

THE ART OF DIALOGUE

Jewish–Christian Relations in a Post-Shoah World (The Jerome Cardin Memorial Lecture)¹

Björn Krondorfer

We wish, perhaps, that some events of the past would quietly fall into oblivion, be erased from collective memory for a fresh start. Surely, the Holocaust, or Shoah, would be such an event: The systematic attempt of Nazi Germany and its European collaborators to annihilate all European Jews and Jewish culture revealed modernity's darkest side, and it sobered the Enlightenment's belief in the steady progress of humanity toward moral improvement. The unleashing of unprecedented genocidal violence was made possible by putting modern technology and a bureaucratic apparatus into the service of a nation state ruled by a racial ideology. What started in the early years of Hitler's dictatorship as domestic terror evolved into a systematic genocidal campaign after the beginning of World War II in 1939. In hundreds of camps dotting the European map, the so-called inferior and undesirable people labored, starved, suffered, and died. The abyss of this system of terror was reached when the six extermination camps started their operations in December of 1941. The name Auschwitz is seared into our collective conscience and consciousness.

When we think about Auschwitz, the term dialogue does not readily come to mind. Auschwitz, it seems, is the antithesis to dialogue, to understanding, to reconciliation, and to life. Philosopher Theodor Adorno once wondered whether poetry can be written again after Auschwitz, and we may similarly ask whether dialogue can happen again in the face of such calamity. Auschwitz, one might say, is a negative space, a cemetery without graves, a house of death without traces—and this negative vortex

cannot be mended or undone by dialogue. But Auschwitz today is no longer a death camp: It has become a memorial site, a tourist site, and a site of modern pilgrimage of millions of visitors each year. And if Auschwitz the death camp dampens any optimism about the prospect of dialogue, Auschwitz the contemporary memorial site demands us to engage a dialogical ethics.

The importance of dialogue is the topic I want to address at this occasion. I want to show that there is an *art* to dialoguing, and this art calls us into an ethical commitment of relationality. I also want to show that the art to dialoguing involves, literally, the *arts*. In my life, I have experienced and practiced dialogue through the performance arts as well as the visual arts. The body of work that my artist friend Karen Baldner and I created over the years is one example of how the visual arts can facilitate dialogue and serve as a catalyst for restoration and transformation. Our collaborative effort (previously covered in *CrossCurrents*²) has resulted in multiple objects of installations, prints, and book art that serve as witnesses to our ongoing dialogue between a Jewish German woman and a non-Jewish German man, both of whom were raised in Germany but are now residing in the United States.

The Cardin Memorial Lecture has, over many years now, offered ample occasions to publicly reflect on aspects of Jewish-Christian relations, and so I start there as well. As much as I have emphasized in my opening words that the annihilation of European Jews must be understood as a genocidal effort of a *modern secular* dictatorship, it is also true that the silence and complicity of the Christian churches contributed to the utter abandonment of the Jewish communities during the Holocaust. Soon after 1945, however, this fatal neglect triggered a process of soul-searching among Christian communities and led to a thorough overhaul of Christian thinking about Judaism. Christians began to repudiate their anti-Judaic, anti-Jewish, and antisemitic traditions that have blinded and distorted their century-old views of Jews and the Jewish religion (Fig. 1).

In his 2011 volume on church documents of post-1945 Christian-Jewish dialogue, Lutheran theologian Franklin Sherman summarizes those changes succinctly. He writes: "A transformation has taken place in recent times in the relation between Christianity and Judaism."³ Sherman dates the beginning of this transformation to February 1946, when the nascent World Council of Churches expressed a "deep sense of horror at



Figure 1. Detail. *pushmepullyou* (2007). Baldner and Krondorfer. Unique book (7" × 11" × ¼"). The page reads: "My Cultural Portfolio" and shows a sacrificial lamb (*Opferlamm*) on one side and, on the other, an antisemitic woodcut of the *Judensau*.

the unprecedented tragedy which has befallen the Jewish people" and acknowledged "the failure of the churches."⁴ Christianity shed its supersessionist ideology that portrayed Judaism as inferior, as the old Israel, as God-killers, and so forth, and, instead, began to speak of Judaism and Christianity as sibling faith traditions. In 1948, the World Council of Churches followed up with the declaration that "antisemitism is a sin against God"⁵; and in 1965, the Catholic Church issued the authoritative *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time), in which it repudiated the Christian teachings of contempt, affirmed God's covenant with the Jewish people, and declared the church's opposition to any "hatred" and "persecutions" directed against Jews.⁶ For the past seven decades, efforts at improving Jewish-Christian relations through dialogue have been, to say the least, impressive. Despite occasional attempts to the contrary, there is little chance of turning back to pre-Holocaust theological attitudes that had declared Jews and Judaism the antithesis of Christianity.

That is not to say that all problems are resolved, which is far from it. Misinformation and misunderstanding continue to exist among Jews and Christians, and more work needs to be done on individual and parochial levels and concerning liturgical and lectionary reform. Much of this task, however, falls into educational efforts of effectively teaching the theological insights gained over the last decades to the parishioners in

local churches and synagogues. The theological shift itself, however—this new paradigm of thinking about and going about Christian-Jewish relations—has irrevocably taken place, and ample evidence of this transformation is available in print, in the form of local committees and regional institutes, or in national and international organizations, such as the International Council of Christians and Jews or the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations in Boston, of which I am a member.⁷

There is something comfortably undiluted and unambiguous in the particularity of a covenantal relationship affirmed in the post-1945 Jewish-Christian dialogue. The sculpture “Relatum-Silence” (1997–2007) by artist Lee Ufan evokes, for me at least, the clarity of such dialogue, even though Ufan, a Korean-born artist, steeped in Asian religious sentiments, intended something quite different with his art.⁸ In “Relatum-Silence,” a massive steel plate and heavy boulder are placed opposite each other, the plate towering over the rock in front of it, with some space between them. These two objects are in a narrative relationship, facing each other across an indeterminate space. They seem to tell a story of a face-to-face encounter of two identifiable entities, a rock and a steel plate, like Moses standing at the stony top of Mount Sinai in the face of God. They stand in a covenantal relation. Perhaps it is the moment of God’s revelation to Moses, leaving as tangible evidence the stone tablet with the commandments. We could even imagine the rock and the plate to represent Christians and Jews in dialogue, intimately connected, yet separated by a space between them, one hard as a rock, the other firm as steel. There is both a tense as well as a contemplative aura to this relationship, a history of violence as well as a mystagogic intimacy.

If we imagine Jewish-Christian relations as represented in Lee Ufan’s art, we must realize that the calm lucidity of his sculpture would be more broken and fragmented today because of the growing cacophony of diverse voices from around the globe. The image by artist Siona Benjamin (see front cover of this issue) captures for me, like no other painting, the contemporary challenge that religious indeterminacy poses to the covenantal particularity of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Siona Benjamin, a Sephardic Jew from India, combines in reverent and irreverent ways Christian, Jewish, and Muslim iconography, displaying also recognizable Holocaust signs and a heightened gender sensibility. Imitating Jewish and

Christian illuminated manuscripts and Indian miniature paintings from the Mughal Empire, you see a veiled Muslim woman in a concentration camp uniform and encircled by a halo, which, in Muslim art, is reserved for angels and the Prophet Muhammad alone. She is a woman with a blue face, perhaps a reverence to the Hindu deity of Vishnu, a woman watering plants of what might be the newly born or the unborn. The painting is called *Lilith* (2004) and is a part of a series called *Finding Home*. A religious home is no longer an unbroken identity. Home is as much exile, as the exilic experience is home. Siona's sensibilities toward space recognizes multiple religious and cultural identities. Whatever one thinks of her art, it is as confounding as it is creatively responding to today's realities.

Siona Benjamin's painting illustrates the fact that new challenges have arisen to post-Shoah Jewish-Christian relations. These challenges do not, I suggest, come from people who actively and deliberately contest the theological progress made in Jewish-Christian relations over the last decades, but rather from people who remain largely indifferent to Jewish-Christian dialogue. I am thinking here particularly of younger generations. As I can observe among my students, they seem to take for granted the improved relationships between Jews and Christians, and their interests have shifted to other issues of cultural and religious diversity. They see themselves as spiritual seekers, not as committed to particularity. The relevant literature on religious identity confirms such attitudes and speaks of hybrid religious identities, of hyphenated religious identities, of dual religious belongings, or of multiple religious belongings, and this includes ambiguous religious identifications even within a tradition.⁹ These contemporary phenomena have led to a general decline of interest in the particularity of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Also, since the events of 9/11, focus has shifted to Muslim-Christian and Muslim-Jewish dialogue and, more generally, to conversations with the Asian religious traditions. When my religious studies colleagues Karla Suomala, Katharina von Kellenbach, and I convened a four-week international research seminar in 2011 on the intersection of religious pluralism and Jewish-Christian dialogue, we were quite aware of these trends.¹⁰

Describing themselves not as religious but spiritual, my students seek paths outside of the biblical promise of a covenantal relation. But even when they remain within the Christian or Jewish faith traditions, theological discussions remain, for them, largely foreign and alien. When it

comes to the Holocaust, which has been, and will foreseeably remain, a popular topic among students, this event no longer raises questions about religious belonging or challenges them to think theologically. Rather, the Holocaust is of interest to them as a historical event with political and ethical implications concerning tolerance and diversity; it is not an event that compels them to reconfigure Jewish-Christian relations, as it did for the churches right after 1945. Of course, there are a number of other current challenges to post-Shoah Jewish-Christian dialogue, such as new alliances between conservative evangelical groups and activist, militant movements in Israel, such as the Gush Emunim. Or, if we were to sketch the broadest of reasons for the fading interest in Jewish-Christian relations, I could name a number of global anxieties—such as the environmental crisis—that are not sufficiently addressed in the Jewish-Christian dialogue community. The established discourse of post-1945 Jewish-Christian dialogue groups is perceived—and, in my view, to some extent correctly—as circling around a set of worn issues that newcomers, and particularly the younger generation, find somewhat obscure and immaterial to their lives.

But rather than lamenting such a decline in interest, I want to suggest that here lies an opportunity for future Jewish-Christian dialogue if we were willing to apply the processes and lessons we have learned from our particular engagement since 1945 to the current situation. In the wake of the Shoah, Christians and Jews have worked diligently to establish mutual trust and open dialogue and have moved to an acceptance of a covenantal relationship of equals. This did not come easy. It was often a thorny, unsettling, discomfoting, painful, and at times upsetting process. And it is this post-Shoah dialogical process, I argue, that can be seen as a gift that Jews and Christians can bring to other communities that experience social tension and religious conflict. It would require, however, to opening up of the established patterns of Jewish-Christian relations to changes. This might be frightening to some, but I think we can do so with some confidence. Christians and Jews, who know themselves in a covenantal relationship to God and to their fellow human beings, a relationship made out of free choice, can embrace the present and future as a not-yet determined reality that constantly draws us into greater intensity and greater complexity of an ever-evolving creation. In other words, we should not fear but embrace change as an opportunity. As Rabbi Joshua

Heschel so pointedly stated in his famous “No Religion Is an Island” speech of 1966: “Parochialism has become untenable. The religions of the world are no more self-sufficient, no more independent, no more isolated than individuals and nations. Horizons are wider, dangers are greater. We are all involved with one another. No religion is an island.”¹¹

This is where the art of dialogue enters. What does it take for dialogue to be transformative? Clearly, it must transcend the mere exchange of niceties. If we recall that the starting point of the current status of relations between Christians and Jews was the Nazi assault on covenantal relations, then we must realize that effective dialogue begins where it matters, and where it matters, it might hurt, and where it hurts, it leads (when carefully managed) to transformation (Fig. 2).

The kind of dialogical work I have been engaged in for many years goes beyond mere conversation. It goes beyond some of the classic models that are limited to discerning commonalities between people estranged from each other and beyond a mere acknowledging of differences. Instead, the dialogical work I have in mind aims at facilitating and implementing restorative and reconciliatory practices among and



Figure 2. Detail of *Tikkun/Mending* (2006). Baldner and Krondorfer. Paper-sculpture (approx. 60" × 25").

between groups that find themselves in tension and in conflict with each other.

The essential components of the art of dialogue can be grouped into three categories, and I will explain each in some more detail. Effective dialogue needs

1. Memory Work,
2. Reconciliatory Processes, and
3. Restorative Vision

Memory Work

We all have dreams. Some we forget, others we remember. Some we are ashamed to share publicly, others we are eager to talk about. To understand dreams, we need to recall them, acknowledge them, and interpret them. We can call this dream interpretation or dream work. What is true for dreams, I suggest, is in analogical fashion true for memories. We all have them, but to understand them, we need to recall, acknowledge, share, and interpret them.

In situations of communal conflicts that stretch over generations, memory work is particularly important, but also particularly difficult, because memory motivates us to act in particular ways in the present. Unchallenged, memory can serve to fortify our communal borders, defend our social identities, make us cling to stories of suffering and victimization, or insist that we must replay a hero's tale about the past. In contrast to simply *having* memories that get reiterated in families and communities, *memory work* is the attempt to work through troublesome memories and to work toward a place in which we are no longer prisoners of the past but freed to relate anew to people like us and people not like us.

Memory work is not cost-free, especially when we talk about collectively experienced trauma and collectively enacted wrongdoing, as in the Shoah. Judith Lewis Herman writes that "remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims."¹² Healing individual pain and restoring social order are two essential elements for mending the world affected by the Holocaust—this twentieth-century event that still informs our understanding of today's ethnic, religious, state-sponsored, and genocidal conflicts around the globe. Searching for

responses to the history and memory of the Holocaust, hence, is neither a private obsession nor a nostalgic task, but a necessity for the future.

The Abrahamic religions know that we do not remember simply for the sake of memory. Rather, memory infuses and informs the present. Edward Kessler writes that such dialogue needs “a renewed emphasis on *memoria futuri*,” the positive aspects of memory. “Religious remembrance,” he writes, “is not an act of nostalgia, but one that empowers the present.”¹³ In the Abrahamic traditions, the past presence has always been important. For Jews, Muslims, and Christians, memory is not just an accumulation of historical facts but a pillar of spirituality, a source of revelation, and a mechanism by which people can take account of their moral selves. When Christians, for example, celebrate the Communion (or the Eucharist), they celebrate the remembrance of the presentness of Jesus Christ in the midst of their community. “This is my body Do this in remembrance of me.” When Muslims pray five times a day, or fast during the annual month of Ramadhan, or do the *hajj* once in a lifetime, they engage in acts of remembrance. Theologically, this is known as the concept of *dhikr*—Arabic for remembrance, a reminder, an evocation. The opposite of *dhikr* is forgetfulness, and forgetfulness leads Muslim believers astray from the path with and to God. When Jews remember the Exodus during the annual Passover seder, or remember the first attempted mass killing of Jews during Purim, or when they remember the destruction of the Temple at Tisha b’Av or God’s mercy during Yom Kippur, they too emphasize that memory makes spiritual demands on believers in the present. In short, the religious act of remembrance is more than a mere commemoration of a historical event. It is the acknowledgment of a past whose presence must be actualized now and in the future. Interreligious dialogue, then, is in a good position to bring awareness to the necessary task of memory work for groups living in the aftermath of traumatic memory and in continuous social conflict.

However, memory work, whether done with or without a commitment to a particular faith, does not come easy. When Christians and Jews, or Germans and Jews, or any other social group in conflict enter into transformative dialogue, questions of group identity and loyalty are raised. One’s sense of belonging may become unsettled. Memory work brings up defensiveness, fears of betrayal, and a desire to withdraw into protected and familiar mental territory. Memory work, hence, needs

guidance. For when it works well, it compels us to reconsider our assumptions and renders us vulnerable in the presence of the other, which is an indispensable seed for any personal and social transformation to happen (Fig. 3).

Memory work is arduous because it is channeled through the dynamics of blame and shame, anger and guilt—dynamics that affect individuals so profoundly precisely because these are not just personal but transindividual problems anchored in our cultures. I have seen this in encounters between young Germans and American Jews; among my students of Hispanic, black, white, and migrant backgrounds during racial reconciliation seminars; among Palestinian and Israeli educators in peace training sessions; or among German clergy and rabbis from the Chicago area when we commemorated together the dead at a liturgical moment in the former concentration camp of Buchenwald.

Similar dynamics have also been palpable at every step in the work of the Jewish German Dance Theatre, the performance group of Jewish American dancers and non-Jewish German actors, which Lisa Green Cudek and I co-founded in the 1980s.¹⁴ The same dynamics left their mark on the many post-performance discussions with German audiences when we toured Germany in 1988 and 1989. Working through memory is a force also present in just about every piece that Karen Baldner and I have created in our ongoing dialogue. She and I searched for a visual lan-



Figure 3. *Connection* (2002). Pencil on paper. Student Kamila Nevludova drew this in response to a dialogue program on the Holocaust.

guage that preserves the intensity and intimacy of sharing with each other our Jewish and German family roots that are so deeply embedded in the very tangible landscape of Europe (Fig. 4).

Reconciliatory Processes

If memory work is an important element in the art to dialoguing, I want to stress again that it is not an exercise for the sake of memory itself. The art of dialogue does not consist in storing, archiving, and displaying the past—this is the task of historians and museums—but in affecting positively social relationships in the present.

After the Holocaust, it was certainly not easy for Christians to trace and acknowledge the patristic beginnings of the teachings of contempt (of Jews), or to confront themselves with the forced medieval disputations that often ended with the expulsion of the Jewish conversation partners, or to acknowledge the torturous and lethal proceedings of the Spanish Inquisition of suspected *marranos* (Jewish converts to Christianity who secretly practiced Judaism). To return to these troubled times was not meant to re-inscribe what was already known historically but to change and transform contemporary relationships. The goal of memory work is not to fortify entrenched communal identities, but to soften these bor-



Figure 4. *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face* (2012). Krondorfer (installation with map, window panels, photoprint, horsehair).

ders, move into territory of unsettling empathy, and risk a transformed understanding of each other. Memory work, in other words, is embedded in the framework of reconciliatory processes.

For a reconciliatory process to work, the results cannot be predetermined. Reconciliation might happen, but it can never be forced. Also, reconciliation is not the same as forgiveness. It does not even require forgiveness, a fact that is often misunderstood. Reconciliation is a regaining of trust, of trusting relationships; just as relationships are always open to change, reconciliatory processes are open-ended. They simply ask participating parties to share their experiences, ideas, fears, and concerns in direct and honest ways in the presence of the other. Reconciliatory processes encourage the engaged parties to show respect but not politeness. Importantly, in reconciliatory processes, one learns to empathize (although not necessarily agree with) the experiences of the other. Such empathetic identification, however temporary, is unsettling and therefore initially resisted.

There are no magic bullets in these processes. We are not talking miracles or divine intervention, and religiously grounded Christians and Jews can understand this easily. Knowing themselves enfolded in and bound to a covenantal relationship, they understand that success is not measured by quantity or by perfect end results but by one's willingness to walk a righteous path. It is like the Talmudic story where a student of Torah is about to give up when confronted with the seemingly impossible task of removing a huge heap of dust, because it would take a lifetime to do so. But the sage advises him that it is "not incumbent upon thee" to remove it all, just to remove a small part every day.¹⁵

For example, in 2010, I facilitated a weeklong intensive seminar for a group of fifty Jewish Israelis, Muslim Palestinians, and secular Germans in Beit Jalah, the West Banks, based on the principles outlined above. Sometimes, when people hear me talk about these encounters, they ask with a skeptical voice, "and...did it bring peace to the Middle East?" Of course, it did not. Evidence of transformative change does not lie in miracles, but in small signs, such as the exchange of a brief gesture between a Palestinian young man from Ramallah, who had been angry and spouting politicized phrases for much of the time, and an orthodox young woman from the suburbs of Tel Aviv, who never had met Palestinians before on a personal level. As both of these young people were standing

in line for lunch, they exchanged a friendly poke with their elbows and smiled at each other. If success were measured by standards of grand political solutions, such dialogical encounters would be disappointing. No peace agreement descended upon this troubled territory after our meeting at Beit Jalah. And yet, such a gesture captures the effectiveness of creating dialogical frames in intractable situations: The little poke with the elbow (with no further words exchanged) was all that these two people were able to muster at the time. Amidst cultivated mistrust and political hatred, it signaled the possibility of a different symbolic order (Fig. 5).

Restorative Vision

Memory work and reconciliatory processes need to be guided by a restorative vision, the third element of the art of dialogue. Theology may speak in this situation the language of eschatology, of mending, or of messianic hopes, although, of course, quite distinctly in the Jewish and Christian communities. There are also non-theological terms that I find extraordinarily helpful when articulating such a vision, like social repair, restorative justice, moral repair, or the moral imagination. They help to envision alternatives to violent, unjust, and discriminatory social and political systems.



Figure 5. Memory work with Palestinian and Israeli participants (2009). Left: Israeli sculpture; right: Palestinian sculpture.

Crucial for any restorative vision is a commitment to fairness and justice; otherwise, desired solutions may just be reduced to apologetic and exculpatory mechanisms in which legal immunity or political amnesty safeguard perpetrators while disempowering victimized communities. A restorative vision needs to live with the *as if*, the not-yet fulfilled promise, always falling short of what one ultimately knows to be right and fair. It is like the fuel that keeps a dialogue running; it is a guide assisting through times of frustration, when patience runs thin in dialogical encounters. A restorative vision leads participating parties in the right direction even as they may feel, at times, dissatisfied by compromises or derailed by the many detours that it takes.

For me, a restorative vision must be grounded in responsiveness to the other. Caring responsiveness asks for such things I mentioned earlier: openness, honesty, respect, vulnerability in the presence of the other, unsettling empathy, self-awareness. I call such responsiveness to the other an ethics of relationality. Relationality enables us to appreciate and support the dialogical work that is required when approaching diversity and differences with the aim of moving beyond entrenched positions and toward restored relations.

To speak about responsiveness to others in a world of religious and cultural diversity is not just empty rhetoric, because such dialogical responsiveness obligates us. Often, this obligation is not simply a matter of personal choice, but one of historical contingency. I can say with certainty that the Holocaust, for someone born and raised in Germany, is of importance because I find myself embedded in historical and social conditions that have been passed on to me through national and family origins. Whatever I wish to think or do as an individual, it does not remove me from the fact that in 1943, for example, my father, at the age of 17, spent almost a year in an anti-aircraft platoon of the German army, only two miles away from a Jewish slave labor camp in Poland. These stories, these conditions, reach deeper and beyond my individuality; they determine some of the choices I can make as a human being called into freedom (Fig. 6).

Today, I find myself engaged in a web of multiple relationships with Jews, Germans, Poles, Christians, Americans, and more recently Palestinians, but also in relational webs determined by my gender, parenthood, religion, race, and professional affiliation. These relation-



Figure 6. Detail. *pushmepullyou* (2007). Baldner and Krondorfer. The page shows linocut and reads: “Blechhammer 1943–44.”

ships cannot be fully understood if I presented myself, or if I were perceived by others, in and through only *one* identity: I am not just a German, I am not just a Christian, I am not just the son of my father, and I am not just a scholar of religious studies. I am all of these, but also always more than the sum total of these aspects. Unless the sum total of these multiple sources of identification and experiences are integrated in those places where my life intersects with the lives of others, neither I nor my conversation partners can grow and mature.

Does my commitment to the Shoah limit me as I seek to engage reconciliatory mechanisms in contemporary conflicts that plague the globe? It is a question I often ask myself. I have struggled with it and have come to the ethical position of “responsiveness to the other.” Let me explain.

Because I inhabit a special relation to the victims and the perpetrators of the Shoah and to the communities to which they belong, I can safely speak of the singular significance that the Holocaust holds for me as for many others in the Jewish-Christian dialogue community. Because the Shoah is of utmost relevance to us, we do not need to expect from others to give it the same weight and significance. In places where the Holocaust intersects or overlaps with other burdens of past or present systems of injustice, the value of dialogical responsiveness dictates new and innovative forms of bringing into play the history and memory of the Holocaust. For example, I cannot easily share the singularity that the Holocaust has for me when I am working in a global context, either with

Palestinians and Israelis, on transitional justice in South Africa, or with students in racial reconciliation retreats. In diverse cultural contexts, it will do me no good to insist on the uniqueness of the Shoah when today's world is ripped apart by multiple violent conflicts or to insist on the uniqueness of Jewish-Christian dialogue while living in a society that is religiously diverse, mixed, and complex.

When engaged in global conflict solutions in a religiously and culturally diverse world, we are asked to become conscious of dialogical relationality. This does not imply, however, that we should expect from our conversation partners that they give equal weight to the faith, beliefs, and values that are dear to us. Each of us is called into the responsibility of his or her own historical contingency. In conversations with African Americans, for example, I can bring the significance that the Holocaust has for me into the conversation without expecting this to change the meaning that slavery holds for my dialogue partners. In encounters with Palestinians, I can testify to the kind of responsibility I have toward Jewish Israelis because of my link to the Holocaust without having to expect that Palestinians will share my view or that, therefore, the value of the Naqba is diminished. Conversely, I can expect from my conversation partners that they too do not insist on their particular ethnic, national, or religious narratives, but that they are responsive also to my narrative and experiences. In other words, if we want to engage the meaning and place of our values, religious beliefs, and practices, we must proceed together in mutual recognition of our shared responsiveness to each other. It cannot happen one-sidedly. It is mutual responsiveness that leads to transformation.

The art of dialogue calls us into a caring responsiveness to the other within a framework of memory work, reconciliatory processes, and a vision of restorative justice. As much as we wish, we cannot predict the outcome of such dialogue, because it always takes a risk to act compassionately toward the one we do not know yet. What the art of dialogue insists on, though, is to train our moral imagination and empathy, however unsettling this can be. As human beings, as moral agents, we have the capacity to transcend the limitations of merely self-interested action and we can, instead, move toward other-directed care. When we see the face of the other, we might see a troubled past, but we must also look into the present face of the other to see the possibilities of our future relationships.

Notes

1. This text is a slightly edited and revised version of the *Jerome S. Cardin Memorial Lecture*, presented at Loyola University, Baltimore, on March 25, 2012.
2. "Witnessing and Re-Imagining Through the Arts: Meditation on a Dialogical Process," Björn Krondorfer (in collaboration with Karen Baldner), *CrossCurrents* (December 2010):495–514.
3. Sherman, Franklin (ed.), *Bridges: Documents of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue: Volume One: The Road to Reconciliation (1945–1985)* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), p. xiii. See also Yaakov Ariel, "Interfaith Dialogue and the Golden Age of Christian-Jewish Relations," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 6 (2011):Ariel CP 1-18 (<http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr>).
4. *Bridges*, p. xiii.
5. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
6. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
7. The Christian Scholars Group on Christian–Jewish Relations published, for example, *Seeing Judaism Anew: Christianity's Sacred Obligation*, ed. Mary C. Boys (Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2005).
8. For an image of "Relatum-Silence," see Dawn-Michelle Baude, "Encounters Between Seer and Seen: Lee Ufan at the Guggenheim," in *artcritical: the online magazine of art and ideas* (www.artcritical.com/2011/09/13/lee-ufan/), accessed May 2012. The image sites of search engines like google or bing also bring up a number of pictures of this installation.
9. For example, Cornille, Catherine, *The Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2008); *ibid.* and Christopher Conway (ed.), *Interreligious Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010); Rita M. Gross, "Buddhism and Religious Diversity," *Tricycle* (Fall 2011):n.p. (www.tricycle.com/feature/buddhism-and-religious-diversity?page=0,0).
10. "Explorations at the Intersection of Religious Pluralism and Jewish-Christian Dialogue," Research Coolidge Colloquium 2011, hosted at Union Theological Seminary and Auburn Theological Seminary, New York City.
11. "No Religion Is an Island" was first printed in 1966 in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* and is reprinted as Document 68 in *Bridges* by Franklin Sherman, pp. 419–436, 421.
12. Lewis Herman, Judith, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 1.
13. Kessler, Edward, *Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 201.
14. See Krondorfer, *Remembrance and Reconciliation: Encounters Between Young Jews and Germans* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
15. See Polano, H., *The Talmud: Selections* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1877), p. 245.

Copyright of Cross Currents is the property of Wiley-Blackwell and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.