kenya, near the Somali and Ethiopian borders. The district is made up mostly of Somali clans. Like those in other parts of the Horn of Africa, the people of Wajir have suffered

the impact of numerous internal wars in neighboring Somalia and Ethiopia. With the collapse of the Somali government in 1989, increased fighting inside the country created countless refugees, who spilled over the border into Kenya. Wajir soon found itself caught up in interclan fighting, with a flow of weapons, fighting groups, and refugees who made life increasingly difficult. By 1992 the Kenya government declared Wajir to be in a state of emergency.

The 1990s were not the first time Wajir had experienced clan-based war, but it soon became one of the worst cycles of violence. Dekha, one of the key women leaders in Wajir, recalls that one night in mid-1993 shooting erupted once again near her house. She ran for her first-born child and hid for several hours under the bed while bullets crisscrossed her room. In the morning, discussing the events of the night before, her mother recalled days in 1966 when Dekha was a child and her mother held her under the bed. They were reflecting that morning and feeling sad that the violence had not come to an end. As mothers, they were tired of the violence. Dekha was so affected by her mother's statement that she determined to find a way to make Wajir a place where her daughter would enjoy a violence-free life. She found other women with similar stories. Fatuma tells how at a wedding the women worried about how they would get home and had to leave early. They lamented the rising violence, the thievery along the highways, the guns that were everywhere carried by their young boys, and the fear of abuse and rape with which young girls lived even in their home villages.

So the women quietly gathered, fewer than a dozen of them at first. "We just wanted to put our heads together," they said, "to see what we knew and could do. We decided the place to start was the market." They agreed on a basic idea. The market should be safe for any woman of any clan background to come, to sell, and to buy. Women were looking out for their children. Access and safety to the market was an immediate right that had to be assured. Since women mostly ran the market, they spread the word. They established monitors who would watch every day what was happening at the market. They would report any infractions, any abuse of someone because of her clan or geographic origin. Whenever issues emerged, a small committee of women would move quickly to resolve them. Within a short period of time, the women had created a zone of peace in the market. Their meetings and initiatives resulted in the creation of the Wajir Women's Association for Peace.

While they were working hard on the market, they soon discovered that the broader fighting still affected their lives. Sitting again, they decided to pursue direct conversations with the elders of all of the clans. Though they had access to their elders, this was not an easy thing to do. "Who are women to advise and push us?" was the response they feared they might get. So they sat and thought through their understanding of the elder system, the actual key elders, and the makeup of the Somali clans in Wajir. Using their personal connections within their own groups, they worked with concerned men and

succeeded in bringing together a meeting of the elders of all the groups. They aligned themselves carefully to not push or take over the meetings. Instead they found one of the elderly men, quite respected, but who came from the smallest and therefore the least threatening of the local clans. In the meeting he became their spokesperson, talking directly to the other elders and appealing to their responsibility. "Why, really," he asked, "are we fighting? Who benefits from this? Our families are being destroyed." His words provoked long discussions. The elders, even some of those who had been promoting revenge killings, agreed to face the issues and stop the fighting. They formed the Council of Elders for Peace, which included a regular meeting group and subcommissions. They began the process of engaging the fighters in the bush and dealing with clan clashes.

The women, recognizing that this effort could be very important for Wajir, decided to take up contact with government officials from the district and eventually the national representatives in Parliament. Accompanied by some elders, they transparently described their initiative and process. They agreed to keep the officials informed and invited them to various meetings, but they asked that in return the officials not disrupt the process that was in motion. They received the blessing of the government.

Soon the question became how to engage the youth, particularly the young men who were hidden and fighting in the bush. The women and elders met with key youth in the district and formed what became known as the Youth for Peace. Together they not only went to the bush and met with fighters, they began to travel the district, giving public talks to mothers and youth. They soon discovered that a key concern was employment. Guns, fighting, and rustling had significant economic benefit. If the youth were to leave the fighting, their guns, and the bush, they would need something to occupy their time and provide income. The business community was then engaged. Initiatives for rebuilding and local jobs were offered. Together, the women from the market, the elders commissions, the Youth for Peace, the businesspeople, and local religious leaders formed the Wajir Peace and Development Committee.

Through the work of the elders, ceasefires came into place. Commissions were created to verify and help the process of disarming the clan-based factions. A process of turning over guns to local authorities was coordinated with these commissions and the district police. Emergency response teams were formed made up of elders from different clans who would travel on a moment's notice to deal with renewed fighting, rustling, or thievery.

Solidifying the rising peace, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee brought together all of the groups and held regular meetings with district and national leaders. They could not control the continued fighting in neighboring Somalia nor the influx of problems that came from outside their borders, but increasingly they found ways to protect their villages and stop the local fighting before it spiraled out of control. Key to their success was the ability to take

quick action and stop the potential moments of escalation by directly engaging the people involved. Former fighters now disarmed and, back in the community, became allies of the movement. They helped to constructively engage other fighting groups, increasing the process of disarmament. When crimes were committed, their own group brought those responsible forward, and restitution was sought rather than blind protection and cycles of revenge.

Ten years later, Wajir district still faces serious problems, and the Wajir Peace and Development Committee still actively works for peace and has continued to expand. New programs include police training and work in local schools. More than twenty schools are participating and have formed the Peace Education Network, which involves peer mediation and teacher training in conflict resolution.

Poverty and unemployment remain significant challenges in Wajir. Guns still cross borders in this region. Fighting has not stopped in Somalia, and it spills into Wajir. Religious issues and the global implications emerging since September 11, 2001, with the presence of U.S. marines and the antiterrorism campaigns, have become new issues. But those involved in the Wajir Peace and Development Committee continue their strong work. The elders meet on a regular basis. There is greater cooperation among the local villages, clans, and the district officials.

And the women who stopped a war monitor a now much safer market.

A Story from Colombia: We Have Decided to Think for Ourselves

Josué, Manuel, Hector, Llanero, Simón, Oswaldo, Rosita, Excelino, Juan Roy, Miguel Angel, Sylvia, and Alejandro shared several things that forever bound them together.[3] They lived along the Carare River in an area called La India, in the jungles of Magdalena Medio in the country of Colombia. They were *campesinos*, peasants. They considered themselves ordinary folk. And they faced an extraordinary challenge: how to survive the wicked violence of numerous armed groups that traversed their lands and demanded their allegiance.

The Rio Carare is located in the heart of Magdalena Medio. It is a territory that brings together a stream of influence and people. Water flows through this thick jungle territory, and it brought *campesinos* in search of land from other parts of Colombia around the middle of the twentieth century. They came seeking refuge from the more conflicted zones of Colombia in the middle of the fifty-year-old war, the longest in the Western Hemisphere. It was at best a frontier territory with many natural dangers, a lack of any basic civil protections or law, and requiring hard work. Petroleum was discovered and now flows in this region and out to the Atlantic coast for delivery to the international com-

munity. So does the river of drug traffickers. And, of course, as is the case in many rural parts of Colombia, the river of armed groups and guns flows too.

By the late 1960s the leftist-oriented guerrilla movement FARC (Armed Revolutionary Front of Colombia) entered the territories of Carare. Military response from the national government followed and escalated. Unable to affect or eliminate the influence of the guerrilla movements in the region, landowners privately financed and secretly arranged, often in conjunction with the military, the "paras," armed groups of vigilantes from the Right, which soon gained a greater independence. Battles took place not just for the land where the early *campesinos* had made their homes and against informal war taxes but for their very allegiance. Whoever controlled the particular territory at the time controlled the laws: Whoever robs will be killed; anyone who kills someone will be killed; whoever informs anyone of our presence will be killed. As one statement put it: "[N]o one is obligated to follow our code; you always have the right to leave the territory." The law of silence prevailed: "It is prohibited to talk about the death of any friend or family member, about those who killed them or the reasons why they were killed. If you open your mouth, the rest of your family will be killed." Such were the realities faced by Josué, Hector, Manuel, and the other *campesinos* of the region.

In 1987 the situation reached its nadir. Increased fighting and larger scale massacres began to take over. In response to the guerrillas, a notoriously violent captain of the Colombian army convened more than 2,000 peasants from La India and offered them forgiveness in the form of an amnesty if they would accept his weapons and join the ranks of local militia to fight against the guerrillas. In the eyes of the captain, many of these peasants were guilty of supporting the guerrillas—if not directly participating. So the offer of forgiveness was considered an ultimatum about choosing sides in the conflict. He concluded with what he called the four choices before the *campesinos*: "You can arm yourselves and join us, you can join the guerrillas, you can leave your homes, or you can die."

The crowd was stunned. In the midst of the silence, a middle-aged *campesino*, Josué, spoke from the crowd and from his heart. His speech that day was so memorable that up until today you will find peasants in La India who can recite his response to the captain word for word even though they were not there. Garcia (1996), who did a study of this movement, offered this version of Josué's speech that day. Responding to the captain in the open meeting, he said:

> You speak of forgiveness, but what do you have to forgive us? You are the ones who have violated. We have killed no one. You want to give us millions in weapons paid for by the state, yet you will not facilitate even the minimum credit for our farming needs. There are millions for war but nothing for peace. How many men in arms are there in Colombia? By rough calculation I would say at least 100,000, plus the police, plus 20,000 guerrillas, not to mention the Paras, the drug lords and private armies. And what has all this served? What has it fixed? Nothing. In fact Colombia is in the worst violence ever. We have arrived at the conclusion that weapons have not solved a thing and that there is not one reason to arm ourselves. We need farm credits, tools, tractors, trucks to make this little agricultural effort we try [to] make produce better. You as members of the National Army, instead of inciting us to kill each other should do your job according to the national constitution, that is, you should defend the Colombian people. Look at all these people you brought here. We all know each other. And who are you? We know that some years ago you yourself were with [the] guerrilla[s] and now you are the head of the paramilitaries. You brought people into our houses to accuse us, you lied, and you switched sides. And now you, a side switcher, you want us to follow your violent example. Captain, with all due respect, we do not plan to join your side, their side or any side. And we are not leaving this place. We are going to find our own solution. (Garcia, 1996:189).

Later that week a group of twenty *campesino* leaders decided to play the ultimate card: They would pursue civilian resistance without weapons. As one of them put it, "We decided that day to speak for ourselves." In the weeks and months that followed they organized one of the most unique and spontaneous processes of transformation Colombia had seen in fifty years.

They formed the Association of Peasant Workers of Carare (ATCC). Their first act was to break the code of silence. They developed ways of organizing and participating. Participation was open to anyone. The quota for entry was a simple commitment: Your life, not your money. This was expressed in the phrase "We shall die before we kill." They developed a series of key principles to guide their every action:

1. Faced with individualization: solidarity.
2. Faced with the Law of Silence and Secrecy: Do everything publicly. Speak loud and never hide anything.
3. Faced with fear: Sincerity and disposition to dialogue. We shall understand those who do not understand us.
4. Faced with Violence: Talk and negotiate with everyone. We do not have enemies.
5. Faced with exclusion: Find support in others. Individually we are weak, but together we are strong.
6. Faced with the need for a strategy: Transparency. We will tell every armed group exactly what we have talked about with other armed groups. And we will tell it all to the community. (Garcia, 1996:200).

And these were not just ideas. The *campesinos* created a living laboratory of immediate impact and great risk. They solidified their group by finding a core they called the "key folks," who were uniquely placed as individuals to link them with different geographic parts of La India and with the various groups. Within weeks after consultation with local villages they posted handmade signs with the title "What the People from Here Say," which included a declaration that no weapons would be allowed in their villages. They spontaneously declared their lands to be a territory of peace.

Delegations were sent to meet with the armed groups. Never conducted by a single individual and always public, each meeting with each different armed group required careful preparation and choice of who would speak. But the message remained the same: respect for the territory of peace and the *campesinos*. They approached each meeting seeking the connection with the person not the institution. The key, as several people reported it, was that they had to find a way to meet the human being, the real person. Informal and in some instances formal agreements and arrangements were reached. The association held to its promise of never giving in to weapons and never giving up on dialogue. In the public debriefing of any meeting, everyone was welcome, friend and foe alike. The doors were never shut. Transparency was carried to its fullest extent.

During the next years violence was greatly reduced, though Magdalena Medio remained and is yet today a hotbed of armed conflict. In 1990 the association won the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize for its innovative work. In 1992 the United Nations recognized the movement with the We Are the People Award. Nonetheless, the local campaign for respect and dignity came with its price. Josué and several other leaders were assassinated by unknown and yet undetermined *sicarios* (hired guns). Survivors believe the murders were due to local politicians, not the armed groups. Their legacy, however, lives on. Today in Colombia many speak of the potential of local groups to develop and build a capacity for civilian resistance as the key to building a permanent peace. As Alejandro Garcia, the history professor who extensively interviewed many of the early and subsequent participants in the association, aptly wrote: "Born in the nucleus of violence, the ATCC introduced into the logic of war a sense of uncertainty: it broke the conventional cycle of spiraling violence and developed through lived demonstration the basic idea that solutions without violence were possible" (Garcia, 1996:313).

A Story from Tajikistan: Talking Philosophy with the Warlord

The following information is based on notes from a trainer's journal, February, 2002.

We are seated in a seminar room in Dushanbe with twenty-four professors from seven universities across Tajikistan. Two small electric heaters, their coils burning bright red, keep the late February cold at bay inside the Republican Healthy Lifestyle Centre. We have the appointed cream of the crop. One or two are deans and a few others are heads of their respective disciplinary departments. From the perspective of the organizers we count ourselves lucky to have five women and a strong showing of younger scholars, though seated each day in the corner, occasionally drifting in and out of late afternoon naps, is the kind and always enthusiastic seventy-year-old head of the Department of Scientific Communism, now re-titled Political Science.

The Intertajik War lies nearly six years in their past. Our seminar on conflict resolution and peacebuilding probes into the challenges and difficulties of responding to violence and building a nation in this newly independent Central Asian country. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the schedule for our three-year initiative, aimed at helping to build the civil society, was set back a few months, as the Tajik-Afghan border and the space above this mountainous region witnessed the anti-Taliban war effort unfold. Our subject matter now seems doubly interesting and urgent.

Our Tajik University colleagues completed their higher education through the Soviet system. Most have doctoral degrees. Travel, when it happened for academic reasons, was to Russia or Eastern Europe. Of the twenty-four, four speak English with any proficiency. Our English-Tajik translation is painstakingly slow. Some would prefer Russian. Under the encouragement and guidance of the minister of education we will produce a Tajik-language text that compiles approaches to peacebuilding from different parts of the world coupled with original Tajik research on conflict and peace in this setting.

The professors become considerably more animated when the topic of the Tajikistan civil war emerges. They have a variety of opinions about what difficulties were experienced and what made the achievement of a negotiated peace possible under the guidance of a UN mandate. One participant asks my co-trainer, Randa Slim, and me, the only two non-Tajiks in the room, why so few in the international community have given careful consideration to what the Tajiks achieved in ending the war. They may well have a point. Tajikistan, as journalist Ahmed Rashid convincingly argues, is the only country in the region or the world for that matter, to have ended a brutal civil war with the "creation of a coalition government that included Islamicists, neo-communists, and clan leaders." He goes onto to note: "Islamicists lost elections, but they were *represented* in the elections, and they accepted their loss" (Rashid, 2002:241). The professors want a straight answer: Why don't people pay attention to what we have learned? Neither of us has a good answer.

During that afternoon's chai break, I have tea with the only professor in our group who knows some of the inner details of how the Tajiks negotiated

while war raged and how they brought the Islamic movements into negotiation rather than isolating or trying to defeat them. He draws me to a corner with a translator to tell me the story.

"I was tasked by the government to approach and convince one of [the] warlords, a key Mullah-Commander located in the mountains, to enter negotiations," Professor Abdul begins. "This was difficult if not impossible, because this commander was considered a notorious criminal and he had killed one of my close friends." He stops while the translation conveys the personal side of this challenge.

> When I first got to the encampment, the commander said I had arrived late and it was time for prayers. So we went together and prayed. When we had finished, he said to me, "How can a communist pray?"
>
> "I am not a communist: my father was," I responded.
>
> Then he asked what I taught in the university. We soon discovered we were both interested in philosophy and Sufism. Our meeting went from an agreed twenty minutes to two and a half hours. In this part of the world you have to circle into truth through stories.

In the hallway Abdul's gold-capped teeth sparkled with a smile as he finished his idea: "You see in Sufism there is an idea that discussion has no end."

His point well conveyed, the professor picked up the story again:

> I kept going to visit him. We mostly talked poetry and philosophy. Little by little I asked him about ending the war. I wanted to persuade him to take the chance on putting down his weapons. After months of visits we finally had enough trust to speak truths and it all boiled down to one concern.

Abdul stopped and leaned over, taking the voice of the warlord. "The commander said to me, 'If I put down my weapons and go to Dushanbe with you, can you guarantee my safety and life?' " The Tajik storyteller paused with the full sense of the moment. "My difficulty was that I could not guarantee his safety."

Abdul waited for the translator to finish, making sure that I understood the weight of his peacemaking dilemma, and then concluded: "So I told my philosopher warlord friend the truth, 'I cannot guarantee your safety.' "

In the hallway Professor Abdul swung his arm under mine and came to stand fully by my side to emphasize the answer he then gave the commander: "But I can guarantee this. I will go with you, side by side. And if you die, I will die."

The hallway was totally quiet.

"That day the commander agreed to meet the government. Some weeks later we came down together from the mountains. When he first met with the government commission he told them, 'I have not come because of your government. I have come for honor and respect of this professor.' "

The professor stopped. "You see, my young American friend," he tapped my arm lightly, "this is Tajik mediation."

We finished our chai and moved back to the classroom discussions on the theory of conflict and peacebuilding.

Years have passed since the end of the war. The weapons have been laid down. Things are not easy in Tajikistan, but from all accounts, the professor-mediator and the renegade warlord are alive and well, and occasionally they still talk poetry and philosophy.

The Moral of the Stories

What made these changes possible? Though working their hardest and very skilled in their trade, at the moment of the initial meetings it was not the techniques used by the mediators nor the nature and design of the process that created the shift in the Dagomba-Konkomba encounter. The inverse may be true: The process seemed to have gotten off to a bad start. It was not the technical expertise introduced by professional peacebuilders in Wajir or Magdalena Medio or by the professor-philosopher and his counterpart, the warlord. It was not the local or national political power, exigencies, the fears of a broader war, nor the influence and pressure from the international community that created the shift. It was not a particular religious tradition: the stories in fact cut across religions. It was not political, economic, or military power in any of the cases. What then, created a moment, a turning point, of such significance that it shifted whole aspects of a violent, protracted setting of conflict?

I believe it was the serendipitous appearance of the *moral imagination* in human affairs.

3

On This Moment

Turning Points

Do not remember the former things,
Or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

—Isaiah 43:18–19

In the first decade of the new century and millennium, we face a turning point, a unique moment with the potential to affect and redefine the ways we organize and shape our global family. The turn of centuries—and, much more, the turn of millennia—provide unique times to reflect about the grand journey of humanity. We have traversed a century filled with extraordinary changes, one that has left us even greater challenges. Through numerous decades, expectations were raised, then dashed, that we were finding our way toward a world defined less by our divisions than by our cooperation, more by our ability to meet fundamental human needs than by the outright denigration of human dignity and rights. If nothing else, the twentieth century created within us a keener understanding that humanity has the potential for constructive change within our political, economic, and technological reach and, an equal dose of realism, that we have fallen short and shown ourselves incapable of realizing our potential. If we take seriously this realizable potential and our incapacity to reach it, we are left with a singularly perplexing question that seems especially appropriate in the timeframe of the first decade of the new millennium: What collective and global legacy are we leaving for our great-great-grandchildren this century?

This is not just a challenge posed generally, or reserved for political leaders or policy makers. This is a challenge I wish to place before the burgeoning fields of conflict transformation and peacebuilding broadly defined with all of their professional applications. I count myself a practitioner within these disciplines and I believe we need a dose of realism. Ours are professions afflicted with a proclivity toward the promise of great change. It is true. Our rhetoric comes easy. If constructive social change rolled forward as easily as our words and promises pour out, world justice and peace would have surely been attained by now.

Some argue that we suffer from an exaggerated rhetoric coupled with an overly optimistic, and therefore unrealistic, understanding of how the world really works and how change can or cannot take place. Following the events of 9/11, I heard that a perplexed member serving on the board of a major foundation which had contributed to a variety of initiatives in the field of conflict resolution asked the question: "Have our investments not made any significant difference in the big picture of things?" While I do not believe in the remotest sense that blame can be laid at the feet of a particular field nor its effectiveness determined by what transpired on September 11, 2001, there is a wake-up call inherent in the events that have been transpiring in the first few years of this millennium.

The start of the 1990s was filled with hope that as a global community we were witnesses to a new era. The ideas of our field, of finding whole new ways for individuals, communities, and even nations to respond to violence and build a justpeace[1] appeared as the great dawn of this new era. Now, nearly fifteen years later, we must ask ourselves a daunting set of questions. These are not posed in reaction to doubts about our potential, doubts that frequently arise from different sources, particularly from *realpolitik* advocates. These questions beg something more important. They plead for critical reflection at the core of our professions as justice, peace, and conflict practitioners.

How does constructive social change happen? How can we be more strategic in the pursuit of this change? What carries us closer to the promise of our words? How do turning points that make a difference happen? Are we capable of participating in a turning point that will affect the whole of the human community?

Thinking about and understanding the nature of a turning point requires a capacity to locate ourselves in an expansive, not a narrow view of time. Elise Boulding suggested that such a view of time must take place within what we touch and know but never be limited to a fleeting moment that passes us by. In a provocative twist of terms she created an intriguing image: We live in a "two-hundred-year present" (Boulding, 1990:3). Her idea is not hard to calculate. Let me give a personal example to illustrate it.

I well remember conversations with my great-grandmother Lydia Miller whose hand I held in the first decade of my life. She was born in the 1860s.

The newest members of my extended family are Nona Lisa, Eliza Jane, Gracie, and Garrison, all four only a few months or years into the adventure. If they enjoy a full life, I will have held the hands of people who in old age will perhaps live to see the celebrations of 2100. Boulding suggests we calculate "the present" by subtracting the date of birth of the oldest person we have known in our lives from the projected passing-on date of the youngest person in our family. In my case, the hands that held mine date back into the nineteenth century and those I now touch will live forward into the twenty-second. This is my 200-year present. It is made up of the lives that touched me and of those I will touch. The 200-year present represents my lived history. It is in this sense of "the present" that we need to locate ourselves in order to understand the nature of the turning point.

The convergence of events in the first few years of the new century, perhaps best symbolized in the tragedy of September 11, 2001, appears to me to represent such a moment, a crystallization of a singular opportunity. The turning point in our 200-year present is pregnant with enormous potential to constructively impact affect the fundamental well-being of the human community. However, contrary to the range of scientific and political projections, this turn in humanity's journey does not rotate on which specific forms of governing political, economic, or social structures we devise. It does not spin primarily around finding answers to ever-present and pressing issues of population growth, environmental degradation, use of natural resources, or poverty. It does not find its essence in the search to understand the roots of violence, war, or terrorism, or in solutions to the same. It does not develop on the basis of learning a few good communication skills, new facilitation methodologies, or teachable techniques for resolving conflicts. Each of these is important, and many represent the core challenges we face. But they do not constitute the capacity to create a turning point that orients us toward a new and more humane horizon. The turning point of human history in this decade of the 200-year present lies with the capacity of the human community to generate and sustain the one thing uniquely gifted to our species, but which we have only on rare occasions understood or mobilized: *our moral imagination.*

At the midway point of the last century, a critical essay appeared that created a stir in the evolution of the social sciences. C. Wright Mills (1959) suggested that the endeavor taken up by the scientific community needed to embrace a deeper challenge than had been fully comprehended by his fellow scientists. Exposing the false tensions of ideologies that wished to govern political and intellectual debate and stripping bare the verbose layers of grand social theory that obscured rather than clarified, Mills made a simple argument: Structural history and personal biography are connected. He admonished academics, in particular social scientists, to take up their proper vocation. That vocation is lost, he argued, when it is distracted by the narrowness of discipline-based technical applications or becomes drunk with esoteric verbi-

age that avoids critical assessment of the social world. The antidote, he penned in an unforgettable phrase, is only found in those willing to engage and build "the sociological imagination."

I recognize the intellectual and cultural debt this book owes to Mills's insights and formulation of the problem. My interest is not to further develop his critique of the state of affairs within the scientific community. Nor am I oriented toward an exploration into what became of this sociological imagination, though anyone reading his book fifty years since its writing cannot help but be struck by its extraordinary relevance to contemporary academic and scientific debates and quandaries. My interest emerges initially from my own sense of vocation and the need to reflect more intentionally on the experiences I have been afforded in the past twenty-five years of international peacebuilding. Obviously, one's circle of experience influences what one observes and writes. My vocation and my circle of experience have taken me into and around the geography of violent human conflict. In those contexts I have been witness to the best and worst sides of humanity.

In other writings, I have intentionally referred several times to *vocation.* Though conflict resolution and peacebuilding have come into their own rights as professions and though I consider myself a professional working in these fields, I have always understood my entry and sustained work at the level of a vocation. Beyond profession, my concern has been to find and follow a calling, a deeper voice. In the truest sense of the word, *vocation* is that which stirs inside, calling out to be heard, calling out to be followed. Vocation is not what I do. It finds its roots in who I am and a sense of purpose I have on earth.

To follow the voice and develop work as "craftsmanship" in the social scientific sphere, argued Mills (1959), requires a sociological imagination. For those of us in the justice, peace, and conflict professions, vocation calls us back to the road that winds beyond the rest stops of techniques and day-to-day practice. It beckons us to search for our deeper purpose and possibility, found more in *who we are* than in *what we do.* For our human community to find this deeper sense of who we are, where we are situated, and where we are going requires that we locate our bearings, our compass. A compass needle functions by finding its north. The north of peacebuilding is best articulated as finding our way toward becoming and being local and global human communities characterized by respect, dignity, fairness, cooperation, and the nonviolent resolution of conflict. To understand this north, to read such a compass, requires that we recognize and develop our moral imagination far more intentionally.

This kind of imagination has a parallel with Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann's proposals, which are captured in the title of his book *The Prophetic Imagination.* For all intents and purposes, finding the voice of truth, ways to turn toward humanity in the fullest sense, and faithfulness to live in God the Creator's sustenance were the mainstay of the prophets' vocation. Intriguingly, Brueggemann provides a keen sense that this work is both

moral and requires connection to the artist's, particularly the poet's, voice. Brueggemann describes the role of the prophet as bringing "to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have been denied" (2001:65). It seems noteworthy that an Old Testament theologian and a midcentury sociologist dipped into the realm of imagination to describe the capacity for both connection to reality and transcendence. In both cases, it leads us to something that lies beyond yet is rooted in people's day-to-day lives and struggles.

Somewhere midstream in writing this book I gave a lecture on the topic of the moral imagination to a young seminary audience in Yangoon, Burma. In attendance that evening was my colleague Ron Kraybill, who expressed enthusiasm for the ideas and added that he was not sure where exactly but he thought he had seen a book with the title *The Moral Imagination.* My dreams of originality met the age-old adage "there is nothing new under the sun."

Since September 11, 2001, I had been calling on religious leaders and politicians alike to exercise a greater moral imagination in response to the unprovoked violence released that day. It seemed to me then and even more so as I write two years later that we, as Americans, have difficulty envisioning ourselves embroiled in a cycle of violence. The acts of 9/11 were viewed as unwarranted provocation that came out of the blue. And indeed they were. But it is also true that these acts can be equally situated not as isolated events but as part of a cycle with a history of actions, reactions, and counteractions. Only when understood in the context of a broader pattern, which in the short term can be very difficult to visualize, is it possible to see that how we choose to respond has consequences and implications in terms of a wider, historic pattern. Through our response, we choose to transcend or enter and sustain the cycle of violence. For the most part since 9/11 the leaders of the United States have chosen the route of perpetuation. In less than two years as a nation we have engaged ourselves in two land-based wars costing billions of dollars. And by all current accounts, the route of choosing violent response has not increased domestic or international security. It has succeeded in fostering the cycle.

In the late fall of 2001, I argued that we seriously consider the implications of falling prey to the cycle of violence and should pursue to our utmost the development of responses that transcend the cycle. In several essays and numerous editorials in local newspapers, I argued that this required unleashing our moral imagination and pursuing the unexpected (Lederach, 2001). I later saw the phrase emerging in a few religious magazines. But it had not occurred to me that this phrase, *the moral imagination,* had already been used as a book title. Research soon confirmed Ron's intuition and more: There was not *a* book with this title—there were dozens.

I soon found myself engrossed in a community of authors linked by the choice of *the moral imagination* as the title or subtitle of their books.[2] I found it a fascinating journey to read through the range of disciplines and perspec-

tives. Although I have sleuthed and even read a chapter on Sherlock Holmes as an agent of moral imagination (Clausen, 1986), I have not been able to discover who may have first used this phrase or in what context. My best guess is Edmund Burke's essay on the French Revolution in which he laments the loss of elements that would "beautify and soften private society" furnished "from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of her naked shivering nature" (Burke, 1864:515–516). Brown (1999) in his excellent *The Ethos of the Cosmos* suggests in his subtitle that the genesis of the moral imagination is found in creation itself. By virtue of such a view we could, without stretching the truth or the metaphor, propose that the capacity of the moral imagination dates to time immemorial.

Relevant to our exploration however, is the inquiry of why such a range of authors and disciplines converged in using *the moral imagination* as part of the title of their books. At a first level, several categories emerge. The largest set of volumes is oriented toward the concerns and approaches of ethics and decisionmaking, primarily in the spheres of business and public policy (Clausen, 1986; McCollough, 1991; Johnson, 1993; Tivnan, 1995; Stevens, 1998; Williams, 1998; Werhane, 1999; Brown, 1999; Fesmire, 2003). A second category explores the moral imagination in literature and the arts, drawing principally on story and narrative as providing guidance for the character development of both adults and children (Price, 1983; Clausen, 1986; Kirk, 1988; Bruce, 1998; Guroian, 1998). Still others draw on the term to promote a particular way of critiquing, provoking, and encouraging their professional disciplines to a greater sense of purpose or developing moral standards within a religious tradition (Babbit, 1996; Stevens, 1998; Allison, 1999; Fernandez and Huber, 2001; Newsom, 2003). A fourth group of authors suggested that this phrase captured the essence of extraordinary, ground-breaking individuals (Clausen, 1986; Kirk, 1988; Johnson, 1993; Babbit, 1996; Bruce, 1998; Fesmire, 2003). Many were well-recognized writers and visionaries like T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Toni Morrison, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Some were renowned philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Sören Kierkegaard, Hannah Arendt, and John Dewey. Other authors pointed to traditional understandings as found in Kaguru thinking (Beidelman, 1993) or the efforts against significant structural impediments to feminist Cuban writers to find their place and voice (Babbit, 1996).

Looking across these categories we can begin to locate several points of convergence. Though I was well along in my own writing and conceptualization, I suddenly found myself very much at home in the essence of what linked this set of diverse authors to the phrase *the moral imagination*. I found three keys.

First, the authors concurred that the moral imagination develops a capacity to perceive things beyond and at a deeper level than what initially meets the eye. Perhaps best captured in Guroian's term, *awakening*, the authors spoke of attentiveness to more than is immediately visible. In her discussion of George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, Guroian described this quality of imagination as "a power of perception, a light that illuminates the mystery that is hidden beneath a visible reality: It is the power to 'see' into the very nature of things" (1998:141).

Second, no matter the particular disciplinary field, the authors landed on the term *imagination* in order to emphasize the necessity of the creative act. The subtitle of Brown's book, *The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (1999), suggests that this kind of imagination has its essence in the very act of original creation. More frequent however were the authors who explored the "arts" not as the domain of professional artists, but rather as a frame of reference for understanding a defining characteristic of the moral imagination: the capacity to give birth to something new that in its very birthing changes our world and the way we see things. Johnson explored this most intentionally in the chapter that carried the title of his book, "Moral Imagination," commenting that though art is often perceived as having the liberty to break the rules of morality, in fact art makes moral reasoning possible. "Everyone recognizes," he writes, "that imagination is the key to these artistic acts by which new things come into existence, old things are reshaped, and our ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking and so forth are transformed" (1993:212).

Third, while expressed in different ways for a variety of purposes, the authors converged in the idea that the moral imagination has a quality of transcendence. It breaks out of what appear to be narrow, shortsighted, or structurally determined dead-ends. Whether this is the capacity of a character in a fairy tale to transcend what appears as predetermined disaster or the need to open a wider range of possible actions in decisions facing the NASA space program, or a car manufacturer, or an anthropological method of study, the exercise of the moral imagination, these authors argue, breaks out into new territory and refuses to be bound by what existing views of perceived reality suggest or what prescriptive answers determine is possible. Babbit in her intriguing exploration of rationality, *Impossible Dreams*, suggested that the role of the moral imagination is to set in motion the "bringing about of possibilities that are not imaginable in current terms" (1996:174). Rather than set aside my initial attraction to the phrase, I felt reinforced by much of what I was reading in the application of the moral imagination to peacebuilding. I chose to stay with it as my title.

Some readers may feel unsettled with the use of the word *moral* in approaching the topic of conflict and peace. Contrary to the word *imagination*, it seems to carry a strong bias toward narrowing and confining boundaries. The word is not without its negative connotations and certainly has less than desirable affiliations and misuses. However, *moral*, like *vocation*, appeals to something great. As terms, they beckon us to rise toward something beyond those

things that are immediately apparent and visible. The quality of this phrase I most wish to embrace reverberates in this potential to find a way to transcend, to move beyond what exists while still living in it.

However, the term clearly merits a discussion on what I do not wish to convey with the word *moral*. We typically connect moral with morality and then relegate morality to the sphere of religion. Though I come from a religious community, the moral imagination is not the commodity or exclusive realm of a particular religious belief, much less religious establishments or systems. Moreover, those religious communities, from one persuasion to another, who wish to corral and pen up morality by providing rigid boundaries that can and cannot be crossed often create the antithesis of the moral imagination: dogmas. While pretending to give life, dogmas are little more than static ideological structures. They stare at us like ossified bones in an archaeological dig, attesting to something that once was alive and gave life. Modern religious moralizing has too often translated into rigid ideas, unresponsive and ill adapted to our most pressing challenges. We fall significantly short of our God-given potential when morality becomes prescriptive dogma, creating moral stasis. The moral imagination of which I speak has little in common with such morality.

Ironically, the moral imagination does not build itself around nor is it primarily about ethics. Noble and necessary as it is in the human community, the ethical inquiry remains somewhat reductionist and analytical by its very nature. The purpose, the raison d'être of imagination, on the other hand, moves in a different sphere for it seeks and creates a space beyond the pieces that exist. Not confined by what is, or what is known, imagination is the art of creating what does not exist.

Centuries ago the apostle Paul described our world as a community wracked with unrelenting pain. "The whole creation groans," he wrote, "with labor pains until now" (Romans 8:22). The metaphor suggests that humanity lives in a time of great pain and great potential. Birth is simultaneously pain and potential, the arriving of that which could be but is not yet. I believe the human community still groans with such pain today. We seek a birth of something new, a creation that can break us out of the expected. We seek the creative act of the unexpected. This is the potential and the aspect of the moral imagination I wish to explore.

In accordance with these understandings we must not relegate the term *moral* exclusively to a religious inquiry. Our challenges require that we link its fundamental energy as practical and relevant to the political affairs and issues we face today. Politics, economics, and global structures have become so inauthentic that few of us truly believe in them. We live in this paradox: The things most omnipresent that govern our lives are the very things from which we feel distant. We hold fast to myths that what we have created to govern our lives is responsive to whom we are as human beings and to our communities. Yet at the same time these creations appear to have lives of their own independent of us, foreign to us, and distant from us. An inquiry that seeks to understand how cycles of violence can be broken and transcended is precisely one that must infuse politics, political discourse, and governing structures with a capacity for responsiveness to our human community.

In this book, I suggest and will explore the moral imagination as the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist. In reference to peacebuilding, this is the capacity to imagine and generate constructive responses and initiatives that, while rooted in the day-to-day challenges of violence, transcend and ultimately break the grips of those destructive patterns and cycles.

This exploration does not push toward finding *the answer* to our problems in a single overarching solution, like some miraculous new political, social, or economic system. It does push us toward understanding the nature of turning points and how destructive patterns are transcended. Turning points are moments pregnant with new life, which rise from what appear to be the barren grounds of destructive violence and relationships. This unexpected new life makes possible processes of constructive change in human affairs and constitutes the moral imagination without which peacebuilding cannot be understood or practiced. However, such pregnant moments do not emerge through the rote application of a technique or a recipe. They must be explored and understood in the context of something that approximates the artistic process, imbued as it is with creativity, skill, serendipity, and craftsmanship.

Turning points suggest that violence and the moral imagination point in opposite directions. As Vicenç Fisas paraphrased philosopher Bruno Bettelheim: "[V]iolence is the behavior of someone incapable of imagining other solutions to the problem at hand" (Fisas, 2002:58). Headed in the inverse direction, I will argue that the moral imagination rises with the capacity to imagine ourselves in relationship, the willingness to embrace complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity, the belief in the creative act, and acceptance of the inherent risk required to break violence and to venture on unknown paths that build constructive change. The moral imagination proposes that turning points and a journey toward a new horizon are possible, though based on perplexing paradoxes. The turning points must find a way to transcend the cycles of destructive violence while living with and being relevant to the context that produces those cycles. A horizon, though visible, is permanently just out of touch, suggesting an epic journey, the pursuit of which in peacebuilding is the forging of new ways to approach human affairs with an enemy. For our field this kind of journey is not built with a technician's manual. It requires us to explore the art and soul of social change and it starts with the need to explore the essence of peacebuilding and the heart of on-the-ground realities where violent patterns have dominated human affairs.