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## THE ROLE OF FORGIVENESS IN RECONSTRUCTING SOCIETY AFTER CONFLICT

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Once dismissed as an irrelevant religious concept in a political world, the concept of forgiveness has begun to be increasingly associated with highly secular post conflict reconstruction. As the post Cold War world has splintered into violent wars and persistent low level conflict, its potential for healing civil society has begun to be explored in media, popular, and academic analysis. Despite this increased profile, forgiveness may be one of the least understood and yet potentially necessary acts required for a society to fully break a cycle of violence. The mere fact that it is being considered or discussed implies that extreme suffering has occurred. Given that the most horrendous acts of spiritual, emotional, and physical violence have taken place between the same persons attempting to rebuild a society after conflict, it is logical to ask, how is forgiveness possible? Is it necessary for reconciliation? And most importantly, how do former enemies find a way to live together once again?

This paper will address these questions by defining forgiveness and by focusing on its possibility and relevance in a post conflict situation. It will consider this topic within the framework of social reconciliation – a collective attempt to rebuild a mutually beneficial and co-operative civil society –by examining the concept of justice, by drawing upon psychological models of interpersonal forgiveness, and by considering other strategies for social healing. The traditional model of "justice as fairness" is questioned in its effectiveness to stop cycles of revenge and violence within a country. A more recent evolution of a "justice as reconciliation" paradigm developed by Mahmood Mamdani and derived from the South African experience, is explored as an approach that can embrace the process of forgiveness within the construction of reconciliation.

Defining forgiveness is almost as problematic as determining its role in reconciliation. The notion of forgiveness was for a long time almost exclusively associated with the language of religion. It occupied a prominent part in the early teachings of the New Testament as a powerful social and personal action, but "[forgiveness] seldom if ever attained an impressive place in the ethics that the church sought to commend to its secular host society". The Protestant Reformation also strove to incorporate a socialised form of forgiveness but reinforced the concept of "the power of the divine over human forgiveness", emphasising the relationship between the individual and a higher power rather than between other humans. (1) Within Judaism human imitates divine forgiveness and considers "forgiveness to be a moral duty". (2) John Bowker emphasized that almost every religion has its own view and interpretation of suffering and atonement. Each can be seen as setting the stage for some form of forgiveness. The Islamic approach tends to seek justice as a way of addressing peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. (3) Buddhists begin from a sense of self that wishes to be free from suffering and deemed worthy of experiencing happiness. Followers identify the causes of both suffering and happiness, and actively pursue the ones leading to happiness as a way to avoid "suffering and mental afflictions". (4)

A more politically focused interpretation of forgiveness depicts forgiveness and hope as a means of launching a new beginning by rebuilding social, political and economic structures on a national level. It has been described as a "collective turning from the past that neither ignores past evil nor excuses it." Forgiveness.. "neither overlooks justice nor reduces justice to revenge, ..[but] insists on the humanity of enemies even in their commission of dehumanizing deeds, and ..values the justice that restores political community above the justice that destroys it". Acknowledgement of a transgression, or "remembering not forgetting", abandonment of revenge, and the intent to seek genuine renewal of human relationships are its most important principles. Donald Shriver argues that "precisely because it attends at once to moral truth, history, and the human benefits that flow from the conquest of enmity, *forgiveness* is a word for a multidimensional process that is eminently political". (5)

True forgiveness can be seen as a complex and prolonged evolutionary process separate from but also interwoven with justice, apology, truth, and reconciliation. Its enactment belongs entirely to the offended and is a courageous and powerful expression of unconditional acceptance and love that can be seen as an attempt to stop the transfer of hate from one generation to the next. A genuine collective and individual willingness to try to release the hurts of the past, accompanied by hope and determination to begin anew, can be argued to be a beginning point in this process. But what are the emotional roots of forgiveness, the source of feeling that makes it possible? Recent development of a psychological "process model" and analysis of interpersonal forgiveness is some of the most promising work done so far in explaining the internal human dynamics of forgiveness.

In 1992, Robert Enright and his colleagues Elizabeth Gassin and Ching-Ru Wu published the results of a five year study conducted among adults in the U. S. outlining an eighteen

step process of forgiveness. Called the "Psychological variables engaged in a process intervention on forgiveness", it listed the following progression.

1. Examination of psychological defences.
2. Confrontation of anger; the point is to release, not harbour, the anger.
3. Admittance of shame, when this is appropriate.
4. Awareness of cathexis [hurt].
5. Awareness of cognitive rehearsal [replaying the scene repeatedly in one's mind] of the offence
6. Insight that the injured party may be comparing self with the injurer.
7. Insight into a possibly altered 'just world' view. [issue of justice]
8. A change of heart/conversion/new insights that old resolution strategies are not working.
9. A willingness to explore forgiveness as an option.
10. Commitment to forgive the offender.
11. Reframing, through role taking, who the wrongdoer is by viewing him or her in context.
12. Empathy toward the offender.
13. Awareness of compassion, as it emerges, toward the offender.
14. Acceptance/ absorption of the pain.
15. Realization that self has needed others' forgiveness in the past.
16. Realization that self has been, perhaps, permanently changed by the injury.
17. Awareness of decreased negative affect and, perhaps, increased positive affect, if this begins to emerge, toward the injurer.
18. Awareness of internal, emotional release. ". (6)

Acknowledging the potential for great individual variation in this process, it was understood that some of these steps would be skipped, while others would be repeated several times. In this process, the first two steps require identifying the psychological defences such as denial or repression that had been used to mask the pain of the injury. (These first two steps could result from knowing the "truth". – such as facts about how an incident occurred etc., that were previously withheld or unavailable.) This acknowledgement – either of emotions or release of denial - often leads to anger. The next steps, 3 – 7, explore the additional emotional and psychological discomfort resulting perhaps in an altered perception of appropriate justice or in an understanding that life is not fair. Steps 8 - 10 are the turning points in the process of exploring options to revenge. "A commitment to forgive is usually an intellectual decision to forgive the offender, perhaps influenced by the change of heart and the exploration." The final steps, 11-18 bring the offended through the process of reframing the injury of "seeing" it in a new way, while beginning development of compassion and empathy toward the offender. Step 14 may be the most significant step in this process for post conflict situations in stopping future cycles of violence. It is as an indication that "the person is ready to accept the pain that justice tells us should not have been his or hers in the first place" – and that this *"courageous absorption of pain keeps that pain from being transmitted to future generations in displacement"*. From 15-18, the offended is recognising his/her own imperfections and perhaps developing empathy toward the offender along with a

willingness to let the hurt become part of the past. The result is an "abandonment of resentment" and the emergence of "unconditional love".(7) Overall, the key to achieving forgiveness appears to be the offended's willingness to explore the range of options within the process and to persist until genuine forgiveness is attained.(8)

The relationship between anger, revenge, and forgiveness is particularly important in understanding the role of forgiveness in reconstructing a society following conflict. It can be argued that anger – an understandable reaction to extreme offence - is the root emotion of both forgiveness and revenge, each of which can be seen as an opposite side of the same coin. Hannah Arendt recognised this duality maintaining that the act of revenge was self-perpetuating and unending while forgiveness stopped the vicious cycle. "Forgiveness is the exact opposite of vengeance, which acts in the form of re-acting against an original trespassing, whereby far from putting an end to the consequences of the first misdeed, everybody remains bound to the process..." To her the act of revenge was predictable as an automatic response to a transgression, while the act of forgiveness was not. "Forgiving, in other words, is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it. ...Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever..." (9)

Tavuchis mentions the "complex lesson about anger and apology" where the victim nurtures "a sense of righteous anger and indignation", which prompts the call for the necessity of an apology (thus a request for forgiveness).(10) While this anger may trigger an apology, it is clearly understood that one is not required (or always possible especially if the offender is dead or otherwise unattainable) for forgiveness to occur.

Sociologist Georg Simmel too felt that the "psychological and sociological character" of conciliation shared a common source of anger with the dynamics of forgiveness. "After all, forgiving, too, does not presuppose any laxity of reaction or lacking strength of antagonism. It too is lit up in all its purity after the most deeply felt wrong and the most passionate struggle. Hence in both conciliation and forgiving lies something irrational, something like a denial of what one still was a moment before. This mysterious rhythm of the soul which makes processes of this type depend precisely and exclusively on the processes which contradict them is perhaps most clearly revealed in forgiving. For forgiving is probably the only affective process which we assume without any question to be subordinate to the will – otherwise, the *begging* of forgiveness would be meaningless. A request can only move us to something over which the will has power. That I spare the vanquished enemy or renounce all revenge on the individual who has offended me, can understandably be achieved on the basis of a request: it depends on my will. But that I *forgive* them, that is, that the feeling of antagonism, hatred, separateness yield to another *feeling* – in this respect, a mere resolution seems to be as powerless as it is in respect to feelings generally. Actually, however, the situation is different, and cases where we *cannot* forgive even with our best will are very rare."(11)

If one understands the source of the forgiveness paradigm to be rage and anger, with its possible result as either forgiveness or revenge, then an alternative perspective of the role religion-based ritualistic violence plays in community "healing" may be seen. Tim Allen described such a case in northern Uganda that he encountered while doing fieldwork in the late 1980s and early 1990s among the Madi. In this instance a woman, accused of being a witch was tortured and killed along with her daughter by a group of intoxicated males. Other, more formal instances occurred where individuals, mostly women, were accused of witchcraft, given a swift public trial, and executed. The aftermath of each killing appeared to result in a type of social bonding which prompted Allen to propose the idea that "torture and killing can become essential for the establishing of interpersonal accountability and the re-emergence of viable community life". While it is too early to judge what role this type of ritualistic killing truly plays, one suspects while reading the description, that it has much more in common with psychic "scape-goating" and anger directed toward revenge rather than with forgiveness and reconciliation.(12)

The close relationship between anger, revenge, and forgiveness is especially clear in a justice/forgiveness model, "Stages of justice and styles of forgiveness development" constructed by Enright et al. The first five forgiveness styles depict different forms of "pseudo" forgiveness, not to be confused with the authentic version described in Style 6. Each like numbered stage and style is considered to be the equivalent action in each area. Stage 1 is justice as "*Heteronomous Morality*. I believe that justice should be decided by the authority, by the one who can punish." Style 1 for forgiveness is "*Revengeful Forgiveness*. I can forgive someone who wrongs me only if I can punish him to a similar degree to my own pain." (There is an old Hindu proverb that warns "Forgiveness looks good on the snake which has the venom." (13) Justice Stage 2 is "*Individualism*. I have a sense of reciprocity that defines justice for me. If you help me, I must help you." Forgiveness Style 2 is "*Conditional or Restitutional Forgiveness*. If I get back what was taken away from me, then I can forgive. Or, if I feel guilty about withholding forgiveness, then I can forgive to relieve my guilt." Both of these strategies equate forgiveness with justice as punishment or restitution, demanding that something be given before forgiveness is extended. Justice Stage 3 is "*Mutual Interpersonal Expectations*. Here, I reason that the group consensus should decide what is right and wrong. I go along so that others close to me will like me." Forgiveness Style 3 is "*Expectational Forgiveness*. I can forgive if others put pressure on me to forgive. I forgive because other people expect it." Justice Stage 4 is "*Social System and Conscience*. Societal laws are my guides to justice. I uphold laws, except in extreme cases, to have an orderly society." Forgiveness Style 4 is "*Lawful Expectational Forgiveness*. I forgive because my religion demands it. Notice that this is not Stage 2 in which I forgive to relieve my own guilt about withholding forgiveness." Forgiveness Styles 3 and 4 suggest certain social pressures that must be in evidence in order for forgiveness to be granted. Justice Stage 5 is a "*Social Contract*. I am aware that people hold a variety of opinions. One usually should uphold the values and rules of one's group. Some non-relative values (life, liberty) must be upheld regardless of majority opinion." Forgiveness Style 5 is "*Forgiveness as Social Harmony*. I forgive because it restores harmony or good relations in society. Forgiveness decreases friction and outright conflict in society. Note that forgiveness is a way to control society; it is a way of maintaining peaceful relations." Both of these steps

differ from the previous ones only in the order of reciprocal action, in that their expectation of a certain condition to be met follows the extension of forgiveness rather than preceding it.(14)

Only the sixth step is genuine forgiveness because it is given freely without expected reciprocity, instead focusing on mercy and the "forswearing of personal justice". In Justice Stage 6 "*Universal Ethical Principles*" states "My sense of justice is based on maintaining the individual rights of all persons. People are ends in themselves and should be treated as such. Forgiveness Style 6 is "*Forgiveness as Love*. I forgive because it promotes a true sense of love. Because I must truly care for each person, a hurtful act on her part does not alter that sense of love. This kind of relationship keeps open the possibility of reconciliation and closes the door on revenge. Note that forgiveness is no longer dependent on a social context as in Stage/Style 5. The forgiver does not control the other by forgiving; he releases her." This version of forgiveness "includes the concept of justice [the offended realise they have been treated unfairly and have no duty to show compassion]...but goes beyond seeking a "fair solution" and instead reaching for a compassionate one.(15) In doing so a different paradigm of power emerges. By counter-intuitively and freely choosing to show compassion and forgiveness in the face of destruction, the victim breaks the self-limiting power of the cycle of guilt, shame, rage, reaching instead for the greater and more universal power of hope.

This concept of forgiveness as an optimistic release empowering the giver challenges Nietzsche's claim that "those who forgive are weak and unable to assert their right to a just solution". Enright and colleagues concluded that Nietzsche may have been referring to a style of acquiescent (pseudo) forgiveness that stems from low self esteem (perhaps a form of the preceding Style 3 or 5). This is when the individual feels powerless to achieve justice rather than achieving an "intrinsic forgiveness [that] valu[es] forgiveness in and of itself, displays self-acceptance, psychological strength, and respect for others, despite the presence of anger". Responding to the criticism of "forgiveness as a reversal of societal justice" the authors maintain that social justice and interpersonal forgiveness can exist together and that "a forgiving individual indeed may serve on a jury and see that justice is served. While forgiveness primes society to welcome the freed criminal, it does not require us to hastily open the jail cell door." Countering the accusation that sees "forgiveness as perpetuating injustice", they assert that forgiveness is being confused with reconciliation. "Forgiveness is an internal release and involves one individual. Reconciliation, on the other hand, involves two people who are behaviourally coming together."(16)

Forgiveness is the driving force behind an apology. While forgiveness is the sole province of the offended, an apology belongs entirely to the offender and is a classic confrontation between both. Dissecting the process of apology - "a speech act that seeks forgiveness" in his book *Mea Culpa*, Nicholas Tavuchis describes the relationship between the two. "Something happens; something is said or done that is interpreted and judged offensive, improper, or harmful. An apology is called for, someone apologizes, the apology (let us assume) is accepted, the offender is forgiven, and life goes on *as if* nothing had happened." His emphasis on the "as if" in that statement, acknowledges that

some tension and lingering antagonism may remain, but on the surface, "the social slate is wiped clean" although the act itself cannot be undone. (17) Thomas Scheff describes the significance of the apology-forgiveness relationship as a removal of a "threat to the social bond ...a relationship in which solidarity prevails" caused by alienation that can occur equally in both modern and traditional societies. "Modern societies tend toward individualism and isolation... – each cannot know the other and reveal the self because both are too distant... traditional ones, toward conformity and engulfment - ...each cannot know the other and reveal the self because loyalty and conformity demand that important parts of the self, basic desires, thoughts, and feelings may be hidden, even from the self. Secrecy, deception, and self-deception go hand in hand....Both formats are equally alienated."(18)

Both Tavuchis - who insists that one must also feel genuine regret in the form of sorrow or grief – and Scheff – for whom embarrassment is the driving emotion feel that the genuineness of an apology is the key to its success. Both would agree with Erving Goffman's description. "In its fullest form, the apology has several elements: expression of embarrassment and chagrin; clarification that one knows what conduct had been expected and sympathizes with the application of negative sanction; verbal rejection, repudiation, and disavowal of the wrong way of behaving along with vilification of the self that so behaved; espousal of the right way and an avowal henceforth to pursue that course; performance of penance and the volunteering of restitution."(19) While a sincere apology may help to facilitate the process of forgiveness - in another U.S. study conducted on interpersonal forgiving, McCullough et al, found that an apology often triggered first empathy, then forgiveness toward the offender – its presence is not necessary to begin the process of forgiveness. (20)

And what about the relationship between forgiveness and justice? Shiver observes: "Simple justice is elusive...forgiveness thrives in the tension between justice-as-punishment and justice-as-restoration. To take both sides seriously is to ponder how "due retribution" can play a restorative role in the future relation of wrongdoers and wrong-sufferers, and how forgiveness makes room for punishment while making wider room yet for the repair of damages and renewal of relation between enemies."(21) As Connerton points out forgiveness has not been considered an option in the traditional forms of justice. "...Those who have suffered most severely at the hands of the old regime want not only revenge for particular wrongs...the settlement they seek is one in which the continuing struggle between the new order and the old will be definitively terminated, because the legitimacy of the victors will be validated once and for all. The present is to be separated from what preceded it by an act of unequivocal demarcation. The trial by fiat of a successor regime is like the construction of a wall, unmistakable and permanent, between the new beginnings and the old tyranny." (22)

This traditional concept of justice – of righting wrongs and settling grievances through trial and punishment is the "justice as fairness" concept described by John Rawls in his 1972 book A Theory of Justice, and updated in his 1993 Political Liberalism. Rawls' concept of justice relies upon two basic principles. The first requires that each person have equal access to a "fully adequate scheme of basic rights and liberties, ..with the

same scheme for all" within which "equal political liberties are to be guaranteed their fair value". The second principle accepts "social and economic inequalities of wealth and authority" if they satisfy two conditions. "First, they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society." (23)

In seeking a concept of justice that can be supported by the "religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines" of society, Rawls describes a "political conception of justice". By political he means a "moral conception worked out for ...political, social, and economic institutions", in other words, the "basic structures of society...and how they fit together into one unified system of cooperation from one generation to the next." "Thus justice as fairness starts from within a certain political tradition and takes as its fundamental idea that of society as a fair system of cooperation over time, from one generation to the next. This central organizing idea is developed together with two companion fundamental ideas: one is the idea of citizens (those engaged in cooperation) as free and equal persons; the other is the idea of a well-ordered society as a society effectively regulated by a political conception of justice." Rawls concedes that "at some point a political conception of justice must address the just relations between peoples, or the law of peoples"...but he leaves that tricky issue to be worked out by others. (24)

Robert Nozick questioned the conflict of interest inherent in Rawl's description of the unequal distribution of society's cooperative benefits. Given the choice, Nozick maintained that individuals would prefer a larger rather than a smaller share of benefits and should be given the freedom to attain whatever size share that they could manage to get. He felt that this problem of "distributive justice" required a set of principles that determined the "division of advantages and for underwriting an agreement on the proper distributive shares." "These principles are the principals of social justice. They provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation." His solution to this dilemma was to create a minimal institutionalist state – a sort of free market version of civic justice, where any person could gain access to as many benefits as he was willing to work for. (25)

Mahmood Mamdani has challenged both these interpretations of justice in exploring a new paradigm of social reconciliation that lies somewhere between the "justice without reconciliation" as enacted in 1959 Rwanda, and the "reconciliation without justice" being attempted in contemporary South Africa. Taking the place of justice is the "ascendancy of another, that of rights [Justice Stage 6 in the Enright et al model] which goes by the name of "reconciliation" in South Africa". Although potentially problematic, this concept of reconciliation is perhaps the closest to the evolution of an institutional framework that encourages the possibility of forgiveness. In his paper "From Justice to Reconciliation: Making Sense of the African Experience", he recounts how the traditional type of "justice as fairness" perpetuated alone and unaccompanied by reconciliation (or forgiveness) can lead to a perpetual cycle of revenge as illustrated by what happened in Rwanda following the 1959 "social revolution.(26)

Mamdani begins this by describing how the historic concept of the Rawls/ Nozick type of justice – based on the racist colonial civil society and legal system - framed the struggle for independence from African colonisers, setting the stage for the "justice" dispensed in Rwanda. In the urban centre of (white) power in the African colonial state -split into both a modern urban power and as a traditional rural Native Authority - "civil power was the source of civil laws which guaranteed civil rights to citizens". This arrangement perpetuated the racist organisation of "the power, the law and the bearers of rights". The Native Authority defined in terms of ethnicity and "customary" law played the parallel role of civil law to the community rather than to civil society. In this way two identities - a racial one for citizens and an ethnic "particularism amongst victims" emerged from this legal and institutional framework. "Race was the identity that united beneficiaries, and ethnicity the identity that fragmented subjects." (27)

But as Mamdani points out the two artificially constructed worlds in equatorial Africa–civil/ urban and ethnic/ rural – were undermined by the reality of the demands for urban migrant labour in the colonial political economy. This crossing of boundaries created urbanized subjects who were racially excluded from the rights of the civil society they were living in and helping to support. It was this "racial grievance that formed the social base of nationalism". Rural definitions of ethnicity also became blurred as chiefs who comprised the Native Authority began developing an "insurgent peasant identity" that called for " 'genuine' custom to replace that which had been officially crafted and enforced as custom". Defined in this way justice was interpreted as "first and foremost, deracialization of urban society, civil society and the central state" and "denial of the stigma...that went by the name 'tribe'". The dependency theorists argued that the colonial political economy had been intentionally underdeveloped, leading to a global division of labour regulated by and subject to an imperialistic domination. Thus a true reformation of social justice for the post colonial states required an internal revision of the racially constructed colonial state as well as a transformation of positioning in the external global economy. The core of Mamdani's argument is that "The failure to deracialize power [after independence] was a double failure. Epistemologically, it was a failure to historicize/ problematicize notions of race and tribe as identities reproduced by a form of power, and embedded in a set of institutions. Militant nationalism either accepted these identities and definitions as the hallmarks of a positive science, or it dismissed them as ideological constructs. Politically, it was a failure to produce a practice that would change the paradigm. When revolutionaries succeeded, they managed to turn the world upside down; but they failed to change that world. More than anything else, that failure was political." (28)

To Mamdani, the epitome of this failure was illustrated by the "social revolution" of Rwanda in 1959 where the quest for justice turned into revenge. "Culturally, the differences between Hutu and Tutsi are like differences along a continuum. Politically, however, Hutu and Tutsi are as bipolar opposites, constructed by a form of the state in which if one has the identity of power, the other has the fate of being a subject. In colonial Rwanda, Tutsi was the identity of the Native Authority, Hutu of the subject peasantry. It is, I think, similar to the difference between the identities 'Afrikaner' and 'coloured' in apartheid South Africa. As cultural identities, they illustrate more

differences along a continuum. But as political identities, they were bipolar opposites: 'Afrikaner' was an identity of power, while 'coloured' was a subject identity." (29)

When the new "Hutu Power" emerged from the 1959 insurgence assisted by the Catholic Church and tacitly supported by the Belgian colonial power, the political tables were simply reversed and "Hutu" and "Tutsi" became politically enforced permanent identities, with one symbolising the wielding of and special access to power, and the other, the unquestionable subject of that power. This failure to recognise and to change the historic colonial construction of this political and social power and its resulting identities contributed most to turning justice into revenge - thus launching and perpetuating the cycle of conflict, then genocide between the two groups. The irony of this situation is that both shared a "victim consciousness" in different realms of power – the Hutus resisting "an ethnic dictatorship in the Native Authority" and the Tutsis fighting against a "racial dictatorship in civil authority". Instead of attempting to collectively identify and reshape these externally imposed political constraints, they simply chose to trade places. The result was then a "programme of redress, heralded as revolutionary justice, [which] became permanent" and that further solidified their political separateness. "As revolutionaries vowed never to forget the past, they accented the past over the future, giving a longer leash to the identities which animated that past, and shorter shrift to forging a common identity and community of survivors of that past tragedy. ...It is the failure to frame justice within notions of an inclusive political community that turned justice into a permanent preoccupation, a vendetta that increasingly spelt revenge."(30) To Mamdani, the recent South African experience represents an opportunity to redefine the old vengeful winners/ losers relationship. With its Truth and Reconciliation Commission, South Africa, unlike Rwanda, is a society striving to reach an ideal political balance that Shriver describes as "a social existence that encompasses both a just love and a loving justice".(31)

In Mamdani's new paradigm of "rights" instead of "justice", social reconciliation as opposed to political reconciliation may open the door to forgiveness and offer an escape from the self perpetuating cycle of revenge by encompassing a broader and different interpretation of justice as reconciliation that restores individual rights rather than simply punishing those perceived to be members of a group of perpetrators. "It includes ordinary members of society, those who benefited or got victimized as part of the logic, the outcome, of an ongoing system, regardless of agency; the embrace of social reconciliation includes the vast majority, in a word, beneficiaries and victims." On the other hand the narrowness of political reconciliation confines its process to addressing the issues of "systemic group disadvantage", and to the political elite - to activist victims on one side and the state perpetrators on the other – defined in terms of group identities. By widening the reconciliation framework as has been done in South Africa, the collective winner/loser syndrome is eliminated by redefining the interaction of perpetrators and victims as "gross abuses of human rights – murder, torture, rapes – but not on gross systemic outcomes such as pass laws and forced removals". This approach is based on individual violations and treats these crimes as a minority of the population. This individualisation of blame has also been extended to targeting political figures, thus allowing guilt and evil to be defined in individual rather than in group terms, allowing the

majority of citizens to transcend the past by forging a future out of new identities. By shifting the focus "from perpetrators to beneficiary, and from beneficiary to victims as the majority" the blame is individualised. Thus "perpetrators are personally and individually guilty, [but] beneficiaries may not be". "...Many a white South African can honestly have benefited from the system and yet be totally surprised at the injustices perpetrated in the name of the system." (32)

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed by an Act of Parliament in April 1994, approximately one year after the "relatively peaceful transition - described as "miraculous" by many - from oppression, exclusivity and resistance to a new, negotiated democratic order". The initial timetable was for two years, from December 1995 until 1997, but was extended until 31 July 1998. When introducing the bill, the Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar called it a "pathway, a stepping stone... for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past, which generated gross human rights violations...and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge ...[to] commence the journey towards a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence and development opportunities for all South Africans irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex."(33)

It was composed of three committees: The Committee on Human Rights Violations – which was formed to collect stories of the victims on a voluntary basis; The Committee on Amnesty – assigned with hearing evidence on political crimes and allocating amnesty; and The Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation – which sought to help the victims through monetary payments or commemorative ceremonies. An Investigation Unit composed of "lawyers, members of the police force and international experts" was to follow up on the factual investigation of the stories of both victims and perpetrators. The concept behind its formation and leadership by President Nelson Mandela, was to gather the "truth" about all the politically motivated human rights violations – "murder, torture, disappearance/ abduction, severe ill-treatment" – that took place in South Africa between 1 March 1960 until 5 December 1993. Bishop Desmond Tutu was chosen to be chairman of the TRC.(34) Of these committees the one on amnesty, confronting the traditional concept of justice as punishment ("fairness"), has proven to be the most controversial and difficult for many to accept.

The vivid portrayal in the mass media of witnesses' pain-filled accounts of death, torture and various forms of severe ill-treatment during the hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee, combined with court challenges by prominent victims (such as the Biko, Mxenge and Robeiro families) to the removal of their right to seek civil redress as a result of amnesty being granted, have highlighted difficult questions concerning the value of "truth", amnesty, justice as punishment, and the role of forgiveness. These criticisms confirm the fact that the concept of justice in ordinary life and language functions mainly as a (passionate) protest against wrongdoing as well as a demand for rectification.(35)

There is yet another important set of criticisms deploring the TRC's "lack of justice". From the perspective of those who are accused, mostly former enforcers of Apartheid, there is a troubling contrast between the impartiality and the procedural protection of the

justice system and a Commission allowing, for example, untested allegations to be made in public HRV hearings. In the words of retired police commissioner General Johan van der Merwe: "We have been quite disappointed, especially with the committee investigating gross violations of human rights. The principles of natural justice are not being adhered to. There is no way we will be able to say afterwards that justice has prevailed".(36)

Apart from amnesty, which has been dispensed on a case by case basis, public articulation of the "truth" raises its own questions. Who is telling the "truth" and what do they have to gain by doing so? While it may be effective in promoting healing and in inspiring forgiveness in some circumstances, it has its own set of limitations. In a 1997 editorial in the British Medical Journal, Derek Summerfield asked the question "Does a truth commission promote reconciliation [in South Africa] ? ...Does the truth purify?" He suggests that the truth is elusive and influenced by other events so that its revelation may be "inflammatory and divisive rather than reconciling".(37) Michel Foucault questions the source of the "truth" -who is telling it and for what reason – by describing the battle to acquire it as about "the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays". "‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it. A ‘regime’ of truth."(38) Michael Ignatieff feels that it is important to distinguish between factual truth and moral truth. One tells the chronology of what happened while the later is a narrative that attempts to explain who is responsible and why events took place. He points out that the version of truth depends on who is telling it. "What you believe to be true depends, in some measure, on who you believe yourself to be. And who you believe yourself to be is mostly defined in terms of who you are not." In other words, if you are Serb, you are "first and foremost not to be a Croat or a Muslim". If you are Catholic, then you are not Protestant –if Hutu, then not Tutsi – if white African, then not black African, and so on. He finds Archbishop Tutu’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be admirable but finds the assumptions he makes – "that a nation has one psyche, not many; that the truth is one, not many; that the truth is certain, not contestable; and that when it is known by all, it has the capacity to heal and reconcile" – questionable.(39)

Brandon Hamber, clinical psychologist and co-ordinator of the Transition and Reconciliation Unit for the Centre of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa, reinforced this point in a paper he presented at a conference on Ethnic Studies in Northern Ireland. "[Hamber] concluded his remarks by cautioning the audience that it is a mistake to assume that story telling and giving testimony, either in public or private spaces, equates with healing. Truth alone will not lead to reconciliation nor will it guarantee that a human rights culture will permeate the society and that those who suffered in the past will be able to deal with their traumas." He has cautioned that despite the success of TRC hearings, many of the victims have had varied reactions. Some have found it to be the final leg in a journey of personal healing, while for others it has been only the beginning step. "...Truth may heighten anger and calls for justice...[and] there is also the constant threat of a perpetuated cycle of revenge. ...Thus, survivors and families of victims need to accept their anger as legitimate without feeling they are expected to forgive perpetrators."(40)

The concept of confession implied by truth telling is also relevant to this discussion. Its religious overtones and relationships of power have much in common with secular apologies. Both seek an absolution from transgressions and past "sins" and are directed toward the one or many who have the power to forgive or absolve. Foucault described it as a "ritual of discourse ...that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of ...[an] authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile."**(41)** Tavuchis also speaks of the victim's power to redeem and reconcile after an apology. "This power also entails a profound moral obligation since the helpless offender, *in consideration for nothing more than a speech*, asks for nothing less than the conversion of righteous indignation and betrayal into unconditional forgiveness and reunion."**(42)** The questions that remain are similar to those concerning "truth" - who is absolving and why?

The issues of truth, amnesty, and forgiveness have been addressed by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, member of the Human Rights Violations Committee, TRC. "Amnesty was never meant to diminish the trauma that families and individuals had to go through. In fact, some witnesses who have come to the Commission have expressed a preference for the truth, rather than a need for the punishment of perpetrators. I think that it would be more difficult for families of victims to accept the total and unconditional amnesty adopted in the Guatemalan model, where perpetrators from all sides are not supposed to be named. Human rights groups and families of victims in that country have criticised the terms of the amnesty as breeding ground for bitterness, and not reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission hopes that one of the lessons from these confessions is the importance of individual choice. I think that individual conscience should be elevated above the service of the state, or other institutions of power, especially for those acts cloaked in legitimacy. This is why I cringe at the thought of political parties who discourage free speech, and instead push a "party line." I believe this is another form of oppression that takes away decision making from the individual, and can also be seen as mocking the notion of "making a clean break with the past."**(43)**

Cautioning against seeing the TRC as a quick fix to South Africa's societal problems she continues: "...One can neither legislate nor proclaim reconciliation from above. "The significance of the notion of "breaking with the past" has been variously interpreted in the public arena. Some equate it with "forgive and forget." In other words, simply turning the page, wiping everything from memory, and moving on. The danger with this conceptualisation of reconciliation is that it trivialises the process of forgiveness, and reduces pain into something that can be easily chucked away, in exchange for joyful unity with the one who caused the pain. Yet forgiveness is a journey and a challenge. Acknowledging and accepting a plea for forgiveness is a first step, and one that requires both parties to work at. Assuming anything more profound than a first step would be unrealistic, and tantamount to a form of false reconciliation." In her view it is a long process best achieved through "interpersonal contacts that ultimately are the best way to break down stereotypes and antagonisms", an echo of the Enright models of forgiveness."**(44)**

Are there other ways for a society recovering from conflict to begin taking the steps toward reconciliation – with or without a truth commission- that encompasses the possibility of forgiveness? Isak Dinesen's quote; "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them." may offer some insight. (45) Perhaps a collective and individual reconstruction of social memory and "history" holds the key. Social memory as illustrated by author Paul Connerton, is defined as a group beginning anew through enactment of collective social, political or historic recreation, often in the form of "commemorative ceremonies" or "bodily practices". David Turton also describes a collective "mythico-historical narrative" or a creation of a group homeland mythology as a way of coping with the past, present and future. Another view – essentially "pragmatic" and represented in the work of Derek Summerfield for example – emphasises the value of remembering but not dwelling on the past, preferring to focus on the present and future instead. A type of religion based behaviour described by Naila Nauphal promotes forgiveness as a form of personal and collective action. An alternative perspective is the psycho-analytical, Western diagnostic and therapeutic style of individual talk-therapy which centres on the recall and reworking of traumatic events and finds the possibility of forgiveness in an individual's full acknowledgement of what has happened to him or her. A multi dimensional approach to forgiveness education has potential to broaden this concept and has just begun to be explored.

Social memory can enact a public willingness to begin again in several different ways. Connerton describes this collective will in the social and political arenas by pointing out the French "commemorative" ceremonial approach to the trial and execution of Louis XVI following the Revolution. "By putting Louis, as the embodiment of kingship, to death in such a way that official public abhorrence of the institution of kingship was actually expressed and witnessed", the monarchy was finished forever in France. "Bodily practices" were demonstrated in the dramatic changes in styles of dress that took place within French society almost simultaneously after his beheading. Connerton states that this form of bodily practice emphasising a newly classless society took place from 1791 to 1794, when clothing became a type of standard uniform. But, as he goes on to say, despite appearances nothing is truly new.

"All beginnings contain an element of recollection. This is particularly so when a social group makes a concerted effort to begin with a wholly new start. There is a measure of complete arbitrariness in the very nature of any such attempted beginning. The beginning has nothing whatsoever to hold on to; it is as if it came out of nowhere. For a moment, the moment of beginning, it is as if the beginners had abolished the sequence of temporality itself and were thrown out of the continuity of temporal order. ...But the absolutely new is inconceivable. It is not just that it is very difficult to begin with a wholly new start...More fundamentally, it is that in all modes of experience we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all; that prior to any single experience, our mind is already predisposed with a framework of outlines, of typical shapes of experienced objects. To perceive an object or act upon it is to locate it within this system of expectations. (46)

The recreation of historic narrative as social memory is another forum in which the process of political forgiveness could be enacted on both a group and individual level. In this context the past is not forgotten, but simply relegated to an event that may or may not be relevant to the present and future. David Turton's paper on "Forced Migrants as Makers of History" discusses how two groups, the displaced Hutu camp refugees fleeing genocide and civil war in Burundi and the Mursi, who were forced to move because of drought and famine in Ethiopia, recreated their own histories ". The Hutus, who were camp refugees fleeing from conflict, were constantly preoccupied by "an impassioned construction and reconstruction of their history as a 'people'", seeing themselves as an exiled nation with an eventual return to a "homeland" which was more an imagined concept than an exact physical location. Interestingly, the Hutu "town refugees" who were integrated into a non-refugee population in Kigoma Township on Lake Tanganyika, and who did not have the issues of enforced isolation and outside administration as did the camp refugees, did not seem to feel the same need to recreate their history. Alternatively, the Mursi, forced to move because of climate and land problems, developed a history of a migrating people searching "for a cool place" where greener pastures and fertile fields are in abundance. Both historic recreations are seen to be a way of reaffirming each group's identity by overcoming the negativity of their past while positively preserving their present and future image.(47)

Another group of survivors, described by Derek Summerfield, emerged from the World War II and Holocaust death camps without becoming psychologically ill. "Both veterans and those emerging from concentration camps in 1945 mostly sought to rebuild their social and work lives and to put the war behind them. Most did not seek, nor were offered psychological help as post-war society in Europe and America did not see them as carrying a permanent psychological wound. ... Psychological trauma is not like physical trauma; people do not passively register the impact of external forces (unlike, say, a leg hit by a bullet), but engage with them in an active and social way. All over the world, huge numbers of ordinary, unremarkable people demonstrate a capacity to endure, adapt, and transcend that scarcely suggests psychiatric casehood." It is important to remember, however, that others did suffer a "survivor syndrome" with symptoms very similar to those described by Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. (48) The Save the Children Fund and Celia Petty have developed a set of practical steps that they see as helpful in encouraging children in particular to recover from trauma.

Each culture has its own ritual for acknowledging forgiveness. Lebanon, a country torn apart by fifteen years of civil war in the 1970s and 80s, can be seen as an example of the overlapping of religious, political, and cultural processes on the road to reconciliation. The concept of an apology rooted in shame and embarrassment has played a major role in this process. Those who have committed acts of violence are encouraged to confess and seek forgiveness by entering the house of the slain person, asking for protection of the house, formally admitting to having committed the killing, and requesting the host's mercy. If the apology is accepted, the offender's head will be shaved and he will be dressed in new clothing to signify his rebirth. This ritual carries great weight in a country where "public opinion is the worst tribunal". As Naila Nauphal points out, "This does not mean that hostility and violence have suddenly disappeared. Only they have been

transferred into/and neutralised by the highly institutionalised rituals of hospitality. ...the conflict has been replaced by a reciprocal code of honour." (49)

Social memory is the link between all these forms of analysis. Social theorist Maurice Halbwachs has argued that individual memory is shaped by membership to a social group and strengthened by religious, class, and family ties. It differs from academic historical reconstruction in that it may or may not accurately reflect the facts or the chronology of an event. Halbwachs states that "society tends to eliminate from its memory everything which could separate individuals" and at certain moments "society is obliged to become attached to new values, that is to say to depend upon other traditions which are in better relation with its needs and present tendencies". (50) It would appear that by issuing a public apology, dispensing monetary restitution, and/or articulating the language of forgiveness in this climate of ritual and pragmatic re-invention, a symbolic and pragmatic purpose would be served in promoting healing and the process of forgiveness.

Western Psycho-Analysis has an individually focused approach to recovering from trauma, as embodied by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the development of which focused primarily on American male Vietnam War Veterans. This approach has been strongly challenged as of doubtful usefulness among Western and more especially non-Western populations.(51) However, if carefully chosen aspects for its utilization are sensitive to the population's needs, it may have possibilities as a building block. Assisting groups to set up centres for short term diagnosis and treatment, accompanied by long term development of centres for mental health has been proposed, but the criteria of such help must be acceptable to the recipients. Training and supporting local fieldworkers, perhaps drawing from the pool of teachers has been suggested. "Listening, seeking a solution within the family or community rather than trying to explore feelings or traumatic experiences in depth; support[ing] children [and adults] in building up their defences rather than exploring them; us[ing] traditional ceremonies to purify; engag[ing] traditional diviners and healers" are all ways to culturally sensitise this form of healing. Forgiveness and its process would be possible in such a setting, as it could set the tone for a positive reconstruction of social, political, and economic structures. (52)

This same culturally sensitive approach could be extended to formal forgiveness education. Using a limited version of the basic eighteen step process model developed by Enright and his colleagues on groups of "parentally love-deprived late adolescents" in the US, Radhi Al-Mabuk concluded that "a curriculum focused on a commitment to forgive" increased hope, optimism, and a willingness to forgive. The actual enactment of forgiveness seemed to occur more often when the curriculum included the entire eighteen steps of the Enright model. Their conclusion states that; "We believe that the positive psychological outcomes here may be a function of the *process* of forgiveness rather than only one's initial commitment to forgive. The results of this study imply that those hurt by another need to go beyond saying they will forgive. They need to courageously explore and understand their injurer's humanity. This is the precursor to the empathy and compassion that may be the keys to psychological healing..[and] may allow the person to absorb the pain, which consequently may transform the person from a victim mindset to a survivor mindset." (53)

It also must be recognised that in some circumstances forgiveness may not be possible. "There are monsters who do such evils as ordinary people dare not dream of. They may be towering titans who trample whole populations. They may be crawling worms who seduce little children into prostitution. Whether giants or punks, they hurt people so badly that they may disqualify themselves forever from forgiveness by a fellow human being".(54) In cases such as these, the best course of action may be to participate in reconciliation to the best of one's individual and collective ability as observed by Gobo-Madikizela and Summerfield.

Of all these alternatives, it may be Mamdani's concept of reconciliation -as a mix of beneficiaries and victims as a minority of society, defined in strictly individual terms- that may be most supportive for the possibility of developing interpersonal and intergroup forgiveness. In proposing his new paradigm of reconciliation as justice, he recognises the struggle to balance the acceptance of past wrongs against the unpunished enactment of past evil. "There is no Chinese Wall between good and evil; the two are interred in the same bones. The dilemma is how to live with evil: Love Thy Enemy. In secular terms the dilemma is how to live in a pre-revolutionary, nay, non-revolutionary, world. ...Is the point of identifying evil to embrace it, or to struggle against it? Before you can *love* thy enemy, must you not recognize the *enemy*? ...In avoiding a quest of justice that turns into revenge, by treating evil exclusively as the Other and ignoring the potential for evil in Self, should we not also beware of a pursuit of reconciliation that turns into an embrace of evil?" (55)

He points out two lessons learned to prevent reconciliation from embracing injustice and evil, have focused on the quest of a new type of political and social justice. The first lesson is that a distinction between political and social reconciliation may allow a population to "chart a process which makes manageable the tension between reconciliation and justice", by approaching reconciliation in degrees, moving from the political leadership to the population, from perpetrators and victims as a minority to beneficiaries and victims as the majority". The second is that the quest for justice does not have to be self-righteous and can be framed instead as an historic response to injustice. "The challenge is to bound that quest within a larger objective, the quest for a re-defined political community in which the identities victim and perpetrator, victim and beneficiary, can be transcended as those of survivors of an era gone by." (56)

In his paper, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence", psychologist Malvern Lumsden endorses that broader view. "The construction of a peaceful world society requires that individuals, groups and nations can negotiate shared meanings, including coherent but compatible identities and patterns of social relationship. ...It is in the transitional zone between society and individuals that shared meanings can be (informally) constructed and negotiated, and it is shared meanings that form the core of group identity and culture, as well as peaceful interpersonal and intergroup relations." (57)

It is important to realize that a formal understanding of the process of forgiveness in reconstructing a post conflict society is in its infancy. As Nicholas Tavuchis stated: "Although I have referred frequently to forgiveness as a crucial element in the apologetic

equation, this mysterious and unpredictable faculty has not been adequately addressed or formulated. If, as I have argued, sorrow is the energizing force of apology, then what moves the offended party to forgive? In historical and cross-cultural terms, what is deemed forgivable and unforgivable?" (58) And if forgiveness can be achieved, what is its role in rebuilding social, political, and economic structures?

In the end, it may be wise to remember that no matter how much a group promotes or supports a climate for reconciliation and healing, it is the capacity for forgiveness that lies within each individual that arguably influences the long term success of these efforts. We can not only recreate communities but ourselves by using the same techniques of history, memory, narrative, and psychological interventions previously described. If each of us can find within the capacity for enacting that magical internal moment of letting wrongs go, no matter how horrendous the grievance, of trying to forgive in order to step painfully toward a more positive future, then perhaps we can say that there's hope for the human race. Until this point, the wronged individual risks suffering a three fold oppression: first, by the wrong itself; second, by the hatred (of others, of self) that may consume him or her; and thirdly, (reentering a political dimension) by the continuing social conflict that a lack of forgiveness helps to keep alive.

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