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D E E T H I C A
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De Ethica was founded in 2013. It published its first issue in 2014 under the guidance of its first Editor-in-Chief, distinguished professor Brenda Almond.

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From the Editor

This issue of *De Ethica* is one of ends and beginnings. As to beginnings, it introduces a new section of reviews of current books in philosophical, theological and applied ethics. With this, we also welcome Alexandra Lebedeva to the editorial team. She introduces this new section of the journal, and the reviews published in this issue in a separate editorial below.

When it comes to endings, the core of this issue is the second and final part of our special issues from the *Societas Ethica* conference on Reconciliation held in Sarajevo in 2023. This second of two issues on the topic is introduced by our guest editor Johanna Romare by the way of a discussion on reconciliation and republicanism, which also presents the articles of this issue.

There is one more ending. This is my last issue as the Executive Editor of *De Ethica*. It has been a very interesting journey and a learning experience; the work of journals looks very different from the inside, than it does from the outside as a researcher just submitting papers to different outlets. What is the difference? Let me answer a question with a plea: please say yes to reviewing papers! Much more time is spent trying to find reviewers than any other part of the publishing process.

This issue is also a beginning in one more sense. The new Executive Editor of the journal is Martin Langby. He has during my tenure served as the Assistant Editor, and he has served with distinction. From my experience of working with Martin, I can say, without any doubt, that *De Ethica* and its readership can look forward to a bright future.

Lars Lindblom, Executive Editor

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From the Guest Editor

Introduction

After having read the contributions for this second special edition on the ethics of reconciliation, I was finding myself contemplating power relationships and domination. Can reconciliation ever take place without also transforming the power structures that have sustained injustice, or that risk producing new forms of it? While the three articles by George Kodimattan Joseph, Hans Vium Mikkelsen, and Gary Slater, do not explicitly address power and domination, they each, in their own way, touch upon the question of under what conditions people can live together without being subjected to another's will. In Kodimattam Joseph's account of Gandhi, this work begins in the ethical sphere – with *ahimsa*, the refusal to let one's will reduce the other to an instrument of harm or vengeance. Instead, action must be bound to truth, and therefore answerable to the other. Mikkelsen, meanwhile, shifts the question from individual will to the political life of memory. He shows how monuments and memorial practices on the one hand can acknowledge suffering and enable responsibility, but also how they may fix identities, freeze injury into permanence, and become vehicles of symbolic power. Slater, in turn, examines the territorial and institutional architecture of post-war Bosnia, arguing that the Dayton settlement preserved the form of sovereignty while emptying it of civic reciprocity, producing a "toxic Westphalianism" in which borders segregates rather than enable shared political life.

What these insights bring into focus is the role of domination and arbitrary power in reconciliation processes. While memorial practices, apologies, and truth commissions are important forms of moral redress, my understanding is that they must be accompanied by sustained measures addressing the political, social, and historical structures that made domination possible.

Reconciliation as a moral and political matter

If one takes this perspective seriously, reconciliation must, I believe, be understood as both a moral and a political matter. It raises questions of recognition, guilt, and responsibility, but also of law, participation, and – most importantly – institutional design. Yet I have rarely seen non-domination applied as an explicit normative framework for morally acceptable reconciliation and transitional justice processes. Likewise, institutional questions – for example, how truth commissions should be organised from a non-domination perspective – have not been centrally addressed.

What should we require of a normative framework that considers the power structures and dominant orders that produced the conflict or oppression in the first place? While this editorial is not the place for theoretical development, I would nevertheless like to take the opportunity to examine the idea that reconciliation processes must be

characterised by non-domination more closely. What might such an idea look like, and what could it achieve?

Let us begin with the neo-republican conception of non-domination. The contemporary republican tradition, as developed by, among others, Philip Pettit, understands freedom as non-domination – which is a condition in which no one is subject to another's arbitrary power.[1] Pettit illustrates this with the well-known master–slave example. Even if a master refrains from interfering with or mistreating a slave, the slave remains unfree because the master retains the arbitrary power to interfere in the slave's life. Thus, unlike liberal non-interference accounts, Pettit argues that domination can exist without actual interference, and interference can occur without domination.[2]

This conception of freedom draws on a long republican tradition that goes back to Cicero, which employed relations of domination and servitude to clarify what it means to be free. Pettit's neo-republicanism adapts and systematises this idea to scrutinise how institutions, laws, and civic rights can be designed to remove the very possibility of arbitrary domination rather than merely limiting concrete instances of interference. Republicanism is usually construed as a theory arguing for an order in which states do not dominate their denizens, but it has also been extended to a global or transnational theory of non-domination.[3]

Although republicanism emphasises non-domination, it has paid little attention to reconciliation as a distinct subject.[4] Drawing on the question on which I opened the editorial, I want to make the argument that republicanism's focus on non-domination may sharpen how we conceive of reconciliation as both a moral and a political matter. Although my argumentation must remain brief, I believe that from a republican point of view, there would be at least two grounds for insisting that reconciliation and its related processes be non-dominating.

First, reconciliation commonly implies that former adversaries can meet as equals. Pettit uses a metaphor of the "eyeball test" – of being able to "look others in the eye" – as a practical test for domination and non-domination.[5] The parties must be able to interact without fear of subordination, intimidation, or arbitrary pressure. Importantly, this equality is in Pettit not merely moral but institutional as it presupposes rights, procedures, and other forums that protect from arbitrary power, and secure meaningful participation. In other words, Pettit's eyeball test could be seen as pointing to a minimum institutional condition for reconciliation: Unless social and legal structures remove the conditions for arbitrary domination, any encounter between former opponents will remain asymmetrical and fragile. Nevertheless, as Pettit argues in "The Globalized Republican Ideal", individuals can enjoy private non-domination, that is, sufficient legal protection and material security in everyday relations that enable interaction without fear or deference,

[1] Philip Pettit, *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Chs. 1-3 (esp. pp. 51-79).
[2] Pettit, 1997, p. 23 ff.
[3] Cf. e.g. Pettit, 1997, pp. 150-53; P. Pettit, "A Republican Law of Peoples", In *European Journal of Political Theory*, 9(1), 2010, pp. 70-74. P. Pettit, "The Globalized Republican Ideal", In *Global Justice: Theory Pratice Rethoric,* 9(1), 2016, pp. 47-69.
[4] There are however scholars who have touched upon the issue. See J. Braithwaite and C. Parker, "Restorative Justice Is Republican Justice," in *Restorative Juvenile Justice*, ed. Gordon Bazemore and Laurence Walgrave (Palisades, NY: Criminal Justice Press, 1999), pp. 103–126, where they link restorative justice to republican non-domination in the context of criminal justice.
[5] P. Pettit, *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 82 ff.; Pettit, 2016, esp. p. 52, 55, 59.

while still suffering *public domination*.[6] By the latter he means that a state, elite, or colonial regime may retain the capacity for arbitrary interference because its power lacks effective institutional constraints. Citizens can therefore relate to one another on fairly equal terms even while living under a government that could at any moment reimpose subordination. Applied to the Sámi in Sweden, they may enjoy the same legal protections as other Swedish citizens while nevertheless being exposed to public domination through state or commercial decisions on land, water, forestry and mining that threaten reindeer husbandry, cultural practices and community viability. What this shows is that private non-domination can persist even where there are no binding institutional limits on arbitrary public power. Thus, even if the situation at first glance passes the eyeball test – appearing as formal equality – public non-domination will only exist when legal rights to land and resources, effective consultation and real accountability are binding and enforceable.

Second, reconciliation requires shared, publicly endorsed standards for truth, responsibility, and justice.[7] These, in turn, presuppose institutions and procedures through which those standards are enforced. On a neo-republican account, such standards have normative weight because when entrenched in institutions that function as standing constraints on the exercise of power, they limit the scope for arbitrary power in the very processes that determine what is to count as truth, guilt, and appropriate redress.[8] Thus, freedom as non-domination requires that institutions be structured to prevent arbitrary interference, concentration of power, and one-sided control over historical narratives and normative judgments. Truth commissions, public hearings, courts, reparations schemes, etc. must therefore be arranged so that no party can make itself judge in its own cause, unilaterally controlling the production of facts, the allocation of responsibility, or the interpretation of past wrongs. From a republican perspective, this requires both a separation and dispersal of powers, and procedures that compel those who decide to "always listen to the other's side"[9]: to give public reasons, answer objections, and shape outcomes so they accommodate the range of interests and perspectives present.[10] It also requires that those subject to these institutions enjoy standing not merely as recipients of decisions but as claimants, with an acknowledged capacity to contest, seek review, and press for revision of outcomes that purport to speak in their name.[11] Thus, republicanism reframes the significance of shared standards in institutional terms by shifting the question from "Do we agree?" to "Are the mechanisms of those institutions consistent with non-domination?".

But whose institutions? And can they be non-dominating?

A republican perspective on reconciliation seems to be promising, particularly because it calls for institutions and norms that prevent continued dependence and domination.

[6] Pettit, 2016, p. 53.
[7] See e.g. D. Philpott. *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation. Studies in Strategic Peacebuilding* (New York, 2012; online edn, Oxford Academic. 20 Sept. 2012), p. 50.
[8] Pettit, 1997, pp. 67 ff.
[9] Q. Skinner, Q. *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 15-16; Pettit, 1997, p. 189.
[10] Pettit, 2012, esp. chs. 3–4, where Pettit develops how institutionalised control and procedural requirements make non-domination practically possible.
[11] Braithwaite and Parker, 1999, pp. 108–114.

However, this institutional argument immediately invites objections. Whose institutions are these? Institutions can themselves be instruments of domination – imposed by victorious parties, ruling elites, colonial powers, ethnic majorities, or international actors. And more fundamentally, can institutions ever be non-dominating in contexts where the conflict is between groups, not simply individuals?

An alternative conception of non-domination that may evade this critique is the one developed by Rainer Forst. Forst does not tie his concept of non-domination to the question of whether someone has power over you or not, but to the justification of the very existence of power – to whether all parties involved can participate on equal terms in the normative process.[12] This opens up a theory of power and justification that is more general than the republican theory. In his book *Normativity and Power: Analyzing Social Orders of Justification*, Rainer Forst treats non-domination as the foundation for transnational justice, arguing that it is impossible to discuss justice beyond the state without also addressing "the many and complex relations of domination that exist within, between, and beyond states that mark our current global predicament".[13] The conception of domination Forst adopts is a Kantian, discourse-theoretical one, which entails that domination consists in relations of arbitrary power that cannot be justified to those subject to them. Non-domination, in Forst's terminology, therefore, requires that norms, institutions, and practices be justifiable to all affected through reciprocal public discourse grounded in Kantian respect for persons and their autonomy.

The difference between Pettit's republicanism and Forst's critical theory is that for republicanism power is problematic when it is arbitrary – but it becomes legitimate when there are institutions that can bind power so that it cannot be exercised without the ruling power being subject to scrutiny and held accountable.[14] For Forst, by contrast, power is problematic when it is not justified to those over whom it is exercised.[15] Thus, dominance cannot be reduced to merely someone being able to intervene in your life.

One way to make the difference between these two understandings of domination and non-domination concrete is to test them on existing reconciliation processes. If we take the Truth Commission for the Sámi people as an example, we can see that Pettit and Forst would approach the question in quite different ways. The commission investigates the Swedish state's historical abuses against the Sámi, including linguistic and cultural assimilation, forced relocations, racial biology, colonisation of land, and political marginalisation. From a republican understanding of non-domination, the central question would be whether these groups have lived – and continue to live – under arbitrary state domination. The analysis would focus on whether, and to what extent, the Swedish state had the capacity to intervene in the Sámi people's lives at its own discretion, without being answerable to those affected. It would also ask whether the Sámi have had – and have – genuine access to political influence and legal mechanisms to control the state, and whether the Truth Commission appears likely to lead to institutional reforms that reduce domination through increased self-determination and obligations to consult. In this way the commission is legitimate if it leads to new or reformed institutions that reduce or eliminate future domination.

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[12] R. Forst, *The Right to Justification: Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 6, 21 f.
[13] R. Forst, *Normativity and Power*: *Analyzing Social Orders of Justification,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 153.
[14] Pettit, 1997, e.g. p. 25 f, 35 f.
[15] This permeates many of Forst's writings, e.g., Forst, 2014 and Forst, 2017.

Forst would instead pose a more radical and critical question: "Has the Swedish state ever justified its norms and decisions to the Sámi – and have the Sámi had the opportunity to reject them?" An analysis of Swedish assimilation policy, such as the imposition of language bans, forced relocations, and the placement of Sámi children in boarding schools, would show that it was in no way justified in a manner that recognised the affected as equal, moral subjects. Instead, the state has for centuries demanded obedience and conformity without ever asking for justification. From a Forstian understanding of non-domination, a Truth Commission would be legitimate if it demonstrably made the past visible and recognised that the power exercised lacked legitimacy.

Nevertheless, a Forstian conception of non-domination does not fully address the risks of power and domination in reconciliation processes. Taking the Swedish Act (SFS 2022:66) on Consultation in Matters Concerning the Sámi people as an example: The act was introduced to strengthen Sámi influence over administrative decisions by establishing a statutory duty to consult the Sámi Parliament and other Sámi bodies before decisions that particularly affect the Sámi (for example, the use of land for tourism, mining, and so on). The act requires consultations to be conducted so as to promote Sámi participation at all levels – government, national agencies, regions, and municipalities. The consultation act seems, *prima facie*, to meet Forst's requirement that the state ought to justify its decisions to the Sámi people. Its implementation, however, displays substantial shortcomings, not least that a relationship of domination between the Swedish state and the Sámi persists, and that the rule preserves the state's final say, and thereby upholding the reproduction of domination. This suggests that domination remains only partially constrained, leaving persistent deficits in the Sámi people's right to justification and institutional arrangements that permit arbitrary action. As Forst's theory is chiefly procedural and relational, it seems to offer limited guidance on the institutional form a court or a Sámi administrative area would need to take to avoid reproducing domination.

However, rather than dismissing these possible objections to both republicanism and Forst's conception of non-domination, I contend that Forst's critical perspective could serve to deepen the republican insights. Neither Pettit's nor Forst's concept of non-domination can, on its own, articulate a requirement that institutions (for example, state agencies or municipal councils, as in the case of the Swedish consultation act) be designed so as not, by definition, to place the Sámi in a subordinate position. While institutions may be designed to restrain domination, they may nevertheless embody histories of exclusion, colonialism, or majoritarian control.

Yet the two theories together can be powerful. Forst's insistence on the right to justification would force republicanism to confront forms of domination that are embedded in the very creation and authority of institutions. In fact, this is precisely the aim of critical republicanism, as developed by Cécile Laborde.[16] Although Laborde focuses on religion and secularism, her demand for a self-reflective, power-critical republicanism – one that interrogates its own norms, symbols and institutional practices – is central to reconciliation and transitional justice.

[16] See e.g. Cécile Laborde, *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Reconciliation as non-domination

Going back to the three articles for this special edition the contributions to this issue offer – in my reading –three distinct ways of identifying and challenging forms of arbitrary power – in the will, in memory, and in space. George Kodimattam Joseph's article "Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation: Lessons from Gandhian Thought" begins with the ethical dimension of reconciliation. Ahimsa and satyagraha are understood as a disciplined refusal to let the will become arbitrary. Non-violence is a constraint placed on one's capacity to exercise power over another. It binds action to truth rather than impulse or retribution. Of course, Gandhi does not develop an institutional theory of reconciliation, but he offers an ethical precondition – the refusal to turn another person into an object of unchecked power. "In Memorials and Memory: The use of memorials and monuments as a part of the process of reconciliation", Mikkelsen shows how memorials and monuments can sustain the conditions for reconciliation – acknowledgment, responsibility, mourning, but in my reading also how they – under certain circumstances – could contribute to domination. Memory can make power accountable, but it can also entrench it – it is a public practice in which power can be rendered contestable, or in which alternative voices can be silenced. In "Reconciliation Across Religious/Political Borders: Westphalian Norms and the Legacy of the Bosnian War", Gary Slater, turns to territory and borders. Slater's argument is that borders must be transformed – from frontiers into spaces of encounter, where the presence of the other does not signal threat but the possibility of political relationship. What emerges from these reflections is that reconciliation – to be normatively meaningful – should be understood as a practice of establishing non-domination. It concerns the creation of conditions under which former adversaries can relate without arbitrary power secured by institutions that enable accountability, participation, and justification.

Johanna Romare, Guest Editor

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From the Book Review Editor

I am happy to introduce a new section in *De Ethica* – the book review section. The idea for this section was proposed and thoroughly discussed by the current members of the Editorial Team, and we are now delighted to present the first issue of *De Ethica* featuring four book reviews. As the journal continues to develop, regularly publishing both ordinary and special issues, we have also observed a growing interest in book reviews. So why include them? We believe that engaging in the academic tradition of reading and critically commenting on each other's work is a practice worth preserving. Book reviews offer *De Ethica* readers the opportunity to stay informed about recent works in philosophical, theological, and applied ethics, while also fostering dialogue with authors across national, political, and religious boundaries.

The book reviews included in this issue address a range of subjects and ethical questions. Marko Draganov Vučković, in his extended review of Leigh Patel's *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, identifies Patel's approach to decolonizing education as a "Decolonial Deleuzean" ontology, which envisions reality as a networked "one-and-many" relationship. Vučković, however, critiques this framework for unintentionally risking the reproduction of the very exclusivity it seeks to overcome.

In his review of of Wilk and Gimbel's book *In on the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy*, Chris A. Kramer explores the moral implications of humor. He argues that jokes and humor demand ethical analysis, as they introduce additional layers of power dynamics, while highlighting the importance of identity and context in the communicative act.

Vaishali Singh reviews Myisha Cherry's *Failures of Forgiveness: What We Get Wrong and How to Do Better*, a work that resonates closely with the theme of the present Special Issue on the Ethics of Reconciliation. Singh presents and critically examines a conception of forgiveness that moves beyond a narrow, demanding view, offering instead an understanding of forgiveness as elective rather than obligatory for victims.

Finally, my own contribution – a review of Cheyney Ryan's *Pacifism as War Abolitionism*, examines pacifism with a particular focus on the war system and how it should be abolished. Ryan explores the origins of war and its relationship to the notions of state, empire, and nation in a novel manner and simultaneously relates to a rich tradition of pacifist thought.

Alexandra Lebedeva, Book Review Editor

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Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation: Lessons from Gandhian Thought

George Kodimattam Joseph

In this paper, I explore the potentials of the Gandhian conceptual framework for proposing strategies to reduce tensions among communities and nations, and to reconcile broken relations. The analysis focuses on three major Gandhian concepts such as i) ahimsa which denotes nonviolence, ii) satyagraha which signifies non-cooperation and civil disobedience, and iii) antyodaya which implies concern for the disadvantaged and victims. First, the discussion attempts to identify the methods proposed by the Gandhian framework for avoiding potential conflicts that might lead to violence. The paper examines manifold implications of the concept of nonviolence and elucidates both the merits and limits of the concept in contemporary contexts. Secondly, the paper analyses the feasibility of the strategy of nonviolent non-cooperation, which compels parties involved in the conflict to look for possible solutions. Thirdly, the paper elucidates the possibility of drawing substantial support from Gandhian thought to defend our obligation to be on the side of victims of aggressions and transgressions. Finally, the paper evaluates the constraints of the Gandhian framework in responding to sudden and unanticipated crises, its excessive demandingness, and the problem of impossible possibilities.

Introduction

The Gandhian approach to international peace has been gathering great attention since the second half of the twentieth century, ever since the success of the Indian freedom movement. Likewise, Gandhian views on human nature, political values, and social dynamics bring deeper insights into several issues in political thought and moral philosophy. A closer look would reveal the promising nature of the Gandhian conceptual framework in drawing measures to reduce tensions among communities and nations, resolve wars and conflicts, regain social harmony, repair damages, and reconcile broken relations. Accordingly, the global community acknowledges its commitment to a *culture of peace*, which denounces the culture of hostilities, and a great regard for the Gandhian way[1].

[1] Mary King, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr: The power of nonviolent action (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), pp. vi-vii

Potentials of the framework were predicted well before the Indian episode as Gandhi observes: "If India reaches her destiny through truth and nonviolence, she will have made no small contribution to the world peace for which all nations of the earth are thirsting".[2] The global orientation of the Gandhian framework is worked out by establishing a perfect alchemy between the Jain tradition of the East and the Biblical tradition from the West and integrating the virtues of individuals and values of collective social structures. For instance, the Gandhian position manifests an impeccable commitment to the five great virtues (*mahāvratas*), such as nonviolence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), non-attachment (*aparigraha*), and chastity (*brahmacharya*), that are upheld in the East, and furthermore, attempts to harmonise these concepts with the Western intellectual traditions. The five great virtues get paramount importance in Jainism, the champion of absolute nonviolence.[3] However, the five rules of Buddhism and the five regulations of the Yoga school of Hinduism propose the same list of imperatives,[4]and Gandhi was quite familiar with both these philosophical traditions.[5]

A major merit of Gandhian thought is the synthesis established between the Eastern wisdom and the Western intellectual traditions. Specifically, three of the significant Gandhian concepts, namely, nonviolence (*ahimsa*), civil disobedience (*satyagraha*), and upliftment of the last (*antyodaya*), draw immense support from the Western tradition as well. For instance, Gandhi acknowledges the influence of Tolstoy's works, such as *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and *Confessions* in moulding the Gandhian version of nonviolence which focuses on 'love as the law of life'.[6] Likewise, the Gandhian concept of civil disobedience absorbs great inspiration from Henri David Thoreau's work, titled *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*.[7] The Gandhian ideal of the concern for the last is largely from John Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last,* which as Gandhi admits, brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life.[8] The chapter XIX, titled 'The magic spell of a book' of his autobiography acknowledges its profound impact on Gandhi, guiding him to the deeper implications of the 'Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard'.[9] Furthermore, Gandhi talks about the deep impression that the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount, made in his heart, and he compares it with that of the Gita.[10] Accordingly, Gandhian philosophy appears to be a rare synthesis of eastern and western traditions.

[2] Mohandas Gandhi, India of My Dreams (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1947), pp. 264-265; Young India (1931), 12.3
[3] Mysore Hirayanna. Outlines of Indian Philosophy. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2018), p. 166.
[4] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Indian Philosophy vol. 2. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 351-356.
[5] Mohandas Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 145-150.
[6] Mohandas Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth. op. cit., p. 243.
[7] Henri David Thoreau, On the Duty of Civil Disobedience, Aesthetic Papers, pp. 189-211.
[8] Mohandas Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth. op. cit., pp. 467-471.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Mohandas Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth. op. cit., p. 149.

Inescapability of Conflicts

Human existence can be understood as a nexus of manifold relationships moulded by the thick web of delicate fibres of interrelationship. The process of establishing and retaining relationships, however, involves challenges and costs because each individual is radically different from others in maintaining dispositions, preferences, motivations, and other individuating traits. Conflicts, at the bottommost level, are relations among persons[11], and possibly the disturbed relations. Furthermore, human existence is a pursuit of achieving a set of essential needs such as biological necessities, safety concerns, the craving for belongingness, and wants for self-esteem and self-actualisation.[12] The third in the above hierarchy, which is the need of belongingness, demands special attention in this regard. It is conceived to be a natural instinct of animals that are higher in the evolutionary process to manifest a sense of belongingness with the group, and human beings are no exception in this regard. The sense of belongingness to a specific group necessitates excluding members of other groups that manifest features dissimilar to the criteria of affinity being considered. Given the fact that all humans are not equal in manifold parameters, exclusion turns out to be a corollary of the sense of belongingness.

The above tendency to adopt an inclusion-exclusion approach leads to discriminatory outcomes such as labelling non-members as outsiders, strangers, and enemies. However, Singer and others would justify the imperative of 'equality of consideration'[13] irrespective of our differences. Stated otherwise, it is justifiable to grant equal consideration to everyone based on human dignity which outshines possible differences that are contingent. The line of argument which traces the phenomenon of conflicts back to human instincts, however, follows the Hobbesian reasoning, which focuses on the darker side of the human condition. Whereas the Gandhian view of human nature introduces an optimistic account, which manifests an unshakable belief in the goodness of humankind. Gandhi believes in the immense potential of humankind to transcend the drives imposed by nature and transgress the limits imposed by one's physical constraints. He argues that human goodness can transform the worst among evildoers and the vibes of love would open both hardened hearts and unseeing eyes. For instance, Gandhi was convinced to change the mind of the pilot who bombed Hiroshima as he argued that "I will not go to underground. I will not go to shelters. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see I have not the face of evil against him."[14] He was so sure that the above disposition could transform humans and situations, and avoid disgraceful outcomes.

Nonviolence: the only enduring solution to conflicts

Gandhian thought suggests 'nonviolence' as the law of the civilized society and, furthermore recommends it as the only enduring framework to assure the prevalence of justice and reconciliation of social bonds. First, the preference for nonviolent engagements and sincere efforts to promote a culture of nonviolence ensure an environment which avoids potential conflicts that might lead to violence. Resonating Romans 6:23, "The wages

[11] Thomas Nagel, 'War and Massacre', Philosophy and Public Affairs 1(2): 1972, pp. 123-144.
[12] Abraham Maslow, A Theory of Human Motivation, Psychological Review 50: 370-396.
[13] Peter Singer, Writings on an Ethical Life (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), p. 29.
[14] Margaret Bourke-White, Half Way to Freedom. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), p. 232.

of sin is death,"[15] Gandhi would suggest that violence leads to further violence and destruction of everyone. Therefore, it is indispensable that efforts should be made to curb its further breeding, though it involves some cost. Here, the Gandhian proposal looks significantly different from the Western concept of pacifism which is primarily the avoidance of harming others. Gandhi would rather recommend positive measures to promote peace and harmony in the society. A closer look would make us convinced that the apparent passive implication of the prefix *non* in nonviolence is deceptive, for it is not confined to the avoidance of violence which is denoted by the popular normative concept of *nonmaleficence*. Rather, it signifies *beneficence* which is positively contributing to the welfare of everyone. Likewise, the Gandhian concept of nonviolence is heavily loaded with deep metaphysical and ethical implications, and he prefers to call nonviolence *the soul force*.

Metaphysical and practical implications of the Gandhian concept of nonviolence can be better understood by analysing the three forms of nonviolence which Gandhi identifies.[16] The first form of nonviolence, according to Gandhi, is the one that the weak adopts. Here, nonviolence is the manifestation of one's helplessness, for the weak prefers to follow nonviolence because of the inability to confront the oppressor. Accordingly, the above disposition cannot claim the status of a virtue; rather, it appears to be a sign of one's incapability and wretchedness. The second type of nonviolence is that of cowards who do not have the courage to face the oppressor. Both the above two types of nonviolence lack solid foundations on character traits and virtues. Instead, both are manifestations of helplessness, which is largely determined by situations. In the due course of time, it is possible that both will turn to violence when the situations change in such a way that they are capable to respond to the oppressor. For this reason, Gandhi does not consider the nonviolence of the weak and cowards to be nonviolence in its true sense, and he adds that he 'would rather have the violence of the brave than the nonviolence of the weak and coward'17. Gandhi would count the third type of nonviolence, that of the morally strong, as the only form of nonviolence which claims merit. Here, nonviolence is the manifestation of great moral strength which emerges from one's fathomless spiritual force and impeccable virtuous disposition. Hence, nonviolence is a character trait of a brave and virtuous person, not of the weak and cowards, and "the path of true nonviolence demands much more courage than violence".18

Accordingly, nonviolence is not an expression of one's weakness but a testimonial to the possession of one of the deadliest weapons that might eliminate all enemies. Gandhi believed that nonviolence is "infinitely greater than and superior to brute force", "mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction invented by ingenuine humans", and furthermore, "destruction is not the law of genuine humans".19 Here, his position resembles to the Biblical exhortation to "feed one's enemies if they are hungry; give them something to drink if they are thirsty; by doing this one will heap burning coals on heads of enemies".20 Since deeds of care and compassion can change minds of enemies and burn out the latent feelings of enmity, enemies no more exist. This radical suggestion to respond

[15] The Bible, Revised Standard Version, Romans 6:23
[16] Ramachandra Krishna Prabhu & U.R. Rao (ed). The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1966), pp. 167-168.
[17] Sudhir Chandra, Gandhi: An Impossible Possibility. (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 3.
[18] Mohandas Gandhi, 'Nonviolence'. Harijan 4 August, 248-249, 1946.
[19] Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, Gandhi: His Life and Thought. (New Delhi: Publication Division, Government of India, 1970), p. 350.
[20] The Bible, Revised Standard Version, Romans 12:20.

to violence with nonviolent and compassionate deeds necessitates acquiring deeper convictions and higher moral sensibilities. Hence, nonviolence is the weapon of the strongest who maintain a virtuous disposition to denounce evil while keeping no hatred towards evildoers. Gandhi prefers to call it the soul force, an active force of the highest order, or the power of God within us.21

Given that the commitment to nonviolence is closely linked to the moral strength of persons, we need to take nonviolence principally as a disposition to denounce ill feelings that generate aggression. Additionally, the rule of the virtuous disposition of nonviolence would reverse the destructive forces and resolve conflicts that might damage relations. Our commitment to a culture of nonviolence might nurture virtues of empathy, openness, tolerance, forgiveness, and inclusiveness that demand urgent attention today. The idea of peace, according to Gandhi, should not be confined to the absence of war. Rather, it should imply the prevalence of synergy and harmony within oneself and the collective. Gandhian view that 'wars are won not with weapons but by moral force' is corroborated by historical facts that witness the success of nonviolent solutions that involve open dialogue, mediation, and collective effort to eliminate possible root causes. For instance, the success stories of Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, the 14th Dalai Lama, and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan validate the Gandhian approach. Nonviolence has a long history of success, which is much higher than alarmingly costly violent solutions to social problems.22 Moreover, the solutions drawn on nonviolent grounds manifest added advantages of endurance and perceived fairness. However, the turn to nonviolence requires constant moral training and deep cultural transformation that might claim lengthy efforts and prolonged attention. It looks humanly impossible to practice unconditional love for the evildoer and to maintain an unblemished nonviolent disposition. However, turning to his faith in human goodness, Gandhi would argue that it is quite possible.

Nonviolence, suffering for others, and self-harming

While applying the principle of nonviolence, one might face serious challenges from within because this ambitious task disturbs and redefines one's entire value system. It looks self-deceptive to suppress one's own emotions against the oppressor, counterintuitive to sacrifice legitimate claims to lead a life which one finds valuable, and unfair to oneself while tolerating the oppressor and thereby perpetuating injustice. As the disposition of individuals is a decisive factor in the rule of nonviolence, the voice of the self is the prime challenge in refraining from violent responses. It is sensible that one is primarily responsible to oneself, and therefore, everyone has a right, and therefore an obligation, to protect oneself from evildoers such as political invaders, ideological infiltrators, and domestic oppressors. Accordingly, nonviolent tolerance to evildoers appears to be committing a major crime against oneself. One may find no significant difference between acts of self-harming and acts of vicarious suffering and nonviolence. Additionally, we may be compelled to acknowledge the slippery slope on which the entire premises in defence of vicarious suffering rest and admit that suicides are morally justifiable. However, it is widely believed that life is intrinsically valuable and acts that cause harm to one's own life or lives of others are morally reprehensible.

[21] Ramachandra Krishna Prabhu & U.R. Rao (ed), op. cit., p. 154.
[22] Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, op. cit., p. 355.

The sublime manifestation of nonviolence, which is the nonviolence of the brave, should not be conceived as an act of self-harming. Acts of self-harming are generally performed by agents whose agency is significantly compromised[23] and whose ability to cope up with situations is at a lower degree. However, the question that what all kinds of acts of self-harming might be regarded morally inappropriate is subject to the scrutiny of each culture. Stated otherwise, it is not that all kinds of self-injuries are morally blameworthy, and some are indeed supererogatory. Accordingly, it looks better to focus on consequences rather than acts to determine the moral nature of self-harming acts. The absolutist attention to acts alone would prohibit harming oneself even for altruistic acts whereas consideration of consequences would identify ethical distinctions among amputating to save oneself from cancer, which might affect the whole body, harming oneself through smoking, which might bring an early death, and engaging oneself in masochist behaviours. While it is not good to harm oneself because life is valuable, it may be morally permissible to harm oneself for greater or far-reaching consequences and, therefore, the vicarious suffering of the morally strong should not be taken as the acts of the weak. Rather, it is a method of eliminating the enemy by heaping coals of fire on her head, as we read in Proverbs (25:21) and Romans (12:20). Here, the fire of compassion and nonviolence blazes and purifies her mind and transforms her altogether, and which in turns assures that she is no more your enemy.

The idea of nonviolence occupies a central position in Gandhian ethical philosophy, political thought, and metaphysics. Among the eleven great vows proposed as the guidelines for human conduct, nonviolence and truth, the first two among the five cardinal virtues get prime attention. Subsequently, while developing his political theory, he justifies the inseparable nature of these two concepts as the two sides of the same coin and additionally, correlates the concepts with the ideas of *means and ends*.[24] While our ultimate goal, according to Gandhi, is truth, the only means to achieve the goal is nonviolence. Both means and ends are equally important, and both are convertible terms as well. Though we do not have any command over ends or outcomes, it is very well possible for us to control the means or our present actions that might bring the desired outcomes. This is because means grow into ends in due course of time, and ends are nothing external.[25] The above argument is well moored on the golden rule and the law of karma that assert the fact that we are makers of our destiny and we will harvest what we have cultivated. In addition to the fact that the world is being governed by natural laws, it is being governed by moral laws as well. Therefore, it is essential to turn to nonviolent means if we look for a desirable social order ahead, for violent means results in further violence, whereas nonviolence promotes harmony and synergy.

The turn to nonviolence, however, is not problem free. As the Gandhian position suggests, it demands much more than the pacifist position of avoidance of harming others. Rather, it is a commitment to do good irrespective the of adverse state of affairs, particularly while the recipients have already violated the dictates of nonviolence and do not deserve a nonviolent treatment. It is possible that the framework of nonviolence would turn out to be inadequate in responding to sudden and unanticipated crises that demand immediate attention. Furthermore, it should face serious challenges from sociocultural processes that are antagonistic to the idea of nonviolence, which requires lengthy efforts and prolonged attention. Therefore, nonviolence is not an immediate solution to most of

[23] Zsuzsanna Chapell, 'The enacted ethics of self-injury', Topoi 41 (2022): 383-394.
[24] Mohandas Gandhi, India of My Dreams, op. cit. p. 64.
[25] Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, op. cit., p. 349

our day-to-day conflicts but a long-term method for avoiding conflicts and resolving it without ill feelings. Stated otherwise, it is largely a preventive method or a long-term social insurance strategy rather than a treatment measure.

Nonviolent non-cooperation and disobedience with civility

The second strategy, introduced by the Gandhian framework for reconciliation and conflict resolution, is *nonviolent non-cooperation* which is meant for pressurising parties of the conflict to look for possible solutions to the problem. The idea of nonviolent non-cooperation is essentially dualistic, for it involves both nonviolence and non-cooperation in the conceptualisation part and internal and external components in the domain of its application. Here, non-cooperation or boycott is adopted as an effective strategy to pressurise the parties of conflicts, and the whole effort should be free from any violence. Likewise, non-cooperation is proposed both from within the specific society and groups that are not parties to the conflict. While non-cooperation from others might compel the parties of the conflict to explore possible measures to resolve the problem, disobedience of the domestic civil societies may force power structures to rectify the unjust measures that are adopted.

The above strategy of nonviolent non-cooperation is a major construct in the Gandhian concept of satyagraha, which, in the literal sense, implies steadfastness to truth. The idea of *truth* occupies a central position in the Gandhian moral philosophy and political thought as well. As a political position, *satyagraha* would imply a collective effort to seek truth, fight for truth, and abide by truth. In the etymological sense, the concept *satya* or truth originates from the root *sat,* which implies 'being', 'source' or 'the ultimate reality.' Moreover, for Gandhi, it is nothing but the cosmic harmony which denounces conflicts on contingent grounds. In concrete situations, however, we make a putative difference between fighting for 'true' causes and fighting for unfair causes. Likewise, we may find it possible to distinguish fighting clean from fighting dirty. Accordingly, all reactions and wars are not equally wrong, and we do have an obligation to offer moral support to the ones whose cause is just and whose concern is closer to truth. To avoid committing the same mistake, however, the support offered to the one who is fighting for a fair cause should be nonviolent.

A closer look at the Gandhian thought would reveal its great potential in responding to contemporary conflicts that find no adequate solutions. It is possible that we may have learned to live with these problems, but the problems do not affect everyone equally. Frequent occurrences of similar conflicts, along with the overwhelming load of information, result in the phenomenon of normative numbness, which makes us incapable of responding to the legitimate concerns of the oppressed. The larger the number of victims of any conflict, the deeper permeating shall be our psychic numbness.[26] However, it is quite difficult to believe that one will be immune to the impacts of the conflict forever because it is not easy to predict all possible ramifications of the trouble and its long-term impacts. Given the potential magnitude of any conflict, the Gandhian position would insist that the civilised world has an obligation to motivate the evildoer to rectify mistakes and turn to the path of harmonious coexistence. Here, the strategy of disobedience with civility may be adopted by insiders, such as civil societies and voluntary groups, and non-cooperation

[26] Scott Slovic & Paul Slovic, 'The Arithmetic of Compassion', New York Times Dec 4, 2015

and sanctions may be considered by other external groups, such as other states and international organisations.

While heeding to the voice of Gandhi, it looks perfectly justifiable to impose nonviolent measures such as non-cooperation on parties of conflicts, adopting collective boycott against them, and enforcing economic sanctions that incapacitate them. In the real-world scenario, however, the above strategies must face several serious challenges. Though the strategies might appear prima facie nonviolent and justifiable, the possibility of leaving negative feelings behind is a major concern. The wound that might be caused by the sense of 'outsider' or 'unwanted' might generate additional incisive issues that result in greater bleeding. Hence, the possibility of unintended violence that might follow nonviolent non-cooperation is a major limitation of the above proposal. Secondly, nonviolent strategies draw justifications from our obligation to stay with the truth, which is debatable. It is possible that we do not have fair access to the truth, or the truth known to us is seriously manipulated, or it should be evaluated in the light of other convincing truths that claim priority. Lastly, it is possible, at least in a shorter duration, that the evildoer may get chances to do greater harm if nonviolent strategies are adopted.

Obligation to be on the side of victims

A broader interpretation of Gandhian thought would vindicate our collective obligation to be on the side of *the last* in society and with the *victims* of aggression and transgressions. The concern for the last and compassion towards the oppressed are two major features of Gandhian social philosophy. Gandhi has repeatedly acknowledged that the above ideas were borrowed from John Ruskin. For instance, the chapter XVIII, titled 'The Magic Spell of the Book', in part IV of his autobiography, speaks about the deep impact of Ruskin's thoughts on Gandhi. Gandhi confesses that Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last*, "brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation" in his life,[27] and he decided to change his life radically. Subsequently, Ruskin's idea took an ever-living rebirth as the Gandhian concept of *Sarvodaya,* which signifies the concern for the last. Envisioning an egalitarian social order, the idea of *Sarvodaya* prioritises collective welfare over individuals' good, advocates trusteeship over capitalistic ownership, denounces majoritarian oppressions, acknowledges the truth that humankind is one, and accepts the duty to identify oneself with the oppressed. At a later stage, the idea of *Sarvodaya* evolved into a social movement and subsequently became an independent school of Gandhian thought.

Historical accounts witness to the alarming fact that innocent civilians, specifically women, are major victims of violence since the wrong targets are always being chosen as a combat strategy. Massive elimination of innocent civilians is often justified with several unconvincing reasons, such as the act was unintended, no better alternative was available, or the population was indirectly supporting the opponent by passive cooperation. Though the larger size of the number of casualties has imposed a psychic numbness, it is very well known to humanity that more than 40 million innocent civilians were brutally killed in the World War II. However, the numbness persists in the present times while more than 25,000 civilians are killed in the war in Gaza.28 Additionally, thousands are taken as hostages,

[27] Mohandas Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 467-471.
[28] United Nations, UN News, 22 January 2024.

mutilated, and raped. Likewise, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner (OHCHR) has reported 27,149 civilian casualties for the period between February 2022 and September 2023 in the Ukraine-Russia conflict.29 Various international agencies have released alarming genocide reports from various parts of the world, for instance, from Rwanda, Somalia, Nigeria, and Myanmar.

The Gandhian insistence on the obligation to be on the side of the voiceless victims of aggression manifests the absolutist orientation of his position.30 Advocating the sanctity of human life, Gandhi argues for the essential equality of all humans and discards discrimination based on power, nationality, religion, class, and caste. The position is largely inspired by the Upanishadic view that establishes the identity between *Brahman* and *Atman*, that is, the identity between the cosmic self and individual selves.31 This identity serves as the foundation for inherent unity among all humans and as the ultimate reason for ascribing equal value to all humans. Additionally, the same position motivates him to find the presence of God even in the most wretched state of human existence, and hence, he calls the last *daridra narayana*, a terminology which equates the poor with God32. While considering convincing reasons for war restrictions and conflict resolution, respect for the absolute value of human existence appears to be the prime concern. Both absolutists and consequentialists, regardless of their ideological preferences, may admit that personhood is the central concept in adjudicating conflicts. This is because conflicts, at the bottommost level, are afflicted relations among persons.33 Since attention to the idea of personhood necessitates normative considerations, it appears imperative to consider who should be targeted and what methods are justifiable. Since civilians are not the real cause of the problem, targeting civilians in conflicts turns out to be morally objectionable. Even if the aggression is targeted at evildoers, it is not violent elimination but nonviolent non-cooperation that results in incapacitating them would look morally defensible.

It is possible that our estimations of the actual impacts of violence would turn out to be dishonest because the calculations performed are significantly flawed. Generally, our assessment is confined to the number of casualties and material damages, and it disregards several major impacts, such as several unreported harms to the life of individuals and the quality of their life, irrevocable damages to the stability of the social structure, and irreparable damages to the environment. Displacement and exile are corollaries of conflicts, and the fugitives are likely to be subjected to further harm. Likewise, conflicts disturb the social harmony and infuse a sense of distrust, which in turn leads to added disharmony. Though the global community is concerned with curbing the carbon footprint resulting from industrial activities, transportation, and agriculture, it has not started thinking seriously about the dreadful volume of carbon emissions from wars and conflicts. In addition to the emissions from bombs and weapons used at the war front, greenhouse gases are released both from increased fuel consumption by troops and fires caused by

[29] OHCHR, Ukraine: Civilian casualty update, 11 September 2023

[30] Ramachandra Guha, Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World. (Gurgaon: Penguin Books, 2018), pp. 172-178, 263-277; Thomas Weber, Gandhian philosophy, conflict resolution theory, and practical approaches to negotiation, Journal of Peace Research 38(4): 493-513.

[31] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Indian Philosophy vol. 1. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 169-173.

[32] Ramachandra Krishna Prabhu & U.R. Rao (ed). The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1966), pp. 54-56.

[33] Thomas Nagel, 'War and Massacre', Philosophy and Public Affairs 1(2): 1972, pp. 123-144.

wars.34 Even after thirty-two years, the oil wells set fire during the Gulf War continue to pollute the region with unstoppable emissions.

Since conflict resolution demands a fair treatment of all possible victims of war which include humans, society, and nature, the Gandhian position that adopts a holistic framework turns out to be a promising candidate in global debates on conflict resolution and reconciliation. While it is impossible to undo the harms committed by conflicts and aggressions, it is quite possible to check the troubles from appearing again and curb the progression by repairing damages, rectifying mistakes, and supporting the victims. It is precisely for this reason that the Gandhian proposal of nurturing a culture of nonviolence looks meritorious and enduring. Here, the framework which Gandhi adopts appears to be radically different from other pacifist proposals. While other pacifist positions suggest avoidance of aggression, Gandhian thought proposes positive measures of social action that promote justice, peace, and reconciliation. Indeed, the obligation to pursue these constructive measures falls on everyone. It exceeds political strategies and policy deliberations. It lays great expectations on civil societies.

The suggestion to be on the side of the victims of conflicts appears to be a great idea. However, one may find it difficult as well. First, it is counterintuitive to be with victims if they no longer exist, for it is impossible to extend our concern to non-contemporaries who were eliminated by conflicts. This is a significant challenge in rectificatory justice, even if the accused is ready to compensate for the harm caused. Likewise, it is counted as a major reason for not forgiving for the wrongs committed in the distant past. Both theological and legal deliberations, at least in certain cases, are tendentious to absolve the accused if the harmed no longer exists. For instance, a person may be found guilty of living with someone while his wedded partner is alive, and no divorce is granted. After the wedded partner's death, however, the person may be treated differently. Secondly, it is practically impossible to fully repair the harm caused to victims, even if they exist. Though it may be possible to compensate for the material damages by rebuilding their houses and cities and adopting affirmative actions, it is impossible to heal their inner wounds, erase the traumas, and regain the dignity which is brutally assaulted. Finally, owing to displacement, it is quite laborious to locate the victims of conflicts and bring them united to fight for the cause.

An impossible possibility

Promoting a culture of nonviolence might look as the only enduring solution to conflicts, aggressions, and wars. However, one may believe that the pursuit of nonviolence, specifically the nonviolence of the brave, is 'a fine ideal, much to be desired, but dreadfully unrealistic'.[35] Many of Gandhi's contemporaries, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Indian National Congress, the party he established, found him too difficult to follow. The scepticism of the Indian National Congress towards the Gandhian doctrine of nonviolence betrayed itself in its 1920 Nagpur session by declaring its motto of 'achieving freedom by legitimate and peaceful means';[36] not precisely through nonviolence. This lack of conviction, both of his party and the people, culminated in conflicts and violence at a later stage. Moreover, the upsurge in violence proved that the

[34] Carbon Literacy Trust, 'The climate impact of war', February 2024.
[35] William Shirer, Gandhi: A Memoir, Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1993, p. xi.
[36] Sudhir Chandra, Gandhi: An Impossible Possibility. (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 2.

nonviolence adopted earlier was not the nonviolence of the brave but that of the weak and coward. Since the Gandhian ideal of nonviolence appears to be overly demanding, many find it quite impossible. For the same reason, many found him enigmatic, and he remains posthumously as enigmatic as he was while alive[37]

The Gandhian ideals of nonviolence, non-cooperation, and the concern for the last appear impossible at first glance. However, a closer look makes us to believe otherwise and acknowledge the virtue of endurance linked to the ideals. Gandhi would find the ideals perfectly possible, for he had a deep trust in humanity.[38] It seems justifiable to hold that the trust in humanity is the backbone of Gandhian thought. This trust prompted him to identify immense potential of humankind and achieve targets that were apparently impossible. Likewise, it is the trust which people invested in Gandhi made him great and possible. Now, as Sudhir Chandra argues, it is our distrust which makes him impossible as well, 'when the world needs him more than ever before'.[39] Stated otherwise, it is our choice, either to trust or distrust, that determines the success and failure of the framework proposed by Gandhi. Likewise, trust, a foundational value, is essential for both establishing and maintaining relationships. Trust is crucial in reconciling broken relations as well.

The apparent difficulty involved in practising Gandhian ideals is not a valid reason to take them impossible. Rather, these ideals entail an upward journey which ensures lasting outcomes, and we find nothing in human history that contradicts Gandhi's proposal to resolve conflicts. It appears counterintuitive to hold that durable interpersonal relations and viable collective existence are possible through oppressive strategies that discount truth, trust, and concern. Though one might have the illusion that better possible options are violence, shrewd diplomacy and sanctions, these paths do not bring the desired outcome. Since aggressions and conflicts are relations among persons,[40]individuals appear to be the primary focus in conflict resolution initiatives. Therefore, the Gandhian approach calls for taking responsibility for our actions, doing self-examination, listening to the inner voice, and identifying the dignity of persons. Gandhi has faith in human goodness, and therefore, he appeals to higher human sensibilities for a peaceful coexistence. Since the root causes of conflicts are essentially not merely political, solutions can never be confined to political strategies alone.[41]It demands turning to the trust Gandhi had in human goodness and reaffirming our trust in Gandhian ideals.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to evaluate the potential of the Gandhian conceptual framework for offering conflict resolution strategies that are enduring and possible ways to reconcile broken relations. The discussion presents lessons from three major Gandhian concepts, such as nonviolence, non-cooperation and civil disobedience, and the concern for the last. It is argued that the commitment to nonviolence is the only enduring way to resolve conflicts and reconcile broken relations. However, it is not an easy ideal. For Gandhi, it is the nonviolence of the brave which claims the status of a virtue that promotes harmony and reconciliation, whereas the nonviolence of the weak and coward may not be

[37] Sudhir Chandra op. cit. p. 14.
[38] Sudhir Chandra op. cit. p. 17.
[39] Sudhir Chandra op. cit. p. 157.
[40] Thomas Nagel, op. cit., p. 133.
[41] Sudhir Chandra op. cit. p. 144.

regarded as virtuous. Nonviolence, as Gandhi presents, is not confined to the avoidance of violence; rather, it signifies the disposition to contribute positively to the welfare of everyone. The discussion incorporates a careful evaluation of commonly raised problems, such as the possibility of self-harming and the likelihood of perpetuating evils. Furthermore, the feasibility of nonviolent non-cooperation and disobedience with civility as two potential strategies to pressurise parties of the conflict to think about reconciliatory paths is examined. The discussion evaluates the phenomenon of psychic numbness, which results in the silence of the masses, and affirms the role of collective efforts in resolving conflicts, reconciling relations, and bringing social harmony. The Gandhian suggestion exceeds political strategies and deliberations, and it lays great expectations on civil societies. Additionally, the paper presents reasons for justifying our duty to be on the side of victims of conflicts and aggressions. It is necessary to expand our notion of victims and revise the prevailing concept of rectification. While analysing possible implications of the three Gandhian concepts, I have tried to incorporate possible objections that each one attracts. Among other concerns, constraints in responding to sudden and unanticipated crises and the overly demanding nature are two major limitations of the framework, and the latter makes it look impossible. The discussion identifies the role of trust in determining the impossibility and possibility of the Gandhian framework. I have tried to clarify why the Gandhian way of conflict resolution and reconciliation looks advantageous over other pacifist proposals. It claims added advantages such as the virtue of endurance inherent to nonviolent measures, the focus on constructive collective actions for conflict avoidance and reconciliation, and the emphasis on inclusive restorative practices.

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Memorials and Memory - The use of memorials and monuments as a part of the process of reconciliation

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Memorials and monuments can help us to create a common history, to keep the past alive. However, when it comes to the process of reconciliation memorials and monuments can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand memorials can ensure a public awareness of our common history, of what has happened. Memorials ensure that misdeeds will not be forgotten too easily; the perpetrators cannot simply demand that the victims forget in the name of the common future. On the other hand, memorials can have the effect that we remember all too well, that we linger in a victim identity, which freezes history and, in this aspect, closes the future. This article analyses the uses of memorials and monuments and describes how memory is an essential part of a process of reconciliation. Memorials and monuments are not static expressions. In fact, monuments can turn into offensive statements, and the question here is how to deal with this? Is the solution to tear them down, to erect counter-monuments or to use them to illustrate the development of history? All these questions are asked in the context of how memorials and monuments can influence the process of reconciliation positive and negatively.

Memorials and monuments as a safeguard against collective repression and forgetting

One of the common features of the literature on reconciliation, be it theological, sociological, or psychological, is that reconciliation requires a recognition of what has really happened, of what it is that has given rise to the need for reconciliation. Seeking the truth is an essential part of a reconciliation process. Here memorials and monuments can be both a constructive and a destructive factor. In general, the process of reconciliation must take the dialectic between the present, the past and the future into account. The process of reconciliation between two groups, whether cultural, ethnic, national or political defined, must contain a vision for the future, for a common coexistence. The future is here defining the present. But this describes only "one side of the coin". Reconciliation implies also that the present must encounter and accommodate the past. Reconciliation is not to be equated with forgetfulness. Reconciliation is not just about looking forward; it is also about finding a way to deal with the past. The question is how to do this without letting the past determine future relations. In short: to enable this dialectic between the present, the past

and the future the process of reconciliation must take the following five phenomena into account: forgiveness, justice, truth, trust and peace. In this article I will focus on one aspect of how to deal with the truth: the potential (and possible "traps") of using memorials and monuments in the common narrative of who we are, where we come from, and where we want to go. To state the possibility of reconciliation as an alternative to either war, conflict, or parallel existence is to claim that history is heritage rather than destiny.

Lasting reconciliation does not take place on the basis of individual or collective repression. One of the ways in which a society can seek to establish a shared understanding of the past and thereby contribute to a possible reconciliation process is through the establishment of public memorials. These memorials provide a safeguard against collective repression and forgetting. However, the aim of memorials can vary quite a lot. Some memorials serve to remember and honor the fallen who fought for a country or who rose up against oppression. These can be grandiose memorial parks, sculptures and huge cemeteries that cannot fail to make an impression on the viewer simply by virtue of their size, or it can take form of a small, unnoticeable memorial stone erected on the spot where a freedom fighter was executed by the regime. In case of the latter, it is necessary to know the history behind the memorial stone in order to understand it. Other monuments serve as a celebration of seminal events that have had a decisive impact on the self-understanding of a nation and/or its people, as well as a monument can serve as a remembrance and celebration of a person, who have changed the history. Barak Obama expressed this rhetorically, when he stated that "Mandela belongs to eternity".[1] However, memorials are a double-edged sword, as they can "freeze" a particular interpretation of history, which can make it difficult to let the future be open for new relationships. Memorials can help us to face the past, but they can also close the future in the sense that we let the past determine the future if we look at history as a "game of repetition".

In the following I will analyze how memorials and monuments are influencing our understanding of not only the past but also of the present and the future. A part of this analysis will consist in a description of three main ways of approaching memorials and monuments: 1) the establishment of counter-monuments, 2) the reversing of the content of a memorial site or monument and 3) the demolishing of the monument or memorial site. I will do this from an interdisciplinary perspective, including historical, sociological and theological analysis of the use of memorials and monuments in relation to reconciliation. Memorial sites and monuments are at one and the same time a historical lesson and a celebration of history. They are not just a "picture" of the past, they are also a living, social, cultural and political voice. I combine insights from memory studies with examples of how memorials and monuments are related to the process of reconciliation. I keep weaving theory and praxis together in my exploration of how memorials and monuments are not just a voice from the past, but also a living, present voice, that in part determines the future. The awareness of the potential double-bind of memorials and monuments helps us to treat history as heritage rather than as destiny. Monuments and memorials can be a valuable resource to navigate in the dialectic between present, past and future in which reconciliation takes place. The story told must be open-ended.

[1] In his eulogy, Obama quoted the words spoken at the death of President Lincoln in 1865: "He no longer belongs to us. He belongs to eternity". See Thomas Andrew, 2013. 'Mandela tilhører evigheden"'. *Jyllandsposten* (2013). Online at https://jyllands-posten.dk/international/usa/article6314325.ece (accessed 2024-02-27).

The relation between story and history

Jewish writer and professor Elie Wiesel emphasizes that in the case of man-made disasters, it is important to remember injustice to ensure that justice will be done – not only in retrospect, but also in the future.[2] Thus, remembrance is granted a positive, forward-looking purpose. For Wiesel, the aim of memorials and monuments is not to keep victims in their role as victims either to gain the right to receive ongoing special treatment or, paradoxically, to obtain the right to act violently against previous or present enemies. In case of the latter, victims are misusing their history as an excuse to act aggressively, while at the same time maintaining the role of a victim internally and externally. Maintaining the victim's perspective can blur one's ethical compass so that one fails to recognize one's actual position of power and the associated ethical responsibility and obligation. Wiesel's point is not to support a particular victim identity, but instead, through the remembrance of injustice, to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Memorials are a way to incarnate history in time and space. This can be achieved, for example, by linking the memory of a people's fate with concrete examples of the loss of individuals. Within the field of memory research, there is a special attention to the development of a new type of memorial museums, where the focus of communication is on individual stories. Through the manifestation of concrete personal stories, history is made recognizable in a different way than through an overall presentation of history, which both can have an objective and a more mythologically determined character. Both tend to describe history in an abstract way. In a Danish context one example of a communication of history through a series of concrete minor stories is the permanent exhibition at the Tirpitz Museum. The museum describes the German occupation of Denmark in the second world war. It is built around one of the German bunkers placed on the Danish west coast and the architecture is in itself a part of the exhibition. The exhibition tells the stories of several people, from the little girl who heard the airplanes at night, to the engineer and worker who worked for the German occupying power building bunkers, to the German soldier in Denmark, and the resistance fighter who carried out sabotage against the German occupying power.

Simply put, the museum mediates experiences rather than information. The visitor gets a mediated experience of the experience, as the museum "draw the visitor into the story that they are telling, making the visitor play an active role and identify with the story's characters."[3] This new type of museum is not so much concerned with establishing the big cultural, political, and societal overview. Instead, the big story is brought to life and told through a series of minor stories, where the visitor is invited to identify oneself with the individual personal stories and destinies through the expanded use of digital communication. Many of these new memorial museums deals with war crimes and crimes against humanity. The focus here is on portraying the violation of human rights, rather than explaining the political, cultural, and social reasons for why it could happen. The narrative has a well-defined moral purpose: an appeal to never let it happen again. To put

[2] Cf. Elie Wiesel, *From the Kingdom of Memory: Reminiscences* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), p. 187: "Justice without memory is an incomplete justice, false and unjust. To forget would be an absolute injustice in the same way that Auschwitz was the absolute crime. To forget would be the enemy's final triumph."

[3] Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity. Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), p. 24.

it simply, the narrative is more emotional than rational, with more emphasis on identification than on communicating facts.

In her analysis of the rise of the many memorial museums, sociologist Amy Sodaro points out that the moral purpose is not without a certain inherent ambivalence. Firstly, museums have subjected themselves to a political purpose that is determined by a contemporary reading and use of the past. Sodaro points out that whereas we used to orientate ourselves politically based on visions of a future, that we believed would be better, we are now orientating ourselves by reference to the past, which we now use as an explanation and guarantor of our political goals. In this way, the past is interpreted as a point of reference for the future. The battle for history has thus become a political battle – and can no longer be seen as an isolated dispute among historians. We currently see this in Putin's use of history as a political justification for invading Ukraine. We also see it in the coming Republican president Donald Trump's official campaign slogan: "Make America great again", whereby he both mythologizes the past and promises to recreate this mythological past. Sodara describes this use of history very aptly:

> Where once the (glorious) future was the social and political way of ordering and orienting the world and the past was simply tradition that was incorporated into everyday life, today the future is uncertain and the past becomes the primary field for enacting and ordering politics and life. Memorial museums, then, are central to this ordering of our world vis-à-vis the past.[4]

Secondly, the ambivalence towards the moral use of history is justified because it implies that through enlightenment and empathy, we can avoid repeating the atrocities and cruel deeds of history. However, this is a naive reading that does not take the inherent human desire for power and potential evil into account. In contrast, Christianity's realistic view of humanity emphasizes that each individual human being possesses the ability to do radical good as well as radical evil. Evil is not something we can put behind us as a historical event, nor is it something we can exonerate ourselves from. Evil must be fought persistently, both individually and collectively. This does not imply that it is not important to learn from history, but conversely, we must not believe that enlightenment can secure us against the rise of totalitarian regimes – let it be in the form of fascism, Nazism, communism, or any other oppressive and freedom-depriving system. Memory is not in itself a safeguard against the unfolding of human evil. Sodaro puts it this way:

> Violence, atrocity, and genocide continue to rage around the world, despite robust efforts at remembering. Thus we need to understand not only what is behind this urgent need to remember but especially the limits of memory's ability to aid in the prevention of violence, promotion of democracy, and promise of peace.[5]

Commemorative monuments can both create myths and they can remind us of concrete history, as when the American soldiers who died in the Normandy invasion are commemorated through the erection of an almost endless row of white crosses at the American cemetery at Coleville-sur-Mer. Wiesel's insistence on maintaining the historical experience of injustice and hopelessness reappears here: "... the memory of death will serve as a shield against death."[6] But with Sodaro's reflection *in mind,* we must not delude

[4] Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity*, p. 28.
[5] Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity*, p. 29
[6] Wiesel, *From the Kingdom of Memory*, p. 239.

ourselves that memory in itself is a sufficient shield against the rise of totalitarian regimes based on violence and oppression.

The focus on history as a collection of different stories that touches us on a relational and emotional level enables us in a paradoxical way to see history in a broader context. The memory of the Holocaust serves not "only" to avoid the persecution of Jews in the future, but to warn – and call for resistance – against any future genocide, against any crime against humanity.[7] The warning contained in the memory of the persecution of the Jews is thus not linked to a specific people but is universal in its concern. But precisely to avoid the universal becoming abstract, it must be demonstrated in the concrete.

The Memorial Park in Berlin for Europe's murdered Jews consists of more than 2.700 concrete blocks of varying heights, with narrow pathways in between. It is a moving work of art, at once a memorial and a warning of what a mechanistic view of humanity combined with a totalitarian system can lead to. Underground, the monument is supported by a museum that tells the story of a few individual Jews. These stories contradict or rather explore the monument's coldness, conformity and abstraction. Through the erected monument, history is given a face, and we are forced to face history. In other words, the monument helps to transform knowledge of history from a series of historical facts to a history that has been given a body, where the social and the human consequences of what has happened has been taken into account.

With monuments as carriers of memory, the pitfalls already mentioned become clear. The monuments can both cause a stigmatization of the victim as a victim, just as they can bring about a glorification of heroes or events in history, which are thereby granted a mythological status that can be a major obstacle to a long-term solution in a social, cultural, political or religious conflict. This narrows the scope for political action, making it much more difficult to make compromises, as one must be sure not to undermine the myth, which in turn is linked to the need to avoid being seen as a traitor to those who have sacrificed themselves. Mythological history constitutes its own rationale, which can be difficult to penetrate. In the case of Northern Ireland, for example, both loyalists and nationalists have their own myths in which they portray themselves as victims heroically fighting against a superior power and injustice. These myths have implications for today's political and cultural space, as they both maintain and expand one's identity in opposition to the opposing party, just as they keep you loyal to those who have sacrificed themselves for the cause so far. To compromise would be to commit treason. Thus, history is not neutral.[8] From a visit to Belfast, I remember the following inscription on one of the gable murals: "This is dedicated to those who served in our conflict. We forget not."

Many memorials represent an attempt to maintain an identity-bearing memory and are therefore as much directed towards the present and the future as they are directed towards the past. Memorials can serve as a concrete spatial manifestation of a myth; the historical monument is not historical in the sense of a balanced and sober source of knowledge, but rather a glorification of a particular interpretation of history that serves a

[7] Philosopher Hannah Arendt emphasizes that the Holocaust should not be interpreted as anti-Semitism but as a crime against humanity. Jews were not the only victims of Nazi persecution, it also affected gypsies, Poles, communists, homosexuals, and people with special needs.

[8] Northern Irish peace activist and leader of Corrymeela David Stevens has put it this way: "Sacrifice and victimization are important interpretative keys in the way that the past is understood in both traditions [The Ulster Protestant Community and the Irish Catholic Community]. The heroic sacrifices of the past require continuing honor, respect and loyalty.". See David Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness. Explorations into Reconciliation* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2004), p. 95.

specific purpose. As such, memorials can be directly counterproductive in the effort to establish a shared history that aims to make a shared future possible. The gable murals in Northern Ireland serve largely to reinforce the mythological historiography of the extremes on both sides, which gives both sides the right – if not the duty – to continue the struggle based on their own self-understanding. As a result, the fear of violence breaking out again is just below the political surface. That peace does not automatically imply reconciliation becomes here very clear.

The use of Counter-monuments – The Judensau in Wittenberg

Monuments and memorials do not in themselves guarantee the establishment or preservation of a shared history. Monuments can both support mythological interpretations and question them. Harward Law School Professor Martha Minow draws attention to the phenomenon of counter-monuments, where people deliberately choose to erect new monuments in order to question the previous monuments' interpretation of the past.[9] In a theological context, one of the best-known examples of this is the counter-monument at the *Stadtkirchen* in Wittenberg, where the frieze with the *Judensau* is contradicted by a sculpture embedded in the tiles just below the original frieze. This counter-monument serves multiple purposes. It is both a memorial to the Jews who died during the Shoah, and it is a public confession of sin: that the Church as well as individual Christians throughout history have taken part in the persecution of Jews, culminating in the Shoah. Finally, the counter-monument is a theological objection to interpreting Judaism in direct opposition to Christianity.

The point is that by erecting a counter-monument, you are facing history. You are not trying to explain away or deliberately trying to forget that Luther, with some of his writings, also contributed to the persecution of Jews. By keeping the *Judensau* in the wall of the Church and erecting a counter-monument just below it on the pavement, the Lutheran Church acknowledges that Christianity (including Lutheranism) has taken part in the persecution of Jews. The counter-monument is an expression of guilt. It both refers to the atrocity that had happened to the Jews and interprets it in the light of the cross, that it is God's people who suffer. The counter-monument emphasizes the very close connection between Judaism and Christianity: that they are both united in having the same God as father: Yahweh. The counter-monument represents a theological reinterpretation of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, emphasizing that the God of the Christians is also the God of the Jews, which is emphasized both by quoting from the book of Psalms in Hebrew and by writing that God's real name is *Shema Ha Mphoras*. The latter is subtle, as it is a very direct contradiction of one of Luther's writings against the Jews: *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi*, in which Luther equates the Jews with the devil.[10] As recently as February 2020, a private person had filed a lawsuit with the German court demanding the removal of the *Judensau* from the church. The court rejected this claim due to the fact that the church had erected a counter-monument that has changed the context of the sculpture. It now appears as a monument against anti-Semitism. The

[9] See Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness. Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), pp.136-45.

[10] The inscription on the monument reads: ”God's actual name, the reviled Shema Ha Mphorah, whom the Jews held almost unspeakably holy before the Christians, died in six million Jews under a sign of the cross”. In addition, Psalm 130:1 is quoted in Hebrew (”Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord”).

pastor of the church, Johannes Bloch, subsequently pointed out in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that we cannot change history by removing or destroying monuments. Instead, through the monuments, we can be reminded of the potential evil of mankind - and thus let the sculptures stand as a warning against repeating history. The latter is especially true when a counter-monument puts the work into a new context. The counter-monument is both a memorial plaque in honor of the victims and a reminder of the atrocities that man can commit – even in the name of God.[11]

Many memorials serve not only to remember, honor, or even celebrate past events. They are just as much a warning that something similar could happen again – either as a result of human cruelty or stupidity, or as a consequence of the vagaries of nature. As for the former, the memorial can be both a reflection on the cruelty of the past and a call to action, which is why the monument is also a reminder of man's ability to do good. Minow gives examples of memorials that bear a resemblance to modern art happenings as they are designed in such a way that they eventually will dissolve. The message: history requires a current stance. The monument is more than a memory of what was, it is also a reference to what is and what is to come. The monument as a form of happening seeks to deconstruct itself, to go against its own expression, to be acting rather than descriptive or referential. A striking example of this was a twelve-meter-high column in Germany, in the city of Harburg. The monument was a protest and warning against fascism, war, and violence. The column was erected in front of a shopping mall and was designed in such a way that it gradually sank into the ground – eventually disappearing completely.[12] The inscription on the memorial read, here quoted from Minow:

> One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice.[13]

Counter-monuments are a way to critically engage with the past without wanting to remove the original monuments. But could there be cases where the desire to achieve reconciliation with the atrocities of the past may encourage a more radical approach to removing the monument rather than putting the monument into perspective and contextualizing it – whether through information about the background of the monument or the construction of a new counter-monument? This is a question to which there is no simple and unambiguous answer. As mentioned, monuments always represent both a past and a present voice. And sometimes the current voice can become so strong that you must consider whether the monument should still have a place in the public space. At the same time, monuments can serve to keep the past alive so that we don't become historyless, believing that we can understand and interpret our place in the world without considering our cultural, religious, and political backgrounds and origins. Finally, on the one hand monuments can provide a one-sided view of history that requires other voices to be heard to avoid building a one-dimensional cultural, religious, and political narrative. On the other hand, ancient statues and memorials can be transformed into a counter-monument that challenge our previous understanding of history and its significance for our time. Instead of glorifying past heroes the monuments are then a reminder of past oppression.

[11] With the latter, I'm expanding the issue to all of humanity, not just Christianity.
[12] See Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, p. 142.
[13] See Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness,* p. 142.

However, one must remember that we cannot judge past actions by our contemporary moral standards.

The transformation of memorials and monuments – Spain post Franco

Due to the "Pact of Forgetting" (1975) a collective encounter with the fascist past of the Franco regime has never really taken place in Spain. The Pact of Forgetting was made between moderate Franco supporters and the left-wing opposition to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy after almost forty years of fascism. This meant, for example, that streets and squares were still named after some of the heroes of fascism, which has been an open wound for many of the victims and their relatives, as well as for their children and grandchildren. The first major step to break the collectively imposed silence was the passing of the Historical Memory Law in 2007, where the socialist government obliged local authorities to remove symbols and street names that could serve as a glorification of Franco's dictatorship. The purpose of the law was to acknowledge the victims of the civil war and the fascist regime.

The aim of the law was not to remove historical references to the Franco regime for the sake of forgetting, nor was it to hold the descendants of the regime accountable for the regime's atrocities. Instead, they wanted to avoid the continued heroization of the fascist regime and its leaders. The goal was to give the victims a voice through the introduction of the Historical Memory Law – and thereby also to contribute to a real reconciliation process. Enforced silence suppresses the truth of the violence of the fascist-regime, which victimizes the victims once more. Critics of the Historical Memory Law, on the other hand, argued that the law would instead lead to renewed confrontation rather than reconciliation, as the implementation of the law would cause the conflict to blow up again. However, imposed silence and forgetting is to the benefit of the perpetrator, where there is no reckoning with the past and the truth about the past is suppressed in favor of achieving peace. Thus, reconciliation is not the right word for this approach as reconciliation requires the ability to embrace the past.

Ever since the Historical Memory Law was passed, the law has been at the center of the struggle between the bourgeois and conservative forces on the one hand and the leftist and more secular forces on the other. One of the street names that was changed in 2017, ten years after the passing of the law, was Calle del General Yagüe in the capital of Madrid. Yagüe was known as the "Butcher of Badajoz". He was responsible for the mass execution of up to 4000 people when he took the city of Badajoz in 1936. The street has now regained its original name: Calle de San Germán – but not without much controversy. The then conservative government in Madrid initially refused to implement the law.[14]

The Historical Memory Law made a political discussion about how to deal with Franco's monumental tomb: El Valle de los Caídos – The Valley of the Fallen – possible. It was erected by Franco as a "victory monument to honor the 'heroes and martyrs of the crusade'", but the only two people named in the mausoleum are Franco himself and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the leader of the Spanish Falange movement.[15] The monument, which is blasted into the rock and is larger than St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, has very much served as a "place of pilgrimage" for supporters of Franco and the military regime. The monument has not primarily been a place to commemorate the repression and the

[14] See Kasper Kloch, "Hovedrengøring af historien". *Weekendavisen* (19th of February 2016).
[15] Cf. Kasper Kloch, "Glemslens pagt opsagt". *Weekendavisen* (24th of September 2019).

violations of the human rights. Instead, it has provided a space for a continued glorification of Franco and the military regime. In the eyes of the Spanish right wing, Franco was the main reason that Spain was not turning into a communist regime, and he is therefore seen as a national savior, a father of the country, rather than an oppressing dictator.

There are hundreds of wooden boxes containing the remains of the victims of the Franco regime in the side wings of the basilica. The bodies of the opponents of Franco were first thrown into mass graves after they had been brutally executed. They were then dug up, thrown into large wooden boxes, and collectively deported to the side wings of the basilica as a final demonstration of power and insult to the victims.[16] The relatives of the victims could not resist this double insult of the deceased: first the mass grave, then the collective deportation of the dead to Franco's memorial. Descendants of the victims have been fighting not only for the identification of their relatives in the mass graves but also for getting the possibility to give them a proper and public burial. It is a struggle that is still ongoing. Purificación Lapenã, who has become known for her ongoing struggle to find the remains of her grandfather and her grandfather's brother, both killed by the Franco regime, obtained court permission in 2016 to open the side chapel of El Valle de los Caídos to search for the boxes with the bones of her grandfather and his brother. Finding the bones and having the opportunity to rebury them is to move their fates and stories out of the anonymous mass graves – and thus change history by reclaiming their individual stories in public. This might lead to an opportunity for reconciliation. Imposed forgetfulness will surely not.

The bones of Francisco Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera were exhumed in 2019 and 2023 respectively and reburied in lesser known, less grandiose tombs in Madrid. The purpose of this was to prevent El Valle de los Caídos from continuing to appear as a mausoleum to the honor of Franco. The response of the mayor of Madrid to the exhumation and reburial of Primo de Rivera demonstrates clearly that the political and cultural past in Spain is still highly inflammatory. The mayor describes the supporters of the Historical Memory Law as: "... all those who understand politics as opening up the wounds of the past rather than trying to create a future for all of us."[17] The desire of the Spanish Prime Minister in 2019 Pedro Sánchez, to transform El Valle de los Caídos into a museum that would accommodate both sides of the civil war has not been realized, despite reburials and the renaming of the site to Valle de Cuelgamuros based on its geographical location. Perhaps, as Spanish historian Santos Juliá suggests, this is not possible either. His suggestion is instead to let the monument decay and thus diminish in importance.[18]

Another example of how monuments can change character is the preservation of the small, ruined village of Belchite, located about 40 km from Zaragoza. The town was destroyed in the battle between Franco's troops and the national rebel army. The town had first been taken by the Nationalists. Republicans recaptured the city a year later, and after fierce fighting – and subsequent mass executions – Franco's forces defeated the city in 1938. After the fascist victory in 1939, Franco chose to leave the destroyed city as a memorial to the struggle and the victory of the nationalists. The City of Ruins, as it was later named, should both bear witness to the "heroic struggle of the nationalists" and stand as a warning

[16] Others interpret it as an act of reconciliation that the monument, which was originally built to honor the fallen on general Franco's side, ended up housing fallen from both sides of the conflict.
[17] See Guy Hedgecoe, "Primo de Rivera: Spain exhumes fascist Falange leader". BBC News (24th April 2023). Online at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65370223 (accessed 2024-02-27).
[18] Cf. Kloch, "Glemslens pagt opsagt."

against anyone who might dare to revolt against the fascist regime. The consequences, as the City of Ruins demonstrated, would be incalculable. After Franco's death, the city felt into decay. It was no longer a war tourist destination in honor of the nationalist regime. Now, more than 80 years after the end of the civil war, the City of Ruins stands instead as a monument in remembrance of the victims of the civil war and the subsequent violent fascist regime with its systematic repression of human rights. The monument has been transformed from a destination for war tourism to a monument for "Remembrance and Peace". Thus, the purpose of preserving the ruined city has been reversed 180 degrees. In the 80th anniversary of the end of the civil war, Spanish photojournalist Gervasio Sánchez exhibited some of his black and white photographs from the Balkan war in the ruined buildings. Thus, the memorial to the remembrance of the brutality, inhumanity and destruction of the Spanish Civil War broadens its scope as it becomes a universal cry for peace.[19]

Removal of monuments – Raleigh in the South

Back to the question: are there situations where it makes sense to remove monuments from public spaces? This is a question that cannot be answered with a clear yes or no; it depends on the context. In general, you can't change history by removing historical monuments. The desire to remove monuments from public places is often justified by making an ethical assessment of history based on today's premises – and this is basically historically untenable. A distinction must be made between 1) the situation and the context at the time when the remembered events took place and 2) the situation and the context at the time when the monument or memorial was erected, and 3) how we today judge and use history from our contemporary perspective. That said, there may be monuments or memorials that are perceived as downright oppressive by the descendants of the victims, in which case you need to consider how to address this. Is it by contextualizing monuments or memorials through an educational element? Is it by erecting counter-monuments as mentioned above? Or is it by removing the monuments or memorials? We have seen proposals for changing the monuments through construction of a counter-monument, through changing the monument itself, and through the direct removal of the monument or memorial (as, in the simple form of renaming a street). The reason for this was that there were still people alive who remembered the outrageous acts of violence. They were not only forced into collective forgetfulness in the transition from military rule to democracy, but they must also endure the ongoing glorification of the "heroes of fascism". But what about memorials and sculptures that date back generations? Does it make sense to demand their removal for the sake of the descendants of the victims, who may feel offended? Or does it make sense to remove them out of a desire to revolt against a colonial past or slavery, for example?

In his article "Epistemological Crises Made Stone: Confederate Monuments and the End of Memory", theologian Ryan Newson from Campbell University in North Carolina offers an interesting take on how to weigh the pros and cons of removing memorials.[20] His specific starting point is a discussion on how to deal with a local Civil War memorial located at the government building in the city of Raleigh, the capital of

[19] See Mette Haakonsen, "Nogle krige ophører aldrig". *Kristeligt Dagblad* (9th of December 2019).
[20] See Ryan Newson, "Epistemological Crisis Made Stone: Confederate Monuments and the End of Memory". *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* Fall/Winther, 37/2 (2017), pp. 135-151.

North Carolina. Discussion of whether or not to remove the statue had flared up after the massacre in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, 2015, where nine African American churchgoers were killed by a white man. Immediately following this, there was a public demand to not only remove the Confederate flag from official buildings, but also to remove the 75-foot-tall monument to fallen Confederate soldiers located in front of the government building in Raleigh. Remarkably, according to Newson, the desire to remove both the flag and the monument came not only from various groups of human rights activists but also from representatives of the political right. Newson states that there were two distinctly different motives behind this, but that they both were united by a desire to erase the past.

Newson emphasizes that there is a large gap in time between the construction of most Civil War monuments and the event they commemorate: the Civil War (1861-1865). The monuments were primarily built between 1880 and the 1920's. This implies that the monuments had one primary purpose: to support the South's self-understanding as somewhere – where the right to slavery, and the keeping of a distinct hierarchy between the white race and the African Americans, was a cornerstone of society. Newson describes the erection of the many memorials long after the ending of the civil war as a "war of memory".[21] The monuments were erected at a time when there were many lynchings of African Americans in the South. Despite the South having lost the battle for the right to own slaves, they did not obey the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, passed in 1870, which ensured that all citizens of the United States had the right to vote regardless of race, color, or social status (in this case, whether or not they were former slaves).

An example of the South's continued racist stance was the coup in 1898 in the city of Wilmington, North Carolina, where a group of white supremacists overthrew the city government violently, which was made up of both whites and African Americans. The white militant groups rampaged through the African American neighborhoods, killing randomly. The Wilmington massacre was part of a larger campaign in the state of North Carolina, where leading white voices in politics had launched a major smear campaign to remove African Americans' civil rights. What was unique about the city of Wilmington was that African Americans made up more than half of the population and that a thriving middle class of African Americans had emerged, with a wide range of jobs and professions. Politically, a pragmatic alliance between poor whites and African Americans had emerged, which was a further thorn in the side of the white supremacists. The violent takeover of power in Wilmington was carefully planned. Groups of white militias intervened at polling stations to scare African Americans away from voting; leading politicians from the legitimately elected government were given the choice of being deported or killed. The leader of the militant wing of the rebellion, Alfred M. Waddell, was subsequently inaugurated as mayor. Prior to the election, he had issued the following command:

> You are the sons of noble ancestry. You are Anglo-Saxons. You are armed and prepared and you will do your duty.... Go to the polls tomorrow and if you find the negro out voting, tell him to leave the polls. If he refuses, kill him. Shoot him down in his tracks.[22]

[21] See Newson, "Epistemological Crisis Made Stone", p. 140.
[22] See Jeff Wallenfeldt, "Wilmington coup and massacre. United States History [1898]". Encyclopedia Britannica. Online at https://www.britannica.com/event/Wilmington-coup-and-massacre (accessed 2024-02-27).

The many monuments erected *decades after the Civil War* were not so much about honoring the dead soldiers as they were about preserving the South's self-understanding of "Southern virtues". The erection of the monuments coincides with the fact that the South had effectively abolished the requirement for African Americans to have equal civil rights, including the right to vote freely. The South may have lost the war to the North over the right to hold slaves, but in practice they maintained a clear racial division of rights and privileges. Thus, the monuments to the Civil War in the South have primarily served to demonstrate this inequality in social status and human dignity.

The abuse of memorials becomes particularly evident in light of the fact that it was not until almost a hundred years after the massacre that the South's own narrative of the Wilmington massacre was officially disavowed. It had so far been described as a necessary intervention against racial riots initiated by the African American population. In 2000, a nearly 500-page report was published that provided an academically account of the facts surrounding the planning, execution, and aftermath of the massacre.[23]

The many monuments in the South of soldiers in the Civil War appear therefore as a form of silent legitimization of both the South's falsified past and the structural racism that still exists. Movements like Black Life Matters aim to expose and fight against racism in all its various forms, including exposing structural racism. So how is it that the massacre in Charleston led both activists and representatives of the political right to propose the removal of both the Confederate flag and the Civil War monument in Raleigh? Newson argues that activists believe it is necessary to remove the statue in Raleigh (and all other similar statues in the South) to deconstruct the structural racism that still exists. The political right, on the other hand, still according to Newson, does so to remove the reminder of slavery and the South's refusal to grant equal rights to black and white citizens. Thus, the removal of the monument in Raleigh would make it easier for the political right to claim that racism is no longer a structural issue and that it is limited to the wrong actions of individual maniacs. The claim of structural racism would then be dismissed as a form of "outrage hysteria". According to Newson both views are united in the desire to change history through the removal of memorials from public space, which implies a collectively imposed forgetfulness. Newson, on the other hand, advocates for the preservation of at least some of the most significant memorials to the Confederacy and the Civil War. According to Newson the memorials shall serve "as markers of a past that is with us yet" and in this way help us to see the ongoing structural racism in the society.[24] In other words, to claim that there is racial equality in 2017 and 2024 is both an attempt to forget the historical conditions of the Southern revolt and an attempt to deny the continuing impact of racism, visible and invisible, structurally and individually.[25] Newson's response is

[23] See Wallenfeldt, "Wilmington coup and massacre".
[24] Newson, "Epistemological Crisis Made Stone", p. 145
[25] Newson puts it this way: "Thus, my first suggestion - scandalous even to myself - is that some Confederate monuments should remain standing precisely as markers of a past that is with us yet, and that to take all of them down would further tempt white persons to forget the past in order to be redeemed from it, or make white people all the more blind to their inherited privilege. Confederate monuments are unique physical places where the wound we so often hide from ourselves - of race, whiteness, and a legacy of racialized violence - is made manifest, made stone. In a society adept at avoiding the structural power of race and whiteness - that increasingly produces 'racism without racists' - such monuments may serve as physical locations where people can point to race's ongoing power, be reminded that black lives have *not* mattered in the construction of society, and even serve as locations where people can gather antiracist energy in a shared public space.", Newson, Epistemological Crisis Made Stone, p. 145. Since Newson wrote the article, the monument has been

remembrance in an ethical and religious light that appeals to self-awareness and a realization of the white inherited privileged rights, which he describes in a Christian terminology as an appeal to the recognition of sin and judgment.[26]

The demand for contextualization is crucial to Newson's argument, otherwise it could just as easily be said that the keeping of the monuments contributes to the continued falsification of history. The desire to tear down the statues is not simply an expression of historylessness, as a general, superficial analysis might suggest.[27] Removing memorials and monuments may be appropriate in some cases, but it should not be done in an attempt to forget history, let alone to deny its continuing impact. But monuments may be of such a nature that their removal is a crucial step in the effort to achieve equal rights for all citizens, to emphasize democracy as the best possible form of government, or to throw off the yoke of colonialism or totalitarianism. That said, history cannot be changed, neither through the erection or removal of memorials. But the impact of history can be.

Memorials and monuments can both be a steppingstone and a stumble block towards reconciliation. It is vital for the reconciliation process, that it both can keep the future open and accommodate the past. Here it is important how the past is represented in the present. I have described three different ways to engage with monuments and memorials: The construction of counter-monuments (Wittenberg), the transformation of the representation of the monument (Spain), and finally reflections pro et contra about demolishing monuments of the past (Raleigh). Which of these alternatives provides the best road to reconciliation depends on the actual context.

The state, government and civil societies must consider carefully what they want when they erect a monument or establish a memorial. What is the purpose of erecting a monument or a memorial? What does the monument or the memorial represent? Is it a warning (never again), a celebration of a past event (establishing of a founding story), or a "sanctification" of old heroes or statesmen? Does it turn history into mythology? Or is it an expression of the vulnerability of life? All said, if the aim of the monument or the memorial is to underline the process of reconciliation it must be able to be interpreted in the dialectic between a universal and a pluralistic reference. "Plurality is the law of the earth" to quote Hannah Arendt.[28] Plurality must, according to her, both refer to equality and distinction.[29] Thus, reconciliation is a process that must take not only the plurality of perspectives, but also the very plurality of human existence into account. With regards to the plurality of perspectives the establishing of a common narrative is important. Mutual understanding must come together with the willingness to create a new, common story, and in this way also a willingness to make history. Reconciliation is not about winning or being right; it is rather about establishing the balance between unity and diversity. One concrete example of the use of this dialectic in relation to the process of reconciliation is

torn down by angry protesters as an immediate response to the death of George Floyd during a violent police arrest in 2020.

[26] See Newson, "Epistemological Crisis Made Stone", p. 146

[27] An example of such a superficial analysis can be seen in the interview with Professor Frederik Stjernfelt. in *Berlingske Tidende* on April 10, 2021, cf. Blüdnikow 2021. See Bent Blüdnikow, "Filosof og professor: Vi må respektere fortidens valg af mennesker støbt i bronze". *Berlingske Tidende* (10th of April 2021).

[28] See Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* 1, p. 19.

[29] Arendt states this point in the following way: "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same a anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live". See Arendt 2018, *The Human Condition*, p. 8.

Martin Luther King's articulation of the fight for Afro-Americans' civil rights. He kept referring to this as a fight both for humanity (theologically expressed: that all people are created in the image of God) and democracy: that the US Constitution and Declaration of Independence will only be fulfilled when all American citizens have obtained the right to vote and the ability to take part in the democratic process. Thus, it is not "just" a question of obtaining rights for a certain group; the fight for Afro-Americans' human rights is a fight for humanity and democracy as such. Transferred to the use of memorials and monuments, these must also contain this dialectic between equality and distinction, universality and particularity.

Reconciliation is about being able to embrace your past without being paralyzed by it. The truth, or rather, the truths of the past should neither be suppressed nor glorified but understood in its context then and now. Reconciliation must be able to accommodate the past without the past becoming all-determining of the present and the future. Reconciliation must be able to draw strength from the future, in the hope that contradictions can be accommodated without requiring the elimination of the "other". Reconciliation is an alternative to struggle and annihilation. Reconciliation takes place in a continuous movement between present, past, and future – it is a process that never ends, as life, in all its facets, is full of contradictions. Reconciliation processes are a way of dealing with this - on all levels, from individual, to groups, to states, and on the even larger scale, the relationship between God and the human being.

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Reconciliation Across Religious/Political Borders: Westphalian Norms and the Legacy of the Bosnian War

Gary Slater

The question of reconciliation within the legacy of the 1992-1995 conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina presents religious ethicists with a challenge. A promising resource for this challenge lies in the relationship between religious and political borders, which complements the formal, juridical character of transitional justice. The religious/political borders relationship does not apply to all reconciliation-related cases, yet it does bear on cases in which religious/political identities overlap and questions of sovereign territoriality are at issue. The Bosnian conflict not only fulfills these criteria; its legacy reveals it as a harbinger of contemporary changes in norms associated with sovereignty. Because of their background in the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, these changes can be labeled "toxic Westphalianism," in which adherence to Westphalian norms remains, even as its anchoring distinctions have become unmoored. These claims suggest two further contributions to the ethical engagement with reconciliation. First, the historical approach demonstrates the value of tracing reconciliation to its roots. Second, self-conscious attention to religious-political relations carves out a distinct and important role for religious ethics, which is uniquely placed to navigate between internal and external borders of a religious tradition and promote better forms of public and interfaith engagement.

Introduction

Passing along the major pedestrian thoroughfare in central Sarajevo, one encounters a striking sight. It is a border. Beneath a sign that reads, "Sarajevo Meeting of Cultures," a line cuts across the middle of the street that demarcates not only Habsburg and Ottoman Sarajevo, but also Christian and Muslim spaces. On both sides of this line, the atmosphere is friendly and bustling, the spirit welcoming. Yet just as present across the city are the countless reminders of violence and of pain within a still-remembered past. These reminders include not only the curated sites of the memorial to the Srebrenica tragedy or the Museum of Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide, but also buildings and streets whose damage during the Seige of Sarajevo has gone unrepaired. In spite of the settlement of the Dayton Accords that outlined a General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia

and Herzegovina and ended the 1992-1995 war (which is henceforth referred to as the Bosnian conflict) —and in spite of the resilience of countless inspiring individuals[1]—these damages tell of a country that remains unreconciled decades after the conflict's formal resolution.

The city of Münster, the historic capital of Westphalia, makes a different impression. Its atmosphere is one of stability and quiet contentment. Above the gabled houses of the Prinzipalmarkt, the city's main street, rises the spire of the Church of St. Lamberti, which since 2022 has been electrified with a ladder representing an ascension into Heaven. Just below this ladder's base, however, are three cages that contained the bodies of the leaders of the Anabaptist Rebellion of 1535-1536, which was one of the Reformation's bloodiest episodes.[2] The cages have been fixed, preserved, and displayed in this spot across the destructions of the centuries, most notably the city's reduction to rubble in 1944-1945. If these cages speak of historical violence, only 200 meters from this spot lies the Hall of Peace, where the Peace of Westphalia was signed in 1648 as the resolution of the Thirty Years War and the end of Europe's post-Reformation wars of religion.[3] In a manner that would have surprised the signatories of these treaties, which never once mentioned the word "sovereignty," this event gave rise to what is known as the Westphalian System of international relations, a normative order that came to be associated with territory, statecraft, and borders.

Münster and Sarajevo are not cities that one would typically think to compare. Nevertheless, they are connected in ways that shed light on both the religious/political borders relationship and the search for reconciliation following violent conflict. The two cities are linked as respective bookends of the Westphalian System of international borders and sovereignty, even as they also occupy very different positions relative to the idea of Europe. Münster's historical sites speak from the inception of the Westphalian System, whereas Sarajevo's have been a harbinger of its eclipse. Münster lies firmly within Europe; Sarajevo sits near its borders. Out of these cities' shared histories, contrasting geographies, and entwined legacies can be drawn an invaluable resource for reconciliation, which is the relation of religious and political borders to Westphalian sovereignty.

In its most basic sense, Westphalian sovereignty (or 'Westphalianism') refers to a set of normative assumptions about sovereignty that emerged out of the Protestant Reformation and the rise of European colonialism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, incubated the political and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, achieved its apex in shaping empirical conditions to align with its normative ideals from the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, and has been steadily losing this capacity since the 1970s through a complex combination of economic, technological, and migration-related factors bound up within globalization. Among the distinctive features of Westphalianism are territory, boundedness, and mutual recognition among states. More precisely, Westphalianism implies singular and undifferentiated

[1] For a chronicle of such heroic persons, see Zilka Spahić Šiljak's *Shining Humanity: Life Stories of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), which pays tribute to the peacebuilding efforts of eleven women across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[2] For an invaluable local history of this event, see Willem De Bakker, Michael Driedger, and James M. Stayer's 'Städtische Reformation und Täuferbewegung in Münster: Historiographie, Rezeption und Erinnerung in vergleichender Perspektive' (*Westfälische Forschungen* 66, 2016, pp. 39-71).

[3] A similar ceremony also took place in the nearby city of Osnabrück For an authoritative English-language historiography of these treaties, see Derek Croxton's *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013).

sovereignty *within* a given territory; sharply discontinuous and mutually exclusive sovereignties *between* multiple territories—a combination which puts an emphasis on territorial borders.

A particular contribution that the article makes is its demonstration of how reconciliation can be linked both to patterns of historical reception and to relationships among different types of borders. A key claim here is that if reconciliation cannot take place except across some kind of border, however nonliteral, and if every border has a history and specifically a point in the past at which it first emerged, then thinking about the history of borders is essential, not for the sake of erasing a given border altogether so much as reimagining it to be less antagonistic or exclusionary. The article responds to a specific type of need for reconciliation, which is defined as a restoration of trust and repair of a damaged bilateral or communal relationship following a rupture or conflict. More precisely, it aims to disclose ethical resources for reconciliation in a specific type of case. As an exemplar of this type, the Bosnian conflict has a legacy in which religious and political identities are mutually enmeshed and reconciliation remains elusive in spite of the formal structures that have been established on behalf of transitional justice.

The article unfolds across four sections. First, it briefly sketches the legacy of the Bosnian conflict in terms of reconciliation, doing so in a way that calls for complementarity between reconciliation and formal procedures on behalf of transitional justice. Second, it expands the frame of reference by contextualizing the Bosnian conflict in terms of the background, coalescence, and toxification of norms associated with the Westphalian System of sovereignty, territoriality, and membership. Third, it traces an account of the relationship between religious and political borders. The argument here is that religious borders—which is to say the borders within and between religious traditions—have the potential to serve as sites for reconciliation that can be applied politically; on this view, religious ethics occupies a crucial role as placed at the intersection of internal and external borders of a religious tradition. Fourth, in a short conclusion, it speculates on further applications.

The Legacy of the Bosnian Conflict

Reflecting on the legacy of the 1992-1995 Bosnian conflict, one can make three rather non-contentious claims. First, in spite of efforts on behalf of transitional justice, including the establishment of a court to adjudicate war crimes charges, neither the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina nor the country's political system has been truly reconciled.[4] Second, religious factors were integral to the conflict, not only in a localized manner but also in a deeper, more historical sense, and engaging with interreligious dynamics is a relevant and valuable component of the search for reconciliation. Third, in spite of agreement among scholars that transitional justice entails truth-telling measures, reparations for victims, and institutional reform[5], and in spite of efforts to standardize these as the first tier of a two-

[4] Dino Abazović. 'Political reconciliation: Illustration from Bosnia and Herzegovina'. Keynote lecture, Societas Ethica Conference in Sarajevo (24 August 2023).

[5] Pablo De Greiff, 'Transitional justice, security, and justice.' Background paper, World Development Report 2011 (29 October 2010). Online at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/9245/WDR2011_0015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed 18 February 2024), p. 2.

tiered system (with the second tier consisting of less formal measures)[6], approaches to reconciliation are still needed that complement the formal processes of transitional justice. In other words, it is worth exploring reconciliation in a way that complements the formalized work on behalf of transitional justice (which is a difficult practical issue that is understandably dominated by legal and political questions). Although the Bosnian conflict is represented here more as an instructive case than an object of sustained study, there is no question that the larger-scale relations between sovereignty, reconciliation, and borders explored by this article are manifested in its legacy.

Two books bear mentioning that address the role of religion in the Bosnian conflict and explicitly grapple with the topic of reconciliation: R. Scott Appleby's *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* and Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. The books approach their topic from different directions. The perspective of Appleby is etic, i.e., from the outside, which reflects his training as a historian and is reflected in his minimalist definition of religion in terms of the sacred. He is interested in grappling with religion as a public phenomenon that can promote peace as well as incite violence. The perspective of Volf is emic, i.e., from the inside, which reflects his training as a theologian and is expressed, for example, in his interpretation of Trinitarian doctrine on behalf of a theology of embrace.

In spite of their different starting points, Appleby's and Volf's books complement one another in important ways. Both authors, for example, write about the Bosnian war as an instructive and cautionary case in which religious and political identities become indistinguishable in a kind of exclusionary fusion. Both authors interpret the conflict as one in which political forces co-opt and appropriate religious symbols with violent consequences. More generally, both authors understand that *internal* divisions within a religious community have consequences for how the *external* border of that community is enforced or maintained. Both authors therefore see a constructive public role for religion as a force for reconciliation.[7] Appleby argues, for example, that it was precisely the lack of religious literacy on the part of the public or engagement on the part of religious leaders in favor of peace that resulted in the peacebuilding tendencies in the Catholic, Orthodox, or Muslim communities to be neglected.[8] In that regard, Volf's book, as a thoughtful struggle with violence and reconciliation that is also deeply theological from within a life of faith, actually embodies some of what Appleby believes religions are capable of at their best.

As much promise as there is in these two texts as brought together, there is an important historical dimension that is missing from both books. To his credit, Volf recognizes this in an updated edition of *Exclusion and Embrace*, providing some historical perspective. As he puts it, "The whole globe looks now more like Yugoslavia did on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities among its ethnic groups than like Europe did when the Berlin Wall, that symbol of the bipolar world, came down and the European Union was expanding."[9] Yet Volf's analysis of either the present situation in Europe or of Bosnia in

[6] Line Engbo Gissel, 'The standardisation of transitional justice', *European Journal of International Relations* 28:4 (2022), pp. 859-884, at p. 864.

[7] This has continued with more recent works, e.g., R. Scott Appleby, 'The Global Resurgence of Religion: Prospects and Perils for World Peace', *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, edited by Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue, 2022), pp. 373-388.

[8] R. Scott. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), p. 69.

[9] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace, Revised and Updated: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2019), p. xiv.

the 1990s does not extend back beyond the twentieth century, nor for that matter does Appleby's, other than a brief historical overview of the respective historical trajectories of the Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox communities in the Balkan Peninsula. Such an oversight can be corrected through investigation into the history of Europe and the ambivalence of borders.

Bosnia and the Westphalian System

The present section charts the rise and eclipse—or as I more specifically put it, the toxification—of the norms of the Westphalian System as relevant to reconciliation in general and the Bosnian conflict in particular. The argument I make here is that, from their origins in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Westphalian norms—bounded, uniform, mutually-recognized, and mutually-exclusive territorial states—blended politics, religion, membership, and sovereign territoriality in historically specific ways. These norms are historically powerful, and they remain so, even in what I call toxic form.

The idea that Westphalian norms have become toxic is unique and bears unpacking. This phrase, "toxic Westphalianism," expresses the pining for a sense of political space that never truly existed in actuality, yet is now being vehemently defended and exploited to mobilize the attainment of political power, especially as the global order comes decreasingly to resemble the Westphalian normative framework. The term, like "toxic masculinity" relative to masculinity per se, is meant to be understood as a specific—and specifically bad—version of Westphalianism more broadly. Specific characteristics of Toxic Westphalianism include: hardening territorial borders *physically* as a counterpart to "the border" rising in prominence within public discourse *symbolically*; a discrepancy of norms/facts that excludes non-members of the polity from political participation, blurs religion and politics, and transgresses planetary boundaries precisely to the extent that empirical conditions diverge from norms; and the ambivalent appearance within politics of forces that were constitutively excluded from the political in Westphalian sovereignty at the time of its formation: religious, colonized, and nonhuman agencies; this is ambivalent because, in spite of the liberative potential of these forces, they risk being coopted by—or even furthering—political antagonisms.

To the extent that the claim that the current period is characterized by "Toxic Westphalianism" is innovative, the innovation lies in how it attends to the changing dynamics among anchoring distinctions essential to the Westphalian System (religion/politics, Europe/non-Europe, human/nonhuman), which have become unsettled in recent decades through a complex combination of economic, ecological, technological, and geopolitical forces, even as Westphalian norms have retained their hold in the popular imagination on questions of sovereignty, territory, and belonging.[10] For an

[10] This is a claim for which there is considerable scholarly support. For a study that focuses on the colonial dimension, see, for example, the notion of 1492 and a massive "exclusion" in Enrique Dussel's *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*. Translated by M.D. Barber (New York: Continuum, 1995). For an approach that opens onto ecological questions and philosophy of science, see Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). For a richly detailed global systems approach, see Saskia Sassen's *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). For a particularly challenging corroboration, see Carl Schmitt's *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2006). Schmitt's account shares certain traits with the account given here, including a sense that an older order (nomos) has been eclipsed, an order in which a political theology remained embedded and which depended on a sharp

analogy from moral philosophy, consider Alasdair MacIntyre's "disquieting suggestion" that begins his book, *After Virtue*. MacIntyre describes a scenario in which the natural sciences have fallen into some catastrophe and then been subject to an effort of reconstruction. MacIntyre's suggestion is that discourses on morality have suffered some such fracturing. "What we possess," he suggests, "are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived," even as "[w]e possess simulacra[…]and we continue to use many of the key expressions."[11] In using the term "toxic Westphalianism," I am suggesting that something like this has occurred with respect to the vocabularies of sovereignty, territoriality, and borders associated with the Westphalian System.

The idea of toxic Westphalianism can only be understood relative to the historical arc of Westphalian sovereignty from its origins in early-modern Europe.[12] Fundamental to the historical background from which the Westphalian System emerged were two world-historical events: the onset of the age of discovery and intercontinental European colonization beginning in the late fifteenth century and the Protestant Reformation and subsequent wars of religion in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In both cases, fundamental questions of religious membership, political identity, and sovereign territoriality were being worked out, often at an enormous cost in human life. The date of 1492, for example, is significant for two reasons, both of which have been captured by José Casanova. On one hand, 1492 "marks the decision of the most 'Catholic Kings' to expel Jews and Muslims from Spain in order to create a religiously homogeneous realm."[13] On the other hand, the year "is also the symbolic marker of the beginning of the European global colonial expansion initiated by the Iberian monarchies."[14] These developments represent a significant step from pre-modern to modern borders, in that modern bordering has always existed within a global context that reaches well beyond Europe. Modern bordering has also entailed the capacity of the state to recognize political membership, often in ways that overlap with cultural identities, including religious ones.

Another step from medieval toward Westphalian norms came in 1555, which was the date of the Peace of Augsburg, an attempt at a political settlement in the wake of the fracturing of Christendom in northern Europe brought about by the Protestant Reformation. The Peace of Augsburg sought to resolve the social upheaval—and considerable violence—that had followed in Central Europe in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. Particularly significant for the Augsburg peace was the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, which assigned membership in a given religious denomination (at the time, only Catholic and Lutheran options were considered) to a given territory based on whichever identity was professed by the ruling figure in that territory. What makes this significant in the story of the rise of modern bordering is that the respective states' interests in internal homogeneity, or at least the power to seek such homogeneity, existed alongside an intricate patchwork of political entities in close proximity with one another.

Europe/non-Europe distinction. However, Schmitt is no friend of the notion of reconciliation, seeing as he does the distinction between friend and enemy as the *sine qua non* of the political.

[11] *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Third Edition (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), p. 1.

[12] This section of the article revisits arguments developed within my monograph, *Our Common, Bordered Home: Laudato si' and the Promise of an Integrated Migration-Ecological Ethics* (Leiden: Brill, 2024); see pp. 64-68.

[13] José Casanova, *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics: The Modern System of Classification.* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 18.

[14] Casanova, *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics*, p. 18.

The date that, understandably, has most been associated with the Westphalian System is 1648, which was the year that the treaties that brought an end to the Thirty Years War were signed in the towns of Münster and Osnabrück. The significance of these treaties, which are often known as the Peace of Westphalia, with regard to modern sovereignty has been contested by historians.[15] Even though such criticisms are well taken, it is nevertheless possible to identify developments germinal for modern sovereignty in association with this date. Matthew Longo sums up the legacy of Westphalia as "important first and foremost in establishing sovereignty over territory as an organizing principle of the system of states –i.e., the 'territorialization' of space."[16] As already noted, this legacy is also bundled up with a set of deeply ingrained norms, including the uniform distribution of sovereignty within a given territory, mutual recognition on the part of neighboring states, and, ideally, a kind of geometric purity of borders as lines that divide territory into clean and easily recognizable zones.

For the sake of historical accuracy, it is important to point out that at no time—not in 1648, not now—have real-world conditions matched the norms bundled together under the Westphalian heading. Initially, however, the settlement of 1648 and the stability ushered in in its aftermath did bring about an *increase* in those conditions. This is in contrast to the present situation, in which conditions are moving *away* from said norms. This shift is an important and comparatively proximate background to the claim that Westphalianism has become toxic. This transition can be charted in an evolution on the part of key distinctions that anchored Westphalian sovereignty from its origins in early modernity.

Three distinctions, in particular, emerged in the decades after 1648 and became bound up with Westphalian assumptions about modern territory and politics, two of which are especially relevant for present purposes: Europe/non-Europe and politics/religion.[17] Regarding the former distinction, Europe/non-Europe can be transposed in the form of a parallel distinction: border/frontier. The word *border*, which has a Saxon etymology, suggests "a place of friction or meeting where alterity is negotiated." As Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary points out, "[B]orders are a kind of space where the relationship with otherness can be developed in such a way as to allow for identity-building and place-making."[18] *Frontier*, derived from Latin, is very different, having "its roots in the 'front'" and attesting to the "rivalries and battles that took place before linear devices known as boundaries were in use."[19] At the risk of oversimplification, at the moment the European political order was settling into an equilibrium of mutually

[15] For example, according to Andreas Osiander, the Peace of Westphalia "did not establish the 'Westphalian system' based on the sovereign state" so much as confirm and perfect a "system of mutual relations among autonomous political units"('Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth', *International Organization* 55:2, 2001, pp. 251-287, at p. 270).
[16] Matthew Longo, *The Politics of Borders: Sovereignty, Security, and the Citizen After 9/11* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 47.
[17] The third key distinction is human/nonhuman. For more on the relation of this distinction to Westphalian sovereignty, see Rafi Youatt's *Interspecies Politics: Nature, Borders, States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020).
[18] Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary, 'Boundaries and borders', *Handbook of Political Geography*, edited by Agnew, John et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), pp. 13-25, at p. 2.
[19] Amilhat Szary, 'Boundaries and borders', p. 2.

recognized states via borders, these same states were competing for territory via the frontiers of expanding colonial empires.[20]

As for the religion/politics distinction, Derek Croxton has called the 1648 Peace of Westphalia the "last Christian peace," not because religion ceased to be a factor in European politics, but because "[n]ever again would religious dissention be the driving force behind a major European conflict."[21] As Andreas Osiander has noted, the 1648 Peace "mandated a certain amount of legal protection for the adherents of minority faiths,"[22] which might at first seem like a diminishment of state powers. However, the removal—or perhaps more accurately, the sublimation—of religion from the decisive role it had played in political identity *enhanced* state powers. This is because the state's power to determine its subjects' status was now removed of a powerful intermediary, a major step toward modern forms of state-sanctioned political belonging within a territory. William Cavanaugh has corroborated this claim, arguing that even the 1555 Peace of Augsburg was a sign of dominance of secular rulers over the Church.[23]

A key claim of this article is that a link between Bosnia and Westphalia exists in what I call "toxic Westphalianism," the recognition of which is an essential step toward realizing the potential of religious borders as a resource for reconciliation. As argued above, the outward appearance of Westphalian norms persists in public life even as the Europe/non-Europe and religion/politics distinctions have become confounded and blurred. Regarding religion/politics, for example, there has been a resurgence in recent years of religious populism in politics that transcends religious traditions.[24] When interacting with the persistent norms of the Westphalian system, the capacity of religions to motivate tribalism and exclusion is clear.[25] With regard to Europe/non-Europe, at the outset of the "age of discovery" and for a long time thereafter, the prevailing attitude among Europeans toward non-European territories, above all the Americas, was one of frontiers, a vacuum, a *terra nullius* to be filled. The divergence between frontier and border, non-Europe and Europe, was not only driven by the same forces, and thus profoundly intertwined. Now, this distinction is becoming less clear. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, "we stand today on the threshold of an age when borders are becoming frontiers again."[26] In the midst of such a widespread sense of a loss of control, sovereignty

[20] For further nuance on different phases of colonial expansion in view of a pre/post-1648 distinction, see Walter Mignolo's *Local Histories/Global Designs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
[21] Croxton, *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace*, p. 345.
[22] Osiander, 'Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth', p. 272.
[23] William T. Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State', *Modern Theology* 11:4 (1995), pp. 397-420, at p. 400. For an expansion of this claim, see Cavanaugh's *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[24] For an exploration of these developments across diverse perspectives, see Ulrich Schmiedel and Joshua Ralston's co-edited volume, *The Spirit of Populism: Political Theologies in Polarized Times* (Leiden: Brill Press, 2021).
[25] This is evidenced by the "Rosary at the Borders," which was an event in Poland in October 2017 in which thousands marched along the Polish national borders in defense of a "Catholic Poland" against an "Islamic invasion." For further exploration of this event, see Valentina Napolitano's 'Francis, a Criollo Pope', *Religion and Society* 10:1 (2019), pp. 63-80, at p. 74.
[26] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Crises of Civilization: Exploring Global and Planetary Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 232.

becomes a spectacle that must be performed, and borders become the prime theater of this performance.[27]

That the contemporary turn toward toxic Westphalianism was prefigured in the 1992-1995 Bosnian conflict is evidenced in how that conflict confounded both the Europe/non-Europe and religion/politics distinctions. This claim finds support from an essay from political theorist Étienne Balibar, "At the Borders of Europe." Reflecting on the Bosnian conflict in relation to Europe/non-Europe, for example, Balibar notes, "[O]n the one hand, the Balkans are a part of Europe and, on the other, they are not." [28] As he puts it, "Either Europe will recognize in the Balkan situation not a monstrosity grafted to its breast, a pathological 'aftereffect' of underdevelopment or of communism, but rather an effect and effect of its own history[…].[29] Regarding religion/politics, Balibar links the Bosnian conflict to the intermingling of religious and secular identities, albeit indirectly through the notion of borders. For Balibar, "the zones called peripheral, where secular and religious cultures confront one another, where differences in economic prosperity become more pronounced and strained, constitute the melting pot for the formation of a people[…].[30] By the assumptions bound up with Westphalian norms, interreligious relations are to be politically submerged and sidelined in a world in which the norms of politics, at least outwardly, remain defined by sovereign and territorially bounded nation-states. However, in the Bosnian conflict, not only were religious and political identities imbricated in empirically documented and challenging ways, but the very notion of sovereignty arguably manifested what theologian Catherine Keller has referred to as a "largely hidden theology always at play, for good or for ill, *within* the political."[31] In its demonstration of the unmooring of the Europe/non-Europe and religion/politics distinctions that had anchored Westphalian normativity, the Bosnian conflict was a harbinger.

There is an argument to be made, however, that if religious borders are foundational to the normative order of the Westphalian system and its achievement of political borders, then there is a way to rethink religious borders with political consequences that is relevant for reconciliation. To articulate this argument, it is necessary to explore the relationship between religious and political borders at greater depth.

Borders: Religious and Political

One finds, in political borders, the *need* for reconciliation, in religious borders, the *capacity* for reconciliation, and, in the mutual ambivalence of both borders types, a *connective point* by which reconciliation in one category of bordering can be extended to and applied in the other. To support this claim, it is necessary to be clear on how the respective types of borders are defined, and also how they can influence one another.

At its most general, a *border* is simply a signified distinction between two things. *Religious* borders are points at which the contrasts between or within religious traditions

[27] See, for example, Wendy Brown's *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[28] Étienne Balibar, *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 4.
[29] Balibar, *We, The People of Europe?*, p. 6.
[30] Balibar, *We, The People of Europe?,* p. 1.
[31] Catherine Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), p. 10. See also Robert Yelle's *Sovereignty and the Sacred: Secularism and the Political Economy of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

become explicit and self-conscious to the members of the cultures in question or third parties, giving rise to narratives that reinforce said contrasts. *Political* borders are demarcations between neighboring sovereign territories, in which sovereignty is typically understood in adherence to the norms of mutual recognition, mutual exclusion, and uniform distribution across each territory in question. There are also three basic points worth making as to how borders are to be understood.

First, borders represent both an analytical opportunity and moral challenge. As Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson write, "Insofar as it serves at once to make divisions and establish connections, the border is an epistemological device, which is at work whenever a distinction between subject and object is established."[32] However, as Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary also admits, "[A]ny kind of place where an object and a subject are to be thought together is a theater of unequal relations and domination processes."[33] This puts borders in the odd position of being both relevant to ethics as a problem but also beneficial to ethics as a resource. Either way, they demand ethical attention.

Second, engaging with borders opens onto norms, communities, and practices and can reveal a lot about how communities think. As Richard B. Miller writes with respect to Christianity, for example, "Boundaries are important because they define an order of being and value, along with corresponding attitudes that should structure the Christian life."[34] Normatively, it is important to point out in this regard that both forms of borders have a normative significance that exceeds their descriptive significance.[35] This is the case because borders are constitutively semiotic, in that the meaning of borders lies in how they signify something to someone who interprets them. This means that they are bound up with all kinds of assumptions.

Third, it is possible to think across multiple distinctions, multiple types of borders *together*, exploring how one distinction affects another. One can do this deductively, in thinking through what follows in bringing logical pairs together, or inductively, in seeking to taxonomize things observed from the world. In such reasoning, the logical operations of metaphor and metonymy both play valuable roles.[36] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson capture the distinction between metaphor and metonymy as "different *kinds* of processes."[37] As they put it, "Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving one thing in terms

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[32] Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (New York: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 16.
[33] Amilhat Szary, 'Boundaries and Borders', p. 10.
[34] Richard B. Miller, 'Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical', *Boundaries and Justice: Diverse Ethical Perspectives*, edited by David Miller and Sohail H. Hasmi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 15-37, at p. 16.
[35] John Thatamanil, 'Do religions have borders? Geography, porosity, and the question of appropriation', *TheoPodcast*, Universität Münster (20 September 2023), online at https://www.uni-muenster.de/FB2/aktuelles/ics/TheoPodcastJohnThatamanil.html (accessed 20-09-2023).
[36] For a comprehensive survey of applications for borders in nonliteral forms of reference, see Dina Krichker's 'Making Sense of Borderscapes: Space, Imagination and Experience', *Geopolitics* 26:4 (2019), pp. 1224-1242. For an exploration of borders' metonymic dimension with specific considerations for religion, see Hans-Joachim Sander's 'Difference and Contested Caricatures: Reaching out for Religious Complexity through Metonymies', *Religion and Difference: Contested Contemporary Issues*, edited by T. Wyller, D. Pezzoli-Olgiati, S. Knauss, H-G. Heimbrock, H-J. Sander, & C. Danani (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), pp. 91-115. For a rich theoretical engagement with the links between the rhetorical and phenomenological dimensions of borders, see Thomas Nail's *Theory of the Border* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[37] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 36.

of another, and its primary function is understanding." [38] Metonymy, on the other hand, "has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another."[39] These points apply to political and religious borders, which are metaphorical relative to each other—albeit with an obvious nonmetaphorical dimension for political borders that is not present in religious borders—and metonymic relative to dynamics that exist in history, culture, and politics.

From the point of view of promoting reconciliation, the normativity of both types of borders is ambivalent, which is to say that both political or religious borders can be either obstacles to or resources for reconciliation depending on the context. Marianne Heimbach-Steins, for example, in her essay "The Ambivalence of Borders and the Challenge of an Ethics of Liminality," frames political borders as an agent of both connection and division regarding political participation and social membership.[40] As for religion, Appleby's *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, in addition to its relevance specifically to the Bosnian case, frames religion as ambivalent, in that it is capable of stimulating powerful impulses to death as well as life, peace as well as violence.[41] Although Appleby doesn't explicitly apply the notion of ambivalence to religious *borders*, the many detailed cases in his book, describe conditions that easily meet the definition of religious borders given in this article.

Even if the normativity of each type of borders can plausibly be described as ambivalent, it is nevertheless the case that the two borders types are not exactly ambivalent in the same way. To put it simply, the ambivalence of religious borders can be reframed as an unambiguously positive good in a way that is not possible for political borders. In the words of the theologian John Thatamanil, it is possible "not to regard religious diversity begrudgingly as a reality that must be navigated but as a promise to be received."[42] Political borders, by contrast, however successful they may be for maintaining order, exist in the shadow of the violence that characterizes the origins of political sovereignty. As Mark Salter has put it, "The border naturalises the violence that was necessary to create it."[43] This is not to say that political borders *only* represent something normatively bad; as noted, they are ambivalent, and so they can take better or worse forms. The point is simply that it is much more difficult to make an unambiguously positive case for political borders than it is for religious borders, which, however likely they may be to generate acts of violence, lack such a categorical connection to violence.

In claiming that religious borders can be normatively defended in ways not possible for political borders, this claim is meant to apply exclusively to religious perspectives about other religious perspectives. It is *not* meant to apply to religious perspectives on political borders. Religious perspectives on political borders matter, of course, but these do not escape the critical claims about political borders made just

[38] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 36.
[39] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 36.
[40] Marianne Heimbach-Steins, 'The Ambivalence of Borders and the Challenge of an Ethics of Liminality', *Living With(out) Borders: Catholic Theological Ethics on the Migrations of Peoples*, edited by A.M. Brazal and M.T. Dávila (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), pp. 236-245.
[41] Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, pp. 28-30.
[42] John Thatamanil, *Circling the Elephant. A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), p. 23. For a comparatively tragic perspective on religious borders, see Daniel Boyarin's *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
[43] Mark B. Salter, 'Theory of the /: The Suture and Critical Border Studies', *Geopolitics* 17:4 (2012), pp. 734-755, at p. 735.

preceding. From an ethical perspective, many contemporary political borders are not only rendered indefensible by current conditions and practices—a point which would apply to religious violence, too—but their link to sovereign violence is too ineradicable.[44] There is a difficult point embedded here, which is not just that religious borders have the capacity to be normatively positive. It is also that, as religious borders, they can exist, at least in part, external to the violence at the historical/geographic edges of sovereignty—or in Carl Schmitt's terms, as outside of the friend/enemy distinction that defines the political. Precisely because of this externality to political borders, religious borders have the capacity to promote reconciliation in ways that trespass across a sharp religious/political distinction. This is not to make a normative claim that a religious perspective should *dictate* political borders and control political spaces in the manner of a kind of pre-modern theocracy or a dictatorial sovereign along the lines of Schmitt. Nor is it to express some kind of longing for a return to a pre-Westphalian version of Christendom, which is neither possible nor desirable. Rather, the normative claim here is that religious borders can and should *serve* an interdisciplinary and public conversation in which a variety of coalition partners can work together and build relationships.

There is thus a potential role here for interreligious relationships as a resource for reconciliation. Consider Thomas Brady, Jr.'s point that "the keys to possible global community in the future lie in the history not of states but of religions," which smartly takes care to refer to "religions" in the plural.[45] As with Brady's possible global community, the possibility for reconciliation may be real, but its actualization is by no means assured. According to Saskia Sassen, "out of the partial unbundling of what had been dominant and centripetal normative orders," i.e., territorial sovereignty at the heart of the Westphalian System, "normative orders such as religion reassume great importance where they had been confined to distinct specialized spheres arising into multiple particularized segmentations."[46] One of the implications of toxic Westphalianism is that the religion/politics distinction has become unmoored, which suggests manifold possibilities for how religion can influence politics. If the apparent trajectories of global events are any guide, many of these possibilities do not promote reconciliation.

In this atmosphere, religious ethics becomes especially important as a field not only positioned between the world and religious community but perhaps able to tilt toward the positive side of ambivalence in a way that actually has consequences for society on behalf of transitional justice and reconciliation. As Volf puts it, "Differences among identity struggles are often tied to ambivalence in the process of boundary maintenance, specifically to the blurry lines in boundary maintenance in the mode of other-rejecting exclusion and in the mode of identity-constituting differentiation."[47] Religious ethicists are uniquely placed to engage with a given faith tradition to find resources for engaging outsiders to promote reconciliation.

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[44] For a political critique of contemporary borders, see Harsha Walia's *Border and Rule: Global Capitalism, Migration, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism.* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021). For a religious critique, see Justin P. Ashworth's 'Who Are Our People? Toward a Christian Witness Against Borders', *Modern Theology* 34:4 (2018), pp. 495-518. For a nuanced set of religious perspectives on political borders, see Daisy L. Machado, Bryan Turner, and Trygve Wyller's volume *Borderland Religion: Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope, and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

[45] Brady, 'Limits of Religious Violence in Early Modern Europe', p. 151.

[46] Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 423.

[47] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace,* pp. xv-xvi.

There are two ways in which religious ethicists might apply the aforementioned lessons on borders. The first is to investigate interreligious dynamics in view of deep histories. An example of this approach can be found in the work of rabbinic theologian Peter Ochs, who is a founding figure in the interfaith movement Scriptural Reasoning. In terms of investigating deep histories, Ochs's work demonstrates what has been called *reparative reasoning*.[48] Nicholas Adams has described Ochs's approach in this group as the "conjunction of scientific inquiry, historical investigation, and ethnographic description," in which these disciplines respectively fashion hypotheses, investigate traditions, and engage practices.[49] This involves tracing histories of damaging logics, often binary logics, back to embedded and inherited points of divergence, and rethinking, from within a tradition, these damaging logics in light of contemporary consequences. By looking back into these histories, the possibility exists for moving out of seemingly intractable divides in the present. Ochs has applied to the task of peacebuilding between religious traditions in politically sensitive contexts—South Africa, for example.[50] Important in Ochs's approach to peacebuilding is the retaining of religious difference or, in other words, religious boundaries. As he puts it in "The Possibilities and Limits of Inter-Religious Dialogue":

> Inter-religious peace cannot be won by suppressing inter-religious difference. Whether attempted through prudent speeches or by force of arms, the suppression of inter-religious difference introduces the seeds of violence rather than peace, because religions live in and through their differences."[51]

Ochs's work in peacebuilding complements his background in Scriptural Reasoning (SR), which is an interfaith movement that furnishes a critical method that is clear and falsifiable while remaining sensitive to the inherited habits by which communities address the world. He describes the practices of SR in a manner with real resonance with Appleby, in that participants come to understand that the way they interpret the signs of their religious faith is not the only way one can see things; this, in turn, makes them a bit less hostile toward others outside of their specific religious culture. Ochs lays out a relationship between a state of suffering ("the condition of someone who cannot fix some everyday problem"), a healer ("someone who, after engaging the sufferer in dialogue, can eventually *hear* in the sufferer's report symptoms of an identifiable problem"), and hearing (a critical component of healing, the sum of perception, attention, and hypothesis, i.e., diagnosis, on the part of the healer and trust on the part of the sufferer).[52] His emphasis on *hearing* and *healing* suggests the ability to bring a moral vision into specific situations, address specific obstacles, and realize specific opportunities.

A second key contribution from religious ethicists concerns the intersection between internal and external boundaries with respect to a given tradition. If, as has been

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[48] Nicholas Adams, 'Reparative Reasoning', *Modern Theology* 24:3 (2008), pp. 447-457. This is an instructive contrast to Miroslav Volf's *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2021), which makes a stronger case for forgetting along with remembering as part of the processes of reconciliation.

[49] Adams, 'Reparative Reasoning', p. 450.

[50] See Peter Ochs's *Religion Without Violence* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2019).

[51] Peter Ochs, 'The Possibilities and Limits of Inter-Religious Dialogue', *The Oxford Handbook in Religion, Peace, and Conflict Resolutions*, edited by R. Scott Appleby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 488-515, at p. 509.

[52] Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, p. 253.

claimed, one type of border can affect another, then it follows that how a member of a given faith tradition approaches the divisions within their own faith bears also on how the external boundaries of that faith are perceived. One contribution that the religious ethicist can make is to identify different tendencies and maximize those that best contribute to connection-across-boundaries rather than insularity and suspicion. For example, to name one tradition, Christianity, there is a long history in putting intersecting distinctions at the center of doctrinal formulations. Richard B. Miller has been explicit about the ways in which boundaries of one sort affect those of another sort within the Christian imagination, albeit not so much with internal and external boundaries as "metaphysical" and "geographic" boundaries. As Miller puts it, "How Christians assess territorial boundaries is largely a function of how they conceive the boundary that distinguishes creation from its Creator."[53] Especially helpful commentary in this regard comes from Appleby. For example, Appleby has pointed out that it was precisely the internal diversity of Roman Catholicism that brought about a pivotal shift, most notably at Vatican II but extended beyond it, in the Church's relationship with the world, away from retrenchment and resistance to modernity and toward the support of human rights and democratic politics.[54]

Conclusion

It is important to take a measured view of the applications of an approach to reconciliation by way of the religious/political borders distinction. Even with respect to Bosnia, the pragmatic question of what kind of difference this might make for reconciliatory practices requires considerable further investigation. Moreover, with regard to the question of transitional justice and the claim, which was averred at the outset of this article, that the approach shown here is a complement to the formal processes of transitional justice, it must be acknowledged that toxic Westphalianism, if an accurate depiction of contemporary trends in sovereignty, raises implications that could challenge the "liberal-cosmopolitan justice" the governs the standardization of transitional justice, which has been, as Line Engbo Gissel puts it. "informed by the imperative of criminal accountability, the centrality of individual culpability, the benefits of truth and acknowledgment, the importance of victim participation, the possibility of reconciliation and the existence of a common humanity."[55] Examining the implications of this claim while also tracing the concrete evidence for toxic Westphalianism would amount to a much larger project.

Nevertheless, if toxic Westphalianism raises challenges for the thesis of this article, it also suggests the possibility of further application to cases beyond the Bosnian conflict. Granted, Bosnia is a specific case in which being at the edge of Europe and bound up with Westphalian norms, as well as its interreligious dimension, represents a unique set of circumstances. However, further possibilities to pursue do arise. Amidst contemporary cases of partial relevance, such as the borderlands between the United States and Mexico (which manifests an unmooring of the borders/frontiers distinction but is not overtly interreligious) or India and Pakistan (which exists against a background of both colonial exclusion and interreligious violence, but which is also a vital site of encounter), especially

[53] Richard B. Miller, 'Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical', *Boundaries and Justice: Diverse Ethical Perspectives*, edited by David Miller and Sohail H. Hasmi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 15-37, at p. 16.
[54] Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, pp. 42-54.
[55] Gissel, 'The standardisation of transitional justice', p. 871.

germane is the war in Ukraine, which lacks the interreligious but has been shaped by an implicit theology and questions of deep ambivalence about Europe and sovereignty. The need for creativity in pursuing reconciliation will remain.

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Book Review: Patel, Leigh. *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability.* Routledge, 2016, 120 pp.

Marko Vučković

Leigh Patel's work on decolonizing educational spaces provides a glimpse into an important transcendental motif in decolonial studies: that decolonization must be visible in the structure of being as such. I argue in this book review that the specific ontological picture provided, what I call a "Decolonial Deleuzean" view, implies a one-and-many relationship characterizable by what one scholar has called a "vegetal" ontology, the human social coordinate system in the metaphor of "the plant that is not one." I argue further that this view fails to provide a believable picture of specifically human decolonial belonging in its ontological register by claiming that the plant metaphor provides an inappropriate one-and-many relationship to actual human spaces. "Decolonial Deleuzean" education therefore reintroduces the very exclusivity criterion it is designed to eliminate. I provide, finally, a psychoanalytical correction, one which is compatible with the decolonial project, but strictly speaking, not the Deleuzean one.

Preamble

Leigh Patel must be credited with making two wise ontological moves at the outset of her work *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*.[1] These correspond to dismissals of two analytical modalities particular to the "postmodern" orientation, deconstruction and post-structuralism. Both are bypassed on the same grounds, namely in favor of speaking in a more affirmative, reconstructive dialect within a broadly postmodern set of languages.[2]

Post-structuralism is not so much argued against as it is leap-frogged in favor of a (correctly) superior positionality in a Deleuzean framework which, as has been argued in other places, corrects the major malfunction of Foucauldian historicism. Via *reductio ad absurdum*—in its project of providing totalizing descriptive and mechanistic reductions of

[1] Leigh Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability* (New York: Routledge, 2016), *passim*.
[2] In this, Patel shares the *modus operandi* of key figures of decolonial thought. See Sara de Jong, "Writing Rights: Suturing Spivak's Postcolonial and de Souza Santos' Decolonial Thought," *Postcolonial Studies* 25:1 (2022), p. 91.

the human body and activity, thus displacing the human from the center point of thought and being—it ultimately re-inscribes the human as "the measure of all things,"[3] the very component whose centrality it is designed to erase. Foucault, in other words, reintroduces a deeper, humanistic transcendental reference point at the very origin of thought and being—including transcendentalizing the thought of the transcendental itself. What is needed, as an adjustment, is a Deleuzean maneuver whereby being as such is diffused into local "assemblages"[4] which as a result also diffuse the (fictitious) hierarchical essentialisms common to human collective complexes into a fluidity which does not itself have the character of the human. Patel must be credited for declaring allegiance to this far more sophisticated line of thought.

And against deconstruction Patel offers a promising argument along much the same lines. Patel implies a battery of objections, ranging from deconstruction's (inadvertent) entrenchment of hierarchies by parasitically playing on their "reversals," to its reliance on what can be termed "metanarratives of violence" in its essentialization of not only binaries but also irreducible antagonisms between any given oppositional pairings.

What's needed instead—as Patel points out so clearly—is a (reconstructive) privileging of presence over absence to help recover loss among subjugated populations in colonial historical contexts, constructing a place not only beyond this loss but also beyond any irreducible antagonisms between subaltern groups and their colonial visitors.[5]

Reconstruction of Patel's Position

Patel's project promises this recovery. Patel's overall position—at the level of a robust political ontology—can be compared to the famous uBuntu formula "I am because we are,"[6] to be understood here as a privileging of autochthonous repudiations of binary oppositionality and the affirmation of ontological "togetherness." The basic thesis here is that we cannot isolate the individual as such because we cannot even individuate the collective itself as an itemizable unit at the level of conceptual analysis.[7]

The failure of itemizing the collective should be understood as a trademark of an ontology whereby roughly the following three semiotic criteria are exemplified. Given this failure, what follows is: (i) the instability and ungroundedness of the identity of singular, individual object, whose identity instead depends on an intuited abstraction from its organic place in a historical community; (ii) the possibility that even a well-defined formal system characterizing the totality of such (intuited) individuals might not be able to

[3] For this line of argumentation see A. Kiarina Kordela, *Being, Time, Bios: Capitalism and Ontology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), pp. xv, 14.
[4] Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, p. 5.
[5] These points can be distilled from fragmentary comments in Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, pp. 9, 51, 89f. See also Christine Rogers Stanton, "Crossing Methodological Borders: Decolonizing Community-Based Participatory Research," *Quantitative Inquiry* 20:5 (2014), p. 581, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1988), p. 296., who touch on these points as well.
[6] See Joel Mukwedeya, "Peace and Harmony through uBuntu in a Globalized World," *Comparative Education for Global Citizenship, Peace and Shared Living through uBuntu*, edited by N'Dri Thérèse Assié-Lumumba, Michael Cross, Kanishka Bedi and Sakunthala Ekanayake (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2022) for more on this.
[7] Patel makes use of Karen Barad's notion of "intra-actions" to make this point. See Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, pp. 11, 25f., 37.

guarantee the concrete identity of a single object within that system in a way which allows that individual to be coherently decontextualized from that system; and (iii) the possibility that all individuals have a "textuality" which is radically dependent on linguistic, historical, communal, traditional, and experiential contexts.[8]

Patel's position should therefore be linked to this broader project connecting ontology, politics, and mathematical set theory to the specifically decolonial attempts to recover the place of the subaltern in the "flow" of the currents in the Deleuzean ocean. We can call it a "decolonial Deleuzean" project.[9]

Sticking Point(s)

Before any substantive critique is set out in the following section, it would be appropriate to mention the points of learning for my own part which have resulted from engaging with Patel's text. This learning centers around the way in which the decolonial project injects *time* into the static and oppositional complexes of deconstructivist and post-structuralist modes of re-presentation. Time, given the picture of political ontology provided in Patel's project, must be seen no longer as a static, spatially itemized set of coordinate points, but as a common, communal offering, taking place prior to any set of relations between nodal points in a social space operating in time.

The implications for classroom assessment here are clear but overwhelming—and as such impractical—given the extent to which it suggests a restructuring of traditional educational spaces. If time is unable to be coherently itemized (deductively implying that students cannot be either), then assessments must be "grown," rather than scheduled, in an organic context tailored to the student and responsive to exactly no pressure from external and institutional timelines. A suggestion of this sort, privileging as it does the organic relationship between student and teacher, student and student, and each as diffuse points within a transformed institutional setting, can be seen in Patel's comments on her own students which emphasize these relational priorities rather than institutional prerequisites.[10]

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[8] This point is made in Vladimir Tasić, *Mathematics and the Roots of Postmodern Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 65. Interestingly, it is credited to the 19th and 20th century mathematician Henri Poincaré. Caution should be given here, however, since this intuitionist position does not on its own answer to the objections against the objections to deconstruction and post-structuralism given in the previous section precisely because points (i)-(iii) *are themselves* the coordinates of the postmodern turn as such. For this, see Tasić, *Postmodern Thought*, pp. 93ff., 144. It does however serve as a common starting point between the properly decolonialist position of Patel and the already bypassed positions of Foucault and Derrida in favor of Deleuze. Concerning the Poincaré triplet, the notion of "ethnomathematics" in Ylva Jannok Nutti, "Decolonizing Indigenous Teaching: Renewing Actions through a Critical Utopian Action Research Framework." *Action Research* 16:1 (2018), *passim* is helpfully expressed by its characterization.

[9] This is a misnomer, but it is the best I can get done in this short space. Spivak claims that Deleuze is right to seek out pre-representational and non-binary forms of theory but has the tendency to collapse the difference between representation as a *practice* and representation as a *signpost*. He thus ends up only dismantling the logic of semiotic representation but leaves unfinished—even unconceptualized—the project of dismantling various metastases of democratic political representationalism: "Since theory [for Deleuze] is also only 'action,' the theoretician [i.e. Deleuze] does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group." See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" p. 275. What I have in mind in the "decolonial Deleuze," roughly the figure metonymizing the position of ontological monism *plus* a kind of radical emancipatory politics consistent with Spivak's criticism—the kind of picture we get with Patel and others.

[10] Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, pp. 62ff.

Patel also applies this idea fruitfully to critiquing the standard notion of "social justice," claiming that it fails to dilate the time dimension and in turn ends up standing in as "a proxy for heteropatriarchal racist logics of individuality"[11]—logics which are identified precisely by their use of static oppositional matrices already aptly dealt with in the first section above. This aspect of Patel's work is refreshing and worth emulating, especially when measured against the post-structuralist and deconstructive failures: social justice as such is hijacked territory, repurposed to provide new rationale for the very oppressive social schema it was developed to combat.

Critique

The decolonial Deleuzean project must be seen under a metaphorical rubric capable of conceptualizing an affirmative ontological and political project; it would not be enough, of course, to remain in the mode of simply pointing to an anticipated solution or giving a piecemeal or incomplete approach.[12] Michael Marder has offered one intriguing picture which I have chosen for two reasons, because it provides a positive project which brokers the relationship between an ontology capable of expressing the relation between the "one" and the "many" captured in the uBuntu catchphrase—the many "in" the one and vice versa; and because it provides an appropriate "organic" metaphor thematically continuous with Patel's decolonial onto-politics of *place*.[13]

Marder's picture is that of a "vegetal democracy" anchored in the metaphor of the plant seed, which negates the oppositionality between individual-and-community: "the plurality of the singular [can be found in] the seed that is already many, the plant that is already legion."[14] The "seed" metaphor expresses the educational picture Patel offers, not only in its place-dimension as an organic capsule containing the non-oppositional teacher-student-institution fluid, but also in its time-dimension as the seed which "contains" the information-infused material controlling the entire range of its organic modalities unfolding in time. This sutures the plurality of its own temporal unfolding into every moment of its life cycle with its ability to spawn other "legion" individuals through the seeds which pass on to its environment.

We should see this metaphor in all its concrete dimensions in plant life, as a complex reticulum of network-connected roots[15] which, according to Marder, "exposes itself to darkness as well as to light, unconscious being as well as consciousness, which may, as a whole, turn out to be nothing but an excrescence, an outgrowth of… 'plant-

[11] Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, p. 90. This is part of Patel's insistence on dismantling settler logics (cf. Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, pp. 87f.)—an enterprise which also includes onto-logics.

[12] I think Patel stops short of providing such a metaphorical rubric (which is understandable given the scope of the project), especially in Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, pp. 87f.

[13] I take it that "place" plays on the dynamics of the many-in-one, since it can be seen as both singular ("here") and repeatable. It is superior to "space," which connotes a totalizing gridwork excluding plurality.

[14] Michael Marder, "Vegetal Democracy: The Plant that is not One," *Politics of the One: Concepts of the One and the Many in Contemporary Thought*, edited by Artemy Magun (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 115.

[15] Deleuze calls this "the new harmony" in the climax of his piece on the "baroque," by which he means a rooted reticulum of this very kind. See Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, translated by Tom Conley (London: Althone Press Ltd, 1993), p. 125.

thinking.'"[16] Patel's onto-logic should strike us as eminently open to such a reading, what I've called a "vegetal ontology" in the title.

Now Barbara Cassin has distinguished three modes of negation, which mirror the triad: negation as difference (let's call it Negation1), negation as otherness (let's call it Negation2), and negation as exception (let's call it Negation3).[17] Of these three, only Negation3 has the special property of being coextensive with the exception (empty place) generated between two options, and as such has the ability to "stop the negative buck" without creating yet another negative pairing. The other two come without this clause and imply a potentially endlessly repeatable process of negation.

There usually is no difficulty applying one of these negations to a given positive item. The problem starts when we negate not an item but another oppositional pair. Which negation (1, 2, or 3) corresponds to this difference? The question here is subtle: if we are negating an opposition, of the negation not between the pairs but applied to the pairs as a set—what is the modality of *this* negation? Does it merely generate another, larger oppositional pairing? And if it does, does this not create an infinite regress of higher-order oppositions more appropriate to Negation1 and 2 than it is to Negation3? My intuition here is that Marder, and Patel by extension, are not able to erase the oppositions they promise with a Negation3—problematic because they claim to offer a picture which does just this, "satisfying" opposition as such without exceptions (in political terminology, without generating subalternity).

The vegetal ontology surely successfully completes a Negation2 of an oppositional pair like individual-collective or teacher-student: it subordinates the opposition against the background of another situation in which the opposition cannot possibly be generated, thereby (allegedly) reconciling the original opposition. Plants, because of their interconnected or intra-active roots, represent a situation which is beyond the one-many difference, and so capable of satisfying any antagonism whose pairs are mutually rooted in its networks. And it is this which the student-teacher opposition is meant to mirror by extension in Patel. But: of the negation used in negating the pairing, is it Negation2 or Negation3? I argue it is a Negation2 because it generates afresh an opposition between plant-thinking and human-thinking.

This is not the intention, of course; Marder has in mind to include the human world and its ontological and political nexus into the vegetal modality. But the human sphere is in danger of being disanalogous to the vegetal democracy because we are not dealing with a single but with a double layer of metaphor: where there is a single layer of metaphor employed in plant-thinking (figuratively connecting the seed "as individual" with the seed

[16] Marder, "Vegetal Democracy," p. 124.

[17] As seen in Barbara Cassin, *Jacques the Sophist: Lacan, Logos, and Psychoanalysis*, translated by Michael Syrotinski (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), pp. 95ff. Here are some model examples:
Negation1 = "This candidate's insistence that reducing funding in schools will lead to better education cannot be taken seriously."
Negation2 = "Who cares what we will experience when we die; what did we experience before we were born?"
Negation3 = "So that's the Senate. Now let's turn now to see how things work in the House of Condoms."
The last example is a personal anecdote. Negation1 is equal to non-sense (it could make sense but doesn't); Negation2 is without-sense (it does not even meet the criteria for sense-making); and Negation3 is (in Cassin's terms) ab-sense ("It makes present the hole in the sense/non-sense orb"). See Cassin, *Jacques the Sophist*, p. 99; the quote is harmlessly altered for clarity.

"as legion"), there is an additional layer employed in translating this picture for humanity (namely that humanity is "like a plant" *and* that plants are "like individual-legions").

What is disanalogous here is the first of these layers, the direct connection between the human sphere and the reticulated, interconnected root-network of plants: for humanity, this is just a figure speech, whereas for plants, they are metaphorically "legion" but literally/actually co-constituted in such a root network. We can call to mind whichever cutting-edge studies of plant neural networks extended through roots interconnecting under the ground to form actual pathways of co-touching structures, able to transmit organic impulses via material pathways to other members of the fold. This is a matter of physical, literal concreteness for plants; but for humans this remains at the distance of a metaphor since we do not "touch" in such social-symbolic ways as appendages/extensions of our concrete bodies. We remain corporeally "individual." Humans are then at best figuratively reticulated whereas plants are reticulated as a descriptive fact of the properties of their biomass.

Therefore, there is reason to think that vegetal ontology generates another oppositional pairing, this time between vegetation-and-humanity. This disrupts the ability to use the theory of vegetal ontology as a literal praxis for understanding and acting in the human spheres, precisely because it fails to provide a common matrix in which human oppositions find their symbolic reconciliation. Marder's vegetal democracy, in short, is still related to the human world through Negation2. That is, vegetal democracy is the anchor point which is *other to* the oppositions generated by the majority of human activity; humans are not literally arrangeable plant-wise, and the metaphor meant to provide this link is still in a relation of negation to the literal circumstances of human interconnectivity.

The only remedy is to counter Marder's move and apply not Negation2 but Negation3 to the mesh-like folding of the plant root system and its metaphoric relation to humanity: humans and vegetation share a deeper unity-in-difference because within each of them (the human, the vegetal) there reappears *the difference between human and vegetation* as the "utterly dark spot"[18] equally cohabiting both. This is equivalent to determining an "objective fiction," an object with symbolic properties but without concrete existence which nevertheless causes real effects. This is the true territory of Negation3, namely that the vegetal network and the human body politic as such contain the dark spot corresponding to the pure difference between them: it is the a priori negative reappearing as an embodied object hidden at the center of all identity which constitutes the "one" in the plurality and vice versa. And if we act from this point of unity, from this dark spot, we can accommodate even what the plant network cannot. If we do not make this move, we do not successfully Negate3 all opposition. For its part vegetal ontology does not generate this one "in" the legion; it merely creates another legion and then smuggles an ersatz unification into the human situation in the guise of a seed. But humans have no seeds.

Closure

We should bring this back to earth in a way relevant to the scope of Patel's work. In accepting a "decolonial Deleuze," has I've put it not far above, Patel remains trapped in

[18] See Miran Božović, *An Utterly Dark Spot: Gaze and Body in Early Modern Philosophy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 116ff. Perhaps Marder would say he already does this; if he were to insist I would concede. My argument about the disanalogy of the human sphere would still hold however, and this would merely adjust the thesis to say that Marder's account requires an ab-sential compliment.

another opposition—undetected and unacknowledged in her work—between the decolonized root network of teacher-student-institution[19] *and the generic package of needs appending to any particular student*. A student can have any specific need, including needs—and this is where I think Patel's work is most wanting—which may conflict with the co-participatory presuppositions constitutive of the networked reticulum itself. That is, even if the student has a need which is incompatible with educational practice emancipated from its commodification of time or from its status-first individualistic mentality (among other faults), this student still has expressed a need which either can or cannot be accommodated within the decolonial mode of praxis. And, unfortunately, Patel tells the story of a student who approaches her in a somewhat superficial and mechanical way emphasizing past accomplishment, institutional fit, and practical utility (for working together in a research project) rather than more genuinely placing intra-active emphasis on relationships, mutual interest, and organic out-growth. "We just met," Patel replies,[20] presumably communicating a "no," "not for me," "not yet," or, and she puts it, "let's see how it goes."[21] All students are accommodated, apparently, unless those students have a desire which conflicts with the co-participatory prerequisite.

But, to return to the uBuntu phrase, it is not the case that I cease to be simply because I fail to recognize that I am because we (first) are—I still "am," perhaps I'm not very good at it (at be-ing), but my being is still supported even when in a relation of Negation2 to the decolonial root system—that is, strictly outside of and other to it. Yet it is not the job of the emancipated place to make this exclusionary call (this must be beyond even this opposition) but it is rather the maladroit student who must be accountable for their fit—and if this means exclusion, let it be so; but by its own light it cannot be the decolonized reticulum which bakes in such a necessary estrangement. Which it arguably does in Patel's response to the student—she cannot accommodate by design someone approaching research in that way.

This is the case I said a moment ago cannot be included in the vegetal ontology and as such stands as its exception. Without overstepping what is and is not my business, instead of "we'll see how it goes"—a comment Patel mobilizes as a functional "no" to the student—that is, "not with that attitude," or perhaps "yes, on the understanding that you will be completely changed by the time your request is granted," which is still technically a no to the unchanged version of the student asking—perhaps us teachers, in cases where we encounter students who are not playing the appropriate co-participatory "game," should instead opt to enforce the strictly objective fiction that is the impersonal (exclusionary, unfair, mechanical, "colonial") ruleset. Yes, in principle I can work with you—we could say—and simply lie to the student. Apply for the research position, we could continue, we'll check to see if you'll fit, etc.—and if the student fails to go through the usual battery of "schmoozing" and networking necessary to establish strictly impersonal rules (which of course is also a lie/cover up, since the impersonal, independent, and unbiased rules both generate and presuppose a highly personal and biased set of co-dependencies)—then we should simply let the opportunity pass the student whom we've lied to by.

But it is the lie which must be clearly enunciated (the purely virtual set of impersonal rules) for the system to work (for these rules to be implicitly broken and to hire

[19] The (transformed) institution here is the context in which student-teacher antagonisms can be dissolved, plant style.
[20] Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, p. 62.
[21] Patel, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, p. 64.

on the student who knows the rules are "real fictions" and acts accordingly). In this regard, decolonial places are no different from any other, for they still need the lie—it is just a matter of what gets the right people in the right positions for the right projects, rightly participating. And Patel is clearly after this exact thing as well.

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Book Review: Wilk, Thomas and Gimbel, Steven: *In on the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy*. De Gruyter, 2024, 144 pp.

Chris A. Kramer

Thomas Wilk's and Steven Gimbel's *In on the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy*, takes on a gargantuan task in less than 140 pages; although, to offer my first nitpick, the font is quite small. Too small, really. The stated objective is to provide a theoretical basis for ethical decisions regarding humor and comedy from everyday situations among non-comedians and non-philosophers to sold-out venues by well-known comedians, and likely, non-philosophers. One thing that makes the endeavor audacious is that ethics has a long history, and some quite recent as evidenced by so many first-year students in philosophy classes, of being tossed into the realm of extreme relativism and/or pure subjectivism, as if our moral sense were no different from our sense of taste. On top of this, comedy, humor in general, is often thought to be wholly subjective, and, since it is a matter of individual tastes, and there's no accounting for taste, it follows that Wilk and Gimbel are engaged in the hapless task of trying to account for pure opinion using an entirely subjective tool. I find that funny. Perhaps others do as well, but who's to say? Well, Wilk and Gimbel, for two.

But, to compound the difficulties, humor is not an "ordinary" speech act with conventional rules of the sort outlined by H.P. Grice and his "Cooperative Principle", where one can be "corrected" for flaunting the conversational regulations of clarity, precision, and truth, for example. So, it is not obvious that our "ordinary" ethical assumptions can (or should at all) apply to humorous speech or performance. Yet, humor is employed everyday, likely by everyone in some fashion to some degree. We are ensconced in humor, almost as much as we are in language as such, and because of this, we might fail to recognize the moral implications of our attempts at humor. Or, if we do think about them, especially the putatively humorous acts of others that are composed of content about which we disagree, we proclaim that such acts constitute a moral harm, and we're outraged enough to jump on the hashtag-cancel-bandwagon. Or, if we happen to be superfans of the comedian in potential moral peril, we proclaim that it was "just a joke", and so it would be silly to invoke censure of any kind, much less moral. Sometimes our reactions in either case might be justified. But when and why?

All the moral dilemmas in everyday conversations can be found here, but with the additional burden of dealing with a unique form of communication that thrives off ambiguity, vagueness, hyperbole, incongruity, absurdity, and, to borrow from Gimbel (2017), cleverness, in the construction of the joke. In some cases, the joke-attempt might be *too clever by half*, making us fully befuddled. How might we handle these kinds of issues such that we become less fuddled?

Wilk and Gimbel begin by justifying their project, arguing for "The need of a better account of joke ethics." The predominant theories are either too narrow, ruling out "what

many would deem to be perfectly legitimate humor" (p. 1), or too broad in that they permit way too many instances of joking as permissible that intuitively seem morally problematic. The authors seek a golden mean, borrowing from the philosopher of porridge, Goldilocks. This requires more subtlety and complexity than what is found in most theories that overly rely on the punch-up vs. punch-down dichotomy (it's always acceptable to joke from a marginalized position *at* those in power, but never vice versa). Wilk and Gimbel argue that the ethical acceptability of a joke depends on four key factors — its content, the teller's identity, the audience, and the context — emphasizing that humor's ethical implications require nuanced, situational consideration. Included in the context is an analysis of the relationships between and/or among the audience and humorist. These complications can quickly induce befuddlement.

The concept of "joke capital" is central to their argument. They use the analogy of capital to suggest that, just as an individual accumulates social, economic, or cultural capital that influences how others perceive their actions or authority, they also accumulate joke capital, or fail to, based on their identity, experiences, and relationship to the subject matter of their humor. Essentially, joke capital refers to the moral credibility a person has when making jokes, which can affect how a joke is perceived in terms of its appropriateness and impact. The more capital they possess, either from "inheritance" (p. 40) or through "earning" it (p. 43), or through "reparations" (p. 44),[1] the more likely they can tell a tendentious joke and get a "moral pass", or at the least, be granted the benefit of the doubt that their intentions were merely playful and thus non-malicious. All these elements are easier to assess when the interlocutors know each other. In the same way we can tell when my kids are play-fighting without the intent to do actual harm to one another, or when I am tickling them and they laugh heartily, it is clear it is all for fun — there's a reason one does not tickle strangers, even if one laughs while doing it — especially then. What this capital does is strengthen the play frame within which a comedian or wit can justifiably assert "It was just a joke" and evade moral censure, up to a point, as the audience has a reasonable ground for interpreting the wits' goals as purely for fun.

For instance, a Jewish person may have more "joke capital" when telling jokes about Jewish culture, religion, or history than someone with no connection to those experiences. Likewise, someone who has been part of a marginalized group or who has worked within certain communities on their behalf might be seen as more ethically justified in making jokes related to those groups; they have *earned* capital in this context, and thus should be granted extra leeway, but this is never absolute. Also, there is the important caveat that recent converts into that community need to be careful that their *conversion* is viewed as authentic and not just as an excuse to tell Jewish jokes (see p. 41 for an excellent analysis of the Seinfeld episode in which a Catholic dentist converts to Judaism — for the jokes. When Jerry complains about this dentist's malfeasance, Kramer labels Jerry an "Anti-Dentite").

Wilk and Gimbel argue that the ethics of humor depend on context, as the same joke can be perceived differently based on the teller's background and intentions as well as the audience. All of this, though more complex than the punching up/down dichotomy, is intuitive. The work of the text lies in the philosophical theory which grounds those

[1] I'm a little uncomfortable with the use of the term "reparations" to describe one of the forms of joke capital. It has the feel of "We may not have offered money or land or adequately ameliorated systemic injustices at any major institution from health care to education to the justice department, but how about the freedom to joke at the expense of those within the hegemonic center, on occasion and in the right way?"

assumptions. Their concept of joke capital challenges the idea that a joke's acceptability is based solely on content, emphasizing the importance of identity, power dynamics, and context. But even if one has amassed enormous joke capital, say, the equivalent of Elon Musk's financial capital, that by itself does not grant them completely free reign to say *anything* in a joke. Not coincidentally, Musk's absurdly astronomical wealth has *not* contributed to his joke capital. Indeed, perhaps the opposite is the case, when he displays his out-of-touch attempts at humor on X, almost exclusively at the expense of those on the margins of society who lack financial and/or socio-political capital. Employing one aspect of Wilk and Gimbel's approach, Musk has not given audiences sufficient reason to interpret his humor solely within a play frame, and thus, intended only for fun or pleasure. Well, it seems his jokes are meant to increase pleasure, but only for himself and his followers.

This takes us to what I think is the crux of the book: the overlap of joke capital with presumption of playfulness, and the benefits to society at large of allowing greater leniency for those who push social, political, and ethical boundaries through the often piercing and tendentious use of humor.

First, why should extra leeway be offered to comedians and jokesters in general? Wilk and Gimbel appear to err on the side of freedom with humor: "Ideally, we would each grant to others the right to make jokes, even if those jokes might occasionally sting, because we would recognize that allowing this freedom (even when we are sometimes the butt of the joke) generates a greater good for all" (p. 2). The argument in favor of the freedom to use humor is not unlike arguments for free speech in general; society at large benefits from the free exchange of ideas, even those that might at first sight appear controversial or offensive. Here they borrow from Emile Durkheim on the need for social critique (pp. 85-6). Excessive conformity stifles moral imagination and individual originality — blocking both visionary transformation and necessary subversive critique — so that without a balance of idealistic dreams and rebellious dissent, neither society nor the individual can truly flourish.

For Wilk and Gimbel, humor and humorists should be permitted significant freedom so that they can provide a social good that might not otherwise be forthcoming: "If we do not allow them to push at the boundaries, we risk our social norms calcifying into a stultifying edifice that causes harm to many, and we may begin to take ourselves far too seriously and think ourselves far more powerful than we truly are. In pointing toward figures like Sam Kinison, Lenny Bruce, George Carlin, and Bill Hicks, [Roseanne] Barr was mustering evidence for this claim of social value" (p. 89). They stop short of full agreement with the perspective of Barr and other comedians that *nothing* should be off limits for comedy, especially when performed at comedy clubs, but they do, correctly I believe, provide strong grounds for the intuition that comedians, tricksters, and gadflies, should be permitted considerable latitude while in their play frame, temporarily suspending seriousness.

The morally interesting issues arise when the cost of the joke and the capital possessed by the jokester are opaque. Among the various conditions that could lead an audience to reasonably conclude they are within a play frame, it is the perceived level of aesthetic performance that is the most unique:

> It is a violation of the standard rules of joke telling, according to which one should only tell jokes the audience is likely to find funny. Violation of this leads us to wonder about the conversational function of the bad tendentious joke and to the reasonable

> explicature[2] of problematic views held by the speaker. The seemingly non-bona fide speech act was actually a thinly disguised bona fide speech act which gives rise to presuppositions the teller expects me to share or wants me to share. (p. 37)

A lot rests on this intuitive assessment regarding cleverness and recognized quality of the joke and performance, but they do temper it somewhat: it is not "that high-quality jokes have no moral cost, but it is true that low quality jacks up the moral price" (p. 37). An analogy they use is acting: "We see a similar situation with other artistic acts, say, an actor speaking lines in a play. Are jokes not in some way like that too? … We have no problem separating Anthony Hopkins from Hannibal Lector. (In a sense, the character of Hannibal Lector was just wearing Anthony Hopkins' face.)" (pp. 2, 14). This is nice and subtle.

If we take the analogy a bit further, and we accept that a joker's play bubble is buffered by a high-quality performance that encourages audiences to accept it as a non-bona fide act, we ought to do something similar regarding an actor playing an immoral character. However, that could lead to something like the following: Christoph Waltz was so terrible in the film *Inglorious Basterds*, that he has given us a reasonable basis for thinking he is a bona fide Nazi. If only his acting, ironically, were better, which in this case would mean, more convincing to us that he might *really be* a Nazi, then we would be justified in concluding that he is probably *not really* a Nazi! That is kind of funny, even if not a truly damning critique of Wilk and Gimbel.

Interestingly, and a trifle more damnatory, we see here an instrumental value of humor, its potential for providing a social good without necessarily intending to, but by being *intrinsically* valuable, that is, by *not* presuming any other goals than pure enjoyment and fun. Afterall, on the Wilk-Gimbel hypothesis, advocating for serious social-ethical change is to break from the play-frame, and in doing so, bleed into the real-world of practically engaged seriousness: "When a play frame is securely in place, the audience for a joke ought not to draw the inferences that would follow if the joking speech had been bona fide. The joke, in this idealized case, loses its bite. It fails to be dangerous because it is detached from the broader inferential machinery. It is a bomb that has been defused" (p. 17). This is perplexing, bordering on befuddlement.

Consider a potential source of puzzlement. The moment we take the sting out of morally tendentious jokes that could be interpreted as being directed at a minority group, for instance, by viewing the humor as wholly ensconced within a play frame, we ought to, on the other end of the spectrum, remove any teeth from the bite of presumably subversive humor performed in the vein of Durkheimian social critique:

> The comedians listed [above] were explicitly and intentionally transgressive of cultural norms. They said things in their acts, on stage at comedy clubs, that would be disallowed in many other social contexts. They pointed out the flaws and moral foibles of our society, speaking truth to the power of the dominant culture, and did so *with the aim of improving it*. (p. 89, my italics)

Apparently, these comedians, the ones who ought to be granted some special dispensation *because* audiences can (and should) interpret them as just playing, are in fact NOT just playing. The very reason we should see their humor as a boon to society, their "aim of

[2] H.P. Grice's concept of "implicature" refers to the inferences listeners draw from violations of conversational norms; similarly, when a play frame collapses, listeners infer, justifiably, presuppositions about the speaker's worldview, which continue to shape future interpretations of their speech. Wilk and Gimbel call these inferences "explicatures" — biases, such as racism, that become explicit once the pseudo-joke is treated as a sincere, though non-literal, utterance.

improving it", would seem to be disqualifying on the joke capital account to grant them moral latitude — we are explicitly *not* taking them as just playing/joking, otherwise, why would we take seriously Wilk and Gimbel's assertion that these comedians' "transgressions illuminated the

moral failings of the culture from which they emerged" (p. 89)? No, they didn't! They were just joking. If Wilk and Gimbel are correct that moral sanction is unwarranted when we have good reason to believe a comic is in a play frame, because, "For jokes to cause actual harm, they have to escape the playful confines of their telling" (p. 30), then moral praise ought not to be offered for those on the subversive end of the spectrum using humor via non-bona fide speech. But this is intuitively unappealing, and not a little befuddling.

I think there are avenues available to Wilk and Gimbel to defuse our bemusement, given a charitable reading of their text, but it would take another short book (with infinitesimally minute font) to adequately explore. This book does what good social philosophy should do — buttress our intuitions with theoretical grounding. In so many of the examples I found myself muttering aloud, "of course, that is what a normal person would say!" This is not meant to imply the book only offers obvious moral platitudes; on the contrary, where there might be intuitively plausible explanations, we get the sound theoretical work to demonstrate *why* they are in fact plausible. But we also have more difficult, less initially plausible, hypotheses that are well supported by argument and example, and most often, accessible analogies.

Humor is more than a mere means to instill laughter and mirth, even when humorists insist that is all they intended. It can harm, heal, unite, and divide, or just elicit a giggle. Something so powerful and virtually ubiquitous, found in gigantic arenas and in the simple daily activities among friends and colleagues, calls out for moral analysis. This text offers that ethics of the quotidian, providing an avenue to assess the morality of humor without completely baffling readers. And if you have amazing eyesight or a substantial magnifying glass, you will be able to read it.

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Book Review: Cherry, Myisha. *Failures of Forgiveness: What We Get Wrong and How to Do Better*. Princeton University Press, 2023, 240 pp.

Vaishali Singh

Myisha Cherry's book *Failures of Forgiveness: What We Get Wrong and How to do Better* unpacks complex philosophical ideas on forgiveness, but articulates them in a way that even people with no training in philosophy would understand. The book's aim for the larger audience is clearly reflected in the title, "Failures of Forgiveness," thus positing forgiveness as a chimera which might never be possible to do in a perfect way. At the same time, the sub-text of "What we get wrong" and "How to do better" give us a hope that one can always aspire to learn more about these imperfections, thus improving our moral practices in the process. Despite being marketed as a "self-help" book by commercial websites, it is not difficult to make out that Cherry is also responding to a cohort of philosophers who, as she calls them out, hold a "narrow view"[1]of forgiveness. Thus, in the larger philosophical debate on forgiveness, Cherry contributes significantly to the defense of 'Elective Forgiveness' that sees forgiveness as the prerogative of the victim and not as something which can be demanded from them.

Cherry's project is also informed by a sense of political urgency in responding to what she terms the problem of "forgiveness culture" which poses forgiveness as the solution to resolve any conflict situation, in any place. What I found intriguing about the book was Cherry's ability in relating our personal ideas on forgiveness to the larger politics of it. The book opens with the case of Dylann Roof, a white supremacist involved in the shooting of nine Black churchgoers in June, 2015 at Charleston, South Carolina (p.1). Cherry builds her arguments from this case and comes back to it again and again throughout the book. She succinctly points out that while forgiveness of family members of the victims of shooting is motivated by their own personal reasons, the way forgiveness is asked from them reflects embedded power relations. Why it is mostly Blacks and women who are often expected to forgive? How often is the forgiveness question posed to the White victim of a crime committed by a Black person? Cherry's objective in asking such questions, I believe, is to point out the political implications of our moral practices. She shows how forgiveness, when asked for in the wrong way, or in the wrong context, can actually undermine what it hopes to achieve — healing for the victims and reconciliation for the parties involved.

There are five ways in which Cherry's account of forgiveness deviates from the "narrow view" and gives us a fresh insight into the philosophy of forgiveness based on

[1] Cherry defines "narrow view" as: "To forgive is to let go of negative emotions, like anger and hatred, and replace them with more positive emotions, like compassion and love" (pp.11-12).

our everyday practices. First, Cherry poses a major challenge to the standard accounts[2] by pointing out that forgiveness is not just about feelings but has other behavioural and ritualistic (to only name a few) components as well. Thus, it is not just about how we feel, but also what we do and the different ways in which we do it (p.19). Second, Cherry targets the root of the problem (in terms of what we get wrong about forgiveness) in pointing out that reconciliation is not the only aim of forgiveness (as the "narrow view" believes). It can have various reparative aims besides reconciliation like relief and release for the victims as well as the wrongdoers (p.22).

Third, Cherry's "broad view" is broad not only in terms of what forgiveness is and what it hopes to achieve but also in terms of who it includes in the process of forgiveness. In contrast to the "narrow view" which sees forgiveness as only involving the victims and the wrongdoers, Cherry argues that forgiveness is not only the burden of the victims but of the entire community. I believe that this point is especially crucial in the context where forgiveness is demanded from the victims of structural wrongs like racism. It acknowledges such wrongdoings not as isolated incidents of inter-personal wrongs but as moral wrongs that have social meaning for the entire community and therefore responding to them also becomes the responsibility of the entire community (p.96).

Fourth, the book's aim is to finally convince us that forgiveness will always be imperfect. This, according to me, is the most significant contribution of this book to the corpus of philosophical literature on forgiveness. In contrast to the views which show forgiveness as something "magical" that will lead to something new and drastic, this book convinces us that nothing will ever be restored to its past form and a wrongdoing can never be overcome in its entirety. Fissures will always remain, and forgiveness is about accepting these imperfections and learning to live with it. According to the author, "The idea of imperfect forgiveness is that forgiveness does not take place on ideal conditions or create ideal outcomes." (pp.193-194)

Finally, Cherry's "how to do better" argument culminates in the concept of "radical repair." Cherry's idea of "radical repair" centres on addressing the root of the problem, in a way which is a deviation from the norm and involves teamwork as its most crucial component (pp.174-190). In extrapolating this argument, Cherry draws an analogy with Formula One

racing to argue that radical repair requires constant innovation. This innovation is required in knowing exactly which "reparative toolkit" will fit the current situation. Thus, while forgiveness might be part of a reparative toolkit in responding to a "post-apartheid" regime in South Africa, it might not be appropriate in responding to the murder of a Black victim by the police brutality in US. Most importantly, and this is what I find "radical" about radical repair, Cherry's broad view recognizes that sometimes, somethings and some relationships just cannot be repaired. As Cherry argues, "Sometimes the most creative thing we can do is to recognize and admit that something cannot be repaired." (p.187)

The appeal of the book is in its addressal of various contexts and spaces in which we tend to think about forgiveness. Cherry's own motivation in writing the book comes

[2] Standard accounts of forgiveness place emphasis on forgiveness as the "emotional transformation" of the parties involved. Such ideas can be found in works of Griswold, Charles: *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration,* Cambridge University Press, New York 2007; Murphy, Jeffrie: " Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Responding to Evil: A Philosophical Overview " in *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, Vol.25, No.5, 2000, pp.1353-1366; Hieronymi, Pamela: " Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness " in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 62, No.3, 2001, pp. 529-555.

from her inter-personal context regarding her own difficulty in forgiving her step-father for his wrongdoing, as well as from the context of wrongdoings against Black people followed by public requests of forgiveness from them or their family members. The book addresses practices of forgiveness in different spaces, ranging from political forgiveness in the context of South Africa TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) to its demand in case of inter-personal wrongs in family as well as workplace. The book also responds to a very prevalent practice of celebrities issuing public apologies for their wrongdoings and contrasts "cancel culture" to a "forgiveness culture," developing a critique of both. By including a chapter on self-forgiveness ("Forgiving Yourself"), Cherry has ensured that her account responds to almost all moral dilemmas in the philosophy of forgiveness. The beauty of the book lies in drawing from real-life cases as opposed to only relying on hypothetical cases (which is often a practice in philosophical writing), succinctly capturing the messiness of our moral practices in everyday life. Cherry not only points out to this messiness, but also shows us a way to embrace it and accommodate it in our moral practices.

In the first two chapters of the book, Cherry outlines her central ideas and objective. In the "Introduction: Forgiveness and Magical Thinking" and "What to Expect When You Are Expecting Forgiveness" (Chapter 1), Cherry points out that book's main objective is to "demystify" the idea of forgiveness for philosophers as well as for the general public. Her aim is to challenge the "narrow view" of forgiveness which sees forgiveness as overcoming of anger and resentment. And provide a "broad view" which recognizes that "there is a variety of ways to practice forgiveness. And these practices vary in their aims." Cherry lists different components of forgiveness (not just emotional, as the narrow view believes) like affective, behavioural, performative, cognitive, relational, and ritualistic; and its various aims like relief, repair, and reconciliation.

In the next two chapters, "Forgiveness and Withholders" (Chapter 2) and "Making a Good Ask" (Chapter 3), Cherry wants to point out that there can be no universal conditions on "when" it is appropriate to forgive. Cherry attempts to defend those who forgive "too quickly" as well as those who refuse to forgive. She then outlines what are the right ways to request forgiveness for the wrongdoers. It is in these two chapters that Cherry's idea of forgiveness as elective in nature comes out more clearly. As she points out, "what the victim decided to give in return of offender's apology is their prerogative" (p.57). Apologies need to be rendered with the acknowledgement of difficulty of forgiveness and a possibility of its refusal.

In the chapters that follow (from Chapter 4 to 9), Cherry sees implications of her ideas in different contexts. In Chapter 4, "Forgiveness as a Political Project" she provides a detailed analysis of TRC project in South Africa and stresses the importance of giving a "choice" to the victims to forgive. Cherry points out that it is the element of choice that is more crucial here than forgiveness as it restores victim's agency which was taken away by the acts of wrongdoing. In Chapter 5, "When Race Matters", Cherry reiterates the same point in the context of race violence in the US. She provides a critique of "hurry and bury" ritual where forgiveness is publicly and quickly asked for from the Black victims. Cherry shows how such practices disrespect the victims and obscure wrongdoing; and provides us with the right questions to ask in such context.

In Chapter 6 and 7, "Home Improvement" and "The Business of Forgiveness", Cherry points to the problems of forgiveness in our family and work life. Cherry points out that the pressure on victims to forgive for "protecting" family honour or for the sake of work productivity might result in inauthentic forgiveness and undermines agency and

autonomy of the victims. In Chapter 8, "Canceling Versus Forgiving", Cherry supports the practice of canceling as a call-out and of seeking accountability from celebrities for their actions. She argues that canceling is compatible with forgiveness but argues against the idea of "cancel culture" or "forgiveness culture." In Chapter 9, "Forgiving Yourself", the book further expands on the broad view of forgiveness by broadening the scope of who has the standing to forgive. Cherry supports the practice of self-forgiveness as having a "self-directed" reparative aim but without the relinquishment of one's responsibilities.

Finally, in Chapter 10 "Radical Repair: With or Without Forgiveness", Cherry provides a detailed analysis of her concept of radical repair by contrasting it with superficial and thrifty repair. Cherry argues that "Engaging in radical repair is acknowledging that if anything is to be truly fixed, we are likely to have a role to play and a price to pay." Cherry draws an analogy with F1 racing to outline what radical repair might entail in practice. This chapter, along with "Conclusion" highlights Cherry's own unique contribution to the forgiveness literature.

For research scholars like me, who have been working on the philosophy of blame and forgiveness, Cherry's simple and compact articulation of "imperfect forgiveness" provides a novel way of looking at forgiveness without getting stuck in the debate of whether it can be demanded or not. Cherry closes the argument by totally denying its demanding nature, yet offering ways to wrongdoers in which they can "politely request" it and "express hopes" for it, without the risk of offending the victim. Cherry's account also attempts at defending "withholders" of forgiveness, who are so often neglected in the forgiveness literature or looked down upon as "being stuck in the past" or vengeful. In the "narrow view" of forgiveness, if one fails to forgive despite the justifying reasons to forgive, then they undermine the moral status of the wrongdoer by forever associating their identity with their past act.[3]A victim's withholding of forgiveness, it is believed, assumes moral inferiority of the wrongdoer and does not take into consideration the moral worth of their reparative actions. However, as Cherry points out in her book, refusals to forgive are not always contingent on what the wrongdoer does, but are centred on what the victims expect from the process of forgiveness. Thus, Cherry's arguments strengthen the idea of elective forgiveness without making it seem "unfair" for the wrongdoers who have apologised for their act.

While the book deals with complex philosophical ideas, it is aimed for the larger audience. This might give the perception of the book to those in philosophy as falling short of defending some key ideas in deeper philosophical terms. However, Cherry's non-usage of some conventional philosophical terms should not be misunderstood as the book's non-engagement with them. For instance, Cherry's defense of withholding forgiveness is based on her dissociating the decision to forgive from the actions of the wrongdoer. However, this dissociation cannot be taken at face value since, as Cherry also points out at different places, victim's decision to forgive is conditioned by the wrongdoer's response, like their expression of remorse and guilt and offering of apology. This should not be read as a contradiction in the book. The central argument here is that while the fulfilment of certain conditions might enable forgiveness, they do not make it obligatory for the victim. Without using the conventional terms in the debate, like "justifying reasons" versus "requiring

[3] Such views can be found in: Hieronymi, 'Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness;' Murphy, 'Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Responding to Evil: A Philosophical Overview;' North, Joanna: "The "Ideal" of Forgiveness: A Philosopher's Explanation" in Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (eds.) *Exploring Forgiveness*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin 1998, pp.15-34.

reasons,"[4] or "affective attitudes" versus "cognitive judgements,"[5] Cherry engages with the debate on "elective" nature of forgiveness. Thus, for scholars of moral philosophy, the argument has to be sometimes extrapolated from careful reading of the text and might not be laid out in conventional philosophical terms.

Consider another example. In giving an account of why people hold back on forgiveness, Cherry lists various reasons from "unreadiness" and "self-protection" concerns of the victim to external barriers (pp.37-40). She argues that these are all "good reasons" to withhold forgiveness and further extends the argument saying that these reasons are "apt to find withholders justified for withholding forgiveness" (p.40). This is another instance where a scholar of moral philosophy might be left with wanting something more from the book. Cherry has confounded the reasons that "explain" unforgiveness with reasons that "justify" unforgiveness. She does provide a scope of justification by mentioning that these reasons do not intend to "make the offender suffer" but are rather "performed to gain ethical results." But she does not expand much on what these "ethical results" could be, except for a brief argument that withholding forgiveness is a manifestation of some other virtues like honesty and courage. I believe that each of these arguments require further expansion if one were to provide a strong philosophical defense for withholding forgiveness.

Nonetheless, Myisha Cherry's book provides some novel concepts to moral philosophy that might lead to better understanding of forgiveness. As she says, "Recognizing the limits of forgiveness is itself an important aspect of understanding forgiveness." With her ideas of a "broad view" of forgiveness, that sees forgiveness as always "imperfect" and aiming for radical repair, Cherry contributes significantly to the debates on elective forgiveness. It is a must-read for scholars working on forgiveness for its deviation from the standard literature, not only in terms of its ideas but also the structure of writing and argumentation. It is an important read for scholars of moral philosophy also because it provides significant segues into further research on the nature and appropriateness of forgiveness in various contexts.

For the general audience, Cherry's focus on "what we get wrong" is not just centred on the larger idea of forgiveness as a moral practice but also its subtleties that we often take for granted in our everyday practices. Consider how we often think that forgiveness is about how we feel or that it is just about not being angry and resentful anymore. Or that withholding forgiveness is not praiseworthy and forgiveness is a loving and selfless act in the context of family. Or the often-repeated maxim that forgiveness culture promotes work productivity. Cherry takes each of these assumptions, carefully unpacks them and challenges them with their own logic. And the book is always mindful of leaving us with alternatives since "how to do better" part is equally important. For those reading this book with no background in philosophy, this book not just problematizes (which is so often a charge against philosophers!), but also provides us with possible solutions.

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[4] Milam, Per-Erik: - "Against Elective Forgiveness," in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.31, No.3, June 2018, pp.569-584.
[5]Allais, Lucy: - "Elective Forgiveness," in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol.21, No.5, 2013, pp.637-653.

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Book Review: Ryan, Cheyney. *Pacifism as War Abolitionism*. Routledge, 2024, 212 pp.

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Pacifism, as a normative ethical position, has been theoretically developed but remains disproportionately undervalued as an ethics of peace. It is often dismissed as a naïve or idealistic ideology, a tendency that persists even within ethical and philosophical discourse. By contrast, Just War Theory (JWT) continues to be regarded as a well-established framework for making moral judgments about the legitimacy of war. Among those who defend pacifism, positions range from refined forms of contingent pacifism to more radical interpretations. Cheyney Ryan stands among the latter. *Pacifism as War Abolitionism* (2024) extends the arguments he articulated in earlier works, and the urgency of his critique of the war system could not be more relevant today.

From my perspective, the strength of Ryan's book lies in two key aspects. First, he traces the religious, literary, and political roots of pacifism both as a movement and as a moral stance. He pays particular attention to the fact that ideas and arguments for nonviolence often emerge from positions of marginality, where pacifism becomes a critique of Western modernity as a system of war. Among these sources, Ryan highlights the feminist movement (pp. 178-179) and non-European voices (p. 127). The contributions of these movements and intellectual traditions to the epistemology of nonviolence and the critique of the war system, he argues, must be integral to any plausible ethics of peace. These voices speak from lived experiences of oppression, domination, and warfare, from suffering, grief, and mourning. The epistemic value of such experience is particularly significant, as appeals to experience are often used to dismiss pacifism: those who have endured war, it is said, could never embrace a pacifist stance. Ryan, however, contends the opposite that the experience of war should compel pacifism, for war is hell – inherently brutal, dehumanizing, and devastating.

Ryan draws on a range of concrete historical examples, including the World Wars, the Cold War and its proxy conflicts, the Vietnam War, the American Civil War, and the War on Terror. He challenges the prevailing notion of World War II as a "good war," which is often invoked as a reference point in arguments against pacifism. In addition to these historical cases, Ryan engages with literary sources, such as Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* and *Resurrection*; and examines nonviolent movements alongside abolitionist, anti-colonial, and feminist struggles. Through these examples, he builds a compelling case for pacifism and nonviolence as ethical and political imperatives.

Second, Ryan's principal claim is that ending war requires nothing less than dismantling or escaping the war system itself, and that this can only be achieved through nonviolent means. War inevitably begets more war; it will never cease without the adoption of a radical stance. As Ryan argues, it is insufficient merely to impose constraints or to devise more principled or efficient ways of waging war (p. 8). The central task, therefore, is to identify and critically examine the structures that sustain the war system,

while envisioning how these might be replaced by a system of peace. In this context, Ryan's critique of liberal democracies, their complicity in wars and their deep entanglement with militarization, exposes liberalism's failure to offer a genuinely critical response to war (pp. 135, 154). This raises a crucial question: how, then, can the war system be abolished?

The book is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1, *Grand Illusions*, primarily addresses the notion of "just war" and the belief that some wars are "good" while others are "bad", which, according to Ryan, underpins the entire just war tradition. He urges readers to reject this notion and to reconceptualize pacifism by examining the central institutions that sustain war, such as states, nations, and empires (p. 7). Thus, when Ryan presents his main argument that pacifism entails the abolition of war, it is the *war system* itself that must be confronted. This system, he argues, is characterized by several interrelated features: war follows an autonomous and inexorable logic; its persistence is grounded in the institutions that build and sustain it; this logic possesses a historical dynamic of its own; and it is inherently contradictory (pp. 9-12). These features are rigorously developed throughout the book, though one might question whether a critique of war's *logic* is sufficient, particularly given its contradictory nature. Should the analysis of the war system also encompass its material dimensions, such as the military-industrial complex, political lobbying, and the ideological glorification of war through appeals to national security, threat, and risk? Nevertheless, Ryan identifies one of war's most paradoxical outcomes: the persistent belief in "a war to end all wars" (p. 28), which exposes the deepest irrationality within the logic of war itself.

In Chapter 2, *Pacifism as Tradition*, Ryan presents the plurality of voices within the pacifist tradition and explores the intersections among various social and political movements that have treated pacifism as a viable and coherent stance, such as anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and feminist pacifism. He traces the religious roots of pacifism, focusing primarily on Christian traditions (pp. 52-54). Drawing on diverse historical sources, figures, and movements that have articulated or practiced nonviolence, Ryan situates his analysis within the broader discourse of Just War Theory (JWT), engaging particularly with Michael Walzer's position and that of Walzer's revisionist critics.

In my view, Walzer's analysis of JWT possesses two notable strengths: first, his insistence that JWT principles should guide the moral and political judgments of citizens within states considering war, thereby emphasizing a profoundly democratic dimension; and second, his grounding of these principles in concrete historical examples rather than abstract philosophical constructions. While Ryan acknowledges these strengths, his central concern, at least as I understand it, lies in questioning why Walzer, given his own record of activism against the Vietnam War, did not take a pacifist position himself (p. 76).

In the following chapter, *Personal and Political Pacifism*, Ryan introduces several key distinctions within pacifist thought: between *appraising* and *opposing* concerns of pacifism, theory- and practice-based approaches, and most importantly between *personal* and *political* pacifism. Personal pacifism, as Ryan explains, condemns killing as an individual act and rejects any social practice that involves such acts (p. 84). It represents a bottom-up, interpersonal approach to nonviolence (p. 90). Political pacifism, which constitutes Ryan's principal focus, is instead defined as a critique and condemnation of social institutions and practices that enable political killing (p. 90). It thus operates as a top-down, impersonal approach aimed at confronting the structural dimensions of violence.

According to Ryan, political pacifism directly challenges the *war system* as a historically situated and institutionally structured practice. To clarify this notion, he distinguishes between *war making* and *war building*: war making refers to the acts of killing

and dying in war, whereas war building encompasses the institutions and processes that mobilize human and material resources for the purposes of war (p. 92). Ryan's primary interest lies in war building, as its analysis raises far-reaching questions about the historical emergence of capitalism and the modern state. States are identified as the central agents of war building, and while Ryan gestures toward the broader discussions of the nation-state and empire, he reserves a fuller treatment of these issues for the subsequent chapter, *The Dynamics of the War System*.

The Dynamics of War offers a historical overview of the origins and evolution of the war system within states and empires, tracing its development through successive stages: from the rise of the nation to the challenges this historical account poses for rethinking politics today. Ryan begins with the feudal background of the state, examining the transition from private to public forms of warfare (pp. 122-123). He argues that during this period, war began to assume a distinctly political function: it served to bind people together, thereby constituting collective political identities, such as the idea of "we, the people of Europe." This marks a crucial intersection between the war system and the rise of the nation and nationalism.

Ryan draws on Benedict Anderson's influential argument that the nation is defined, in part, by being "something one is willing to die for." The nation, as such, becomes a powerful ideological construct that enables states to mobilize both inclusion and exclusion (p. 147). In this context, Ryan's analysis of how other political ideologies, particularly liberalism and republicanism, become entangled with nationalist reasoning and militarized is especially compelling.

As mentioned earlier, I find this part of Ryan's analysis both particularly strong and thought-provoking. He argues that although liberalism and republicanism historically emerged as critical responses to the excesses of war (such as the religious justifications for the Crusades), both ideologies ultimately provide their own justifications for war in the name of peace. Paradoxically, liberalism "had reconciled its ideals with acceptance of militarist arrangements like conscription by accepting the claims of the nation-state as necessary to the defense of those ideals" (p. 154). Ryan's explanation implies that the ideal of the nation often serves to justify the restriction of liberal principles, including individual rights.

Put differently, as long as the ideal of the nation remains strong, practices of war making and war building tend to go unchallenged. However, when that ideal begins to erode, liberals become more inclined to question militaristic institutions. Ryan thus suggests that liberalism and even republicanism are intrinsically tied to the ideal of the nation, revealing a complex relationship between the nation-state, liberal democracy, and the notion of the people (*demos*). When the nation is perceived to be under threat, the latent nationalism within liberalism becomes militarized. Moreover, when the nation is defined not only in political terms, who is included or excluded, but also in terms of identity, values, and shared norms, perceived threats to those values once again lead to the militarization of liberalism.

The book's final chapter addresses the question of mobilization for peace. Ryan observes that the most significant efforts to address war have historically emerged only *after* major conflicts (p. 169). While this is partly true, anti-war protests also occur during ongoing wars, varying in scale and in the degree of suppression or marginalization they face. In considering strategies to engage people, Ryan distinguishes between the *idea* of war and the *experience* of war (p. 173), arguing that while the idea of war can seem exciting,

the experience of war is devastating. This distinction raises important questions about how societies remember wars.

Memories of war often carry strong nationalistic sentiments, mobilizing people against a common enemy and provoking readiness to die. These narratives can be reinforced ideologically through war museum as for example the War Memorial of Korea in Seoul or the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow. Yet memory is multidimensional: it is also preserved in veterans' testimonies, memoirs, novels, films, theater, and other forms of artistic expression that offer more nuanced perspectives on both the idea and experience of war. Svetlana Aleksijevitj provides a strikingly different view of World War II and the Great Patriotic War in her book *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II,* illustrating how memories of war can be preserved without glorifying violence or militarism.

Finally, my reflection on Ryan's book and the broader concept of pacifism leads me to emphasize the value of its dual character: pacifism functions both as a political movement and as a normative ethical stance. While theoretical development must continue, particularly with attention to the war system, its material foundations, and its institutions, it is crucial that such development does not depoliticize the issue. One of the central challenges, as I see it, lies in preserving this duality and fully exploring the distinctive value that pacifism offers as both a practical and theoretical approach to peace.

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