

## FINDING A PLACE FOR MORAL IMAGINATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

Public Forum Metro-Manila  
February 27, 2008

By Dr. Jo Abdulhusin Kashim

### **Background**

The Peacemakers' Circle Cooperation Circle in Metro Manila hosted this forum which served as one activity of the URI Moral Imagination (MI) Program. The title was inspired by conversations with the MI team and Dr. Jo about his experience as a member of the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front), the Joint Working Group of the GRP (Gov't. of the Republic of the Philippines), and the MNLF-OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference, a union of Muslim nations to which Muslims in the Philippines looked for support.

To better understand the context of Muslim-Christian relationships in the Philippines, Dr. Jo offered an historical overview:

*The Muslim-Christian relationship in the Philippines is both a religious and social phenomenon. Although it first developed as a religious phenomenon occasioned by the impact of proselytization when Spain tried to reduce the Muslims into Spanish vassalage during the Moro-Spanish Wars and the violent, oftentimes, albeit sporadic, piratical responses of the latter to such proselytization, with the cessation of the Philippines to the United States at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the Treaty of Paris of December 10, 1898, the phenomenon evolved into a social problem.*

*The illegal and anomalous incorporation of the Sultanate of Sulu and the Sultanate of Maguindanao dramatically transformed the problem into a political one.*

*And with the inception of Philippine independence in 1946, due to pervasive political neglect that permeated the body politic, Sulu and Mindanao, known to the Bangsa Moro People as their "Land of Promise," were not developed; instead they were used as site for resettlement of out-migration of Filipinos from the north, who was mainly ex-convict.*

*The resultant effect of this resettlement policy was the iniquitous change and imbalance of the demographic profile of Sulu and Mindanao, creating the pressing problem of Muslim-Christian relationship.*

The problem in the southern Philippines was aggravated when in September 1972 martial law was declared by then President Ferdinand Marcos and all civilians were ordered to surrender their guns. This resulted in spontaneous rebellions among Moros, who traditionally had equated the right to carry arms with their religious heritage and were suspicious of the government's intentions toward them.

The problem eventually gave rise to the creation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) that fought for an independent Moro nation. But during the late 70s differing goals, traditional tribal rivalries, and competition among Moro leaders for control of the movement produced a split in the MNLF. In January 1987, the MNLF accepted the government's offer of semi-autonomy.

In February 2008, Dr. Jo (though not a member of the MNLF) was invited to be in the MNLF Joint Working Group of President Nur Misuari, the incarcerated President of the MNLF. The experience, according to Dr. Jo, challenged his being a "peacemaker" because of the abusive treatment he received from the prison guards of Misuari. As we listened to his story, we realized that this was something that had to be shared with the public. Thus we urged him to do so but from the perspective of an MI peacebuilder (so that we could offer an "out-of-the-box" way of looking at the problem).

The Peacemakers' Circle's

**Public Forum on**



**FINDING PLACE FOR MORAL  
IMAGINATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS  
IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES**

By Abdulhusin M. Kashim, Ph.D.

Wednesday, February 27, 2008  
2:00-4:00 in the afternoon, Balay Kalinaw  
U.P. Diliman, Quezon City



# PRELIMINARIES

- Expect the unexpected
  - From the ordinary to the extraordinary
  - From the charted to the uncharted
  - From the comfortable to the uncomfortable
  - From safety to open risk
  - From the miraculous to turning points
  - From settled scientific, disciplined-based inquiry to vocation of serendipity
- This is Moral imagination, as art and soul of building peace
- Words of thanks

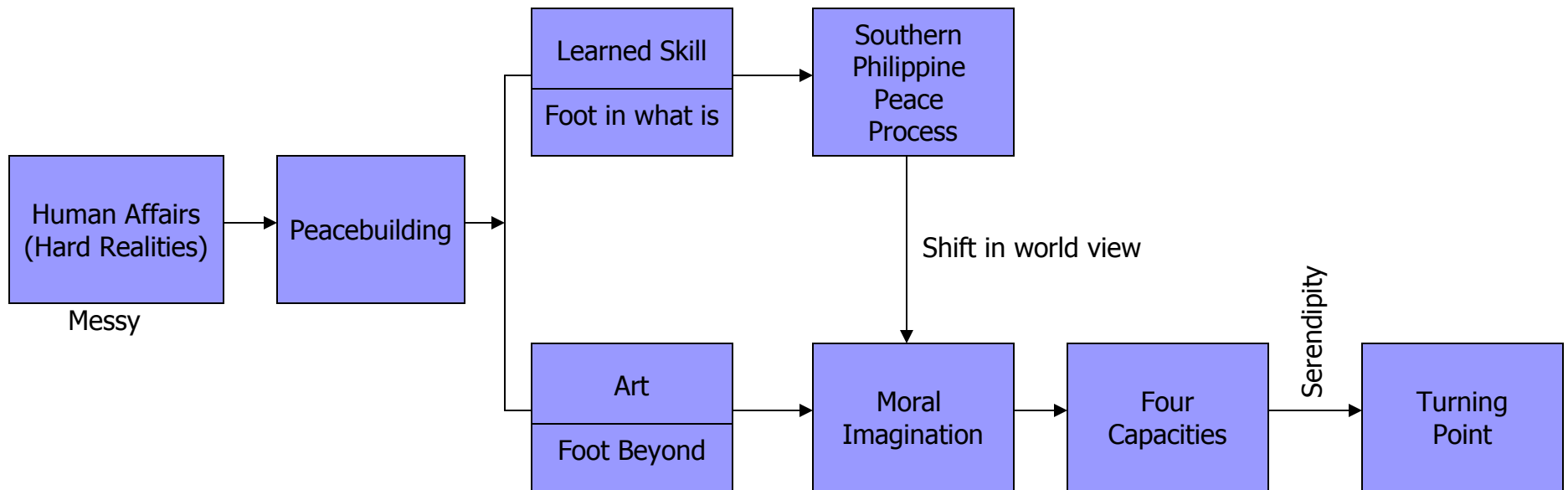


# I. THE CONCEPT OF MORAL IMAGINATION

## 1.1 Moral Imagination, defined

- “The capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist”
- Two Elements:
  - Rooted in the challenges
  - That which does not yet exist

## 1.2 Conceptual Structure of the Lecture





## 1.3 Origin

- Moral Imagination, not new but owed to dozens authors
  - Cited Authors: Price, 1983; Clausen, 1986; Kirk, 1988; Coles, 1989; McCollough, 1991; Allison, 1999; Beidelman, 1993; Johnson, 1993; Tivnan, 1995; Babbit, 1996; Bruce, 1998; Guroian, 1998; Stevens, 1998; Williams, 1998; Brown, 1999; Werhane, 1999; Fernandez and Huber, 2001; Fesmire, 2003; McFaul, 2003; and Newsom, 2003




- John Paul Lederach: Couldn't identify originator; guessed Edmund Burke (Essay on French Revolution, 1864:515-516)
  - Lamented the loss of elements that “beautify and soften private society” furnished “from the wardrobe of moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies,…”
- Brown (1999): **Ethos of the Cosmos**, *“The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible”*—suggested that Moral Imagination is traceable to Creation
- Johnson (1993): The first to use Moral Imagination most intentionally as title of book

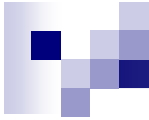




## 1.4 Three Keys that Linked Authors to Moral Imagination

- Beyond and at deeper level
- Creative act
- Transcendence
  
- “Moral” in Moral Imagination vs. Morality
  - Morality as a prescriptive dogma, “little in common”
  - “Moral” moves to create space beyond the pieces that exist, something new, out of the expected
  - Moral Imagination is an act of creating what does not exist

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- John Paul Lederach: No to “art-for-an-art-sake” discourse
    - Believes in moral energy as a practical and relevant tool
    - Moral Imagination to be explored and understood as an artistic process
      - Creativity
      - Skill
      - Serendipity
      - Craftsmanship
  
  - In reference to Peacebuilding:
    - Constructive responses and initiatives
    - Rooted in the day-to-day challenges of violence
    - Transcends the expected
    - Breaks the grips of destructive patterns and cycles



## 1.5 Four Capacities to Generate, Mobilize and Build Moral Imagination

- Capacity to imagine in relationships
- Willingness to embrace complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity
- Belief in the creative act
- Acceptance of the inherent risk

## 1.6 Two Ways to Apply Moral Imagination

- One foot on what is; one foot on what is beyond
  - Set the feet deeply into the geographies of violence and relationships
  - Explore the creative process: As a “wellspring”



## 1.7 Understanding Turning Point

- Definition: It is a “moment”
  - Pregnant with new life
  - Arising from barren ground of destructive violence and relationship
  - Makes possible constructive change
  - Constitutes Moral Imagination
  
- No peacebuilding can be understood and practiced without it



## II. THE PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

### 2.1 The Scanning Blip

- Broader Context: Have fully examined history
- Three Alternative Choices: Transcend, Enter, Sustain
- The Choice Made:
  - Transcend, but within the ambit of structured agenda
  - Perception: Sustain, as a strategy!
- Specific Context: The GRP-MILF/ MNLF Peace Processes: Dynamics: Oversensitivity to formalism

### 2.2 Status: Where Are We Now?

- The GRP-MILF Peace Process: Growing in capacities to develop mechanisms
- The GRP-MNLF Peace Process: Growing in capacities to implement mechanisms



# III. FINDING PLACE FOR MORAL IMAGINATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS

## 3.1 Factors for Consideration

- Redefine “Who we are” and “How we are”
- Determine “Where we are going”
- Embrace the conflict as deeper challenge to vocation
- Look for possibility for change
- Reapply the choice “Transcend,” with most intention
  - Breaking out from destructive patterns and structures of relationships and violence
  - Setting the process to create new space, new life, and turning point

## 3.2 Two Stories on Moral Imagination

- A Story from Wajir: How a Few Women Stopped a War
  - Refer to Material
- A Story from Colombia: We Have Decided to Think for Ourselves
  - Refer to Material



## 3.3 Seven Qualities of Presence (of peacebuilder)

1. Vulnerability
  - Not hide but carry gracefully with acknowledgement
2. Sincerity
  - “Sin cera” (without wax)
3. Patience
  - Quality of being “Ok”; have everything now
4. Courage
  - Standing by one’s “core”; making known one’s views
5. Humility
  - “I have not 100% arrived at the full truth”; capacity to recognize others
6. Compassion
  - Latin: “com” means “with”; “passion” means “heart pounding”; to be with another’s feeling
7. Clarity
  - In purpose; “Who am I?”



## **IV. CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

- Hope to have awakened!
- Turning Points to ponder:
  - GRP-MILF stalled peace talk, Is there? How?
  - GRP-MNLF Tripartite Meeting, Is there? How?





**THANK YOU!!!**