A Personal Story

Several weeks after Hamas' 7 October 2023 attack in Israel and Israel's military reaction I was asked to facilitate a workshop on 'Trust-Building in Times of Violence'. All participants were in one way or another, deeply committed to peacebuilding, and peace making. They gathered for a twofold purpose. First, to intentionally look for ways to talk about peace in their own back yards in the face of these horrific events. Second, to engage in the question of how they can best care for themselves and for each other while living in the gap between their aspirations (peace) and what is (violence). Before long, I could simply feel the tensions rise. Voices were raised. Bodies stiffened. Angry comments against Hamas deadly attack and against Israel's unrestrained military reaction were flying all over the place. It was so unlike the people I thought I knew in this room. No one was listening to the other and some were literally finger pointing and talking over (shouting) each other as they charged each other with not understanding. ('No, No, No, you just don't understand!'). I was at a total loss as to what I needed to do. I was stunned at what I was seeing and experiencing. If 'facilitate' means to make (from the Latin, *facer*e) easy (from the Latin, *facile*) I was struggling 'to make' what I was experiencing 'easy'. In fact, I simply felt helpless at that moment.

I remember taking a deep breath and asking the Lord for help: 'Please Lord, help me out here!' (Yes, I am a practicing Catholic, and this is what I learned early in my life: 'When in doubt, ask the Lord for His Advice'. I was also cautioned by my Spiritual Advisers: 'You may not like the advice you receive!'). Without planning, and in total spontaneity, I quietly removed myself from this circle, went to a corner of the room, and started to softly (but loud enough for others to hear) sing St. Francis' Prayer of Peace: 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace'. I honestly could not believe that I was doing this! For fear of breaking down in tears, I did not look at anyone in the circle as I sang the lyrics that I knew, and hummed to the lyrics I didn't. Initially, some stopped shouting at each other and stared at me. Then, one yelled: 'Are you crazy?' I ignored that question. What occurred in this spontaneous process was something also unplanned. It was indeed a pleasant surprise. Some in the circle stopped talking, stayed in their seats, and started to hum and sing that same song/hymn; some joined me in the corner where I stood, and hummed and sang along with me. Tears were rolling down their cheeks. I teared too. Shortly after, silence prevailed as some went to get themselves a glass of water, or a soft drink . . . some hugged others in the room . . . as friends hug each other. At that moment, there was no need for words. It was as if each understood that they all needed to pause and search their own minds, hearts, and souls for the sake of dwelling in peace . . .

Note: The names of participants and the place where this occurred are excluded for the sake of anonymity.

1 Introduction

This Element is written with three goals in mind: (i) to show how we can choose to be with each other in ways that preserves the integrity of each person as a person in peaceful times and in times of disturbance, (ii) to offer tools and a framework to guide peace leaders and followers to dwell in peace, and (iii) to encourage all to seize opportunities to exercise peace leadership that are within their reach. From a methodological perspective, the lived experience of the personal story shared will serve as the context and 'case' or 'incident' for thinking about peace leadership. While this Element will be bounded by the context, interactions, relationships, and responses of this 'incident', it is also intended to serve as a backdrop and an opportunity to engage in an interpretive understanding of peace dwelling within a 'real-world' context. But some might argue: 'surely this micro-event cannot be appropriate, let alone be sufficient, to address very big questions of peace and violence in our real world?' In response to a question like this, I plead with my readers to seriously consider my 'if-then' questions. If we cannot dwell in peace at local and micro levels, then what hope do we have for dwelling in peace at national and international levels or in someone else's back yards? If we cannot dwell in peace wherever we find ourselves, in our Here and Now, then where can we dwell in peace?

A political theorist, Arendt (2018), offers us a way of thinking about our thinking about the use of a case or incident.

> Thought itself – to the extent that it is more than a technical, logical operation . . . – arises out of the actuality of incidents, and incidents of living experience must remain the guideposts by which it takes its bearings if it is not to lose itself in the heights to which thinking soars, or in the depths to which it must descend. (p. 203)

Descriptions and interpretations of this incident or case, then, are such that it must remain bound to this incident. The lived experience within the context of this incident will remain the guideposts to take our bearings for what it means to dwell in peace. The best we can expect is not any formal definitions of peace dwelling, but a discovery that may illuminate our understanding of what it means to dwell in peace.

The language of *dwelling* places us within the space of home and by implication, homelessness. Our everyday use of the language of home, offer us different images of what it means to feel or be-at-home. For example, gracious hosts, invite their guests into their homes with: 'Make yourselves at Home'. Returning

from a vacation, we hear many say: 'Home Sweet Home'. We hear our loved ones say: 'Welcome Home.' We also hear that 'Home is where the Heart Is'. While away from home, we hear some as longing for 'the green, green grass of home', and others as acknowledging being in a 'home away from home'. Being at home then resonates with different images of genuinely experiencing (a) like we belong, (b) a longing for home, (c) relaxation, (d) the freedom to enjoy being in the presence and hospitality of gracious hosts, (e) gratefulness to the point where guests return the graciousness of hosts with respect and appreciation, (f) being uninhibited to be who we are without judgement, (g) feeling safe and secure from any threat of danger, (h) *as if* we are in the presence of family and friends.

In being disturbed by the violence in the Middle East, participants in this 'incident' began to dwell in that space in ways that only increased their experience of restlessness and anxiety (being-not-at-home). A philosopher like Heidegger (1995) affirms that this interaction of being-at-home (state of rest) and being-not-at home (restlessness) is a part of our human condition – they are both a part of our human experience. (p. 5). For him restlessness is a human affirmation that we are 'not-at-home' everywhere and every time. Similarly, we read a hermeneutic-philosopher and phenomenologist, Gadamer (1996a) interpreting the philosopher Hegel in this way:

> The expression of 'making oneself at home in the world' was a favourite one of Hegel's and he regarded it as constitutive of what it means to be human. It describes the desire to be at home with oneself, secure from any threat of danger, surrounded by a familiar, understood, and understandable world where one can feel free of anxiety. (p. 154)

1.1 What's the Problem?

The problem of peace dwelling as suggested by Hegel and Heidegger is that it is more than having a roof over our heads or building structures for habitation. Without disavowing the need to have a roof over our heads, for both these philosophers, the desire to make oneself at home in our world is constitutive of what it means to be human. The desire to feel secure from any threat of danger and being surrounded by a familiar, understood, and understandable world, appear to resonate with the different images of being-at-home as presented earlier. However, unlike Gadamer's formulation of the philosopher Hegel 'where one can feel free of anxiety', for Heidegger, anxiety or what he calls 'restlessness', by virtue of being a human condition, means that we are not and cannot be 'free of anxiety'. To be free of anxiety is to be free from what it means to be a human being. This does not mean that as human beings we are simply

condemned to a life of restlessness. Dwelling in peace within the context of being-at-home and being-not-at-home means that we need to begin by acknowledging that we dwell in an *in-between space* of restlessness (being-not-at-home) and feeling like we belong (being-at-home). If we accept this then the problem and question of dwelling in peace is a matter of addressing a question that is rooted in our human condition: *How can we dwell decisively and imaginatively in this in-between space of being-at-home and being-not-at-home?*

1.2 A Shift in Thinking

The problem of peace dwelling, as it is reflected in this question, differs from what we learn from scholars within our emerging field called peace leadership. For example, in an interview with Mexiner (2006), a well-respected leadership scholar Dr Jean Lipman-Blumen[1] raised the question 'leadership for 'what?' It was a question that was already raised by Burns (1978) whom some consider as the father of leadership studies (Barbour, 2006): 'Leadership for *what* end?' (Burns, 1978, p. 457; emphasis original). This question presupposes a genuine interest in claiming the purpose of leadership. For Lipman-Blumen,

> As educators, we must ask, 'leadership for what?' That is the basic question! It is not about the leaders; it is what the leaders have to solve. If we can make leadership programs problem-focused instead of person-focused, that would be a very important leap forward. What do you want to *make better* in this society?' (Mexiner, 2006, p. 4; emphasis original)

A story is also told that Lipman-Blumen answered the 'leadership for what?' question at an International Leadership Association (ILA) Conference: 'Leadership for what, if not for peace' (McIntyre Miller, 2016). If we stayed with Lipman-Blumen's formulation of leaders as problem-solvers ('it is what leaders have to solve'), it could appear as if peace leaders are being called upon to be problem-focused by solving or fixing the problem of violence. This may be how problem-solvers make whatever they want to *make better* in society. If this is indeed so, then dwelling in peace would become a technical and logical operation – an activity that may be more appropriate for electronic machines rather than the human brain – to solve an 'unhealthy' problem like restlessness. But is this what's really at stake? Gadamer's (1996b), formulation of the 'enigma' of health, may help us understand the problem differently.

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[1] Among other things, Lipman-Blumen is the author of *The Allure of Toxic Leadership,* Professor of Organizational Behavior at Claremont Graduate University's Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito Graduate School of Management, former Thornton F. Bradshaw Professor of Public Policy, and founder of the Connective Leadership Institute.

> We need to recognize that it is only through a disturbance of the whole that
> a genuine consciousness of the problem and a genuine concentration of thought
> upon it can arise ... But of course it is the state of being healthy which
> possesses ontological primacy, that natural condition of life which we term
> well-being ... But what is well-being if not precisely this condition of not
> noticing, of being unhindered, of being ready and open to everything? (p. 73)

This understanding of well-being has also filtered into political life in Greek
literature. As Gadamer (1996b) shared,

> Plato's great utopia of the *Republic* the true part of the citizen . . . is described
> in terms of health, as a harmony in which everything is in accord, in which the
> fateful problem of governing and being governed is resolved through recip-
> rocal agreement and mutual interaction. (p. 75)

Restlessness and anxiety especially amid human conditions of violence sug-
gests that the 'well-being' of the whole is disturbed, and that everything is not in
accord. It is indeed revealing to also note that the World Churches Council
(2012), also talked about peace from the perspective of 'wholeness' and to the
well-being of the whole (p. 26). Gadamer's formulation of the 'enigma' of
health offers us another way of understanding the problem raised in this
Element. As he shared, well-being by virtue of being well, expresses itself
through a condition of not noticing, of being unhindered, and of being ready and
open to everything. In being well or healthy (or being-at-home), we are unhin-
dered by thoughts of illness (or being-not-at-home). When we are in good
health, we are genuinely absorbed in what we are doing. Being undisturbed,
being healthy, or being well, offers us the gift of 'not noticing' illness or
restlessness. Health offers us the gift to freely participate in our everyday
lives and engage with others in ways that are unhindered by illness (or feeling
restless). In being well or healthy, the gift of health – of not noticing and being
unhindered by illness or restlessness – however, does not mean that we forget
about illness or restlessness. Instead, for Gadamer, well-being is received as
preparing us to be ready and open to everything. Paradoxically, the 'enigmatic'
gift of well-being, and in our context, being-at-home is that it while it frees us
from not noticing and being unhindered by concerns of being-not-at-home, it
also prepares us to be ready and open to noticing in times of disturbance.

1.3 Enigma of Peace Dwelling

We could also say that herein lies the 'enigma' of peace dwelling: that is only
through a disturbance of the well-being of the whole or a disturbance in
harmony where everything is not in accord, that we can become genuinely
conscious of the problem of peace dwelling and show a genuine concentration

of thought upon peace. Within the context of peace dwelling, Gadamer (1996) could be interpreted as saying that what is really at stake is that we are all called <u>not</u> to solve the problem of disturbance/restlessness, or to think that the task before us is to eliminate disturbance/restlessness, but rather to reflect upon and be thoughtful about it means to dwell decisively in this in-between place of peace (being-at-home) and disturbance/restlessness (being-not-at-home). While a distinction is made between being-at-home and being not-an-home, this does not mean that they are dichotomous. This distinction surfaces instead a reality that draws us into a delicate balancing act.

Undoubtedly, this question, problem, and reflection belong to all who find themselves in the middle of being disturbed. In being disturbed by violence, decisions and choices need to be made. Allow me to revert to the 'incident' which I offered in the opening pages of this Element. In retrospect, a critical learning is that the decision to step away from that space of noise, acrimony, and restlessness enabled the presencing or the appearance of a 'pleasant surprise'. Returning to Gadamer (1996), he could now be heard as saying that well-being or being-at-home, could potentially prepare us to be open to the possibility of being surprised in times of disturbance. Does this mean that such 'pleasant surprises' are guaranteed? No. Why? Because we don't know what will happen when we initiate something new. We simply cannot know. Such is the nature of any initiative. We may be surprised. We may be disappointed. As the lyrics of a song, *Que Cera, Cera* goes: *The future's not ours to see . . . what will be, will be.*

At the same time, while the future consequences of our initiative may not be ours to see, can we not give ourselves the gift of imagining alternatives and possibilities other than shouting and finger-pointing, (blaming) in moments of restlessness and disturbance? What is for us to see, then, are choices and decisions that we can make from the perspective of our imagined alternatives and possibilities amid disturbances. With regard to the personal story shared, it is only in retrospect that we come to know that the actions taken at <u>that</u> disturbance ('incident'), opened <u>that</u> dwelling space *to evolve* from a 'normalcy' of how we are supposed to act in an acrimonious state, to confusion, to a charge of 'being crazy' – a charge that takes its own bearings from what it means to act normally under such conditions of disturbance – to the surprise of others joining in and embracing such a 'craziness' for the sake of peace dwelling. What is important to note is that the experience of 'surprise' and being open to being surprised cannot take its bearings from what reacting normally to disturbances has come to mean. It is indeed the decision to step out of this normal-crazy socially constructed convention that enables the possibility of being surprised.

If peace is indeed the purpose of leadership, and if this is expressed as a concern for what we 'want to *make better* in this society', then this desire is

interpreted as being deeply connected to the *problem* and the *question* of what it means to dwell decisively in our in-between space of being-at-home and being-not-at-home by being open to being surprised by the appearance of new possibilities. To suggest that we need to make something *better*, presupposes that we have not done a good job in responding to this problem and question. Said differently, we may not have done a good job in preparing ourselves to stay open to the surprise that there may be possibilities other than reacting to violence with counter-violence. This is a theoretical, philosophical, and practical problem confronting peace dwellers. Practical, not in terms of 'how-to' and rather as 'practice' which is understood as a 'choice and decision between possibilities' and as 'always [having] a relationship to a person's being' (Gadamer, 1996c, pp. 3–4).

Restlessness and the suffering or pain that it inflicts change in character when they are no longer accompanied by the certainty or expectation that restlessness can be eliminated or that peace leadership is about solving the problem of restlessness. What is at stake in the presence of restlessness is that peace dwellers are called to be decisively imaginative in terms of choosing between different possibilities including a decision with regard to who one chooses to be in times of disturbance (relationship to one's being). Consequently, it is not a matter of condoning violence, reacting to violence, solving violence, or giving violence the last word. It is a matter of being open to being surprised by new possibilities amid conditions of disturbance and restlessness.

The experience of violence and counter-violence in the Middle East is such that discord rather than harmony is what it is because both sides of the conflict (Hamas and Netanyahu's government) have mutually resolved to destroy each other. They are locked in and imprisoned by their reactions of violence and counter-violence. Each side of the conflict has chosen to govern and be governed by the principles of hate and revenge, disguised, and rationalized as their right to assure security for themselves. Within the context of the experience in the 'incident' of the personal story, participants at that workshop chose to express their anger and frustration by shouting and talking over others because of what they saw and experienced as injustice. They were disturbed by the injustice of Hobbes' (1651/1977) *Leviathan* formulation of human life in its natural state, namely that human life is reduced to being 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' (p. 100). This state of brutishness, as Hobbes (1642/2017) proclaimed in *De Cive* is grounded in mutual fear rather than mutual love. Politically, in this state of mutual fear, 'every man is enemy to every man . . . wherein men live without other security than what their own strength . . . shall furnish them withal' (Hobbes, 1651/1977, p. 100).

This 'continued state' of mutual fear excludes any hope that there can be new alternatives or possibilities. A life without hope is a life of constant restlessness, of mutual fear in the ill-will of others, of misery, and of feeling abandoned. It is a life that is constrained and imprisoned by a view of the other as an enemy and as an entity that is separated and disconnected from other human beings. A life without hope is a life that affirms it is indeed solitary, poor, nasty, and brutish. While Hobbes affirmed that this condition is true for a life in its natural state, namely a life without 'society' or 'government' (Hobbes, 1651/1977), his notion of government is interpreted as governance. In this way, hope and imagination offers one answer to our research question and problem of what it means to dwell decisively in the in-between space of violence and peace. We can choose to dwell decisively in this in-between space by surrendering ourselves to being governed *by the spirit of hope and imagination*.

Within the context of the 'case' or 'incident 'presented, the absence of hope and the imagination of new possibilities sustains the impossibility of being surprised by the possibility that relationships could be other than what it is between participants in that story and in the larger story between Palestinians and Israelis. This impossibility was already encapsulated in a refusal to pay attention to Jen Anders Toyberg-Frandzen's plea. As the interim Assistant-Secretary-General for UN Political Affairs, about ten years ago, he noted:

> The continued reality of the close to 50-year long occupation and the lack of progress towards the two-State solution ensure that the next round of violence is never too far below the surface. The time has come for leaders on both sides to make the difficult compromises that will promote stability and ensure long-term security for both Israelis and Palestinians. (United Nations, 2014, para 2)

Toyberg-Frandzen's plea needs to be taken in context. The Human Rights Watch (2013) reported:

> Serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law continued in 2012 in Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza. Renewed armed conflict between Israel and Hamas and armed groups in Gaza from November 14–21 involved unlawful attacks on civilians by both sides . . . In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli settlers injured 151 Palestinians as of November 27, Israel imposed severe restrictions on Palestinians' right to freedom of movement, continued to build unlawful settlements in occupied territory, and arbitrarily detained Palestinians, including children and peaceful protesters. (para 1 & 2)

We notice the consequences of a toxic recursive relationship playing itself out for both Israelis and Palestinians then, and now. Bateson (1979), an anthropologist and systems thinker, distinguished lineal and recursive relationships in the following way: '*Lineal* describes a relationship among a series of causes or

arguments such that the sequence does not came back to the starting point . . . .
The opposite of *lineal* is *recursive*' (p. 228; emphasis in original). Sadly, it
appears as if Toyberg-Frandzen's political plea 'to make the difficult comprom-
ises' and to engage in the process of developing a 'two-state solution' have
fallen on deaf-ears and it makes peace among Israelis and Palestinians seem like
an eternal impossibility. Because the actions of both parties return to their
'starting point' (enmity) the tensions that lay 'never too far below the surface'
has simply bubbled over, like a volcanic eruption, and it is burning with rage. In
this context, it is not the experience of 'home sweet home' but rather the
experience of restlessness and disturbance that seems to prevail. In this context,
hopelessness prevails because the no-longer questioned 'starting point' of a life
of mutual fear, or a view of the other as an enemy, and a refusal to make difficult
compromises for the sake of a two-state solution, continue to perpetuate
a relationship of violence and counter-violence.

1.4 Relationship Is the Practice of Leadership

Within our 'emerging discipline' called Leadership Studies (Riggio, 2011),
Burns (1978, 2003) offered us a way to conceptualize the practical work and
the practice of leadership in the context of peace-dwelling. To be clear, while he
spoke to leadership, he did not directly address peace dwelling. Burns (1978)
distinguished the practice of leadership from the action(s) of any one person. He
viewed the practice of leadership from the perspective of 'a *relationship*
between leaders and a multitude of followers' (Burns, 1978, p. 30; emphasis
original) where 'leaders take the initiative in mobilizing people for participation
in the processes of change' (Burns, 2003, p. 25). Second, he conceptualized
transforming leadership within the context of such a mobilization. He outlined
his 'core agenda for transforming leadership' as 'leaders working as partners
with the dispossessed of the world to secure life, liberty, and happiness –
happiness empowered with transforming purpose . . .' (Burns, 2003, p. 3).
Could we not also add, leaders and followers working as partners with all to
dwell in peace – peace empowered with a transforming purpose?

1.5 Not Leader-Centric

Peace leadership, then, is not about traits or skills of any one person. It is not
person-centric as ascribed by Carlyle (1841/1993) and other traits (Kirkpatrick
and Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, 2007), and skills-based (Katz, 1955; Mumford et al.,
2000; Yammarino, 2000) approaches to the study of leadership. However, while
the concept of relationship-oriented behaviour has been around since the early
days of leadership studies, Uhl-Bien (2006) noted that 'the term *relational*

leadership is surprisingly new' (p. 654). While it is indeed encouraging to note that there is a growing list of leadership scholars who are embracing and studying leadership as leaders and followers standing in a socially constructed relationship with each other (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995, 2005; Heifetz and Linsky, 2017; Kouzes and Posner, 2017; Popper, 2004; Scandura and Meuser, 2022), a dominant positivistic paradigm continues to prevail in our discourse about leadership.

For example, Bateson (2000) noted in the Preface to a later edition of her father's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* that Western epistemology drives men and women to (a) 'search for short term solutions that worsen the problem over time (often by mirroring it, such as violence used to oppose violence)' and (b) 'focus on individual persons or organisms or even species . . . in isolation' (p. xiv) from each other and from context. She further went on to say that 'even with current progress in chaos and complexity theory, we remain less skilled at thinking about interactions than we are at thinking about entities, things' (Bateson, 2000, p. vii; parenthesis original). In sociology, Durkheim's (1966) proposition . . . that social facts (including peace) are to be treated as 'things' (p. 14; parenthesis added), appears to not only rule the scientific-positivistic sociological method, but also how we approach our study of leadership. This positivistic method excludes thinking about the implications of interactions and relationships as subsystems within larger systems which may have an investment in maintaining levels of restlessness.

1.6 Peace Is Not a 'Thing'

To think of peace as a 'thing' is to orient to actions like peace building or peace making. It is to think of peace as a 'thing' that can be built, crafted or fabricated. Within the field of peace and conflict, peace building is generally conceptualized as a movement 'toward a frame of reference that focuses on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships' (Lederach, 2017, p. 24). Restorations and rebuilding occur after the end of violence, when all in conflict choose to put their 'swords' down. What is dropped from this dominant *homo-faber* focus is to think about peace dwelling as a human relationship between being-at-home (a state of rest) and being-not-at-home (a state of restlessness) – especially when we fall outside this place of caring for how we choose to dwell with each other. The significance of thinking and talking about peace dwelling rather than peace building is that something decisive is concealed in peace building. For Heidegger (1977), what is concealed in peace-building is that 'dwelling is not experienced as man's Being; dwelling is never thought of as the basic character of human being' (p. 326). Thinking of peace leadership from the vantage point