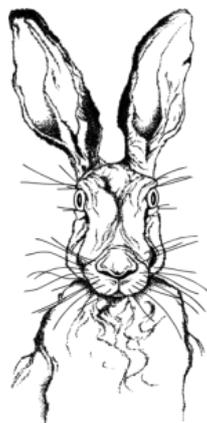


— THE —  
**HERETIC**

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Heresy Consulting Almanac  
2021

EMERGENCE



**HERESY**  
CONSULTING

We long to return to normal, but  
normal led to this.  
- Ed Yong



# INTRODUCING HERESY CONSULTING

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# W E L C O M E

Welcome to the 2021 Heresy Consulting Almanac, a collection of some of the ideas that have provoked and interested us this year.

The Heretic, an annual almanac, aims to raise some questions and reflections, and hopefully provoke some conversations. We want to raise some topics that we perhaps shy away from, and to find meaning in the things that may feel unsettling.

This year's issue is titled "Emergence" as it reflects the interesting year of 2021, a year still at the grips of the pandemic and social change, and perhaps also a year where we're still trying to make sense of the change and uncertainty.



Laurence Barrett  
Director



Angela Lai  
Director



James Gairdner  
Director



**HERESY**  
CONSULTING

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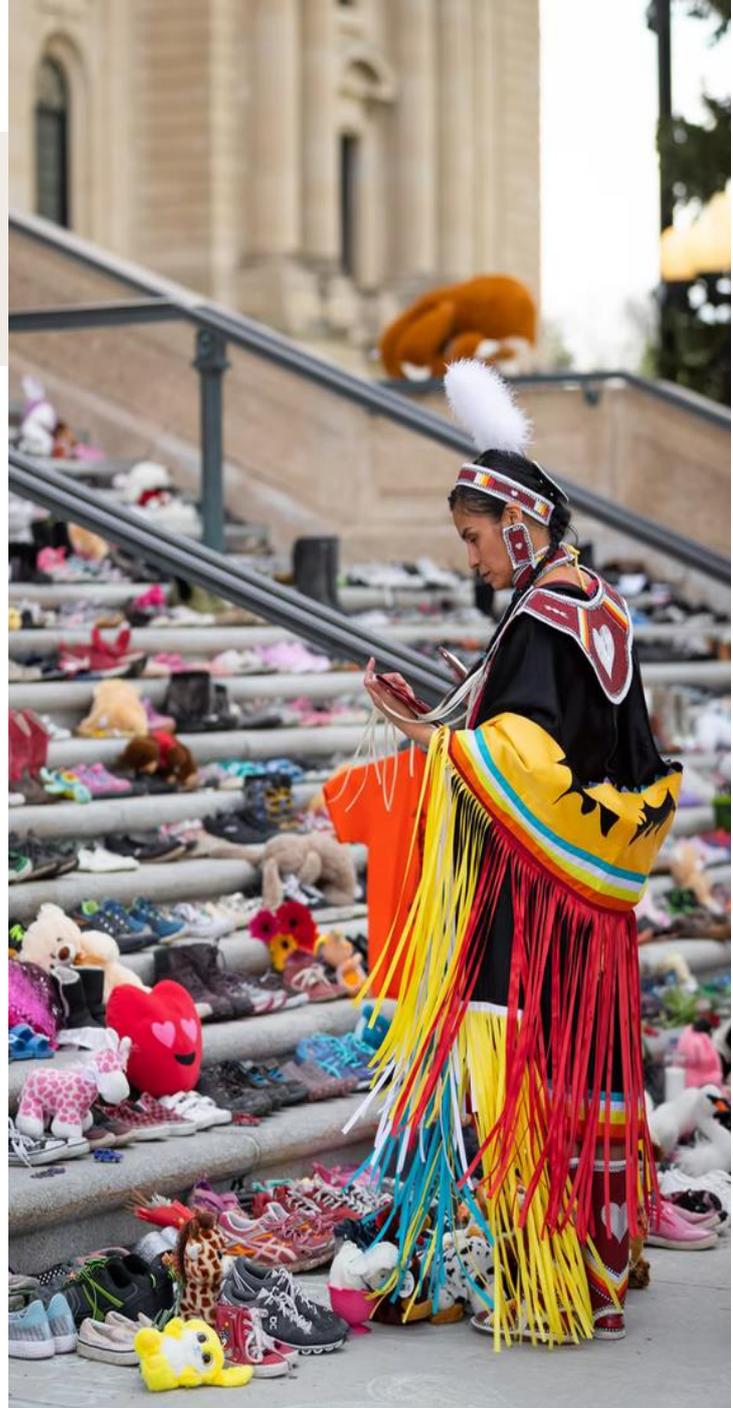
# REVERIE AND THE KEY TO ENGAGEMENT

Article by Laurence Barrett

When we are very young, the foundations of our psychological health are laid in what the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion termed, a 'reverie'. Here we interact with our parents in a free-flowing conversation, without any defined outcomes or goals. We can express our thoughts and feelings and in an open exchange of ideas and associations, we begin to make sense of the world around us.

**Reverie is a creative and emergent process where new ideas are explored, and meaning is made. We develop a shared language, not just of words, but of emotionally charged symbols that define our relationships.**

We know that another person notices us, cares for us and is responding to us, and in this response demonstrating that they understand us. We are 'held in mind' by another and we know that we exist. We learn that we can then influence another person, shaping a mutual dialogue with them, and we develop the self-confidence and resilience we need to face life's challenges. In reverie we learn how to build relationships and to explore our potential. Without reverie, we experience the world as a confusing and dangerous place where we are alone and without influence.



The habit of reverie ideally then continues on into adolescence and adulthood. Here, in a shared experience of humanity, we learn about the world by exchanging stories, asking questions, and creating new perspectives from a jumble of answers and ideas. The quality of the reverie defines the quality of our relationships. From the campfires of our ancestors to the coffee shops of modern cities and the chat rooms of the internet, human beings look for reverie. In reverie we discover who we are, what we believe in and where we belong. Above all we discover that we are a full participant in the conversation and that meaning is not made for us by others, but by us with others.

**The meaning we make through reverie is then both an individual and a collective possession. We are responsible for something we have been involved in creating, and our relationships are strengthened through the process. We are engaged and aligned.**

However, many organisations, encouraged by traditional theories of charismatic leadership, often seem to prefer a one-way process of top-down instruction flowing from senior managers to an increasingly dehumanised and alienated workforce. Employees are expected to be inspired by a vision that they have not been involved in creating and may which bear little relation to their day-to-day reality. The leadership philosophy at play is too often reminiscent of Henry Ford's apocryphal quote: 'Why is it every time I ask for a pair of hands, they come with a brain attached?'. The inconvenient truth of organisational life is that each member of that organisation has a brain filled with own hopes and fears, and a very human need for relationship and significance. In pitching a relentless cascade of top-down 'vision-statements' and goals, managers are in effect emphasising that there

is no reciprocal relationship and that employees' opinions are unimportant. **Disengagement is then inevitable.**

**The resistance to reverie in organisations is perhaps understandable. The process of reverie is ambiguous and open ended and may be threatening to managers who are narcissistic or lacking in self-confidence.**

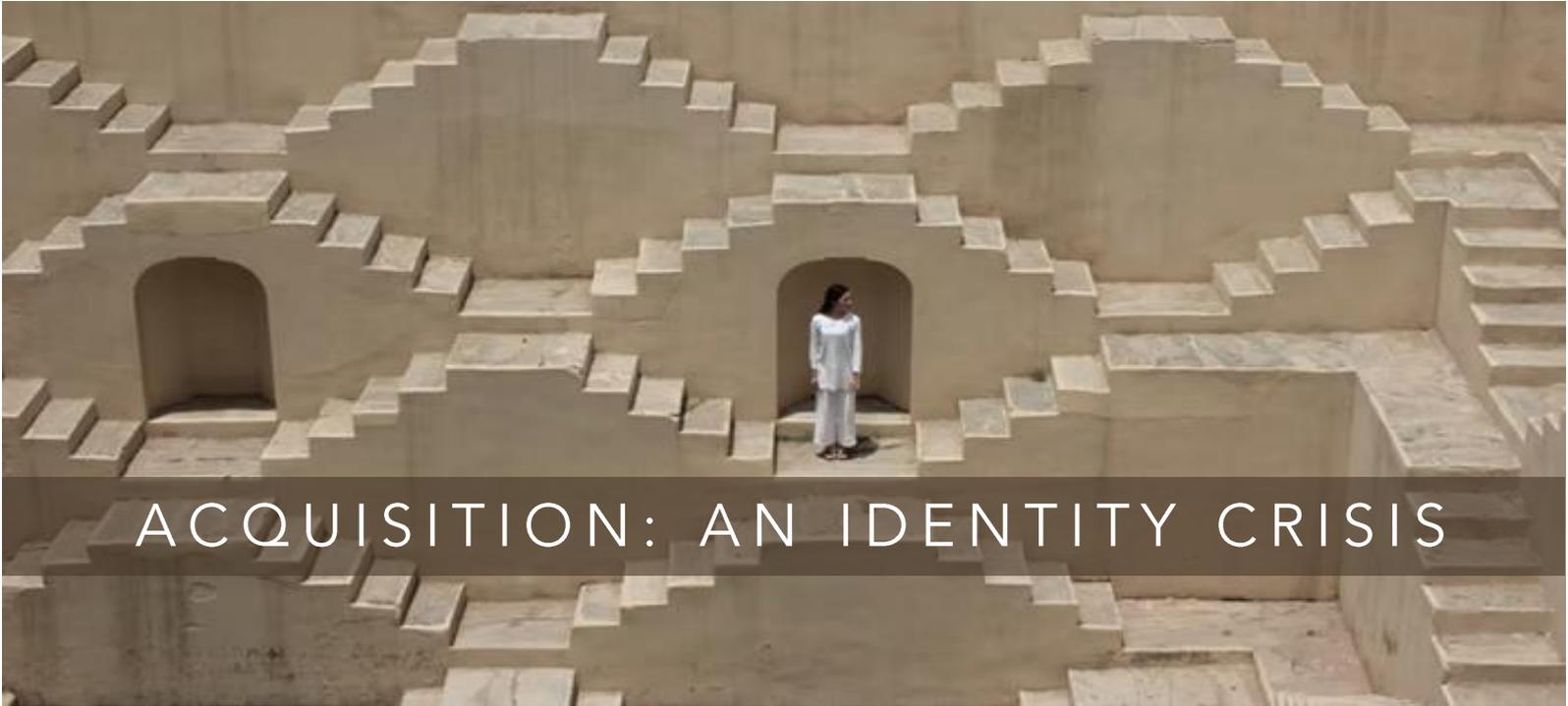


Executives may fear that employees will create their own meaning and begin their own initiatives, which may be better than anything the manager can create alone, and which may undermine the existing structures of authority and control. They may be concerned that the reverie may surface competing interests or bring about conflict, as people decide to openly express their views. While this conflict exists anyway, appearing as organisational politics, it is often more comforting to keep it in the shadows so management can at least pretend that it doesn't exist and address it indirectly or through others. Managers may also be anxious that employees may not approve of their vision, directly challenging their image of themselves as leaders, and again, it may be more comforting to keep any disapproval in the shadows.



However, what matters most in a reverie is not that our ideas are acted upon, but that attention and respect is paid to them. When we are listened to and play a part in the creation of a conversation, we become vested in its outcomes, whatever they may be. The value of reverie lies in the exchange of ideas and the creation of something new. To enter a reverie, we must be prepared to let go of our own needs for certainty and learn to collaborate, entering a conversation with no expectation of a predefined outcome. To engage others, we do not require vision or charisma, but the courage to listen and perhaps have our own minds changed.





# ACQUISITION: AN IDENTITY CRISIS

Article by James Gairdner

Speaking to successful entrepreneurs recently I have been struck by the diversity of approaches that they have taken to, and the resultant emotional experience of, working with an acquiring party. For many the reality of selling their business is a period of moving from master of all you survey to working for some-one else. Whilst the tensions this creates at an individual level are obvious, I have become interested in how one might best navigate the broader challenge of integrating one organisational culture with another. This preoccupation seems important in a world flush with uninvested capital and the likelihood of significant M&A activity as we emerge for the wastelands of lockdown.

For the acquiring parties there are two schools of thought. The first promotes rapid and often fairly brutal integration of all systems, processes and product lines. In essence, subsuming the acquired business into the larger acquiring party. The second promotes an arms length relationship where the two organisations coexist leveraging the benefits of each others systems. Ironically dissatisfaction with the latter state often leading to the former approach some time in future.

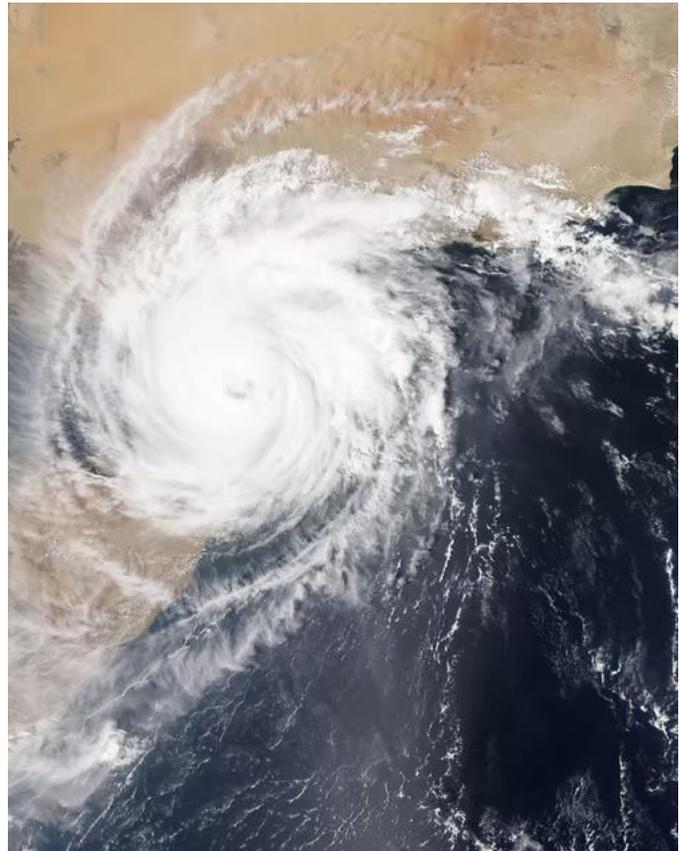
One of the challenges is that people are often not honest or perhaps not clear on the reasons for the acquisition. Even when they are, they can often be derailed by unconscious motivations of which by definition they are partially aware. By example, consider the case of an entrepreneurial digital start up that is acquired by a larger, more conservative enterprise. At the point of transaction much is made of the ability of the latter to learn from the speed and agility of the former, and the former to take advantage of the scale and access afforded by the size of the latter.

What follows is often the undermining of the culture of the acquired party and a gradual, at times raw transition towards the more conservative culture of the acquiring party.

**It is as if the acquisition is less about creating something new and more about the removal of a threat. So what might one do if one is facing such a transition?**

The first thing to say is that we live in an imperfect world. Some acquisitions may deliberately be positioned in one way, with an underlying and very conscious desire for a different outcome. In addition, this field is also fraught with the dangers of CEO hubris and narcissism. In this light, it is little wonder that very few large scale mergers and acquisitions actually realise the value that was initial forecast. Putting this to one side, if we assume that some acquisitions are formulated to promote generative outcomes, how might one ensure that they achieve said outcomes?

Encouragingly, the solution is perhaps less complex than some may have us believe. Revolving as it does around a series of conversations with key stakeholders about the kind of organisation they wish to build, and how they might work together to co-create it. It is worth remembering that what is being attempted here is not simply the merging of two inanimate entities, but the bringing together of two identities. As with any significant individual identity transition, such as midlife or adolescence, this will ultimately result in the creation of something new, which is informed by that which went before but is not it. It will also likely require renegotiation of the psychological contracts that govern individual contribution to the combined entity and the network of relationships that support the system. What may be helpful is the adoption of a Twin Track Approach.



Working individually as two entities to consider the true motivations for the acquisition and what sort of entity they wish to create, what they wish to honour (retain) as part of the process and what they are happy to alter (change)? and crucially what this might require of them? Then coming together to share perspectives, develop a common sense of direction, and align on ways of working together that will form the foundations for the new culture.

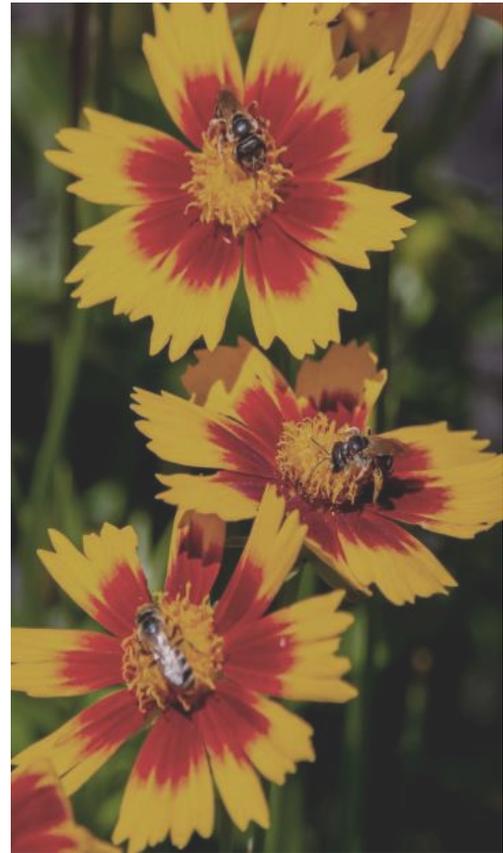
Indeed, the approach will itself act as a strong symbol for the way things get done around here.

This may then involve further iterations or the creation of echoes through the levels of both organisations, seeking to define how each

part of the whole comes together. Understanding the psychodynamic theory, this makes logical sense, but often it is suggested this may take too much time.

Perhaps this is why quicker, more rational solutions prevail. I think this is an illusion, as whilst more rational solutions may provide a sense of pace, they do little to address the very human issues inherent in these identity transitions. This often means that whilst on paper the acquisition has been completed successfully, in reality it hasn't even begun.

The challenge it seems to me is that the sooner we see these issues as human rather than mechanical problems, with all the messiness and complexity inherent in human experience, the more likely we are to seek solutions that work with the mess rather than those that seek to paper over the cracks.







# THE GREAT RESIGNATION

Article by Laurence Barrett

As the pandemic took hold in 2020, we began to see significant economic disruption at a global level. Companies began to make employees redundant, sometimes to simply survive and occasionally using the disruption as excuse to streamline and reduce costs. People began to face an uncertain future. However, as we began to turn towards the possibility of recovery, it became apparent that the balance of power was shifting. An increasing number of employees appeared to be losing interest in traditional employment, or at least employment under their existing terms and conditions. People began to resign in increasing numbers. According to US Federal Reserve Economic Data, the rate at which resignations were happening in the US in the last half of 2020 was approaching 3% with exponential growth, the highest in over 30 years.

While this trend was particularly apparent for those in healthcare and technology, and in midcareer roles it was not confined to those groups. A survey by Korn/Ferry in April 2021<sup>1</sup> suggested that in the US over 94% of US retailers were having difficulty filling vacant positions across all wage groups, with 32% facing 'significant difficulty'. It is likely that this trend will have continued through 2021<sup>2</sup> across all sectors and groups, perhaps even accelerating into 2022.

This 'Great Resignation' was predicted at the beginning of the pandemic by Anthony Klotz of Texas A&M University who suggested that burnout and working remotely would trigger a shift in people's identities and a re-evaluation of their life choices. As our reality began to change dramatically and without warning, the

## Quit rate at an all-time high

The share of workers who are voluntarily quitting their jobs reached a record level in September at 3%.

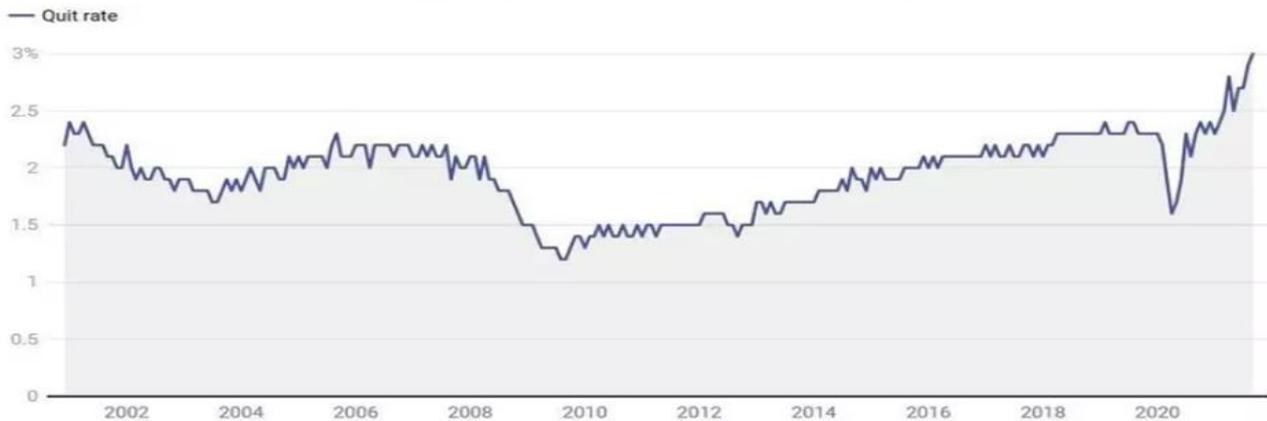


Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND • Source: FRED • [Get the data](#)

continuity of experience that defined our lives began to fall apart. We may think of this break in continuity as a psychological trauma, where we have been unable to integrate what has happened to us through our normal mental processes<sup>3</sup>. This trauma will then typically suggest one of two paths. We will either cling neurotically to memories of the past and deny the transformational nature of events, or we will begin to adopt new mental models which help us make sense of a new reality. Through these models, the stories that we tell ourselves about who we are, begin to change. These changes are rarely conscious or rational at first and are instead founded on a more unconscious feeling of being drawn to something different. They are often difficult to grasp or explain and the new sense of identity that emerges, usually makes conscious sense only in retrospect.

Through the pandemic the often unexamined assumptions we may have made about life and work have been directly challenged. We have begun to spend less time in work, or commuting to work, and more time at home, perhaps with family. We have bought less and perhaps begun to realise that we need less. We have begun to consider the possibility of local work, or online work as a real alternative to big cities and large corporations. Maybe it is time to think about a start-up of our own as we join the gig economy. The increase in workload that many have reported has just served as a reminder that we perhaps have other priorities and other choices available to us. This may have added to an existing sense of unease and disillusionment fuelled by the emphasis on productivity over humanity that has traditionally dominated organisation and leadership theory and practice. A survey on 2015 by the WEF<sup>4</sup> suggested that over 86% of those surveyed believed

we are experiencing a 'global leadership crisis'. The Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2021 Report<sup>5</sup> found that global employee engagement was at 20%, declining 2% from 2019. Gallup suggested that over 86% of those surveyed believed we are experiencing a 'global leadership crisis'. It also found that global employee engagement was at 20%, declining 2% from 2019. It suggested that this was in part driven by a reduction in global trade leading to job losses, increasing workload and stress. According to the Gallup, reported work related stress increased from 38% in 2019 to 43% in 2020. When we saw those around us suffering from overwork or receiving impersonal text messages notifying them that they had been made redundant, we may perhaps be forgiven for wondering whether our jobs were really worthwhile. If we do not matter to our organisations, should our organisation really matter to us?

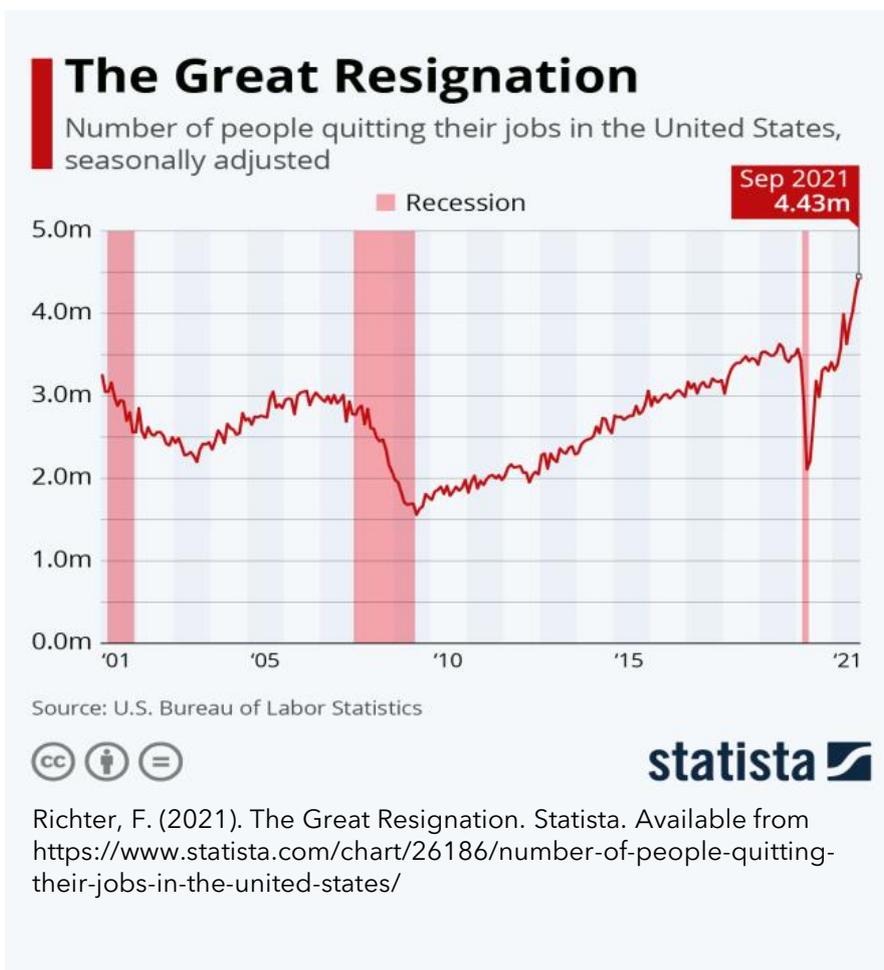


It was perhaps this sentiment that was expressed in the resignation video of Walmart employee Beth McGrath from a store in Louisiana, which became a viral sensation on social media in 2021 and aroused a wave of enthusiastic support. McGrath suggested over the store's PA system that:

*"We are treated by management and customers poorly every day. Whenever we have a problem with it, we're told that we're replaceable...I'm tired of the constant gaslighting. This company treats their elderly associates like shit...Shame on you for treating your associates the way you do. I hope you don't speak to your families the way you speak to us...f\*\*\* management and f\*\*\* this job. I quit".*

We should not however assume that those employees who have not joined this exodus are engaged with their organisations. Some may lack the courage or the financial backstop to leave and may instead simply be withdrawing their energy and interest, becoming the 'working dead'. They have resigned mentally if not physically, and the implications for organisational performance could be considerable.

However, the contribution of leadership and the culture created by leadership to this exodus seems to have been somewhat downplayed. The language used by many commentators to describe possible organisational responses to 'Great Resignation' is often strikingly brutal and dehumanising. A recent interview with a leadership theorist on the World Economic Forum website<sup>6</sup> suggested that organisations may need to hold 'bootcamps to facilitate interpersonal exchange' before focusing on 'socialising' their new 'talents' to ensure they fit the 'new way of functioning'. Others have suggested the need for a 'data driven approach' using metrics to identify the underlying causes rather than consider the possibility that perhaps this impersonal approach and mindset may itself be one of those causes<sup>7</sup>.

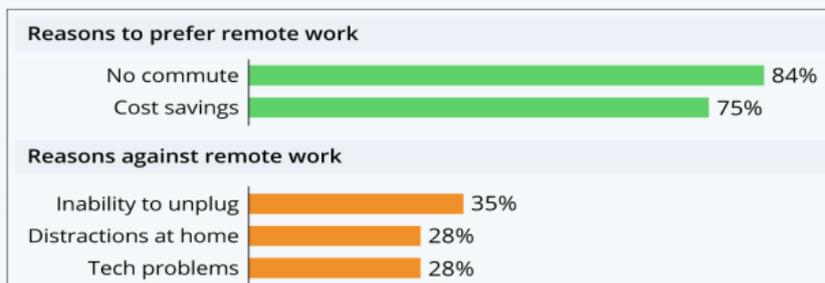
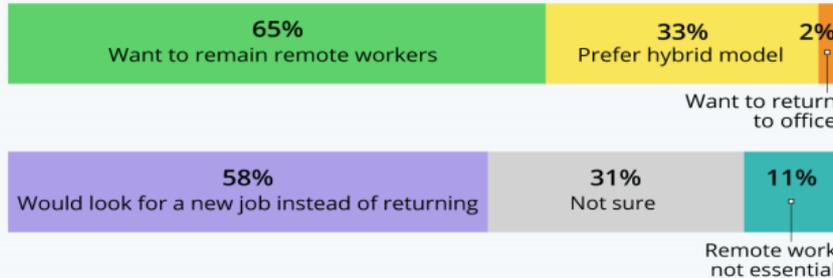


**If employees are viewed principally in terms of their transient production value, it would not be unreasonable to assume that this may be contributing to a sense of growing disengagement.**

Perhaps a simple conversation may in fact yield a greater return than data analysis and training programmes. One strategy employed to reengage employees has been a somewhat belated and limited interest in the potential of hybrid working. However, even here, the narrative has focused on communicating the outcomes of analysis to employees, informing them of how the data tells them they want to work.

## Workers Want to Stay Put in Home Office

Survey responses among workers who engaged in remote work during the pandemic (2021)



Survey of 2,181 pandemic remote workers (3/4 from U.S./Canada), Mar 17-Apr 5, 2021  
Source: Flexjobs



statista

Buchholz, K. (2021). The Great Resignation. Statista. Available from <https://www.statista.com/chart/24714/survey-on-pandemic-remote-work-us/>

**Hybrid working also seems to come at a price, with additional workload and coercive return to work policies. Organisations still seem uncomfortable with simply asking people how they want to work, or trusting them to make the choice themselves.**

It would appear that the pandemic has shown people that there may be another way of living and the challenge of engaging employees may just have got a little bit harder. What happens next may depend on the ability of senior leaders to adapt to a new mindset. The rational, hard driving focus on productivity upon which they have built their careers, may not be enough to lead the organisations of the future. Perhaps they may even rediscover humanity as a viable alternative.

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# EUPHORIC RECALL

Article by Mukti Shah

Watching Gabor Mate's 'The Wisdom of Trauma' reminded me of the time I worked briefly in a Drug Rehab programme (over 14 years ago) and it followed the then unusual but now popular, Drug Harm Reduction approach. This approach is pragmatic and acknowledges the often-impossible struggles people have in managing their addictions (never cured, always in recovery).

This particular project was housed in a large shed, with an asbestos roof, in a slum in a suburb on the outskirts of Pune. The deal was simple. If you entered the programme, you received one hot meal, access to a doctor, a psychologist, a substitute drug that reduced dependence, fresh disposable needles and possibly, recovery. My clients were largely the homeless, women who offered sex in exchange of a substance, beggar-folk or petty thieves or pickpockets who would jump on to the trains going up and down the Mumbai-Pune line (I had my purse 'almost' stolen twice!).

I was young, and had enough of addiction in my own family system and not enough of personal work or supervision (that concept didn't really exist for MH training in India then!) to continue working untriggered and retraumatized there. This is also why I never pursued working in de-addiction. I learned a lot however.

One such concept is that of, 'Euphoric Recall'. This is a state when the person has stopped using the substance but spends their time fixated on the positive outcomes of the addiction, the high, the pleasure or euphoria experienced, the sense of connection with everything, and increased confidence, etc.

All good stuff except they are all temporary and the negative consequences of their addiction are masked under the euphoric recall.

Sobering up is painful because it leads to a sense of numbness and depression and this is amplified in comparison with the prolonged serotonin and dopamine high that addicts are used to. They block or repress the associated reality of the damage caused to their health, the trauma and exploitation they have undergone and the relationships that have been destroyed in pursuit of the substance.

This is the mechanism of relapse which if unbroken can keep the user from ever fully sobering up.

***“You know, it’s funny, when you look at someone through rose-coloured glasses, all the red flags just look like flags.”***

- Wanda the Owl, BoJack Horseman (Season 2, Episode 10)

Nowadays I notice this everywhere. For example, when I hear clients freshly out of abusive relationships start talking about the initial great days, the amazing make-up sex, the erratic grand gestures designed to reel them in, I know it is the Euphoric Recall doing mischief! The client wants their ‘fix’ of post break-up love-bombing. This is the time to remind them about all the times they were mistreated. It is time to remind them of the controlling, manipulation, lying and isolation, to revisit all the greatest hits of abusive texts or e-mails you made them save for this very eventuality, to dig out the pictures of empty, terrified forced smiles in couple pictures. This dysphoric recall technique works many times, but it fails often too unfortunately. So, they 'relapse' by going back into the abusive relationship and eventually return to therapy swearing never to go back and begin all over again.

In a non-addiction context, the dysphoric recall is a great technique to help with procrastination, cultivating healthy habits and building the delayed gratification muscle.



As I write this, I realise that in a way, I guess I do deal with addiction in my practice now! This addiction is not of substances but of relationships, success, shopping, doom-scrolling, dependence, avoidant behaviour, work, tech, even being right. Anything that we overuse to distract from the reality of our emotional pain has the potential of becoming an addiction.

As Jung put it in his book titled Memories, Dreams and Reflections (chapter 12), *“Every form of addiction is bad, no matter whether the narcotic be alcohol or morphine or idealism.”*





# MENTAL HEALTH: THE "UNTHOUGHT KNOWN"

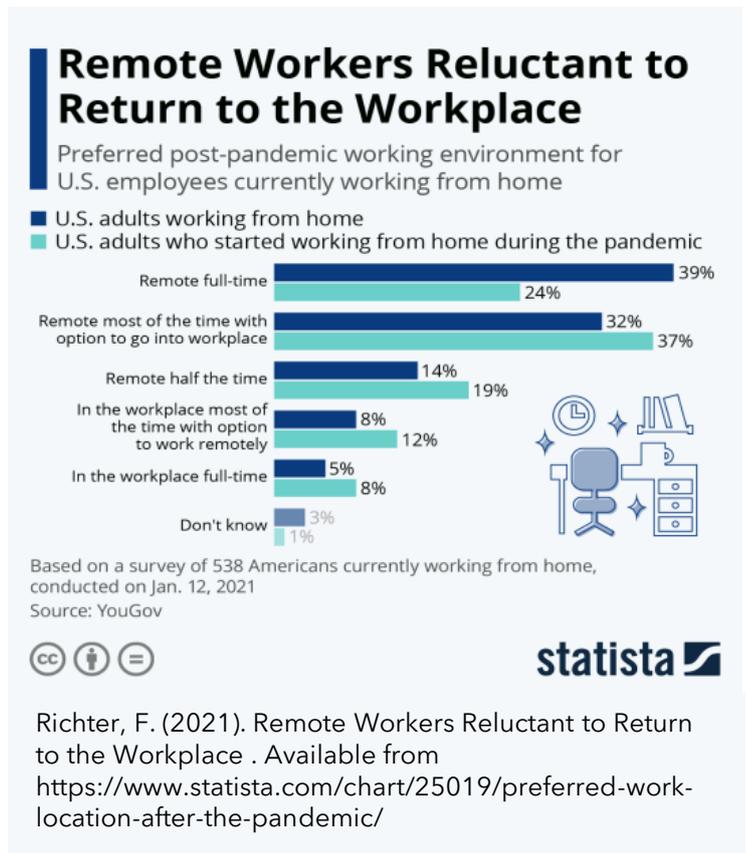
Article by James Gairdner

As the world emerges from the ravages of the coronavirus, the inconvenient truth is that its legacy will be with us for some time. Not least the significant cost in individual mental health, where on a global scale instances have rocketed. A global analysis of data published in the *Lancet*<sup>1</sup> refers to 204 countries and territories, that revealed an additional case load of 76.2 million in major mental disorders (MDD) and 53.2 million in anxiety disorders. To put it closer to the context of the United Kingdom, the numbers are no less troubling with significant increases across the total population led by a 27% increase or 80,226 more referrals in under 18s. At the time of writing this, 1.6 million people are on NHS mental health waiting lists. The Royal College of Psychiatrists says NHS services are struggling to cope with the demand, leaving Adrian James, the president of The Royal College of Psychiatrists, to conclude: *"The extent of the mental health crisis is terrifying, but it will likely get a lot worse before it gets better. Services are at a very real risk of being overrun by the sheer volume of people needing help."*

Having lived through 18 months of lock-downs and uncertainty, I empathise with a desire for this all to be over and long for the days when international travel was easy, and the world less restrictive and crowded spaces filled, for my own part, with less trepidation. On a personal note one of my children is one of those currently sat on a waiting list. However, I was reminded recently of the "unthought known" a phrase coined by Bollas (1987)<sup>2</sup> to represent those experiences in some way known to the individual, but about which the individual is unable to think.

In object relations theory, a preverbal awareness of one's early experiences of important objects (e.g., parents, siblings), that is indescribable in words but that nonetheless influences one's later thought and behaviour.

Diamond (2008)<sup>3</sup> suggests that these "unthought knows" can exist in organisational life, "where as members of a cooperative system, we are tied together emotionally and cognitively" (p.351). The unthought knows represent significant truths that are known but cannot be thought about or talked about with others in any meaningful way.



**It strikes me that "cooperative system" may be extrapolated to include society where the long term and highly inconvenient consequences of the pandemic may represent this "unthought known" which it may be uncomfortable for us to consider.**

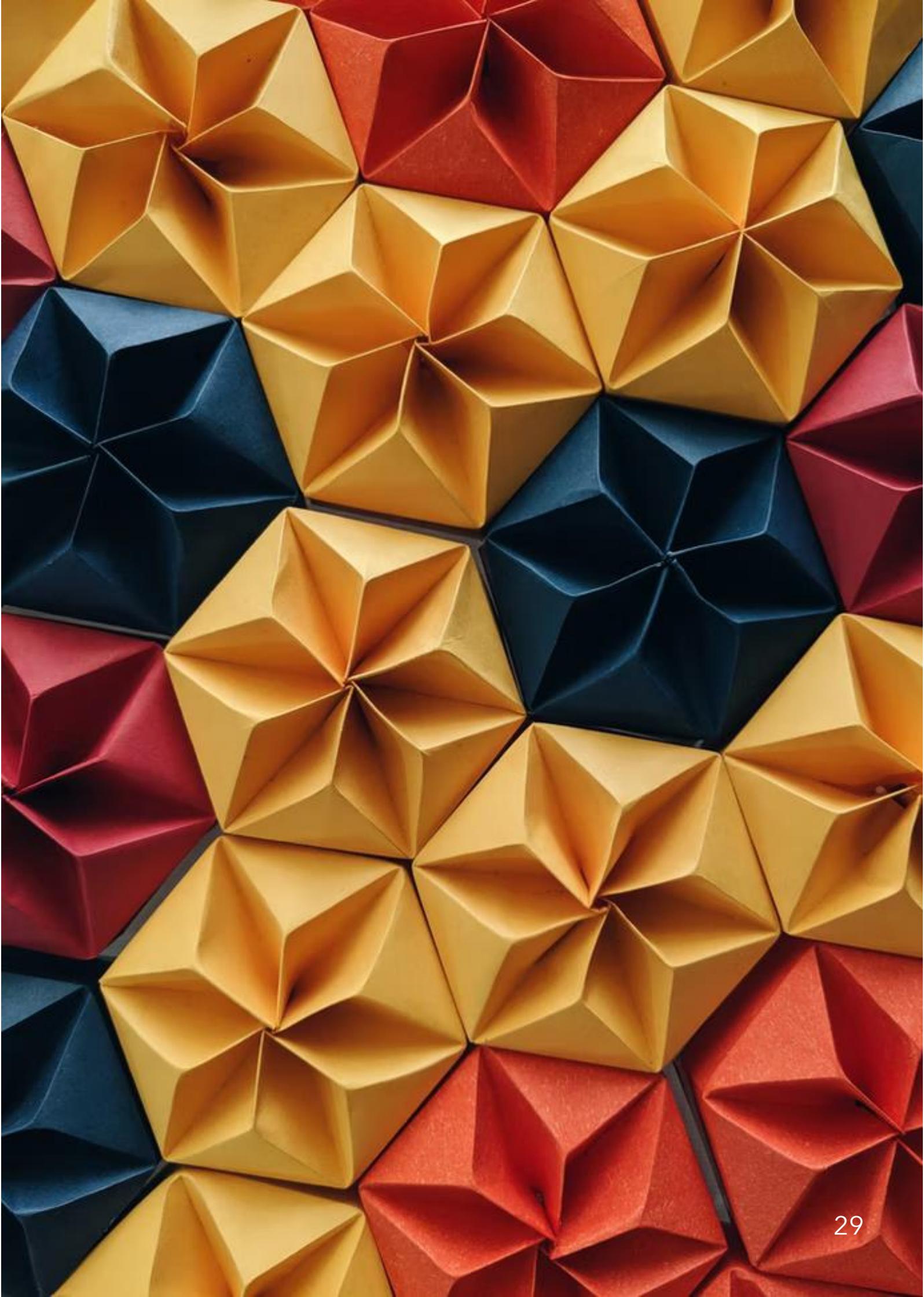
It follows that those who directly represent the effects of the unthought known have themselves to be made invisible. In addition, just as the issue cannot be thought about, neither can the solution. This leads to an underinvestment in the systems that would support them. Could this also explain the stock response from government when confronted with such issues to see the panacea in large sums of money? To triage, even hold at arms length, rather than seek to acknowledge or even understand.

Self-evidently the consequences for those put out of sight maybe devastating, so perhaps now more than ever it may be important for society to find a way to sit with that which it is difficult to acknowledge. At the very least this may mean that those who suffer and those who care can feel heard, which in itself may prove cathartic.

How might we create spaces to sit where we can sit with this discomfort rather than seek to put it out of sight and move on? This feels important not least as Jung suggested because *“everyone carries a shadow and the less it is embodied in an individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is[...]if it is repressed[...]is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness [...] At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions”* (Jung, 1970). It will out, the question I guess is when and how we wish this to occur?

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# State of Emergency

By Cornelia Kausch

Things perpetually change and unfold. That's a truism, of course, yet we are rarely conscious of it. Enter a state of emergency - say, Covid - and this perpetual unfolding becomes radically clear to us, precisely because it lacks clarity, lacks the kind of long-term strategy and planning we rely on in business and life to bequeath to us a sense of comfort. All of a sudden, we are compelled to bear witness to this unfolding, to emergence itself.

Where the veil of order and predictability is lifted, we face the terror, the chaos that human existence actually is. Especially in the early stages of the Covid crisis, we had to confront the very possibility of the Real - sickness, death, anarchy - encroaching upon the Symbolic - language, relations of governance, order - the very systems that give meaning to our life, that indeed we employ in the act of meaning-making.

**Yet, such a state of emergency is also an opportunity for us to become conscious once again of the always-emergent Self.**

When everything is called into question, we must take stock of what we hold dear, what gives us meaning and stability even when the very notion of stability is shown to be a fallacy.

### **What, then, anchors or emergent Self within a state of emergency?**

The people (and, by extension, the organisations) I have seen come out of the pandemic best are the ones who held onto their values. The ones who had a clear sense of what is important outside of themselves, perhaps even beyond themselves: their greater vision, their "Big Why", their sense of purpose and community. At least in what I witnessed in my clients and coachees - mostly leaders - these were the people who best managed to integrate the crisis and its ramifications into their sense of who they are - and their organisations. They looked towards their community for a shared act of meaning-making. These leaders asked questions and listened, rather than defaulting to the all-familiar defence mechanism of prescriptivism and enacting authority. In the moment of crisis, they asked not: how can I lead but how can I serve.

I'm reminded of Jung's words from his seminar on Nietzsche's Zarathustra: *"The self only exists in as much as you appear. Not that you are, but that you do the Self. The Self appears in your deeds, and deeds always mean relationships."*

Trust and relationship-building necessarily is at the core of everything we do, and everything we are. It is important that we, as coaches and facilitators, make leaders aware of this - and not just for their own sakes! After all, the state of emergency during Covid acted very much as a prism, in which a lack of clarity, paradoxically, made some things very clear indeed. I'm thinking here of the people who only superficially identified with the values of their company, or who were working under leaders who did not live up to the nice, inspiring words in their vision statements and core value presentations. They were often quick to notice that a "Bigger Why" was missing, and that their Self would not be actualised in the context of their company.

That, incidentally, is perhaps one of the greatest services a leader can render to an employee: provide a space for their Self to emerge, in community, in shared meaning, with their very own.





## RISING ABOVE: RECONSTRUCTION, RECONCILIATION, RESOLUTION

Article by Hala Abu-Maizer

In order to understand the process of development and post conflict reconstruction and its applicability to our post 2020 world, we must first acknowledge the state of social conflict that have emerged as one in a sea of side-effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Conflict in all its forms is an inevitable feature in the development and evolution of nations and is often independent of time and space. The very creation of the universe and countless solar systems, including our own, have been made possible by the creative energy that is resulted from the interaction and conflict between the elements.

Societies emerging from conflict, be it violent or nonviolent in nature, we are faced with the challenge of building peace with victims and perpetrators, which can be riddled with complications and pitfalls (Zambakari, 2018)<sup>1</sup>. It is worth mentioning that conflict does not exclusively manifest in the form of physical violence, it can be according to Galtung (1998)<sup>2</sup> in the form of **structural violence**; referring to institutional violence created by systems; **direct violence**, referring to the outbreak of overt harm and warfare; and **cultural violence**, referring to the changing perception or an aspect of a culture that finds ways to justify the previous types of violence (Stalenoj, 2014)<sup>3</sup>. Galtung (1998) states that the different forms of violence and war in particular is a testimony of a failed conflict transformation process, as well as a failure to harness the conflict energy (people's pent-up frustrations) into more useful means like addressing the root



causes of the conflict in a productive and creative ways. He emphasises that in order to have successful and sustainable conflict transformation process, a distinction between its three pillars (**the three Rs**) must be highlighted and equally fulfilled. The vicious cycle of repeated violence can only be neutralised when firstly, **reconstruction** is carried out after outbursts of violence; secondly, **reconciliation** is fulfilled between warring parties; and thirdly, **resolution** of the root cause of conflict is confronted and addressed. He warns that the processes is bound to fail if only one or two of those elements are to be fulfilled instead of all, where it's imperative to address and eliminate the original cause of conflict, otherwise the reproduction of violence will persist in a society. Del Castillo (2006)<sup>4</sup> as Galtung, argues that certain elements and causes of a conflict must evolve into means that are more productive after the violent conflict ends. For example, political exclusion must give way to participatory governments, just like how ethnic, religious and/or class prejudice and marginalisation must give way to national reconciliation between groups, and collapsed economies (market failure) must make the shift to recovery. Looking at our conflict ridden global society, I would argue this applies to forms of non-violent conflict as much as it would apply to societies emerging from violent wars. Whereas not all conflict can manifest into physical violence, but all forms of violence emerge from conflict.

The process of development is a multifaceted one that involves the positive evolution and growth of nations, and is often a reflection of the dynamics between a government and its people through social, political, and economic means. The processes of reconstruction is capable of bringing about positive social change and development **if done right**. A direct link can be made between the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and the process of development and reconciliation, as it can facilitate the education and capacity building of a society/ community<sup>5</sup>.

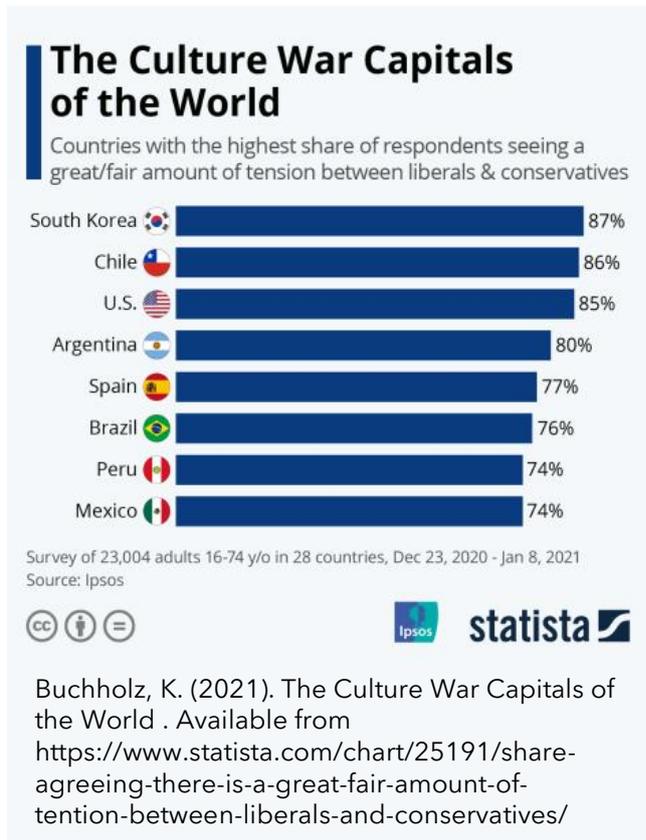
A typical understanding of reconstruction is through state-building, which puts the main responsibility of assisting countries in ensuring a representative democracy and market privatisation are taking place on external actors. It is theorised that this approach will inevitably build institutional and human capacity, which will then work to support the function of some institutions. This understanding conceives the process as an apolitical approach that models development and nation building against the European model, which prioritises building political relationships<sup>6</sup>

**Literature and theory strongly recommends that post conflict reconstruction process must prioritise addressing reconciliation and stabilisation first before going about 'development' as usual.**

It also argues that in the haste of trying to recover the economy through the privatisation of industries at the early stages of post war recovery, governments run the risk of destroying the economy as property rights would still be in question. Del Castillo argues that it could also incite political

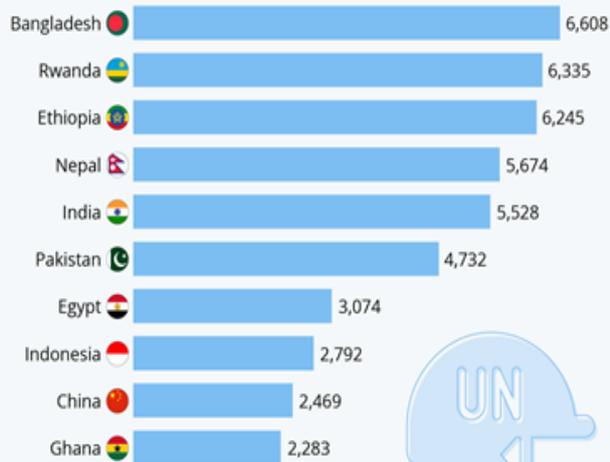
resistance before addressing the pre-requisites for stabilisation like peace building programs, demobilisation, and disarmament of combatants.

**Economic reconstruction and development alone is an approach that is fundamentally incapable addressing peace and reconciliation, and therefore a new measure of success must be adopted in that context which will contributes to the former instead of the latter at those early stages (del Castillo, 2006).**



## The Biggest Contributors To UN Peacekeeping Operations

Main contributors of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations as of March 31, 2021\*



\* Uniformed personnel constitute mission experts, police units, staff officers and troops.

Source: United Nations



statista

United Nations (2021). The Biggest Contributors To UN Peacekeeping Operations . Statista. Available from <https://www.statista.com/chart/14007/top-contributors-to-un-peacekeeping-operations-by-country/>

Simpson (1997)<sup>7</sup> is also critical of this and points out how international funders seem oblivious to the state of 'social dislocation' and the urgent need to rebuild social relationship and trust within a community. He is critical of the assumption that the jobs and wealth created by economic reconstructing will automatically diffuse social tensions and mend broken relationships. In more practical terms, people that have engaged in violent conflict and committed atrocities and mass injustices to each other cannot simply resume living side by side and transmute into a harmonious and cooperative state of being at the onset of peace declaration (Brounéus, 2009). **For that to happen, we need reconciliation that will pave the way to resolution.**

The social traumatising and strong sense of dislocation as a result of the rapid global change that have resulted from the cyclical experience of lockdown, inconsistent messaging, opening up, discovery of new variants, and changing restrictions, could be as strong as any other experience of post-conflict reconstruction. Having to manage anxieties around the fear of the future, uncertainty of the present, and the near constant anticipation of conflict, be it internal or external, is therefore as dislocating to some as humanitarian migration and violence ridden contexts.

It is important to point out that literature refers to reconciliation at times as a goal, and others as a process. In one respect, reconciliation can refer to a long-term process that improves the cohabitation and supports the rebuilding of trust and relationships between different members of a society<sup>8</sup>, and one that is able to change attitudes, behaviours, and emotions of former enemies while building

trust and confidence as tools that will sustain peace. In another respect, it can be seen as a means to an end, where victims and perpetrators are able to come to a place of accepting each other through shifting their psychological orientation. Here, victims and perpetrators are able to stop defining the present, and the future, as an extension of the violent past<sup>9</sup>.

### **Elements of Reconciliation**

There is extensive literature highlighting the different levels at which reconstruction and reconciliation take place, reflecting the complex and cross cutting nature and impact of conflict on a personal and societal level. The three main elements of reconstruction and reconciliation in a post conflict context coalesce around structural and economic reconstruction, judicial forms of accountability, and cultural and collective healing (psychological and mental). Judicial reconstruction include restorative, retributive, reparative, and transitional justice and truth telling<sup>10</sup>.

**Transitional justice is an effective way to hold people accountable of their wrong doing post conflict, by challenging impunity and recognising the dignity of victims. The process of transitional justice can also restore people’s faith in the system, which can helps build positive relationships.**

This can evolve in aiding socio-political reconciliation through adequate representation of groups in governmental and other structures, to resolve divisions through peaceful means. This needs to come with restoring faith in institutions like the media, justice and security (police, judges, military etc.) through adequate reforms.

Mukashema and Mullet (2013)<sup>11</sup> state that lasting resentment, anger, desire for revenge and general dislocation contribute to the decline in mental health and the overall quality of life for people living in the impacted environment.



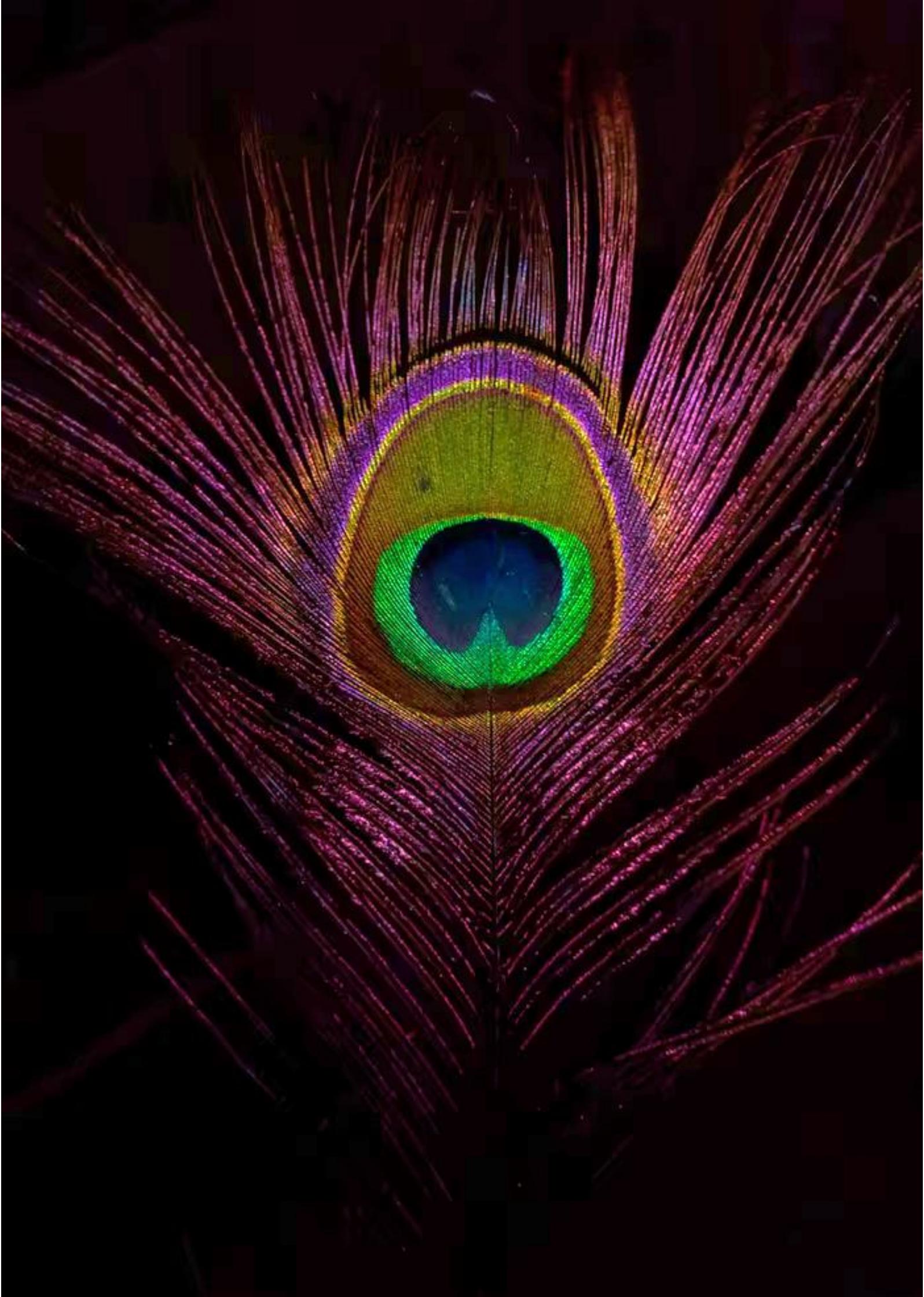
The process of healing and forgiveness is a lengthy and laborious one that is riddled with challenges, yet is one that is necessary, and needs to be done as an element of reconciliation and Galtung's three Rs.

**If this this element is not incorporated correctly, it will be an impediment to development and a hindrance to the process of physical reconstruction, due to the sustained psychological damage.**

If the focus is solely put on 'development' in a financial and economic sense, the process is likely to be problematic despite the range of benefits it brings on. It is more likely to fail in addressing inequality, social and ethnic divisions, war crimes and human rights violations, in addition to rebuilding institutions and bringing about democratic governance and accountability (Simpson, 1997). As the literature reflects, the process of reconstruction and reconciliation permeate varying elements simultaneously. It is a process that underpins rebuilding relationships as well processes and structures, through adequate reforms and reconstruction activities. Moreover, it is a dynamic process that needs to be negotiated between all stakeholders in a society (Zambakari, 2018), where it is able to bring about positive social change and healing.

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## ON THE BRINK OF LOSS

Article by Mukti Shah

There is a little discussed state of mind that precedes loss. It is the phase when the prospect of losing a loved one (due to death, divorce or estrangement) is looming large. You busy yourself in the task of finding the best doctors, treatments or therapists to help you along. Action eases anxiety and presents an illusion of control. Yet, the voice inside you starts whispering trying to prepare you for the inevitable. We often brush these thoughts out of our consciousness because even entertaining the prospect of loss might make it come true.

Like Trishanku, you feel suspended between heaven and earth, neither here nor there. Everything is a possibility, anything can happen.

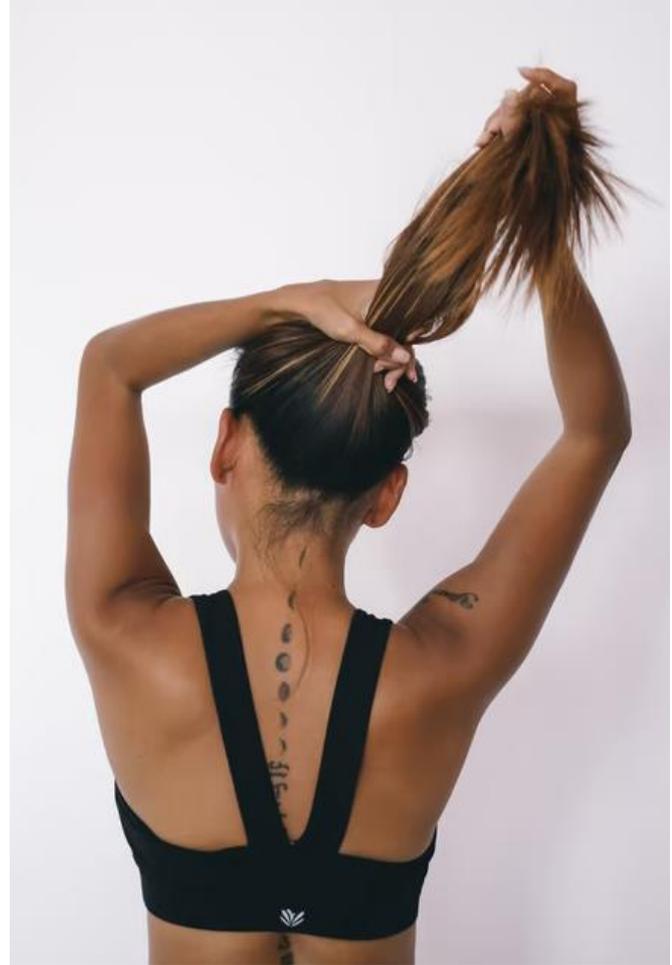
We cannot fully commit to an emotion because the loss hasn't happened yet and there is always hope...

All emotions are anticipatory, in preparation of what is to come. Anticipatory grief, anxiety, anger...The only emotion we can permit ourselves to fully feel is the love but that can trigger further grief.

**What can you do in such a situation?**

Here is what I have learned from my own recent and ongoing experiences with anticipatory grief

1. Roll up your sleeves, brace yourself, this is going to hurt. For a while. There is no timetable how long exactly. And there is no way out of it but through. You are already in the midst of the pain, acknowledge that. The intensity, frequency and duration of this grief is not in your hand.
2. Befriend ambiguity. The demand for certainty will only add to your suffering.
3. Don't forget to celebrate the good and cherish the present togetherness no matter how brief.



4. At some point you will have to wrestle with the big questions this experience of loss might throw up for you. Who am I without this relationship in my life? What does my own life amount to? Is life inherently meaningless? Why is the price of admission to love separation and grief? What is the point?! Why me?
5. Check how you are distracting yourself from the emotional pain. When you stub your toe, waves of pain arise. We hold our toe in our hands to give it support, stop what ever it is we are doing or wherever we are going and breathe deeply till the pain subsides. If you were to inject your toe instead with an analgesic, you would be spared the pain but miss out on the vital information the pain delivers. Does the pain suggest a fracture or just a bruise, did you lose your balance because of vestibular or vision issues?

It is exactly the same with our emotional pain. We can medicate it with alcohol, food, sex or overwork, but that is just a distraction. Pause, regroup, give yourself support and breathe. Listen to what your pain is telling you. Honour it. Allow yourself comfort though, use your wisdom. (chips and white wine in small therapeutic doses are allowed!)





## RED FLAG, WHITE FLAG

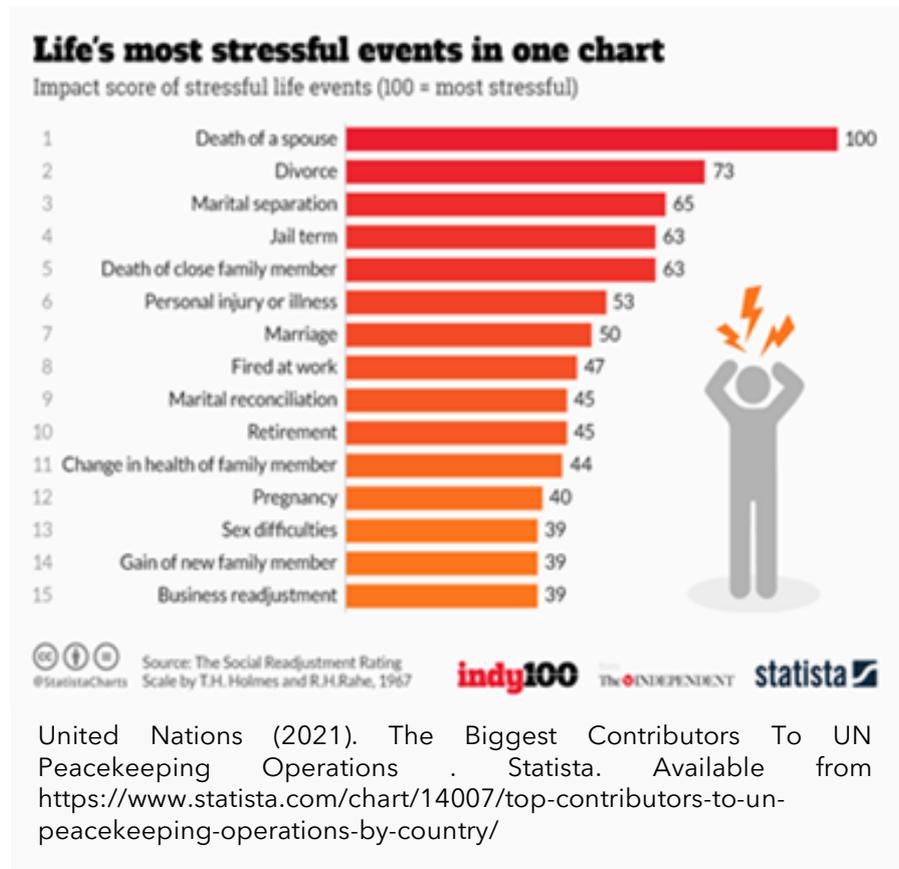
Article by Hala Abu-Maizer

A study conducted by Harbom and Wallensteen (2007)<sup>1</sup> finds that a total of 232-armed conflicts have erupted since the end of World War II in 148 locations. They report that from 1989-2006, out of their 122 conflicts recorded, 89 were categorised as intrastate conflicts. This number peaked in 1991 with 50 intrastate conflicts taking place, and an overall of 26 internationalised intrastate conflicts. These figures highlight the perpetual state of violent conflict some countries have been experiencing. This has mostly been out of sight and out of mind for more developed countries, or those with relative democracies regardless of their state of economic development. The blindfold had been aggressively and abruptly pulled off by the events that had unfolded in the past 18 months, that demonstrated the will, resilience, and at times utter naivety of the human population across imagined borders. Benach (2020)<sup>2</sup> bluntly described the surfacing issues from healthcare, racism, selfish and narrow sided leadership, unempathetic treatment of our natural environment, and the hegemonic state of media, deeply entrenched inequalities, as contributing factors that have exacerbated the impact of the pandemic, and steered the way the human population have been dealing, and will continue to deal with a global crisis of this scale.

So, what can be learnt from such a clarifying and contrasting experience that will, in hindsight, be the tipping point in the transformation of the human consciousness?

Let's take some time looking at the case of Rwanda and their path to development. In the aftermath of the brutal genocide of over 800,000 Hutus and Tutsis, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) put forth a new government in 1994. As a way to deal with the legacy of violence, the government put forth several strategies to deal with the trauma and destruction caused by this very violent and seemingly brief conflict.

The first policy was created in 1999 under the name National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), which emphasised national unity through the creation of a singular Banyaruwanda identity, by erasing the divisionary ethnic identity labels that were the driving force in the intrastate conflict (Clark, 2010) <sup>3</sup> .



This approach is criticised because it makes having an honest and transparent dialogue very challenging (Clark, 2010). This limits the ability to engage fully with the events that took place because parts of the past are not being brought to light on purpose which hinder the reconciliation process. Therefore, survivors' reconciliation and healing process is held back because of their inability to portray their complete story, and are obliged to live in a state of constraint caused by the government's priority of projecting a strong national unity and identity. This flawed premise (Clark, 2010) renders the coping mechanism ineffective in diffusing the diversionary weight the terms 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' still carry (Kohen et al, 2011 <sup>4</sup>).



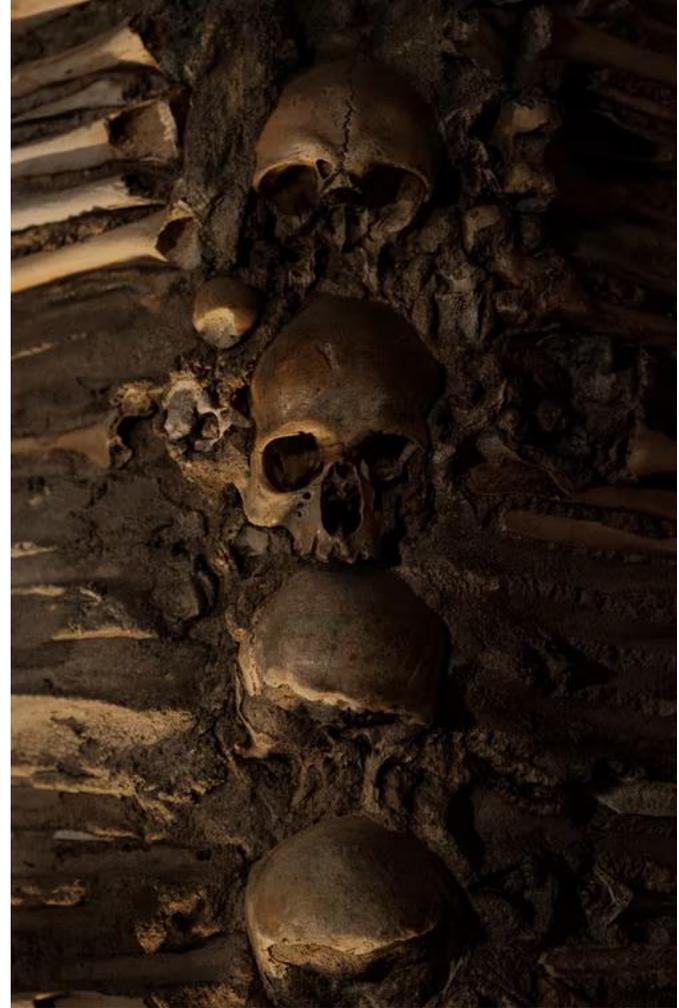
The topic of ethnicity is still one that dominates the minds of people covertly despite the lack of public expression, and is reflected in the government's evasive response towards the human rights violations and crimes committed by the RPF, which is made up of both Hutus and Tutsis. Kohen et al. (2011) questions the methods used by Paul Kagame that resulted in him coming to power post genocide, where practices like voter intimidation and procedural misconduct were commonly used tactics. The process of reconciliation in this case is hindered by the perception of a questionable democratic election.

Another strategy put in place by the government is the formation of the traditional judicial and dispute resolution through the initiative of the gacaca courts (Clark 2010). This initiative aimed to speed up processing and prosecuting a high volume of accusers, promote the rule of law and accountability through public hearings and trials for all the subsidiary genocide crimes. The gacaca courts have been successful at responding to the volume of cases and the way in which it encouraged public participation and dialogue, especially with it being organised trial within a community. However, the process was undermined by heavy government interference and strong emphasis on crimes exclusively related to the genocide, which undermined how far accountable the proceedings can hold individuals that fall outside this exclusive classification (Longman, 2009)<sup>5</sup>. The contradictions arise in this case study become clearer due to the government's effort in communicating their strong intentions in prioritising reconciliation and resolution, while this was not followed up by any public apology issued by prominent people on trial domestically, or at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) (Kohen et al, 2011).

**This demonstrate that political reconciliation is unattainable without a public recognition and apology from prominent victims.**

In terms of the impact of reconciliation and forgiveness on the mental health on survivors, Mukashema and Mullet (2013)<sup>6</sup> report two major findings. Firstly, the motivations behind collective forgiveness were driven by the desire for recovering overall harmony within warring groups rather than healing for inner peace.

They also found that despite a high volume of Rwandans expressing the ability to live side by side with former enemies, they however report very low levels of interpersonal reconciliation (the feeling that you can trust the judgement of those who once caused you harm), which is directly linked to a poor state of mental health amongst survivors. Their study found that despite the seemingly mundane type of



forgiveness involving redefining relationships between members of society, it greatly contributes to the state of social wellbeing, which is a core element of development and prosperity. The problematic policies the Rwandan government had implemented reflect elements of a rigged election, lack of an open, honest and constructive dialogue on ethnicity, and the move towards state centralisation (Kohen et al., 2011).

**Those wave a red flag to all the warning signs discussed earlier, are reflecting a state of incomplete healing and thus fragmented state of reconstruction and development.**

Despite the progress restorative justice and other initiatives made in post genocide Rwanda, the government's promise and seeming eagerness to move in the direction of unity and healing had, in fact, not lived up to the that promise of prioritising individual and group healing ( Kohen et al., 2011). It is evident that in his case, the nation has managed to successfully stop direct physical violence and collectively move on from the conflict that claimed over one million lives in a span of three months, yet the lack of direct violence does not indicate the lack of



cultural or structural violence in Rwanda. At present, the country is relatively stable economically, but features of shallow reconciliation persist because of the strategies that failed to address the root cause of the conflict.

This is compounded by the omission of important facets of the conflict that need to be addressed and confronted to ensure the process of reconstruction, reconciliation and development come full circle. We can see here that reconstruction and reconciliation includes many overlapping elements (political, judicial, personal, social, spiritual/psychological, economic) that are inherently inclusive of development. Hence, a solid foundation needs to be formed and steps need to be taken in mending relationships between community members, in order to reap the benefits of inclusive and complete reconciliation and resolution, while reinforcing sustainable human and economic development.

Benach (2020) emphasises that the pandemic has thrived due to the ripe preconditions and the state of deep inequalities within our global society, In understanding the force we are contending with in facing this adversity, and as the literature as well as history suggest, focusing on economic and infrastructural reconstruction alone will not suffice. Here we must look behind the veil of consciousness and address the root cause of this crisis and all the social and structural fissures that enabled a disaster of this scale.

**This necessary tension and deep state of polarity has presented an opportunity before us that the collective had been asking for. It started what looks like a wave of complete rethink into the way we work and operate as a society, but it is not enough to only be in the state of recognition, but a state of action is now required to make sustainable and inclusive change.**

We can see here that reconstruction and reconciliation includes many overlapping elements (political, judicial, personal, social, spiritual/psychological, economic) that are inherently inclusive of development. Hence, a solid foundation needs to be formed and steps need to be taken in mending relationships between community members, in order to reap the benefits of inclusive and complete reconciliation and resolution, while reinforcing sustainable human and economic development.

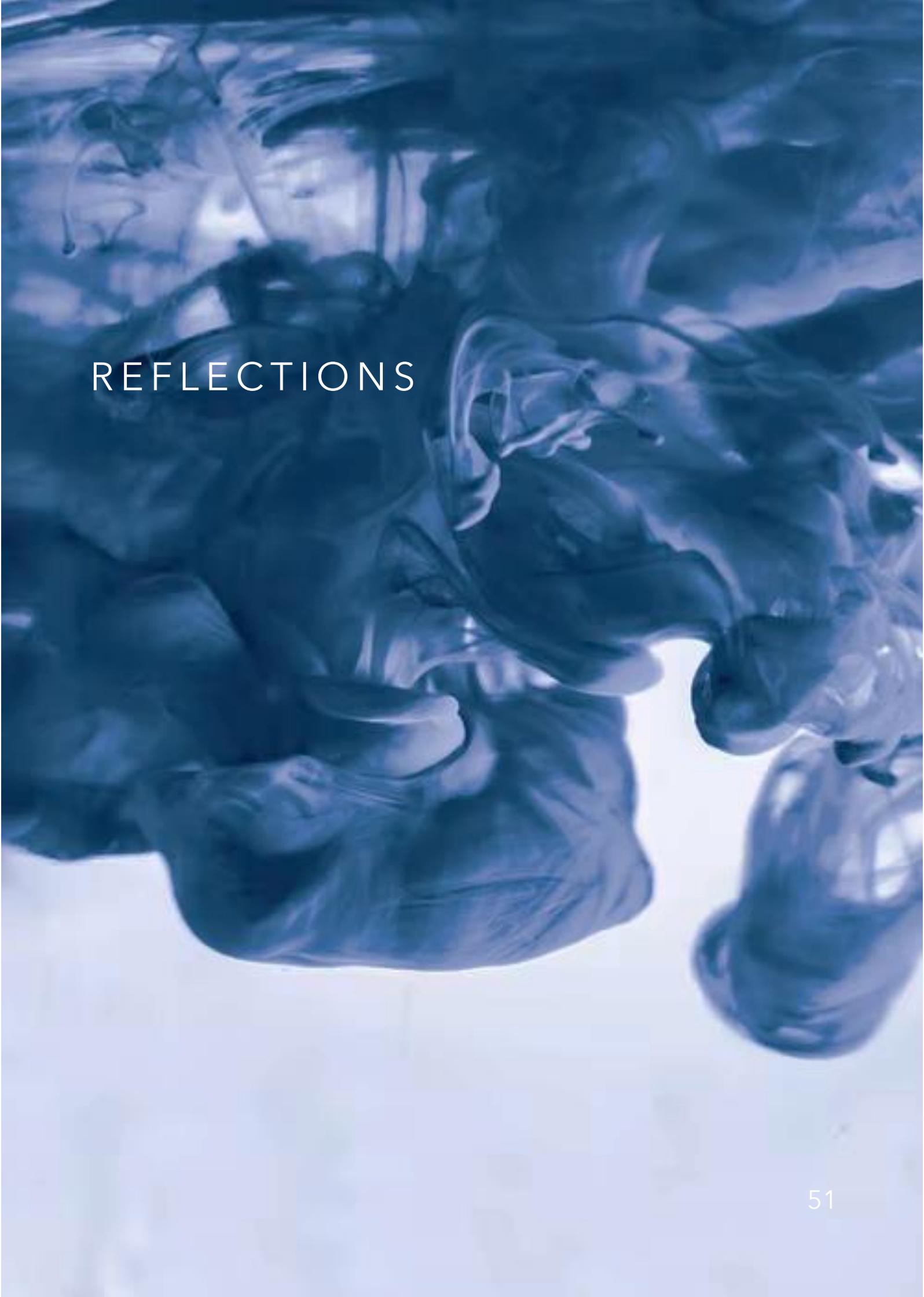


We also must raise our white flags in the face of the many red flags that we have seen come up in the past decade and more specifically in the past 18 months. The white flags is a metaphorical use of term, and one that takes place in our psyche first and society second. We must wave the flag of surrender against the perpetual endless wars that our governments backed by the media is trying to sell us; the narrative that we are the chosen people and we must fight a war against anything that we deem

inappropriate, unnecessary and therefore perceived as an existential threat to our lives. There will always be a war that we think we must fight against to keep our safety and our way of life intact, when in reality the external unseemingly existential threat is fabricated in our imaginations and is constantly fed by thoughts and beliefs rooted in draining insecurity we are constantly engaged with. However, we must not stop seeking improvement, development, growth, advancement, and expansion in the face of challenges and contrast.

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# REFLECTIONS

# RETURN TO ITHACA

By James Gairdner

In May last year as we started to contemplate a return from our first lock-down in the UK and as part of his "Reflections on Coronavirus", Barrett (2020) wrote of the *"whitening or 'albedo', a phase of consolidation, 'the womb in the tomb'"* in his ruminations on the preoccupations of his reflective practice group. Using this alchemical metaphor to describe liminal space, he suggested that this middle phase is evocative of that *"moment of dawn, when we know what we are not, but we are not yet sure what we are becoming...a time of ghosts, where we come to terms with what we are losing, and wait patiently for what is next"*. It seems to me that in many ways we are still waiting...

I was reminded of this recently whilst working with a high growth scale up who has thrived during the pandemic, and who like many is wrestling with the now familiar challenges of the return to the office. We had been engaged to support them in this transition, but it soon became apparent was that this was less of an issue in agreeing with their version of hybrid working, and more of an existential question brought to life by the return to a more familiar place *"who are we as an organisation?"*.

It was as if like Odysseus, they have returned to Ithaca, and discovered they weren't the people or organisation who left early last year. It was as if the symbols present in the office and their ways of working and relating there had no longer provided comfort, but served to accentuate this identity transition. This left them all at sea, being not what they were but as yet unclear what they are becoming, and with no point of reference.

The temptation for both them and us may have been to focus on more comfortable topics such as the mechanics of hybrid working practices or the detail of possible social events. Whilst such things do require work, they are evocative perhaps of a desire to rush forward from this uncomfortable and in between place or perhaps a wish for a time now past.

As the quote from Barrett (2020) suggests, it may be more useful as we emerge to take the opportunity to reflect on transition itself and perhaps ask *"what is it possible for us to be?"*. This may allow the expanding organisation to establish new frames of reference from which to contemplate new ways of relating, new associations, and create new organisational memories.



# NARRATIVE AND MEANING MAKING

By Laurence Barrett

In times of transformational change, we experience a wound or trauma in our experience of reality. We can no longer make sense of the world and no longer have the feeling of 'going on being' that underpins our psychological wellbeing. At an archetypal and symbolic level, we are facing death and the risk of falling apart.

The psychologist Arthur W Frank suggested, that at this point we typically tell three sorts of stories:

*Restitution narratives:* Here we convince ourselves that the world will broadly return to normal. We will be saved by the experts or by expertise. The problem here is that transformational change is by definition transformational. We will no longer have what we had, or least, not in the same form.

*Chaos narratives:* Here we have no anchor points and enter a period of suffering, confusion and disorientation. All our usual defences and survival strategies have failed us and we are flailing around without hope.

*Quest narratives:* Here we begin to

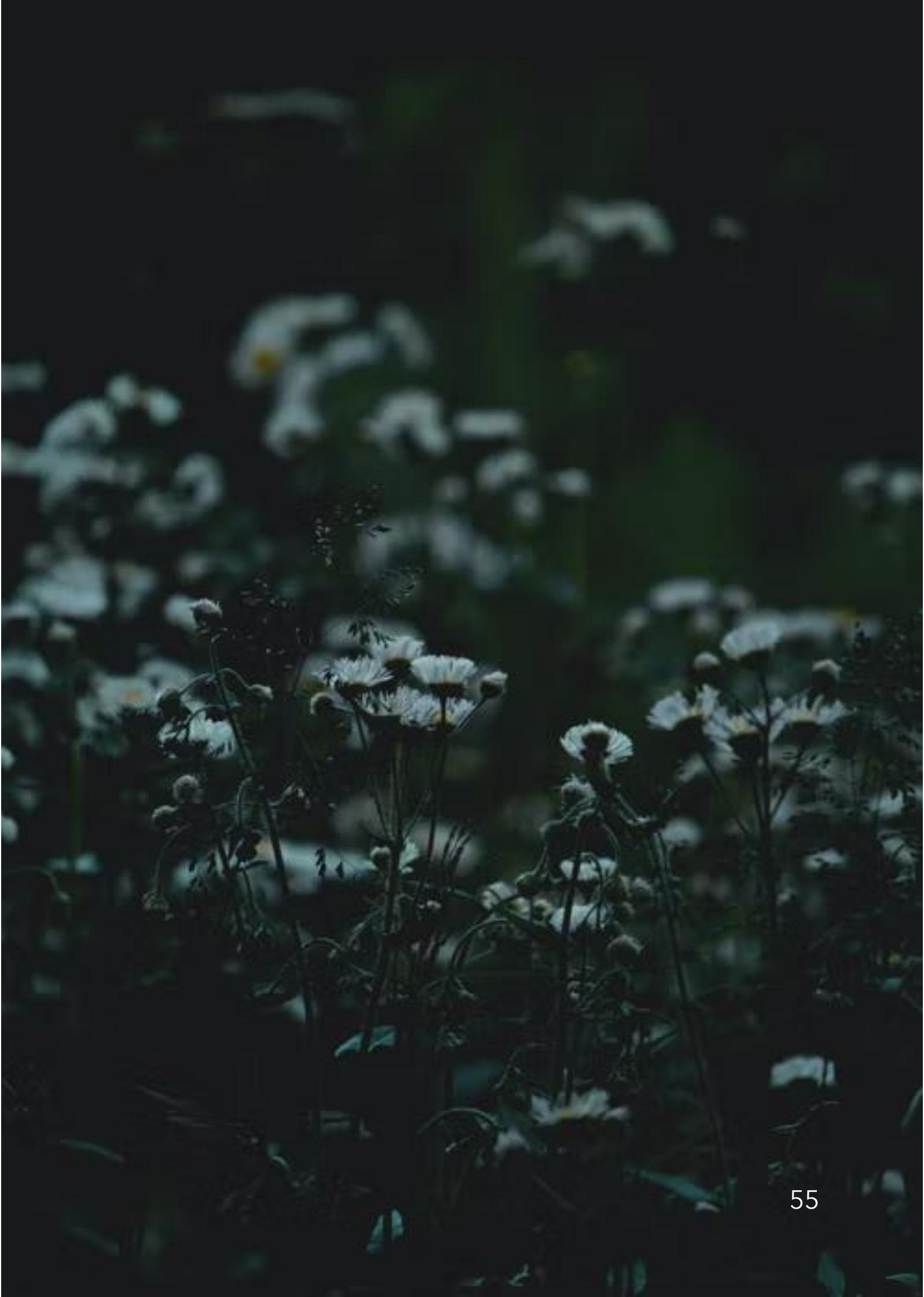
accept our state and in the calm that follows can begin to find a way out. We can tell our story onwards in new ways and are more focused on what next, than on what has been. We begin to use the problems we face as opportunities for something new to emerge. We understand that the pain we have suffered has meaning and potential.

At the moment, I am seeing a lot of restitution narratives about the pandemic and its implications. These are usually told by leaders and 'experts' whose predictions may simply be defence against their own anxiety; an anxiety that in the new world they will no longer have relevance and will have to start again, perhaps even from a level playing field or worse...from behind.

Frank's research suggests that allowing space for the chaos narrative is the crucial step that we must all take. We must acknowledge that we don't know, and be open to new possibilities.

The only thing we can probably say with confidence, is that our predictions of the world over the next decade will be wrong. Now is a time for observation, patience, creativity and most of all humility.

The secret of the Quest narrative is that it is seen most clearly in the rear view mirror....



# SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

By Mukti Shah

Should I stay or Should I go?

This has been the question that has come up the most in my practice in 2021.

Should I stay in the marriage?

Should I quit my job?

Should I defer University for a year?

Should I launch my start up?

The question really boils down to, 'Should I trade in my old, familiar but dysfunctional life for a chance at something more aligned to what I have always wanted'.'

This is not a new thought. Most of us at some point in our lives start feeling a vague unease that things are not the way they should be. But this gentle knock on the door of our Conscious is easy to ignore. So, we trudge on slowly towards a life of 'quiet desperation.' I hear clients lay out the reasons why they should stay- responsibility, discomfort, fear of the unknown, lack of support, security, etc. All perfectly good reasons. And the knocking subsides. Till something happens that increases the discomfort and makes it impossible to ignore the decision anymore.

*"If the essential (intrinsically given) core of the person is denied or suppressed, he gets sick, sometimes in obvious ways sometimes in subtle ways...This inner core is delicate and subtle and easily overcome by habit and cultural pressure...Even though denied, it persists underground, forever pressing for actualization...Every falling away (from our core), every crime against our nature records itself in our unconscious and makes us despise ourselves."*

-Abraham Maslow

There could be many moments, glimpses where the soul encourages us 'to give up trying to be well adjusted to a neurotic culture'. To finally be freed from having to do whatever supposedly reinforced one's shaky identity, and then be granted liberty to do things that align more deeply. (James Hollis).

Pre-pandemic this realisation would often trigger panic followed by a mad scramble to dampen the sound of these summons. What can be done to distract from this disease? Travel? Getting married? An exciting affair? Having a child? A weight loss regime? An expensive retreat with a modern guru? A nervous breakdown? A certification? An expensive car? A more senior role-more responsibility? Befriending alcohol, food, shopping or drugs?

Post pandemic with a lot of these options out of reach there has been a sustained bout of soul searching and reflection. Many have lost loved ones or have faced their own mortality. There is a ripeness for change- to align the outer with the inner. From the outside it may look as if their lives are imploding. There is fear, regret, guilt, self-doubt and lots of second guessing that continues with this process even after the decision to leave has been made.

While the therapeutic space is often used to make hard decisions I see an increased readiness to do so in the past year. The pandemic created conditions that converted this soft tap on the door into persistent pounding- impossible to not attend to or unhear.

The midlife crisis is no longer limited to the midlife...



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