The Liberal Arts and Humanistic Peacemaking

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Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall’s *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* has absolutely nothing to say about liberal arts education. Sweeping, extensive, 496 pages in length, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* surveys what seems the whole scope of topics taken up by the peace and conflict resolution literature. From political interests and the force of arms to diplomacy and mediation, from democracy and human rights, the United Nations and international law to neoliberal capitalism and environmental resource scarcity, from global power structures to the psychology of ethnic division, from identity, fear and empathy to humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism and a global peace culture, from religion and linguistic intractability to the media and the internet, to peace museums, pop music and African footballer Didier Drogba: Ramsbotham et al. dance like dilettantes through a dizzying array of discussions on virtually any factor thought to have peace- or conflict-promoting tendencies. Yet through nearly 500 pages, what the authors do not have time for is a discussion of education in the liberal arts.¹

Of course, “peace education” has its moment in the book. But even here, Ramsbotham et al. never raise the question of how the liberal arts and peace education may or may not connect.

What Ramsbotham et al. suggest is only what the peace scholar or practitioner already knows. Questions of the liberal arts hardly enter the world of peacemaking theory or practice. If they do, they probably come as an interesting side-thought after long discussions on power, democracy, economics and the like. Articles or books that seek to make clear the peace-promoting effect of the liberal arts are rare birds to spot. Peace scholars might see little connection to make between the liberal arts and peace studies, with peace studies’ emphases on the social sciences and direct practical outcomes.² Like Thomas Hobbes’s lament that in

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¹ (Ramsbotham, 2012)
² By a “liberal arts education” I will mean throughout this paper not simply the arts and sciences or schooling at a selective Liberal Arts College. Instead I mean a more particular kind of pedagogic program most commonly found in American higher education. A liberal arts curriculum as I mean it here generally seeks to pursue the larger questions about morality, spirit and the human condition, to develop habits of deep rumination and critical reflection, and to shape moral character. The curriculum often includes “great books” and the traditional humanities subjects, increasingly drawing from more than the Western canon. But it is certainly not limited or even primarily focused
the state of war there are “no Letters, no Arts,” peace practitioners probably think of liberal arts education as something that comes after the peace is secured – a social good that peace enables, rather than a social good that enables peace.³

Why do Ramsbotham et al. find it so easy to pass over any discussion of the liberal arts? Does liberal arts education have so little to offer the human quest of peace?

Ramsbotham et al.'s silence suggests the answer is “yes.” Liberal arts education has little to offer on this subject. If it warrants a place in the peacemaker’s toolbox, Ramsbotham et al seem to suggest, it must be the weakest of tools with little real utility.

Here I find myself disagreeing. But in this paper I don’t want to defend the usefulness of the liberal arts. Instead I want to suggest the problem has more to do with – and says more about – the way we approach questions of peace. Thinking about peace and the liberal arts asks us to interrogate the world of peace theory and practice itself. When we do we find a few important things. First, we can make a distinction between two fundamental approaches to peace: a technical and a humanistic approach. Second, while we find both alive in the field today, the technical approach to peace dominates. The ease with which Ramsbotham et al. pass over discussing the liberal arts is less a sign of the liberal arts’ “uselessness” to the pursuit of peace and more symptomatic of the way peacemakers and scholars tend to think through a technical approach. Third, there are reasons to lament this over-privileging of a technical approach. Fourth, liberal arts education seems to have a more obvious connection with humanistic approaches to peace, and so the lament over the privileging of a technical approach is to some degree a lament for a central connection between peacemaking and the liberal arts.

³(Hobbes, 1996, p 89)
In section I of this paper I’ll sketch out some distinctions between a technical and a humanistic approach to peace. In section II I’ll attempt (all too quickly) to explore the balance between a technical and humanistic approach in peace scholarship and practice today. In section III, drawing on the literature and my own research in Northern Ireland, I’ll suggest (again all too quickly) some costs to privileging a technical approach to peace. Specifically, I’ll suggest that with too much focus on the technical we: a) mask the ways in which character can matter deeply in the pursuit of peace; b) fail to reflect deeply enough on the vision of peace we are striving for, its quality and its value. In the concluding section I’ll return to the question of peace and liberal arts education, finding a way to think about the liberal arts as more than a relatively weak “tool” for peace.

I.

By technical and humanistic approaches to peace I mean us to think of something like Weberian ideal types. Weberian ideal types can be understood, heuristically, as “pure” in abstract form, but when we try to identify them in the real world we find they manifest in impure and blended ways. The world is a messy conglomeration of ideal type forces (for example, Weber’s famous three: rationalism, traditionalism and charisma) and what we see when we look at the world are shifting balances between these forces (for example, Weber reads modern history as the ascent and domination of rational forces over tradition and charisma). In the same way, in contemporary approaches to peace we can see expressions of both the technical and the humanistic. The balance, however, leans strongly towards the technical (just as Weberian rational forces dominate in so many areas of the modern world. Indeed, as I’ll hint at later, the dominance of the technical approach to peace is arguably in concert with the dominance of Weberian rationality).

In this section I want to simply sketch some basic distinctions between technical and humanistic approaches to peace, starting with relatively pure illustrations and then, at the end of the section, offering a more direct analysis.

For a scholar thinking about peace through a technical approach, Paul Collier provides one clear illustration. As Oxford Professor of Economics and former
Development Research director for the World Bank, Collier has long emphasized that economic forces are the primary determinants of conflict or peace. Through the method of statistical analysis Collier finds “the most important risk factors [for conflict are] three economic characteristics: the level of per capita income, its rate of growth, and its structure.... Other characteristics, such as ethnic and religious fractionalization, political rights, and colonial history, do not show up as being important. Indeed, if anything, societies composed of many different ethnic groups are safer than homogenous societies.”

As a result of this analysis, economic development is, for Collier, the key for making peace in the world. Identifying the economic conditions that lead to violent conflict, Collier’s route to peace focuses on the reversal of those conditions. “People imagine that civil war,” he continues, “reflects incompetence or malevolence on the part of governments. I think that this is basically both unfair and misleading... Rather than demanding such of governments that they become the world champions of political and social compromise, we should assist them to transform their economies.”

Collier’s approach to peace involves surveying the object (the conflict-torn society) with the gaze of a scientist, isolating the factors at work to determine the conflict and then, with the skill and tools of a macro-economist, coercively reshaping the economy, as a car mechanic might retune an engine or an orthopedist might reset a broken bone. The restructured economy in turn then changes – pacifies – human behavior in society.

Eventually Collier’s work slips into agreement with the “liberal peace:” a paradigm for peacemaking that arose in the 1990s and has been the peacemaking norm amongst political, economic and academic elites ever since. Initially rooted in the empirical observation that for two centuries no two democracies went to war with each other, that observation eventually evolved into the hypothesis that

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4 Of course he recognizes that where war occurs in ethnically diverse societies it tends to organize along ethnic lines. But, he says, “we should be careful not to conclude from this that ethnic differences are the cause of civil war.” (Collier, 2004)

5 (Collier, 2004)
democratic institutions also create the best conditions for peace within societies as well as between them. In the early 1990s, at the same time that academics were heralding the potential of the liberal peace paradigm, world politics took a turn towards liberal democratic triumphantalism with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1994 the United Nations released *An Agenda for Peace* – a manifesto that established the “liberal peace” paradigm as the United Nation’s explicit, official peacemaking policy. As Roland Paris writes: “Peacebuilding missions in the 1990s were guided by a... widely accepted theory of conflict management: the notion that promoting “liberalization” in countries that had recently experienced civil war would help to create the conditions for a stable and lasting peace. In the political realm, liberalization means democratization, or the promotion of periodic general elections, constitutional limitations on the exercise of governmental power, and respect for basic civil liberties... In the economic realm, liberalization means marketization, or movement toward a market-oriented economic model...” Again, along with Collier, whether it’s the more than 20 peacebuilding missions launched by the UN since 1989, American efforts to establish democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan or “the orthodoxy that [economic] development [is] an integral part of peacebuilding,” the “liberal peace” paradigm seeks peace by way of reshaping political and economic structures, as an engineer or technician re-calibrates a malfunctioning machine.

Compare these illustrations in tone, focus and purpose to that of Martin Luther King, Jr. who, in his famous campaign against racial conflict and injustice in America, offers an illustrative example of a humanistic approach to peace.

In his autobiography of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Marshall Frady speaks of King’s famous campaign as a “great moral saga of belief and violence that unfolded in the musky deeps of the South during the civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties.” For Frady, as for Dr. King himself, King’s pursuit of equality and dignity for black Americans was not, at core, a campaign of war, a political strategy or even an

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6 (Paris, 2004, p 5)
7 (Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009)
effort to re-engineer society. In essence it was a great human drama – a moral saga – on which the moral and spiritual condition of the nation hinged.

From nearly any study of Martin Luther King Jr. it is clear he understood the civil rights campaign as not merely a political stand for one interest group (American blacks) but as a crux moment, a test, in the spiritual life of America under the watchful eyes of God. King is famous for saying “the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.” Still, no complacency tempted him into thinking that the moral arc would simply grab us and drag us along. “We have come,” he proclaimed during his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, “to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism... Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice; now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood; now is the time to make justice a reality for all God's children.”8 Indeed, King and his closest followers believed that God was watching this great saga unfold like a judge, “calling on both black and white Americans to examine their consciences about the state of race relations.”9

The long campaign for civil rights was full, of course, of strategic calculation. King and his followers plotted their times and their places of protest for maximum effectiveness, often with a Machiavellian prudence. But we should not take from this that the civil rights campaign was essentially the nonviolent version of a campaign of war. For King, as with Gandhi, the nonviolent aspect of the protests gave them a uniquely moral character.

For King, as with Gandhi, and unlike later theorists of nonviolence like Gene Sharp, the primary purpose of nonviolence is not to coerce one’s enemies into submission but to transform relationships by converting the inner hearts and minds of both protester and protested against. Says King, “[W]e must never forget that there is something within human nature that can respond to goodness, that man is

8 (King, 1986, p 218)
9 (Washington, 1986, p xiv)
not totally depraved; to put it in theological terms, the image of God is never totally
gone. And so the individuals who believe in this movement and who believe in
nonviolence... somehow believe that even the worst segregationist can become an
integrationist... [T]here is something within human nature that can be changed, and
this stands at the top of the whole philosophy... of nonviolence.”10 For King, as for
Gandhi, the nonviolent encounter serves not only as a crisis moment in which social
relations can be transformed from viciousness to virtue but also as moral education
and character formation. The intent is to draw out from all participants their inner
senses of goodness.

In this moral character the nonviolent protests of the civil rights movement
served for King as just one component in what was his ultimate, larger, loftier goal:
nothing less than moral renaissance of America, in the form of a more just, loving
and peaceful society. Far from merely lobbying for the rights of black America, King
wanted to regenerate a broken, or at least incomplete, American society. His social
vision, rooted in his Christian faith, which he spoke of in terms of a “beloved
community.”

As Ira Zepp explains, for King, “We are tied together in the single garment of
destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.”11 “The interrelated,
interdependent character of life means that “I” cannot reach fulfillment without
“Thou.”... These fulfilled selves constitute the real human community.” Only when
we digest and affirm this sense of interrelatedness do we, for King, “approach the
ideal of the beloved community.”

King, then, is a social thinker, who is clearly aware of the need to transform
the macro-structures of society - economics and politics, for example - in order to
achieve his vision of a regenerated America. But for King, social structures have to
fit, and are held together by, the kinds of relationships a society keeps. So for King,
for example, political laws that enforce racial equality will not regenerate America if
the basic social relationships remain racist. The work of building a good and

10 (King, 1986, p 48)
11 (Zepp, 1989, p 209). The quotation is King’s own, quoted here by Zepp.
peaceful society for King is ultimately “a matter of [developing] personal relationships created by love.”

Beyond some of the specifics of what Collier, the liberal peacebuilders and Dr. King suggest – for example, their presentations of love, democracy and liberal economics as important for peace - these examples help illustrate some basic differences between humanistic and technical approaches to peace.

With Collier and the liberal peacebuilders we see a particular modus operandi: First they observe, through the gaze of a scientist, the object of study (for example, a conflict torn society) and then develop models or theories that explain the workings of that object, as we might explain the mechanics of any system. With that knowledge they identify the functions that determine either conflict or peace (for example, liberal economics and democratic elections as functions that determine peace). Through the application of tools and expert skill (in Collier’s case, for example, restructuring the economy) they look to reshape society to set the conditions for peace. Though the analogies may seem crude, in essence this modus operandi is not so different from that of a car mechanic retooling an ailing car engine or a doctor performing surgery, reaching into the body and manipulating its parts to excise cancers and sew everything back into a desired shape.

This approach to peace is instrumental and technical. The metaphor here for the peacemaker is the technician: the engineer, scientist, doctor, mechanic, skilled strategist or even businessman with his quarterly targets and goals. Violent conflict is a technical problem to solve. Peace is an edifice to be architectured and engineered. The methods hinge on savior-faire and effective use of technology.

By contrast the more humanistic approach of Martin Luther King, Jr. emphasizes how the quest for peace might be understood as a human journey, or an expression of the life we live. Here the metaphor for peacemaker might be the teacher, the artist, the model citizen, the pastor, rabbi, imam, or prophet, but is probably best thought of as simply the good neighbor.

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12 (Zepp, 1989, pp 209-11)
King hopes to effect change towards peace by reaching directly into the murky depths of the human soul. His methods are of moral and spiritual engagement. He speaks to people, hinging his hopes on inner transformations that may come through serious deliberation. He meets his fellow Americans in nonviolent protest, which he stages purposefully as moral encounters. Peacemaking by this approach is not a question of skills and instruments. It involves questions of character, meaning and how well we live. “What kind of person should I be?” “What values should I absorb and uphold?” “How should we live together so that our treatment of one another is peaceful and good?” “What social structures allow us to live in virtuous and valuable ways?”

Note here that, like liberal peacebuilders, King seeks to reshape wider social structures. But as where a technical approach seeks experts to retool social structures using skill and technique (again, like Collier restructuring a conflict-torn society's economy), King hopes for peaceful structures to grow out of new social relationships – imbuing those structures with an organic legitimacy amongst the people because they take the shapes that suit the people’s values and lives.

Peace by the humanistic approach is lived into existence, not built. It is generated, not constructed. Here, as with King, a society is understood as the fabric, the web, of human interaction, essentially constituted of its individuals, their values and social relations. By the humanistic approach, then, peace is understood as the natural character of a society where its individuals, ethics and social relations are of a quality that, simply, constitutes peace. The way to peace is to live a peaceful life in common, figuring out together what is “good” and “peaceful” and then, with commitment, actively live out that good and that peace.

From the humanistic approach, technical peacemaking appears too mechanical, sterile and utilitarian. It seems likely to impose a set of peace-promoting structures without dealing with the very human, existential causes of conflict or peace. From the technical approach, humanistic peacemaking looks too messy, too murky and too reliant on the uncertainties at play in the inner lives of human beings. To the humanistic approach, peacemaking is a way of being, not a project. To the technical approach, peacemaking is a project with a clearly defined
goal, which thankfully, through skillful application of the right tools and materials, can be efficiently and effectively reached.

II.

How do we tend to approach peace today? If, as I’ve suggested, the humanistic and technical approaches are ideal types, we should see a mix of both in contemporary peacemaking efforts, and I think that we do. But it is not a balanced mix. Across peace scholarship and practice today, the technical approach arguably dominates.

Indeed, one of the driving forces in the birth and continued evolution of peace studies – to the degree that it is a unified discipline13 – has been the general concern to apply science and technique to questions of peace. Like the 19th century pioneers of social science – Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Freud – who each came from a humanities oriented background (philosophy, history, religion, classics and poetry, respectively), 20th century peace studies pioneers were drawn to the notion that the power of science might be applied to improve the human social condition. In this way, peace scholarship and practice (to the degree, and it is a substantial one, that peace practitioners draw from the models, tools and strategies of peace scholarship) has simply followed the pattern of increasing rationalism that Weber would identify as a defining condition of modern life.

The birth of the discipline comes with the development of International Relations in 1919, born in the hope that science could provide a better understanding of how to control human tendencies to war. Ramsbotham et al. write, “The failure of... peace, socialist and liberal internationalist movements to prevent the outbreak of the First World War motivated many people in the years that followed to develop a ‘science’ of peace which would provide a firmer basis for preventive future wars...”14 Peace studies have a fairly well established origin

13 “Peace studies” here can be thought of as a wide, interdisciplinary umbrella that could encompass peace studies proper, conflict resolution literature and the peace-oriented scholarship in International Relations.
14 (Ramsbotham et al., 2012, p 36).
narrative, and can be read as progressing in stages. For the early stages in particular, the essential forming of the discipline, scholars were self-consciously working to make the discipline more scientific: from its start in International Relations; to the later turn towards sociology and psychology in the 1950’s and 1960’s, to the sophistication and crystallization of theory on mediation and conflict resolution strategies and techniques in the 1970’s and 1980’s and the increasing movement towards positivistic social science in the “behavioral revolution” of International Relations.  

The concerns of the discipline have always been practical, and its history is steeped in the assumption that the best approach to a practical problem is a scientific approach. As early pioneer Kenneth Boulding wrote in 1957, for example, for the inaugural edition of the first peace studies journal, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, “The reasons which have led us to this enterprise may be summed up in two propositions. The first is that by far the most practical problem facing the world today is... the prevention of global war. The second is that if intellectual progress is to made in this area, the study... must be made an interdisciplinary enterprise, drawing its discourse from all the social sciences...”

The current culmination of these historic trends is that peace scholarship and practice are shot through with the assumptions of a technical approach. Even the basic language of today’s peace theory and practice is deeply infused with metaphors apropos of the technical approach. Peace-related activity includes “conflict management,” “peacebuilding” and “peace operations.” The common task

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15 The first manifestation of “peace studies” was in the birth of the field of International Relations, in the creation of the David Davies Chair in International Politics at the University of Aberystwyth in 1919. Here efforts were largely focused on the war-constraining possibilities of international law and the League of Nations. After World War II, spurred perhaps by the failure of that answer, a second wave of pioneers pushed into further directions. Johan Galtung brought the positivistic rigor of sociology to peace studies, establishing the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, while Kenneth Boulding, Anatol Rapaport, Herbert Kelman and others brought their interests in psychology and social psychology to form the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and spark an interdisciplinary but clearly social scientific approach to the field. In the field of International Relations – still thought of as a parent discipline to peace studies – scholars worked increasingly to mimic the rigors and successes of the hard sciences, culminating in the “behaviouralist revolution” of the 1970s and 1980s. See (Ramsbotham, 2012, pp 35-62)

16 (Ramsbotham, 2012, p 35)
of conflict resolution scholarship is to impart upon the reader the practical “tools,” “techniques” and “strategies” necessary for achieving the target goal of resolving disputes. Specific examples are so numerous they could easily fill a book. Michael Lund writes in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, “Responding to violent conflicts requires two steps: knowing what tools are effective in which circumstances, and devising and implementing multi-tooled, place-specific strategies to move a country toward durable peace (tool profiles).”17 William Zartman, a veteran scholar in the conflict resolution field, begins the introduction of his edited textbook *Peacemaking and International Conflict* with: “Courage and commitment are needed to use the tools required to meet the challenge of moving people away from their prodivity to violence and nations away from the temptation to war. The purpose of this book is to build an awareness of the tools and techniques available to pursue this goal.”18

The foundational UN report *An Agenda for Peace* lists its peacemaking goals in bullet-point like business targets, and they include goals such as: “rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war.”19 Michael Pugh writes of contemporary peace policy, “Progressive benchmarks to be achieved encompass security sector reform, rule of law, democratization, capacity-building, institution-building and so-called “free market” liberalization.”20 Dennis Sandole writes in his book *Peace Building*, “The objective is to identify the unique characteristics of select conceptual tools, suggesting an integrated, holistic model... that could facilitate an upgrade in analytic capabilities of theorists, policy-makers and practitioner concerned with complex problem solving and peacebuilding.”21

Mac Ginty and Williams note that critics dismiss “much of the orthodox [peace] literature as being merely “problem-solving”... focused on specific functional tasks related to peace negotiations or the implementations of peace accords...”22

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17 (Lund, 2002, p 16)
18 (Zartman, 2007, p 3). These are actually the second and third sentences of the Introduction.
19 (UN, A/47/277)
20 (Pugh, 2009, p 78)
21 (Sandole, 2010, p 31)
22 (Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009, p 18)
crack a book on peacebuilding or conflict resolution and the metaphors jump forth, whether the authors are proponents or critics.

Across the spectrum of peace scholarship and practice, the default approach to peace is technical. The closer we move towards academic scholarship the more rigorously scientific that approach is. The closer we move to practice the more considered with practical skills, strategies and techniques that approach is. Yet the basic qualities of a technical approach tend to appear over and again.

That said, the world of peace scholarship and practice has hardly rid itself of humanistic approaches, and we do find them today, often blended with technical approaches and sometimes championed in their own right. Humanistic approaches tend to appear the closer we are to local, interpersonal peacemaking activities, where peacemaking seems to demand that the peacemaker deals with human relations, values and inner perspectives.

Peace education presents this sort of blend. Even peace educators tend to think in terms of tools and toolboxes. “Peace educators...” writes Ian Harris, “have added to their toolboxes conflict resolution, forgiveness and violence prevention skills...” More, education curriculums that actually teach how to live peacefully (and not just the scientific, objective study of peace and conflict) have “not really taken hold in schools systems around the world,” Harris also tells us. But where they do they tend to focus on transmitting conflict resolution skill-sets to students. Yet, the aspirations of peace educators include a very large component that is actually character formation. To look at the UNESCO website for peace education is to find a program primarily devoted to cultivating peace through the promotion of virtues in individuals and societies. Again, many of those virtues, like valuing democracy and human rights, have long been a part of the humanistic education of the liberal arts.

The subfield of conflict resolution also tends to strike a complicated balance. For the most part, conflict resolution continues to teach the tools, techniques and

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23 (Harris, 2008)
24 (Harris, 2008)
“win-win” strategies for negotiation taught by leading early thinkers, and it is safe to say most mediators, negotiators and conflict resolution practitioners think of themselves as applying technical skills to reach a specific, technical goal: getting disputants “to yes,” as Fisher, Ury and Patton famously put it.26 Yet, much conflict resolution practice has found itself necessarily veering into humanistic territory. Once a marginalized alternative in the conflict resolution literature, the workshop methods of figures like John Burton and Herbert Kelman have over decades become key components of the conflict resolution canon.27 Here the approach to conflict resolution involves participants engaging in small workshops where they seek to frame their conflict as a common problem the solving of which would benefit both parties – as opposed to a competition where one side might coming out winning. Much of the workshop hinges on the empathetic exchanges that can be spurred in such close contact. In the process of a success workshop, human souls change. Hatreds and dehumanizing perceptions of the other begin to get whittled away. In his work in Israel/Palestine Kelman has found himself supervising workshops where Palestinians and Israeli Jews find themselves working through their competing, incommensurate perceptions on the injustices of their respective situations.28 Here, within a laboratory designed as a technical answer to a technical problem, conflict resolvers have found themselves inescapably pulled towards a humanistic approach.

Similarly, Michelle LeBaron has her conflict resolution workshop participants sing songs together and explore their creative powers. She too uses the dominant technical language of the discipline. She writes, “The field of conflict resolution has generated many tools...” and many of them “come from a rational, problem-solving orientation.” Yet LeBaron’s approach focuses in on a human’s emotional ways of knowing and sees conflict resolution as a process of inner and relational transformation. She writes, “In the early days of the conflict resolution field, we

26 (Fisher, Ury and Patton, 1991). This pocket-sized book serves as a long-standing bible for students and practitioners of negotiation and mediation, the key text for the Harvard School of Negotiation.
27 (Fisher, 1997)
28 (Kelman, 2001)
noticed the integrative potential of “win-win” solutions. To address [conflict], we devised analytical frameworks, problem-solving approaches, and logical, staged processes. Success meant getting to “yes” about the material matters at issue... This advanced the theory and practice in conflict resolution by substituting scientifically ordered thinking for “jungle theories” in which wit and luck had been the tools. In a second wave of theory and practice, it was recognized that conflict... arises from poor communication... Third parties [mediators] were trained to employ a range of communication strategies...

Notice in these first two stages the emphasis on advancement through scientific sophistication and a focus on technical strategies. But with LeBaron’s own practices she sees these two waves as incomplete. “If we want to bridge differences durably and respectfully, we cannot use a strategy centered in problem solving or in improving communication alone. We have to begin by acknowledging that our logic and common sense about how to communicate arise from our own ways of knowing – the ways we make meaning of our lives. These ways are influenced by culture, personality, context, and a whole system of knowing called our worldview... If we want to truly bridge differences, we begin not with formal analysis but with stories, metaphors and shared experiences.”

Here, in LeBaron’s own work, she shifts from peacemaker as technician to peacemaker as something like teacher, spiritual helper or even shamanic guide. Far from merely applying rational techniques and strategies, LeBaron is asking her workshop participants to explore their worldviews and work critically and reflectively with no less than their senses of meaning. Again, this is humanistic work more than technical tool-twisting, and it is exactly the kind of value-heavy, human-to-human meeting a liberal arts education gives one the facility and the preparation to engage with.

29 (LeBaron, 2002, pp 7-10)
Many peace scholars will argue that technical approaches to peace have met with great successes. But there are reasons to be dissatisfied with the current balance that privileges a technical approach. A list could, I suspect, cover far more than a single article, and in this section I hint at simply two.

One problem with a technical approach is that it can mask the way our personal journeys and character development become crucial to peacemaking. Much peace literature focuses on structures that can be refashioned to create conditions for peace without ever taking up questions of the individual's inner self. Through the lens of most social sciences human behavior can be thought of as the product of wider social structures and forces. To recall Collier, for example, by retelling the economy we set the conditions by which human behavior becomes pacified. The analogy is crude, but it is not unlike the way physicists may think about atoms, molecules or billiard balls. The world around them can be designed to ensure they travel in the direction we want them to. For much literature, then, the inner self can remain a “black box” that scholars do not have to reach inside. The structures around individuals can be designed to ensure the human behavior we want. More, by the technical approach, it is good for peace that peacemaking doesn’t try to reach into the inner self. If peace relied on the inner transformations of every individual in society (or at least a critical mass) then peace, it seems, would never be achieved.

We find this notion even where we would tend not to expect it – for example, in the literature on mediation and negotiation, where we might imagine that scholars would need to dwell on the possibility of changing the hearts and minds of negotiating combatants. Yet again, many scholars prefer not to reach into the “black box” of the inner self and focus on the application of skills and strategies to simply maneuver the participants into desired positions. We often read, for example, of incentives and bargaining tools – “carrots” and “sticks” – or the skillful application of power to force a recalcitrant combatant to see it the negotiator’s way.
Of course, this is not always the case. As I’ve suggested already discussing Burton and Kelman, many conflict resolution practitioners have discovered that conflict resolution often demands inner transformation.

The following quotes from a personal interview with Jeffery Donaldson, Northern Ireland politician and participant in the Northern Irish peace process for the Protestant side, capture the way inner transformations can be crucial to peacemaking. At times a humanistic approach may even be necessary to enable more technical methods. Here Donaldson’s words speak for themselves, but there are at least two key points to notice. First, to make negotiation between Donaldson and his Catholic counterparts possible required an inner shift within him, through empathetic moments enabled by contact with the enemy. Second, Donaldson emphasizes the way in which peacemaking seems less a technical task and more a personal journey, dealing with spiritual crises and navigating our common humanity.

“I’ve been involved in the [peace] talks process from the early 1990's predating the IRA ceasefire and right up until 1997… Many of us came from a background of having lost members of our families during the Troubles -- myself, I had two cousins murdered by the IRA in the 1970's and 1980's… So it was a big decision to remain in the talks with [Catholic Republican] Sinn Fein… I recollect when we'd been in South Africa meeting with some of the South African leaders, Nelson Mandela told us something that I think is the truth for all peace processes – and that is you don't make peace with your friends you make peace with your enemies… [Sitting with Sinn Fein representatives Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness] was a difficult moment for me personally, sitting across the table from them was difficult during the negotiations. It took many weeks for me to get over the initial feeling of – the human feelings that I had – about the presence of these people, knowing what they had been involved in in the past. For me it's been a personal journey, and I think it has to be personal. You cannot – you can't impose on people a change of psyche (?); you can't impose on them a change of attitude; you can't impose on people reconciliation. They have to come with that through their own personal experience, through working things through in their own mind and then their own hearts. I went through that process through the talks and as we went on in those discussions I came to realize that we had to work with people that we would regard as our enemies… I suppose seeing them across the table physically present in the meeting room helped to bring a human dimension to those discussions that may not have been there previously.

I served with the army; I was out on the streets taking the IRA on. If you talk to former combatants in a war...I mean the first world war is a
classic example: you could have groups of soldiers separated literally by a few hundred yards of barbed wire and mud but no concept that on the other side of that piece of ground there were human beings who had families and thought the same thoughts and did the same things that they did and maybe had similar backgrounds. In war and conflict, people become dehumanized, desensitized and a successful peace process has to unwind that, unravel that, has to find a way of rehumanizing the discourse, rehumanizing, if you like the elements that make up the process that you don't just see people as 'them and us', you don't just see them as belonging to a faction, submitting to an ideology, but you see them as people who have families and a community that they represent. Now, for me that takes time. It was a personal journey.

I suppose that one moment that stands out for me was when I attended that seminar on Northern Ireland hosted in Salzburg… [A] Sinn Fein representative… He talked about his personal experience. His son had gone out one day as part of an IRA gang to murder an officer in the Ulster Defense Regiment, which was the regiment that I had served in. And when they arrived to shoot this UDR officer, [the officer] killed the Sinn Fein member's son… Now, I remembered the incident. I recalled it because… I would have been very pleased that my UDR comrade had killed one of his potential assassins. And yet, as I listened to this Sinn Fein member talking about the impact that his son's death had had on him personally. I had a real sense of his grief, his sense of loss and pain and I suppose for the first time it brought home to me that… I guess as I listened to that Sinn Fein member… it brought to me very clearly that on both sides of a conflict there is human dimension that sometimes we lose sight of. And it gets obfuscated by all of the politics, and gets obfuscated by the rhetoric, and by the noise of the violence.”

If Donaldson speaks to the means of peacemaking, a second problem with too much of a technical approach has to do with peacemaking’s ends. Again, through the technical approach we can think of human beings being more or less constrained into peace through the properly shaped social structures, analogous to a billiard ball caused to move in a certain way by the pool cue we use and the groves we build around it. With this in mind, the technical approach to peace makes it too easy for experts to assume they have established an enduring, workable peace by imposing structural changes upon a society or situation. As technicians with expert knowledge, peacemakers via a technical approach may be too prone to believe the structural changes they enact are legitimated simply by the fact that they are the product of expert knowledge. The need to legitimate the new structures by more

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30 Personal Interview with Jeffery Donaldson, January 18th, 2010
thoroughly including the people in the decisions and the peace-restructuring process may too easily slip the technical peacemakers mind. The analogy here may be to the doctor who thinks of herself as a technician of the body, and leaves her patient feeling like an object the doctor has worked upon rather than a participant in his own journey to recovery.

In fact, this is one of the most commonly noted problems amongst critiques of the liberal peace paradigm today. Mac Ginty and Williams write, for example, “The liberal peace imposed a very particular type of order on Bosnia-Herzegovina and sparked enormous resentment among many sections of the population who felt disempowered despite the language of ‘inclusion,’ ‘empowerment’ and ‘participation’ that accompanied European interventions.”31 Oliver Richmond writes, “the liberal peace has appeared in some contexts – often from the perspective of local recipients (or to be precise the political subjects of peacebuilding…) to be insensitive, parochial, narrow and even complacent. This perspective claims it engenders ethnocentrism, cultural biases and a narrow set of interests…”32 Writes Thiessen, “there appears to be significant dissatisfaction with, and increasing resistance to, the liberal peace as experienced by local populations around the world. It is seen as ethically bankrupt… coercive and conditional, acultural, unconcerned with social welfare, and unfeeling and insensitive towards its subjects… [E]merging theory proposes that peacebuilding actors not work from universal blueprints, but engage in caring and empathetic multilevel consultation in order to provide the grassroots with a voice…”33

On these accounts, the liberal peace project reads as if strangely autistic to the particular demands of any given society, and I cannot help but think the imposition of a “universal blueprint” of peacemaking suites the character of a technical approach to peace, which supports the scientific habit of explaining behavior via universal theories and models.

31 (Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009, p77)
32 (Richmond, 2011, p 2)
33 (Thiessen 2000, pp 118, 121)
Finally, there is the question of the quality of peace any given peace effort offers. Through a technical approach, peacemakers seem more likely to accept more limited and unsatisfying versions of peace because they are, in their narrowness, easier to achieve through technical means. With an eye for efficiency and attainable end-goals, the technical peacemaker is more likely to shoot for the sustained cessation of violence than the healthy rejuvenation of a psychosocially divided society because the tools of the technical approach are far more capable of actually achieving this more limited goal. Exactly because technical peacemakers have developed skills and methods to have peace treaties signed and economies reworked, they are more likely to be satisfied with the attainment of these targets. As Paris tells us, eventually liberal peace operators came to take the establishment of a national election as the indicator of success.

Again, the effect of this narrow approach to peace is widely critiqued across the literature. Mac Ginty complains of peace projects leaving societies in states of “no war no peace,” and innumerable authors have written on how postconflict populations across the globe are momentarily pacified but left to nurture the underlying divisions of hate and fear from which the initial conflicts were spawned. Reworking political and economic institutions is something technically-minded peacemakers can do. Conducting processes of national therapy seem to the technical peacemaker beyond their purview of proficiency. And so a wide number of peace projects feature a familiar pattern, where elite-level resources, time and effort go into technical approaches to peace, and in their wake small armies of local humanistic peacemakers with scant resources go to work attempting to heal community-level fractures and divisions.34

In this rumination from Brendan McAllister, former Victims Commission for Northern Ireland, on the quality of peace built in Northern Ireland, he seems to

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34 Recall Collier at the beginning of this paper. The economy for Collier is the root cause of conflict or peace. Ethnic divisions and psychological hatreds become merely the axes upon which conflicts spurred by economics manifest. By this logic, we can see why the need to genuinely reconcile society-wide psychological tensions.
lament a more technical, limited peace and longs for a deeper, more humanistic, more spiritual state of being. He begins:

“Let me set the context of our times. We have peace [in Northern Ireland]. But the peace we have is not the original biblical peace. If we think about peace in terms of shalom in the Hebrew tradition – shalom meaning a rich reality of wholeness; to live in balance within yourself and with other human beings, with all of Creation, with the cosmos, with the Creator. It’s a rich, holistic understanding of living in balance, not just with people, but with all of creation: with animals, with plant life, with the environment, and beyond that the universe.

And whenever the scriptures were written, translated from Hebrew into Greek... they used twenty words to approximate shalom. The closest they could get was the Greek word irene... But it really means harmony and order. Which is beautiful... But it’s not quite as holistic as shalom. Something of the quality of shalom is lost in the translation. [Then] when the Greek scriptures are translated into Latin, the closest they get to irene, which is the closest [the Greeks] could get to shalom, is pax, which means legal order. Legal order. That's a far cry from shalom. So something in the evolution of our understanding of peace constantly gets narrowed down and becomes quite legalistic. And so we have during the time of the Roman Empire the doctrine of pax Romania... [And here is the “peace” of pax Romania:] you have trouble in some region of Gaul, send a legion in with a centurion, kill the men, rape the women and take them off to be servants. There’s no more trouble in Gaul. Pax Romania.

Well, we have a form of pax Hibernia in Ireland right now, in that the international caravan and road show of the world, which spent some time landing its helicopters on our lawns here for a peace process, has departed, and the world looks at Northern Ireland now and tells you that it’s [at peace]. But all that we are left with... [is a] a pax.

The problem I have with that is that this might be as good as it gets... The best we’ll ever get is pax, when what we’re really looking for is shalom.”

IV

Unsatisfied with a form of peace for Northern Ireland that effectively binds and pacifies society through force and legalities, but allows long-lingering and sinister tensions to fester like a steady cancer on the soul of the nation, McAllister invokes a vision of peace revealed to him in the study of biblical tradition. He envisions not merely pacification but regeneration: the broken made new. And as Brendan McAllister harkens to the ancient yet continually relevant concepts of pax
and *shalom* he brings us back to where this paper started, with the question of peace and the liberal arts.

I began this paper with the question: What does a liberal arts education have to offer the human pursuit of peace. The silence of Ramsbotham et al.’s *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, an excellent, leading textbook in the field, suggests the proper answer is “very little.” With this paper I have tried to suggest the answer is, in fact, not that simple. Interrogating the world of peace scholarship and practice we find at least two fundamentally distinct approaches to peacemaking, which I’ve called technical and humanistic approaches to peace. Our answer to whether, and how, liberal arts education does or does not promote peace will depend on the approach we are looking through.

From the vantage point of the technical approach, the liberal arts will have to prove their utility to the goals of the technical peacemaker. Are the liberal arts a useful enough tool to keep on hand in the peacemaker’s toolbox? At least one article has attempted to marry peacemaking and the liberal arts through a tactic something like this.

Coy and Hancock argue that the liberal arts can connect with the general goals of peace education in a number of ways. The authors nicely organize peace and conflict studies into three broad focuses: 1) study on the causes and consequences of violence; 2) tutelage on the methods, skills and techniques for reducing violent conflict, and; 3) instruction on the values, norms and institutions of peace. Coy and Hancock argue that American liberal arts programs have long been engaged in the project of forming a democratic character in students, and this formation overlaps well with the third focus of peace and conflict studies. In this (limited?) way, liberal arts education can be incorporated as a tool for the broad project of educating for peace.

I am for this broad project and happy to see Coy and Hancock tie the liberal arts to it. Yet at the end of this paper it does seem that there may be a whole other,

35 In at least four ways: “producing liberated citizens,” “respecting diversity,” thoughtfully considering different points of view” and “highlighting not just the rights of the individual but the responsibilities that accompany those rights.” See (Coy and Hancock, 2010, p 205)
more fruitful way of thinking about the liberal arts and peace. Just as liberal arts educators tend not to think of their curriculum as simply imparting skills and strategies for students to succeed in their technical targets and goals (for example, wild success in the marketplace) – just as liberal arts educators tend not to see their craft as serving a utility function in society, the raw purpose of their curricula being “not for profit”36 – so too we should see the liberal arts playing a different sort of role in the human quest for peace.

For liberal arts teachers, a liberal arts education enlivens one’s being, enriching their lives by molding into the being of students a love of learning, deep, reflective, critical wisdom and the desire to know and live a moral and perhaps spiritual life. So too by a humanistic approach to peace it seems we would want to think of the liberal arts as potentially a kind of nutritive agent, furnishing the development of the kinds of human beings who strive for peaceful lives and peaceful societies in tandem with – and as a component of – the pursuit of a good life? By a humanistic approach, the liberal arts simply enrich our ongoing quest for peace. Potentially, the liberal arts can educate us into a rich tradition of human thinking that may provide a deeper and more elevated intellectual, moral and spiritual matrix in which to think about peace, as Brendan McAllister reaches into, for example, when he imagines the possibility of Northern Irish shalom. Liberal arts education can help us make sense of the kind of moral encounters Jeffery Donaldson experienced as a peace talks participant in Northern Ireland. Liberal arts education might help the student gain perspective on what is at stake in questions of peace, coming to read peace efforts at great moral sagas more than technical puzzles.

Of course, it would be remiss of me not to admit that at the end of this paper there remains the question of whether or not the liberal arts, viewed through either a technical or humanistic approach, actually is the kind of education that inclines us towards peace. After all, from Homer to Machiavelli, St. Augustine to Flannery O’Connor, the Bhagavad Gita to Reinhold Niebuhr, a liberal arts curriculum can just as easily celebrate warriorhood, find justice in violence and profess the inevitability

36 Here I allude to the recent apologia for the liberal arts by Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2010)
of human conflict as it can lament the waste of war or treat peace as central to the vision of the good life. Just as Ramsbotham et al. pay no attention to the question of the liberal arts, Coy and Hancock point out that liberal arts educators themselves do not have a track record of paying great attention to peace studies. They write, “Peace and conflict studies courses are seldom seen by faculty curriculum committees and university administrators as deserving to be part of their institution’s liberal arts education requirements.”37 It’s entirely possible a liberal arts curriculum that supports peace would have to be consciously fashioned as such. What that curriculum might look like, what values or emphases might be lost in that curriculum and whether liberal arts educators should want to move in that direction or not are all questions for a future paper.

But if we accept for the moment that liberal arts education could and perhaps even should be fashioned in ways that promote a humanistic approach to peace, then we have, I think, an argument for a greater engagement between peacemakers and the liberal arts. There is gold to be had in the alchemy of the two. Ramsbotham et al.’s neglect of the liberal arts is symptomatic of a wider imbalance between technical and humanistic approaches to peace in the overall world of peace scholarship and practice. With limited space I’ve tried to suggest that there are reasons to want a more humanistic approach to peace, and that could mean a greater emphasis placed on thinking about peace through the lens of the liberal arts.

37 (Coy and Hancock, 2010)
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