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To Forgive or Not Forgive: Philosophies, Limits, and Transitional Political Processes

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TO FORGIVE OR NOT FORGIVE: PHILOSOPHIES, LIMITES, AND TRANSITIONAL POLITICAL PROCESSES[*]

Abstract

Forgiveness, as a dimension of the transitional political process of reconciliation, appears in varied forms. The diversity of approaches to forgiveness paired with the doubled question of *Who can grant forgiveness and under what circumstances?* leads to conceptual and practical questions concerning the value of concept in transitional societies. In this article, I draw upon a range of perspectives to elaborate a trajectory of thought that situates forgiveness as an aporetic experience of the limit between the forgivable and the unforgivable. I argue that persistent reflection on this limit is required to achieve the hope and prospects of forgiveness, as well as preserve the judgment of forgiveness from a status that is heterogeneous to transitional political processes.

It is only against the unforgivable, and thus on the scale *without scale* of a certain inhumanity of the inexpiable, against the monstrosity of radical evil that forgiveness, if there is such a thing, measures itself.

–Jacques Derrida, *To Forgive*

The meaning of a thing, as opposed to its end, is always contained within the thing itself, and the meaning of an activity can exist only as long as the activity continues.

–Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*

1. Introduction

In her widely discussed work *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*, Martha Minow (1998) opposes forgiveness to vengeance as an alternative to the retributive economy of violence that often accompanies socio-political transitions. Forgiveness, as Minow traces the concept, arises within two registers of experience that correspond with private/subjective feeling and public action. As private feeling, forgiveness "marks a change in how the offended feels about the person who committed the injury," (p. 15) and is characterized by a cessation of hate and retribution that accompanies the inclusion of offenders in social and moral reconstruction. As public action, forgiveness "often takes the form of amnesty or pardon," and "institutionalizes forgetfulness" in the interests of moving on (p. 15). That there are public and private spheres of experience to begin with reveals a tension central to the idea of forgiveness.

Any attempt to theorize forgiveness from a philosophical perspective must necessarily confront a broad range of experiences that extend from interpersonal to society-wide relationships. The transitional political process of reconciliation is one setting of particular value for thinking through these experiences because reconciliation processes often work to promote forgiveness in an effort to shape the future of a society. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides a valuable example of how the two concepts are integrated in practice given the commission's efforts to identify forgiveness as an important step in rebuilding the national fabric. There are, however, unresolved rifts in and between what "forgiveness" is and what theoretical and practical contribution it makes to the process of reconciliation.

In this article, I draw upon a range of perspectives to elaborate a trajectory of thought that situates forgiveness as an aporetic experience of the limit between the forgivable and the unforgivable. I argue that persistent reflection on this limit is necessary to achieve the prospects and hope of forgiveness, as well as preserve the judgment of forgiveness from a status heterogeneous to transitional political processes. My analysis moves through the works of Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, and Vladimir Jankélévitch to establish a philosophical framework for the concept of forgiveness. In the latter half of the article I briefly discuss this framework in the context of Desmond Tutu's philosophy of praxis and its application in South Africa's national Truth and Reconciliation Commission

(TRC). My ultimate goal is to chart a path for further thinking on the philosophical *and* practical limits of forgiveness within transitional political processes.[i]

2. Transitional Political Processes: The Relation of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Under the subtitle "The disclosure of the agent in speech and action," Hannah Arendt (1958/1998) tells us in *The Human Condition* that "to act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin…, to set something into motion" and that we do so as "*initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth" (p. 177). Action along with speech, and in their shared character of beginning anew, exhibits the two-fold character of equality and distinction, which forms the basic conditions of human plurality. This is to say that although equality implies a general condition under which human beings are capable of understanding each other, they are also distinguished by the appearance of each human in intersubjective interaction, and reveal diversity by virtue of the fact that it is more than mere "signs and sounds [used] to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants" (p. 176). Interaction instead appears as the uniquely human process of starting something new, and doing so in a way that cannot be wholly, or even largely, anticipated by interactants within the flux of human experience.

The desire to counteract the anxiety of beginning anew manifests in the history of Western political philosophy as the assertion that there exists an inherently political substance common to biological human life, which establishes an absolute and pre-given foundation for politics.[ii] But because "humans" rather than "the human" appear to us in speech and action, no such foundation is possible; we are, rather, delivered into a web of relationality to which we add our own design in concert with others, and do so by virtue of our capacity to speak and to act. Arendt is thus careful to note that the beginning of the beginner as *initium* "is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself. With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself" (p. 177).[iii] This character of the human agent as a beginner reveals the inseparability of speech and action

> because the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: 'Who are you?'…Without the accompaniment of speech, at any rate, action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible. Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. The action he begins is humanly disclosed by the word and though his deed can be perceived in its brute physical appearance without verbal accompaniment, it becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which he identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do. (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 178-179)

The disclosure of the agent in speech and action is one important instance of beginning anew. However, what characterizes this beginning is also what characterizes all beginnings in general, and that is the principle of uncertainty. When agents insert themselves into the world with word and deed in response to the question "Who are you?," they do so without full knowledge or control over what they do in fact reveal, which is the essence of the new.[iv] In antiquity, the decisive problem associated with any possible response to "Who are you?" was that of the impermanence of human experience. This quality of experience generated a manifold desire to reach beyond the now of human perception for the purpose of controlling and preserving that which appears naturally. The result is an intellectual emphasis on discovering the processes of nature as a way to overcome and understand what is outside of human control. Such concerns subsequently altered the path of human existence in a way that "uncertainty rather than frailty becomes the decisive character of human affairs" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 232). By turning to science to extend knowledge beyond a thoroughly perspectival account of what is, human culture embraced the uncertainty of discovery as a way to address the frailty of experience. This is to say, uncertainty, as the beginning point of science, embraced a view of process that was previously unobserved, but which is made possible precisely because humans are capable of starting our own processes, rather than being only subject to them. The uncertainty of every beginning is, accordingly, limited; rather than grasping uncertainty as an end, science treats it (uncertainty) as a means to an end; uncertainty is the beginning of the process of discovering what exists naturally and does so as a matter of control.

The control sought through an embrace of uncertainty results in a paradoxical condition. Although we manage uncertainty as a path to gain knowledge, like all beginnings it implies the character of that which we cannot undo and is "matched by an almost equally complete incapacity to foretell the consequences of any deed or even to have reliable knowledge of its motives" (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 232-233). Action thus has a two-fold character of uncertainty and irreversibility, which, together, mean that we always already begin anew without knowledge of what we do in fact begin, and without the capacity to undo those deeds. It is in connection with these facets of action that forgiveness becomes a necessity.

Forgiveness, for Arendt (1958/1998), arises out of a need to overcome both the uncertainty and the irreversibility of action. As a way of managing the uncertainty of the future we make and keep promises about what we will do, but such promises, because they occur in the present and concern that which has not yet happened, cannot be fulfilled to the fullest extent. Because action, both in the form of a promise and in the partial fulfillment of that promise, is irreversible, we would, without the capacity to forgive, never be able to release ourselves 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" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 237). The implication of forgiveness as a necessary facet of action likewise relates to the human condition of plurality: Both action and its consequences serve a necessary role in politics by both promising the future and

maintaining the possibility of acting again, despite the potential for violating what we have promised.

In Plato's infamous "allegory of the cave" from the *Republic*, for instance, the quality of the enlightened prisoner's authority is one founded on speechless authority in which absolute standards (the Forms) endure a process of deformation that enables their application in human affairs. This view of action (i.e., one that begins with the assumption of absolute Truth) cleaves speech from politics as an unnecessary dimension of legitimate rule, which corresponds, instead, with an internal dialogue between me and myself "so that the right and wrong of relationships with others are determined by attitudes toward one's self, until the whole of the public realm is seen in the image of 'man writ large,' of the right order between man's individual capacities of mind, soul, and body" (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 237-238). However, as Arendt points out, forgiveness assumes a world of human action in which promises are made to others and so quite literally is only possible as a result of one's experience with others. This means that a subject's everyday being with others, in which forgiveness is a necessary facet, determines the "extent and modes in which one may be able to forgive himself or keep promises concerned only with himself" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 238).

Arendt (1958/1998) traces the history of forgiveness to Jesus of Nazareth who she credits with discovering the role and significance of forgiving in human affairs.[v] She claims that it was he who corrected the view that only God can forgive and does so through the medium of human beings. Instead, she observes, Jesus taught that forgiveness "must be mobilized by men toward each other before they can hope to be forgiven by God also" (p. 239). Arendt understands forgiveness as a necessary dimension of the human condition, and in keeping with the biblical account that forms the ground of her view, also believes that there are actions that are unforgivable. She talks about such actions as "crime and willful evil," which are subject to retribution rather than forgiveness in the Last Judgment carried out by God. In the realm of human affairs, such actions are unforgivable not because they are understood as literally "unforgivable," but rather because such acts defy human sense, and are thus outside of understanding. Arendt shows us that punishment, which is an alternative to but not the opposite of forgiveness, shares with it a capacity to put an end to what could go on endlessly. But this shared structural character also shows that "men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish" and are also "unable to punish what has turned out to be unforgivable" (Arendt 1958/1998, p. 241). Such "radical evil," following Kant, "transcends the realm of human affairs and the potentialities of human power, both of which they [acts of radical evil] radically destroy wherever they make their appearance" (p. 241). The unforgivable nature of this type of action thus arises out of a sheer inability to act productively, which is to say it forecloses the possibility of forgiving as a condition of its character as radical evil.

The kind of actions that Arendt (1958/1998) has explicitly in mind when she writes of forgiveness are those she names "trespasses," and are deeds that act in violation of the promises we make to secure the future. Without our ability to forgive and move beyond such acts it would be impossible to continue forward freely; "only by constant willingness to change their minds and start again can they [men/women] be trusted with so great a power as that to begin something new" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 240). Forgiveness shares with the new a character of

uncertainty and unpredictability and thus retains the original sense of action in that it is outside of our control and always acts in ways never before considered.

Like Arendt, Vladimir Jankélévitch (1962/2005; 1996) takes the perspective that forgiveness is indeed a human thing, and more specifically, a way of responding to injustice. He discusses forgiveness in two distinct ways: One concerns a positive thesis, which describes the conditions of forgiveness that call it forward, and what it can do. His other, negative thesis concerns what forgiveness is not, and more specifically, the conditions under which forgiveness is impossible.

Jankélévitch's positive thesis concerning forgiveness parallels Arendt's view, although with divergent areas of focus. Like the turn that Arendt attributes to Jesus, Jankélévitch argues that forgiveness "forgives the man insofar as he is a man, and not with regard to this or that" (1962/2005, p. 95). This is to say, forgiveness is a human thing with a particular history that is a necessary condition of all action. In this line of thinking, he argues that what is "inexcusable is in fact not unforgivable; and that the incomprehensible is not unforgivable, either! When a crime can neither be justified, nor explained, nor even understood…there is no longer anything else to do but to forgive" (p. 106). This is where his argument diverges from Arendt's. For Arendt, what is without comprehension and understanding is precisely radical evil, which cannot be forgiven—or punished, for that matter—for these very reasons. However, what Jankélévitch means by that which is "inexcusable" is much closer to what Arendt (1958/1998) refers to as "trespasses," and shares with the latter the character of something like that of a sin for which repentance leads to absolution. The general character of forgiving, for Jankélévitch, is that of a "hyperbolic forgiveness…that forgives without reasons" and even "renounces justice itself" (1962/2005, p. 119). At the center of such acts is a selfless person who asks for and wants nothing in return.

Jankélévitch's (1962/2005; 1996) negative thesis, however, takes on a much different and decisive tone. Closer to what Arendt refers to as "radical evil," Jankélévitch speaks of that which is unforgivable as a "meta-empirical impossibility," as that which defies and stands in contradistinction to an original act of creation. It is that which eliminates the possibility of grace and inspiration.[vi] Jankélévitch acknowledges that there is an infinite debate to be had about what falls into this category of activity, but the Holocaust is one manifestation of wickedness that is most certainly at the heart of the concept. In a work that follows his early treatise on forgiveness, Jankélévitch (1996) turns to an explicit discussion of the Holocaust and describes why it is unforgivable.[vii] Jankélévitch describes crimes against humanity as "crimes against the human essence or, if you will, against the 'hominity' of human beings in general" (p. 555). Such action creates a meta-empirical impossibility in the sense that it has the quality of extermination; it does not allow life, but rather seeks to attack it at the most fundamental level. He draws a parallel between the

> Inquisitors [who], by annihilating the heretics with exterminating fire, suppressed the Other, which existed only by some inexplicable inadvertence of God, and thus claimed to accomplish the divine will, and the Germans, who by annihilating the accursed race in the ovens of the crematoria, radically suppressed the existence of those who should not have existed. And thus the sadists who made soap from the cadavers of [t]he extermination of

the Jews is the product of pure wickedness, of *ontological* wickedness, of the most diabolical and gratuitous wickedness that history has ever known. (p. 556)

The meta-empirical impossibility of forgiveness in the face of this annihilating violence arises from two related sources. First, Jankélévitch (1996) argues that "everyone is free to pardon the offenses that he has personally suffered if he chooses to, but those others, what right does he have to pardon them?" (p. 569). And so those who have perished in the crematoria are precisely the only people who, according to Jankélévitch, can pardon their murderers, forgiveness is impossible.[viii] A second, related dimension of this argument is that events such as the Holocaust, quite literally "deprive forgiveness of its daily bread" (1962/2005, p. 158) in their annihilation of human being. The impossibility of these conditions for forgiveness in the aftermath of the Holocaust lead Jankélévitch to argue that "pardoning died in the death camps" (p. 567) along with the victims who perished there.

An additional dimension of the impossibility of forgiving in the context of the Holocaust, according to Jankélévitch (1996), is simply that no one has ever asked for forgiveness for its atrocities. He shares with Arendt (1958/1998) a reading of the biblical account that requires that one ask for forgiveness as a necessary precondition for such a grant. This is a historically important step, in Jankélévitch's view, because it symbolizes a memory of the wrong without simply letting it pass into the private hell of forgotten suffering. He likens forgiving without being asked to the process of forgetting, which insofar as it "overwhelms everything and the desperate intermittent protestations of memory is not a fair fight; in advising forgetfulness, the proponents of pardoning thus recommend something that does not need to be recommended. The forgetful will take care of that themselves" (p. 571). Although Jankélévitch situates this view of forgiveness in the particular case of the Holocaust, which he sees as not just one barbarous act amongst others, but rather barbarity in its most heinous form, he does so by drawing upon claims that are applicable across a spectrum of activity most generally defined as crimes against humanity.

3. Forgiveness as Horizon

For both Arendt and Jankélévitch, forgiveness is not only possible but objectively necessary, in some sense, for the social world of human beings. Without the capacity to forgive the trespasses of mundane action, Arendt (1958/1998) argues, we would be bound to, and never be able to move beyond, our first act. In a similar fashion, Jankélévitch (1962/2005) understands forgiveness as that which allows us to deal with injustice without resorting to vengeance. Both thinkers importantly posit an absolute limit of action—"radical evil" for Arendt and "meta-empirical impossibility" for Jankélévitch—beyond which forgiveness is a fundamental impossibility. Although they differ in their descriptions of the conditions that bring about this limit, they are both sure that such a limit exists and that we have encountered it in the Camps, if nowhere else.

Jacques Derrida (2001a; 2001b) addresses both views in his account of forgiveness as a horizon of knowledge characterized by aporia. In order to grasp what Derrida means by this, it is first

necessary to consider what an "aporia" is. At stake in the word is a

> nonpassage, or rather from the experience of nonpassage, the experience of what happens [*se passe*] and is fascinating [*passionne*] in this nonpassage, paralyzing us in this separation in a way that is not necessarily negative: before a door, a threshold, a border, a line, or simply the edge or the approach of the other as such. It should be a matter of [*devrait y aller du*] what, in sum, appears to block our way or to separate us in the very place where *it would no longer be possible to constitute a problem* [original italics], a project, or a projection, that is, at the point where the very project or the problematic task becomes impossible and where we are exposed, absolutely without protection, without problem, and without prosthesis, without possible substitution, singularly exposed in our absolute and absolutely naked uniqueness, that is to say, disarmed, delivered to the other, incapable even of sheltering ourselves. (Derrida, 1993, p. 12)

This notion of aporia is important to Derrida's discussion of forgiveness because it situates, prior to the particularities of context, the condition for the im/possibility of forgiveness; this is to say that aporia, the experience of nonpassage in our approach of the other, is the interminable experience of "any event of decision or of responsibility" (p. 16). As a horizon of knowledge characterized by aporia, forgiveness is a type of irreducible presentation that never presents itself to consciousness or existence. To further develop what Derrida means by this we must turn to an example.

The aporia of forgiveness that Derrida (2001a) describes concerns that of giving, of being rendered

> incapable of giving enough, or of being hospitable enough, of being present enough to the present I give, and to the welcome that I offer, such that I think, I am even certain of this, I always have to be forgiven, to ask forgiveness for not giving enough, for never offering or welcoming enough. (p. 22)

This moment of knowing that one never gives enough has yet another extreme or becomes more extreme "when one must ask forgiveness, on the contrary, for giving, forgiveness for what one gives, which can become a poison, a weapon, an affirmation of sovereignty, indeed of mastery" (p. 22). Derrida is here alluding to his study of the Maussian gift presented in *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money* (1992). In an inconspicuous, unnumbered fold at the back of this book is a short allegory titled "Counterfeit Money" authored by Charles Baudelaire that tells the story of the gift in brief, and upon which Derrida configures his argument. Baudelaire recounts an event in which he and a friend have just left a tobacconist when they encounter a beggar to whom the friend gives a large contribution. Out of appreciation for the generosity displayed by his friend, Baudelaire remarks "You are right; next to the pleasure of feeling surprise, there is none greater than to cause a surprise." The coin given by the friend, as he finds out, however, is a counterfeit; a false coin that could well land the beggar in jail or be the "germ for several day's wealth." Upon the friend's reply "Yes, you are right; there is no sweeter pleasure than to surprise a man by giving him more than he hopes for," Baudelaire realizes that his friend's intention was "to do a good deed while at the same time making a good deal; to earn forty cents and the heart of God; to win paradise economically; in short, to pick up gratis the certificate of a charitable man." The

act of for-giving, of giving one's forgiveness in the sense of a gift that is perceived and thus received as a gift is, for Derrida (2001a), a possibility that cannot be eliminated in any event of the decision and the responsibility to forgive. Our inability to pass beyond this possibility, which is also, coincidentally, the impossibility of forgiveness, renders forgiveness, if there is such a thing, aporetic.

Another example of an aporia Derrida (2001a) sees entangled in the question of forgiveness concerns the possibility of asking, in good faith and in line with the meaning of the act, a group or community for forgiveness. In the instance of Baudelaire's allegory, should his friend decide to seek forgiveness for his inhospitable gift of a counterfeit coin, he would surely entreat the beggar to whom he gave the coin. But in the very real circumstances of severe human rights abuses of whom does one ask for forgiveness? In other words, can one ask forgiveness outside of, or beyond, a wrong done to a specific other? Derrida takes us to specific examples of society-wide attempts at something like forgiveness that ultimately result, in his view, in the presentation of "excuses to certain victims of the past, the episcopacy in Poland and Germany proceeding an examination of conscience at the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz; the attempt at reconciliation in South Africa" (p. 25). It is no coincidence that these examples appear next to one another because, as he notes, state sponsored attempts at forgiveness invariably take place against the historical-juridical concept of punishment established for the Nuremberg Trials in 1945. This is to say that although reconciliation in South Africa is an example of an alternative to the trial process, it remains bound to a state-sponsored political act that draws upon the judicial precedent established following World War Two. A dimension of this association is, in the spirit of the gift, an economic calculation that always remains open.

The distinction that Derrida (2001a) wants to draw between forgiveness and politically calculated projects of reconciliation is that forgiveness, in its essence, is unconditional forgiveness; forgiveness that, as Jankélévitch (1962/2005) suggests, is hyperbolic, that forgives that which is unforgivable and does so without compensation. Projects of reconciliation, as Derrida sees them, are conceptually unassimilable to forgiveness precisely for the reason that they ask wrongdoers to confess, and succeed in achieving this aim by granting amnesty, by giving one back his/her life, by giving the time that would otherwise be lost. But herein lies an important distinction that Derrida wishes to make concerning forgiveness. Richard Bernstein (2006) argues that, for Derrida, the finality of the type of forgiveness suggested by reconciliation produces an economy of conditional forgiveness whereby "everything that one takes to be forgivable" is lumped "into one category…[and]…does a great injustice to the variety, diversity, and subtle differences among different deeds and persons that I judge to be forgivable" (p. 401). The situatedness of judgments of forgiveness thus calls for an interminable deliberative process that interrogates the border between the forgivable and unforgivable as an unstable gap that remains in perpetual flux.

4. Reconciliation, Forgiveness, and the Event of Decision and of Responsibility

Exchanges concerning the place of forgiveness in reconciliation continue to generate possibilities that operate outside of retributivist legal frameworks. The views of critics—especially those responding to the justifications for, and the accomplishments of, South Africa's Truth and

Reconciliation Commission—who find forgiveness to be wrongheaded and historically dangerous, as well as those who embrace a strong connection between acts of reconciliation and forgiveness, share in common an unduly constrained understanding of forgiveness. In part, constraint is traceable to a generalized belief that forgiveness lies in commonsensical experiences of apology and acceptance. For others, Derrida especially, the notion of a normative politics founded on forgiveness threatens to destroy the diversity of phenomena rendered forgivable or unforgivable in favor of an institutionalized limit. Those who reject forgiveness as an impossibility present it primarily through a deficit discourse that emphasizes the detriments of distortion, economic calculation and, ultimately, epistemological determination.[ix] For this collection of reasons, the dangers of invoking the language of forgiveness in transitional political contexts is, for many, to invoke forgetting as a solution to history's most heinous crimes and the criminals who perpetrate them.

If we look to the concept and process of forgiveness as it arises within the discourse of the TRC, we see approaches that situate the concept in ways opposed to the idealized problematics envisioned by some. Instead of finality, forgiveness, for transformational figures, such as Tutu, takes on the quality of a beginning, rather than as a point of historical resolution, which is best described as a processual view of forgiveness. Its possibility flows from the fundamental relationality of human being, which he takes as the essence of existence to the degree that "we can be human only in fellowship, in community, in *koinonia,* in peace" (Tutu, 1984/1997, p. 121). Forgiveness thus takes the shape of relational renewal, of a rehabilitation of what has been broken between victim and perpetrator. Further supporting a processual account of the TRC's integration of forgiveness into the TRC's proceedings is the actual goal of the TRC. Tutu notes that the commission's official mandate was to "*promote* not to *achieve*" the worthwhile objectives of national unity, reconciliation, and forgiveness (Tutu, 1999, p. 165). From this perspective, Derrida's concerns about the dangers of epistemological determination of the boundaries of the forgivable appear lessened on the scale of the TRC's national political project when cast in this light.

To *promote* forgiveness and to *declare* forgiveness on the behalf of a polity represent two very different approaches. The declaration of forgiveness on behalf of others has the effect of constraining agency, of making an epistemological determination in the name of those spoken for. And it is surely this mode of forgiveness that Derrida (2001a; 2001b) envisions at the forefront of his concerns. These concerns are, however, transformed in Tutu's account. The focus on *promoting* reflection on rather than *determining* what is forgivable is to declare "our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that us caused the wrong" (Tutu, 1999, p. 273). Promoting individual acts of forgiveness takes on the quality of maintaining hope for the repair of intersubjective relationality in ways that larger reconciliation processes cannot directly accomplish. When put in the very practical frame of how citizens in transitional societies move through the experience of trauma, the possibility of a future unimaginable in the present provides nourishment for the decidedly human necessity of hope precisely at the point of its destruction.

In and between these perspectives on the place of forgiveness in reconciliation is a considerable amount of conceptual and lexical instability. If we take, for instance, the differences among

Arendt's (1958/1998), Jankélévitch's (1962/2005; 1996), Derrida's (2001a; 2001b), and Tutu's (1984/1997; 1994; 1999) views, we end up with positions that, if taken to their philosophical extremes, are quite literally incommensurable. Yet to those whose primary concern is to create time for peace in a historical moment that is outside of time, when the thinking being is annihilated, any notion of forgiveness enters an inviolable realm of the wound that forgiveness aims to address. What is thus called for is a way of thinking about forgiveness that bridges the strengths of these positions and heeds their cautions.

One dimension of forgiveness that is characteristic of the four views referenced above is the need for persistent reflection on the boundary between the forgivable and the unforgivable. As a place to begin conceptualizing the concept of the forgivable, this orientation suggests two possible contributions. First, it makes possible an understanding of forgiveness as a horizon of thinking rather than a prefigured category. Second, it leaves open a path to think and experience hope for the future. Together these contributions draw upon the instability that inheres in the meaning of forgiveness and directs that instability toward the reparation of relationality. Rather than treating forgiveness as a determinative process, the persistence of reflection exposes the process as one of subjective feeling. This kind of reflection, following Derrida, might be aptly described as aporetic, to the extent that the hope of forgiveness only guarantees a hope for a future that may never come, but for which we remain vigilant.

A secondary dimension of forgiveness opened up by the first is that unconditional forgiveness is, strictly speaking, never a possibility if for no other reason than that forgiveness is always conditioned by time. In preserving reflection as a necessity of forgiveness, we must also see this preservation as an opportunity to call radically into question the desirability, and even possibility, of some pure, immediate experience of forgiveness. Even is such an experience were possible, it would defy the fundamental character of forgiveness by transforming it into a definitive act, rather than a process requiring continual renewal. One specific problematic that this observation brings to the fore is that of judging the efficacy and overall value of forgiveness as it occurs alongside reconciliation processes. Measures of reconciliation and forgiveness, are, however, elusive. In the same spirit that forgiveness calls for a persistence in reflection on the limit of the unforgivable, it also calls for persistent, rather than definitive, reflection on the possibilities of constituting a societal discourse of forgiveness at a practical level. The turn to functional approaches open up space for understanding the diversity of forgiveness (acts, practices, conceptualizing, etc.), rather than relying solely on a single, limited notion of the concept.[x]

Any response to the question "*Is there such a thing as forgiveness?*" is thus situated between affective experiences of hope and faith that hold open the possibility of forgiveness, and the lack of a determinative moment that marks the end of the process. This tension is complicated further when forgiveness is promoted alongside reconciliation projects and when third parties take an explicit role in the process. While it is certainly true that one cannot simply entreat an other or a collective to forgive, it also seems immanently possible to preserve the judgment of forgiveness from becoming completely heterogeneous to the political process of reconciliation. If we follow Arendt (2005) in asserting that "the meaning of a thing, as opposed to its end, is always contained within the thing itself, and the meaning of an activity can exist only as long as the

activity continues" (Arendt, 2005, p. 193), the place of forgiveness in reconciliation is not a final action, but a process that ceases to be the moment it is deemed complete. Forgiveness is, instead, a gap held open at the point of judgment; its possibility held open by a continuous process of decision and responsibility. As a type of action, forgiveness is no less vulnerable to the same lack of control that accompanies that which is new, in that we can neither predict nor control what follows.

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[i] This article is part of a larger ongoing project that investigates the practical and philosophical relation of forgiveness and reconciliation. My current research focuses on using the philosophical framework I establish here to assess concrete practices of forgiveness as they are institutionalized within peace movements in transitional societies.

[ii] Arendt (2005) argues that the biological source of politics arises as part of an interconnection between the "assumption that there is something political *in* man that belongs to his essence" and the belief in a "monotheistic concept of God, in whose likeness man is said have been created. On that basis, there can, of course, be only *man*, while *men* become a more or less successful repetition of the same" (p. 95). This orientation toward the fundamental character of the political brings politics into the Western creation myth by locating an origin in the concrete facticity of human being's existence with regard to natural, biological life.

[iii] I have chosen to leave gender exclusive language unmodified in my quotation of sources to best reflect context and maintain readability. I support the continued struggle for the adoption of inclusive language and thus maintain that effort in surrounding text.

[iv] This view parallels Peter Fenves's (2001) argument that in the beginning we are confronted by the fact that we neither know what we want to communicate, nor that we want to communicate something other than that which we do indeed communicate.

[v] It is relevant to note that Arendt's (1958/1998) view of forgiveness is deeply invested in the biblical origins she traces through a multitude of passages from the Bible. See especially pp. 239-240.

[vi] Jankélévitch's (1962/2005) use of "meta-empirical" draws upon a broader technical development of the concept in relation to the "empirical." For further reference see Smith (1957); Llewelyn (1998); and Lacoste (2004).

[vii] Jankélévitch's first work on forgiveness titled *Le Pardon* and translated as *Forgiveness* constitutes his primary treatise on the subject, which his later work, *L'Imprescriptible*, builds upon with specific discussion of the Holocaust. The portion of latter work which I quote from is confined to a chapter titled "Pardonner?," which is translated as "Should we pardon them?" and

appeared in *Critical Inquiry* under that title.

[viii] The French expression "*pardon*" and its variants "*pardonnez*" and "*pardonne*" approximate the meaning of the English expression "forgive" and its variant "forgiveness." See Derrida (2001a), especially p. 24, for further reference on the French-English translation of the term.

[ix] For further discussion of forgiveness in the tradition Derrida (2001a) affirms, see Kristeva (1989; 2002); Nelson (2002); and Weigel (2002).

[x] See Borer (2004) for additional details on the problem of empirical claims concerning the efficacy of transitional processes.

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Pintakasi: **When a Poor Community Empowers Itself to Deal with Peace and Security Issues, Implications for the Practice of Psychology**

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PINTAKASI: **WHEN A POOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERS ITSELF TO DEAL WITH PEACE AND SECURITY ISSUES, IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Abstract

This is an applied qualitative exploratory and participatory field research of a community phenomenon called *pintakasi*. After two years of immersion in an armed conflicted community, this study found out that *pintakasi* is a century- old indigenous community activity wherein the people, in a positive relationship, help each other to respond to a community need with no money involved and personal interest to equally benefit all. *Pintakasi* was used in farming and building bridges, classrooms, multi-purpose halls, seawalls, roads, and churches. Going beyond the traditional use, this study tried to extend the benefits of *pintakasi* by responding to peace and security issues which beset the community. This study also describes how psychologists and researchers might work in solidarity with poor people so as to explore an indigenous empowering process that would serve the best interests of the community.

1. Introduction

This study started with an invitation from a community based organization to help organize the group and the communities which it serves. This organization calls itself the "Tri-People" because they are composed of men and women, farmers and fishers, who are Muslims, Christians, and Manobos (indigenous people). The Tri-People, in their capacity, respond to the

needs of the community related to peace, security, and socio-economic development. The invitation has provided an opportunity to discover a process in the community. After two months, as the researcher lived in the community and dealt with the concerns of the organization, he discovered a community process which the people call *pintakasi*. Since then, the researcher focused his research in exploring *pintakasi* and how this phenomenon works in the lives of this specific population.

It should also be noted that this study subscribes to the perspective of Prilleltensky (2005), Decenteceo (1997), Baro (1994), and Freire (1984) that a psychologist or a community worker in a poor country should prefer working with the poor community in its struggle for social justice and human liberation. Hence, to work with the poor entails partnership and collaboration (Prilleltensky, 2005; Decenteceo, 1997; Noguera, 1996; Levine, 1997; Baro, 1994; & Freire, 1984).

Baro (1996) and Prilleltensky (2006) also stress that the role of psychology is to discover, rediscover, and retrieve indigenous experiences and apply them to the present struggle of the people. Baro (1996) says that a psychologist should search for experiences in the community that liberate and transform the lives of the people. Note that these authors recommend that psychologists, and/or social scientists, look into the experiences of a community for processes, concepts, or structures that the people themselves can utilize. They do not recommend that a psychologist bring into a community his/her expertise and use this expertise to design programs for the people (the role of "expert"). (This is the model on which the researcher was mostly trained.)

With those perspectives, the researcher, who has at least twenty years in community organizing, attempted to discover an empowering community process that would benefit the poor community. Empowering community process means an aspect of people's culture, lifestyle, behavior, relationship, roles, or responsibility which they develop themselves to respond to the needs of the community.

Necessarily, this study was also an exploration of a new role of the psychologist in the community. Traditionally, the psychologist brings his/her expertise to the community to identify problems and generate solutions to problems that he/she saw in the community. In contrast, this study explores the role of the "empowering psychologist," who, by living and working in the community, helps the community to see their traditional ways in a new light as defined by the community. This new version of the psychologist helps the community to recognize their resources, strengths, and solidarity in traditional practices (in this case, *pintakasi*) and utilize these to address and confront their present situation.

By implication, this new psychologist will focus his/her work on the poor. He earnestly hopes to share his experiences of working with the poor with other psychologists who would also like to work with the poor. In his case, he happened to be in a community where the poor are in the majority. And he intends to spend the next twenty years to work with the poor. It is something that needs to be done in the Philippines where the majority of people are poor.

2. The Kalamansig Situation

To get in touch with their life conditions, the researcher consulted with members of each of the 30 communities. These included Christian, Manobo (Indigenous People) and Muslim communities. He asked members of each of 30 communities, "*Kumusta ang inyong kahimtang* (how is your situation)*?*" He had two goals: to know the people so that he would know what they needed and to find a research topic.

After the consultation, he realized that underneath the physical splendor of Kalamansig simmered enormous human problems. The main concerns of the people were violence, security, socio-economic conditions, health, politics, education, ecology, and socio-cultural conflicts.

In all these complexities, one thing remains vivid: solutions need to be found. Whatever these may be, it has to bring positive changes to the lives of the people. The difficulties of the people present a challenge that this research has to embrace, a challenge that calls for a commitment to join the poor in their struggles for a better life.

The problems that the people of Kalamansig face are overwhelming and disheartening. When the researcher thinks of their problems, he is weighted down in mind, heart, and in the spirit. "*Mahirap dalhin*" (it is difficult to carry). As a psychologist who wanted to be relevant to the people's difficulty, he was confronted with a basic question: "What can I do to help them?"

He knew he had to find a way to understand his role as a psychologist in a poor community. Living and working with the people, he had a strong feeling that what he learned about psychological intervention and the role of the psychologist was at best inadequate and at worst wrong. He knew that what he had learned of psychology had been mostly derived from another culture. He also knew that his role was not merely to help the people survive or cope with their difficulties. He had to help them change their miserable conditions in ways that they wanted, toward goals that were meaningful to them.

Likewise, this study is also an attempt to discover a solution that could be empowering for the people of Kalamansig, especially the poor, so that they themselves can respond to their problems. The poor have been surviving and fighting their own battles. They know what will work and what will not, as well as what they are willing to do. Outsiders like the researchers and psychologists should trust these people to define what their roles in the community should be.

3. Method

This applied qualitative exploratory and participatory field research has two goals: (1) discover a community process; and (2) discover how this community process could be used to respond to the needs of the community who owns the community process. This is an open-ended exploratory study because the researcher is dependent on the information that he will get from the community. The study is also dependent on how the community will respond to the researcher's discovery. However, the locus of the research offers a unique situation by which the researcher has to be sensitive and observant to the needs of the community. Kalamansig, which

is located in one of the secluded municipalities of Sultan Kudarat, is an armed conflict area. Hence, the researcher has to take an amount of risk in getting involved with communities that encounter problems in peace and security.

To immerse in the community and listen and learn from the people are the basic methods of this research. The researcher has stayed for two years in Kalamansig to discover and understand a community phenomenon called *pintakasi*. The qualitative procedures utilized were the following:

(a) **Collaboration with the community based organization**. The point of entry to the community was through the Tri-People organization. The researcher got acquainted with the communities through this organization. The organization likewise collaborates on community members who will host his stay. The researcher took responsibility of the personal logistics such as the food, fare, toiletries and materials needed for the research. The organization was aware that the researcher was in their community to help them organize the group and the community. All of the researcher's activities and decisions that were related to the organization and the community had to be collaborated with the organization.

(b) **Collaboration with the local leaders**. Through the Tri-People, the researcher tried to reach out to the local leaders such as the Mayor, Barangay Captains, Imams, Pastors, Priests and respected community leaders (non-political).

(c) **Immersion in the community**. For two years, the researcher tried to immerse in the daily routines of the people. There were times that he had to join the farming and fishing, community meetings, festivities, drinking sessions of men, and children at play. Often, the researcher stayed overnight in the community and sleep at the house of a community leader. He talked to the people in the streets, in the stores, or in their houses. In short, he became part of the community for two years. Aside from attempting to be an insider, the researcher was also an outsider: he had to observe people's behavior, practices, and lifestyle.

(d) **Interview individuals and groups**. As the researcher lived with the community, without making his role as a researcher salient, he tried to listen to the stories of the people. To make the encounter more natural, he did not bring a notebook with him during the conversations. He took notes in his private time. Aside from deepening his knowledge about *pintakasi*, the researcher took interest in the lives of the people. He interviewed both adults and children. Many of the adults were farmers and fishermen. He focused in inquiring about *pintakasi* by asking the following questions in a local dialect that is known to all-Cebuano.

1. Are you familiar with *pintakasi*? This question was asked to understand the people's awareness about the phenomenon and how it evolved.
2. What is your experience with *pintakasi*? This question was asked to understand their thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon.

3. What are the rules in *pintakasi*? This question was asked to understand the structure of *pintakasi*.
4. Why does *pintakasi* continue to exist? This question was asked to understand the thoughts of the people on why they continue to practice *pintakasi*.

The data were anecdotal and drawn from the narratives of the participants. This means that the researcher had listened to the stories of participants with regards to the practice of *pintakasi* and observed how it was used. It also includes the actual participation and observation of the researcher on the use of *pintakasi*. The data also describe how a researcher and psychologist grapple with ideas and methods. More importantly, this research presents how the researcher struggled with the life of a threatened community.

(e) **Observe the phenomenon**. The researcher found it appropriate to listen to the stories about *pintakasi* and to observe how the people use *pintakasi*. To this end, the researcher observed and conducted informal observations and interviews. He wanted to explore further the relevance of *pintakasi* in the lives of the people. As a researcher, he wanted to have some ideas about the nature and range of data that he could find. Research strategies, methods, questions, and issues would emerge later.

(f) **People participate in the validation of concepts**. The researcher tried to bring back the concepts that he found about *pintakasi* to the organization and the community. The perspective is that the community who owns *pintakasi* is in the best position to approve or disapprove the researcher's perception about *pintakasi* based on his findings. *Pintakasi* belongs to the people. It is embedded in the consciousness of the communities of Kalamansig and it has served the practical needs of the people.

(g) **Apply *pintakasi* in collaboration with the organization and community**. The study also attempted to use *pintakasi* to address problems proposed by the organization and the community. The researcher also explored the implication of the use of *pintakasi* in the practice of clinical and community psychology particularly in a poor threatened community to deal with the problems of peace and security. Note that the only intention of the researcher was to use *pintakasi* to organize the Tri-People. But along the way, the situation changed the course of the research. The Muslim armed group threatened the lives of the community. Hence, *pintakasi* was applied to a concern related to peace and security. Perhaps this shows another aspect of the role of an empowering psychologist and researcher: the willingness to discard existing plans in order to respond to ongoing events in the community. The security of the community with the attack of the Muslim armed group forced a change in the research plans. The study gave an opportunity to explore the role of a psychologist in a poor, threatened community.

(h) **Return the result of the research to the organization and community**. The researcher returned the discovery to the people for their use. The researcher attempted to articulate the discovery with the people. He wanted to bring the ideas he had gathered to their attention so as to generate more understanding and awareness, both on the researcher's part and on theirs. He discussed the ideas with them to see whether the researcher's

perceptions coincided with their awareness. The researcher has the responsibility to honor, respect, and nurture the ideas and experiences which he had taken from the people. Hence, researcher should not abandon the people after he has served the purpose of research.

(i) **Collaboration with research adviser**. Throughout the exploration, the researcher collaborated with his graduate advisor (Edwin T. Decenteceo, Ph.D.). He would call him by phone or he would go to Manila to update on the progress of the research and clarify the methodology. His adviser visited Kalamansig once and stayed for five days to have an actual experience of *pintakasi* and the community.

4. Participants of the Study

There were at least 15,000 persons who participated in the study. All the participants were residents of 30 communities of Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat. These communities are composed of Christians, Muslims, and Manobos (Indigenous People). All of these communities had experienced *pintakasi* in non-traditional activities. A community-based organization in Kalamansig which is called the Tri-People gave the opportunity to explore different communities of Kalamansig. It is composed of the respected grassroots leaders of Kalamansig who are Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous People. The organization was the entry point to the community. The organization then became a partner later on in responding to the peace and security concern of the communities.

5. Results of the Study

(a) *Pintakasi Discovered*

As said earlier, when the researcher arrived in Kalamansig, he was still searching for a research topic. Amidst the disheartening brutal realities of this lovely place, he came upon a unique tradition. The interesting phenomenon is called *pintakasi*. The first time he heard and observed *pintakasi* was at a church activity. The leaders called for a *pintakasi* to prepare the church grounds for a festivity. The researcher asked the leaders about this and they said that *pintakasi* is about people coming together for a particular activity such as cleaning the church or doing carpentry work. This is usually done during big occasions. In a single day, the church grounds are cleaned and readied for the festivity.

Informally, the researcher inquired more of this by asking the church leaders, *"Diin nagsugod ang pintakasi* (how did *pintakasi* start)?"* Note that Cebuano is the common language used by the people. Sometimes they would mix Cebuano and Tagalog. In this paper the researcher will quote in Cebuano to emphasize people's ideas and experience about *pintakasi*. This is the only local dialect that the researcher knows.

All those that the researcher asked said that *pintakasi* is originally a farmers' activity where they help each other with farm chores: "*Kalihokan sa mag-uuma* (a farmers' activity)." Later on, the community adopted this activity to respond to other community concerns such as cleaning a church or mosque and building a bridge, road, and classrooms. The researcher also asked,

"*Nagpadayon pa gihapon ang pintakasi sa uma* (does *pintakasi* in the farm continue to be practiced)*?"* People said that *pintakasi* continues to be practiced by the farmers.

This feature of *pintakasi* of bringing the people to work together got the researcher's attention. He decided to explore further the potential of *pintakasi* as an empowering activity, as an approach for bringing people together to work on a project that would benefit their community. *Pintakasi* also struck the researcher as a good way of bringing the people together to work on their problems. It appeared to the researcher, however, that the people had not fully utilized *pintakasi*. The church, also, is not very aware of *pintakasi* or its potential. This was the first time that they talked about *pintakasi*.

Lastly, the researcher was aware that he was attempting to discover the aspect of *pintakasi* that might be empowering to a poor threatened community to deal with the problem of survival. But at the same time, he also searched for the relevance of psychology in the life of the struggling poor communities in Kalamansig. Hence, he attempted to answer the following questions: Will *pintakasi* have its relevance in the field of psychology? Can *pintakasi* be used to empower a poor threatened community to deal with the problems of peace and security? What is the implications of the use *pintakasi* for the practice of clinical and community psychology in the field?

(b) What is Pintakasi?

Pintakasi is a century-old indigenous community activity which the people who have positive relationship help each other with no money involved and personal interest so as to benefit all the members of the community. *Pintakasi* came from the people. It was conceived and used by the people. Hence, the only way to understand *pintakasi* was through the community.

Origin of Pintakasi. The elderlies (70-93 year old interviewees who are Muslim, Christian, and Manobo), around 30 of them could not determine how *pintakasi* started or who initiated the practice of *pintakasi*. They would say, "*Mao nang naandan* (that was the practice)." "*Mao na sukad pa sa gamay pa kami* (it has been there since we were young)." But they affirmed that *pintakasi* was commonly used for farming.

Traditional Activities. People did not recall any experience where *pintakasi* was used to respond to their problems related to peace and order, socio-economic, violence, health, political and ecological. Hence, *pintakasi* was only used in traditional activities: farming, building roads, bridges, seawalls, classrooms, and multi-purpose halls.

Muslim Pintakasi. The Muslims also had their own version of *pintakasi*. They call it *magtabang or d'setatabangay*. The researcher visited two Muslim communities and he was able to inquire about *pintakasi*. They had similar report about *pintakasi*. They added that they also apply *pintakasi* to help during wedding or burial.

Manobo Pintakasi. The Manobos call their version *tanggawa-lawa*. The researcher visited four communities of Manobos. They also use this in farm endeavors. In fact, the researcher was able

to witness a *tanggawa-lawa* during their harvest of corns. They also use this during wedding, festivities, and building of houses.

(c) Features of Pintakasi

Randomly, the interviewees had identified and explained the different aspects of *pintakasi*. When people were asked about what comprised *pintakasi,* they would bring up the following elements:

- ❖ *pagtinabangay* (helping each other)
- ❖ *maayong relasyon* (positive relationship)
- ❖ *kaayohan sa tanan* (benefiting all)
- ❖ *katilingbanong panginahanglan* (responding to a community need)
- ❖ *walay bayad* (not expecting payment)
- ❖ *walay kaugalingon nga interes* (not thinking of personal interest).

Pagtinabangay (helping each other). This was about the community working together. Having felt the urgency of the need, a family member is sent to help in a community project. They had to help by giving their time, skills, and sometimes resources. The people also articulated community concepts related to *pagtinabangay* such as:

- *pag-inambitay* (sharing of resources)
- *pagtambayayong* (joining forces for a common end)
- *pakiglambigit* (involving in the concerns of the community)
- *panag-hiusa* (uniting for a common purpose)
- *pagsinabtanay* (dialoguing in order to understand).

Maayong relasyon (positive relationship). *Pintakasi* is based on positive relationship among members of the community. They know each other to a certain extent such as their important stories, personal problems, and sometimes aspirations. They also respect each other. They support each other in important occasions such as wedding, birthdays, community festivities, and burial. The people also help a community member who is terminally ill or in a burdensome situation. In short, members of the community relate with each other in a personal level.

Katilingbanong panginahanglan (addressing a community need). This is about the community being able to define a community need. A community need would mean a particular concern that negatively affects everybody in the community such as rough road, dilapidated classrooms, and rotten bridges. Eventually, the community would decide to address those concerns.

Kaayohan sa tanan (benefiting all). This is about the aspiration of the people. The aspiration had to benefit everybody in the community. In a similar way, the people also brought out new concepts when *kaayohan sa tanan* was defined. The concepts were:

- *paglaum* (hope for a better community)
- *paglambo* (growth of the community in all its aspects)
- *pagpakabana* (renew and change not only for the self but importantly for the good of the community).

Walay bayad (expecting no payment). This is about the community working together with no money involved. Since, this is not an institutional project, *pintakasi* involves no funds. People are aware that the time, effort, and skills that they render are for the benefit of everybody in the community. They do not expect monetary exchange or remuneration. It is all voluntary. But because they know that they would benefit from the project, all the members of the community would work eagerly.

Walay kaugalingon nga interes (not thinking of personal interest). This is about the community not welcoming individuals who have personal interest in the project. Individuals involved in *pintakasi* have to serve the interest of the community alone. The community had experiences of individuals who joined *pintakasi* because of political reasons such as getting votes for election.

The interviews affirmed that *pintakasi* did not involve planning and evaluation (Figure 1). Since *pintakasi* involved traditional activities, the activities were automatically understood by the community. They knew what they had to do. It included the understanding of expectations and rules. The focus was simply to finish the project so that it could serve the immediate need of the community. Thus, no planning or evaluation transpired. Note also that *pintakasi* was never tried in long-term projects except for farming. The people do farming three to four times a year.

Traditional *pintakasi*, which does not include planning and evaluation, is understandable. Traditional farming activities, learned from parents over several generations, do not need to be planned. At best, what the farmer needs to know are the signs as to when an activity should be started, for example, the start of the planting season or the harvest season. Nor does the farmer need to evaluate an activity except perhaps to know that all the seedlings are planted in the fields or that all the rice stalks have been cut down and gathered.
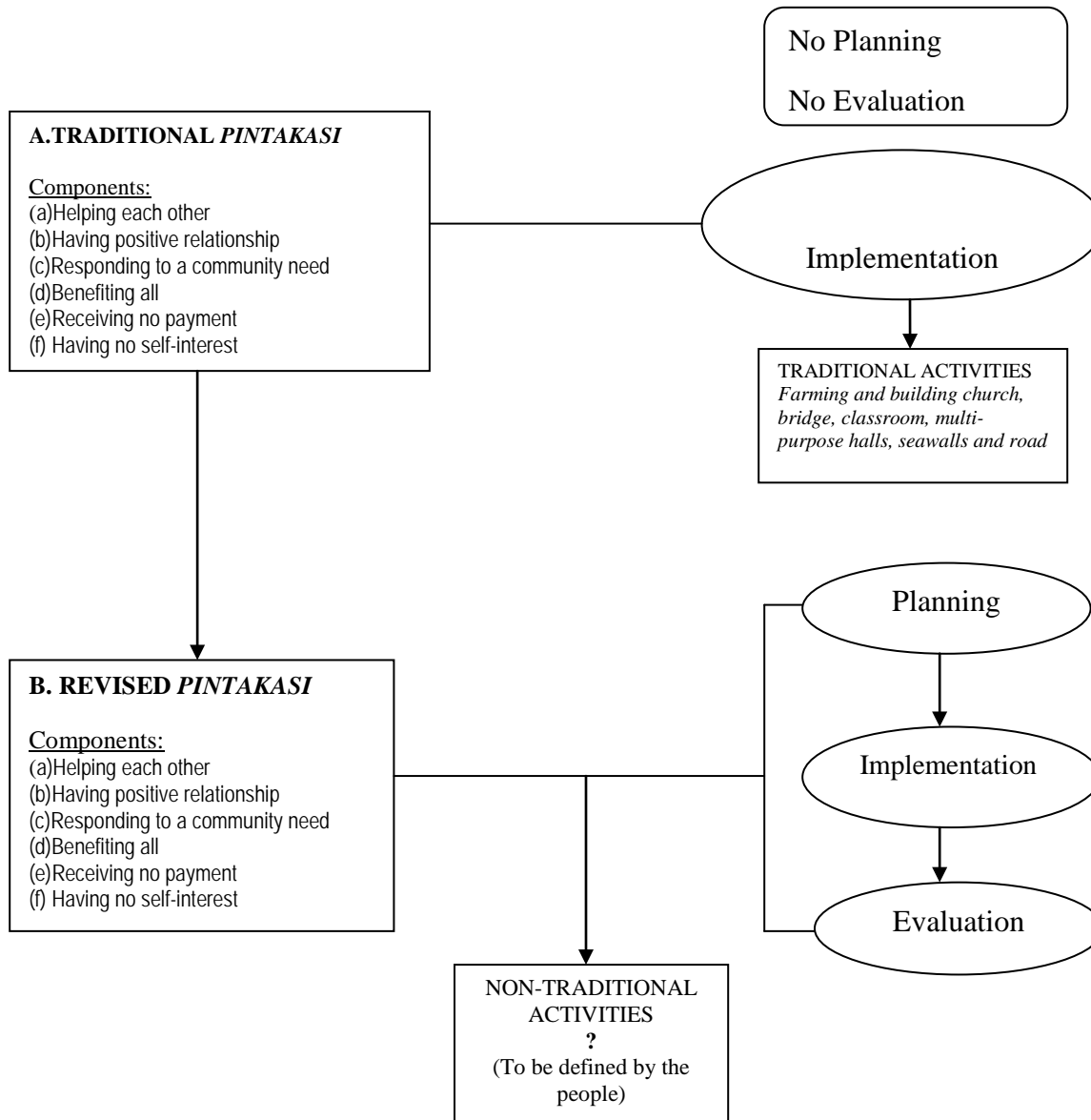
Traditional and Revised *Pintakasi*

Figure 1. (*a) Traditional pintakasi, and (b) Revised pintakasi used in the planning, implementation and evaluation of proposed community activities.*

6. Exploration of *Pintakasi*

The researcher felt that to bring *pintakasi* up-to-date, that is, for the farmers or fishers to use *pintakasi* on activities other than traditional activities, the two components of planning and evaluation should be included in *pintakasi*. Planning allows the farmer to anticipate what is needed to conduct an activity that is somewhat new, that is, non-traditional. The evaluation activity allows the farmer to learn from having conducted an activity. The farmer no longer needs to depend entirely on the experience of an older generation. The farmer can learn from his own experiences.

In this study, revised *pintakasi* was applied to activities proposed by members of the community, which were planned and implemented in the community. In fact, *pintakasi* was utilized to help the community to deal with a totally unexpected event: the disruption of peace and security and the resulting evacuation of residents because of attacks by the Muslim armed group. The researcher tried to have the community evaluate the planning and the activity also using *pintakasi*. This was the first time that the community evaluated an activity involving *pintakasi* (while at the same time using *pintakasi* on the evaluation itself).

This was the first time that the participants used *pintakasi* to address the peace and security problem of Kalamansig. Since this was an unfamiliar and difficult situation, both for the people and the researcher, he felt the need to introduce planning and evaluation (Figure 2).

In the attempt of the researcher to expand the potential and understanding of *pintakasi*, two aspects were considered:

- to use *pintakasi* in non-traditional activities
- to use *pintakasi* with planning and evaluation.

To revise *pintakasi* is a process that articulates the recognition of a positive community force. In this case, as a psychologist, the researcher saw *pintakasi*'s potential in responding to the concerns of the communities. But prior to this discovery, the researcher immersed himself in the difficulties of the people. He took some risks. He came out in the open to inquire on few community systems that violate the rights of the people. For example, the researcher stood at the side of the victims to claim justice for their relatives who were killed. In short, the revision of *pintakasi* was drawn in the context of the poor people's struggles. Thus, he saw *pintakasi* as a tool where the people could work together to address community needs. Levine and Perkins (1997) said that if a psychologist has a poor grasp of community problems, he/she will have difficulty in responding to the concerns of the people.

By adding planning and evaluation, the people and the researcher will be able to create an awareness on the following: (a) the use of *pintakasi* to respond to the peace and security problems; (b) the concrete activities where *pintakasi* could be used to respond to peace and security concerns; (c) the community resources and values which could be used to respond to peace and order problems; and (d) the efficacy and relevance of *pintakasi*, concrete activities, and community resources and values in responding to peace and order concerns (Figure 2).

The framework also shows that the community will determine (a) the use of *pintakasi*, (b) the activities where *pintakasi* will be used, (c) the resources and values they will put in, and (d) efficacy and relevance of *pintakasi*, concrete activities, and community resources and values in responding to peace and order concerns.

At another level, this study is an attempt to create conditions that will be *empowering* to a community. It starts by pointing out to a community that it has a traditional process, *pintakasi*, which it can use to help itself. In other words, *pintakasi* is their own creation and therefore, it belongs to them. By adding the components of planning, implementation, and evaluation, perhaps the community can see that they can work together (*pintakasi*) to see their own needs and problems, look for possible responses, and discover their own resources to design their own program (planning). They can then work together to implement their plan (*pintakasi*). They can also work together (*pintakasi*) to see how well they have done and how they can improve on what they have done in the future (evaluation).

The Dynamics of Revised *Pintakasi*

RESEARCHER/ PSYCHOLOGIST

TPO & SANGAY

PLAN IMPLEMENT EVALUATE

REVISED *PINTAKASI*

ELEMENTS OF *PINTAKASI*

PAGTINABANGAY
(Helping Each Other)
MAAYONG RELASYON
(Positive Relationship)
KATINGBANONG
PANGINAHANGLAN
(Addressing a Community Need)
KAAYOHAN SA TANAN
(Benefiting All)
WALAY BAYAD
(Expecting No Payment)
WALAY PERSONAL INTERES
(Having No Personal Interest)

PROJECTS PROPOSED BY TPO & COMMUNITY

1. Organize the Tri-People Organization.
2. Organize the community to respond to armed conflict.

3. Organize Community disaster management
4. Organize Community prayer for peace.
5. Organize the evacuees.

AWARENESS

(a) Use of *pintakasi*
(b) Non-Traditional Activities where *pintakasi* could be used.
(c) Resources and values they will put in
(d) Efficacy and relevance of *pintakasi*,
(e) Concrete activities, and community resources and values in responding to peace and security concerns.
(f) Community relationship, roles, and responsibility.
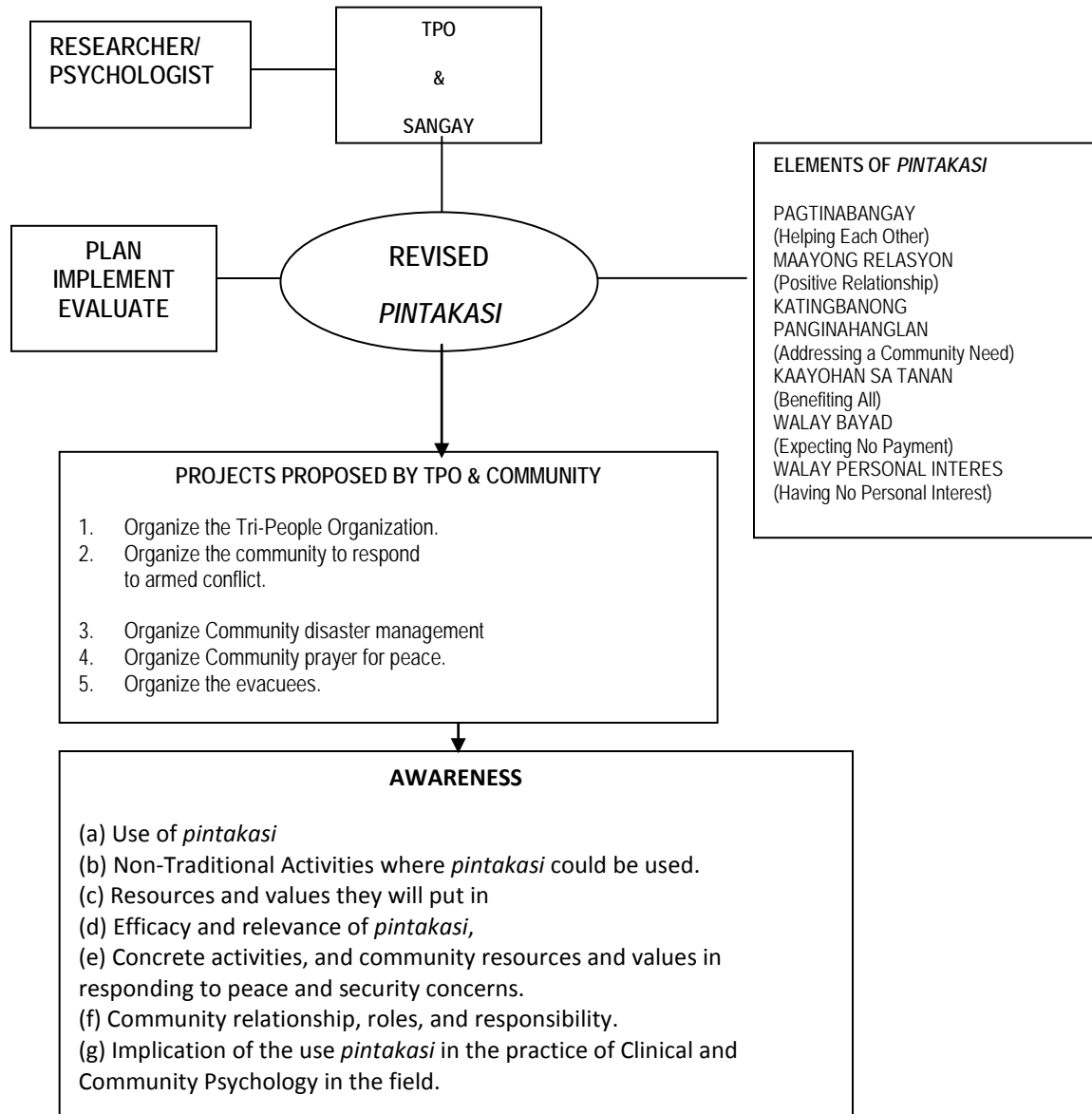(g) Implication of the use *pintakasi* in the practice of Clinical and Community Psychology in the field.

Figure 2. The use of revised *pintakasi* in non-traditional activities.

7. New and Revised *Pintakasi* Utilized

The researcher explored *pintakasi* when Kalamansig was in a critical period. After eighteen months, he had learned about the problems in Kalamansig, which were related to poverty, violence, security, peace and order, cultural, education, ecology, and health. After five months, problems in violence and peace and order surfaced. For more than a year, he witnessed different kinds of hostilities. He saw how the armed conflicts damaged the lives of the poor people. This included the loss of homes, livelihood, loved ones, dignity, sense of self and sense of future. He concretely witnessed at least four occasions of armed conflict.

As the researcher started to work with the Tri-People, the armed conflict became severe. The people affected, particularly the Sangay and Paril communities, sought the assistance of the researcher and the Tri-People organization. The researcher opted to help. The difficult events in the lives of the people gave the researcher an opportunity to facilitate their activity using an experience known to the people—*pintakasi*.

Apparently, in the course of this research, mainly responding to peace and security issues, the researcher helped the Tri-People organization and Kalamansig communities to respond to the following activities which they proposed: (a) organize the Tri-People Organization, (b) organize the community to respond to armed conflict, (c) organize community disaster management, (d) organize community prayer for peace, and (e) organize the evacuees.

(a) Organize the Tri-People Organization.

The organization felt the need to be organized so that they could positively respond to the needs of the communities they serve. The members of this organization articulated their inadequacy in view of leadership, managing the organization, and facilitating the development of communities. In short, as an organization, they would like to deepen the understanding of their roles, relationship, and responsibilities.

(b) Organize the Community to Respond to Armed Conflict.

Through the consultations, the researcher found out the desire of the 30 communities of Kalamansig to organize themselves to respond not only on the peace and security concerns but as well as to socio-economic issues which burden them.

(c) Organize Community Disaster Management.

Two communities (Sangay and Paril) became the target of armed Muslim rebel group. These communities sought help so that they would know what to do in this human-made disaster. The local government had no plan to go to the community because of the danger which the situation presented. The researcher and the Tri-People organization took the risk to help the community. They stayed in the community for a week.

(d) Organize Community Prayer for Peace.

The prayer for peace was part of the activities which surfaced during the disaster management planning in Sangay and Paril communities. The Muslim, Christian, and Manobo members of these two communities had thought that this activity will strengthen their relationship amidst the fear of the attack of armed Muslim rebel group. On the other hand, they were hoping that this activity will deliver the message to the armed rebel group to dialogue for peace. The people were aware that there were already few Muslim rebels who arrived in the community.

(e) Organize the Evacuees.

Two weeks after the prayer for peace, the armed Muslim rebel group attacked two communities. The communities of Sangay and Paril had no other choice but to implement what they planned during the disaster management planning. Part of this was to take the painstaking journey towards the evacuation center.

In the evacuation center, the evacuees decided to organize themselves. The Tri-People organization and the unaffected 28 communities of Kalamansig also decided to help the victims of armed conflict.

Note that even if the researcher introduced planning and evaluation on the said activities, he utilized the components of *pintakasi* to plan, implement and evaluate. Hence, the following questions were asked to plan, implement, and evaluate the community proposed project.

- Helping each other: How do we help each other? What thoughts and behaviors are helpful and why?
- Having positive relationship: How do we create positive relationship? What thoughts and behaviors could create positive relationship?
- Responding to a community need: What is the specific need of the community that we have to respond to?
- Benefiting all: How will the community equally benefit from this project?
- Receiving no payment: What will I concretely contribute for this project? What thoughts and behaviors will concretely contribute for this project?
- Having no self-interest: To whose interest do we work for? What thoughts and behaviors manifest having self-interest?

Note again that the researcher formulated these questions with the community. The researcher facilitated the process of formulating the question by asking the participants, "What questions could we ask pertaining to the different elements of *pintakasi*?"

8. The Awareness of the Participants and Researcher about the Use of Revised *Pintakasi*

The participants and the researcher had a change of awareness on the dynamics and the use of *pintakasi* as utilized in the activities which were proposed by the participants. The following data describe specifically the awareness generated by the proposed activities.

(a) Organize the Tri-People Organization.
- *Pintakasi* could be used to organize their organization.
- The Tri-People were able to define their roles, relationship, and responsibility. They realized that the elements of *pintakasi* are concrete guide to understand roles, relationship, and responsibility in the organization.
- *Pintakasi* could be used to define their goals using the six elements of *pintakasi*.
- The Tri-People recognized their role, relationship, and responsibility not only to their organization but as well as in responding to the needs of the community.
- As the Tri-People leaders had helped facilitate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of activity using *pintakasi*, the leaders and the community were able to generate more awareness on how they could strengthen relationship and respond to peace and security concerns.

(b) Organize the community to respond to armed conflict.
- The 30 communities who were affected by peace and security concerns became aware that they have *pintakasi*.
- The communities defined their roles, relationship, and responsibility in the middle of peace and security concerns.
- The communities defined their need.
- The communities described concrete activities such as community forum for peace and formulation of peace manifesto to contain the immerging conflict. The Tri-People organization had reproduced two thousand copies of the peace manifesto and had distributed them to 30 communities of Kalamansig.
- The communities recognized their resource as a community such as *pintakasi*, agricultural products, and natural resources.
- The Tri-People leaders recognized that they could use *pintakasi* to organize a community.

(c) Organize community disaster management.
- The community recognized the need to organize to respond to armed conflict.
- The community became aware on how they could help each other.
- The community recognized their experiences in the past armed conflicts.
- The community articulated concrete plans to prepare for an armed conflict such as security measures, the communication process, things to prepare, transportation, and evacuation place.
- The community recognized attitudes, values, resource, support system, relationship, roles, and responsibility necessary to respond to a disaster.
- The Christians, Muslims, and Manobos became aware that they could work together to save the community.
- The community decided to have a community prayer for peace.

(d) Community prayer for peace.
- The community recognized the time to get together regardless of beliefs to work together for peace.
- The community recognized that gathering the community to pray for peace could help in sending the message of peace to Muslim armed group.
- Using *pintakasi*, the community planned, implemented, and evaluated the community prayer for peace.
- Through the use of *pintakasi*, the Christians, Muslims, and Manobos became aware that they could work together to achieve peace in the community.

(e) Organize the evacuees.
- The evacuees, through *pintakasi*, defined their roles, relationship, and responsibility in the evacuation center.
- The evacuees realized that they could work together.
- The evacuees, by using *pintakasi*, planned, implemented, and evaluated their activities in the evacuation center.
- The evacuees recognized the use of *pintakasi* in the evacuation center.
- The Christians, Muslims, and Manobos became aware that they could work together productively to attend to their needs in the evacuation center.
- The 28 unaffected communities of Kalamansig realized that they could work together to help the victims in the evacuation center. The communities contributed money, food, clothes, and moral support. They also realized that the Muslims, Christians, and Manobos could work together concretely to respond to the needs of the evacuees. It took a month before the limited relief goods from the government arrived.

9. Discussion

This research has opened up an important discovery in dealing with the concern of a poor community in view of research process, in view of the role of a psychologist, and more importantly, in view of recognizing a community resource.

(a) Doing a Research with a Poor Community.

This research presents a research methodology that considers and prioritizes the welfare of the community more than the data it could gather for scientific or academic endeavor. It also highlights the role of the community in being able to participate in the entire process of research such as the discovery of *pintakasi*, validation of *pintakasi* concepts, and application of *pintakasi*. At the end of the study, the researcher did not abandon the community. But rather, the researcher, with the community, explored how *pintakasi* could be utilized beyond this research— which is to bring positive change in people's lives. Hence, it emphasizes an important role of a researcher which is to unearth a community resource and become community's partner in discovering strengths in responding to life-threatening concerns.

(b) Discovering the Role of a Psychologist in a Community.

The use of *pintakasi* captures the huge concern of psychology as it relates to such issues as culture, organization, war, violence, poverty, community development, ethnicity, spirituality, and survival. Attached to these activities were the observable behaviors, cognitive process, and emotional loads. The elements of *pintakasi* would describe that the people do not need western concepts to make life meaningful. The communities have their resources, tools, and concepts that could be used to respond to their concerns. They only had to deepen their awareness. For instance, nobody in Kalamansig had experienced psychotherapy or counseling from a psychologist. Up to this point, the people do not know anything about psychological process (western perspective). But the people had been using an effective century old community tool (*pintakasi*) to respond to a community need. Hence, the psychologist does not need to teach the people how to support each other. Whether the psychologist is present in a community or not, the people will continue to help each other to address the problems that beset the community. The people had survived their lives without a psychologist. And *pintakasi* is one of their tools for survival. Apparently, the study found out that *pintakasi* could be used beyond survival.

The only way for a psychologist to be of help to the community is to be part of the community. The researcher must therefore become involved in the lives, concerns, and dreams of the community. Since the researcher/psychologist was part of the community, he dealt with the people as partners and not as a clientele or recipient of help. In this consideration, he allowed the people to teach him about community processes. The following bullet points describe essential attributes for establishing relationship with the community.

- *Connect to leaders*. To learn more about the community, a psychologist has to connect to local respected leaders. The respected leaders are not the political elected leaders. As far the experience of the researcher is concerned, the respected leaders have a deep concern for the welfare of the community. They are even ready to die to serve the interest of the community. The Muslim and Manobo leaders said that if an outsider such as a psychologist would want to gain the trust and respect of the community, he has to merit first the respect and trust of the leaders.

- *Live with the community*. To understand a community resource, a psychologist has to live with the community for a longer period of time. In this research, the psychologist lived in the community for at least two years. He had to observe the lifestyle of the community. He had to adjust to their lifestyle, as close as he could (but he could not be completely poor).

- *Community defines the role of a psychologist*. To be empowering in this situation, the community defines the role of a psychologist who would like to serve. The community is the expert, not the psychologist. As mentioned in the study, the people had already survived different faces of poverty and injustices before the researcher and psychologist intruded on their lives. The role is: learn from the people, trust their capacity, and discover their potentials. They have so much to teach about how a researcher and a

psychologist should deal with their lives. The researcher wanted to be an expert on this kind of role. He realized that he had so much to learn from the community.

- *Listen to the community*. The researcher listened to the stories of the people. These were stories about their culture, families, and community practices. He also listened to their problems. His training in clinical interview and counseling was helpful. But it is only in the aspect of listening. He did not see the people as clients nor did he see himself as expert. The community also listened to him. He also had to tell them about his personal stories. He found this an important part of merging with the community.

- *Reflect with the community*. A psychologist has to reflect with the community by consulting the community about their concerns. He has to understand their problems better by allowing the community to clarify their own issues.

- *Discover with the community*. The community exposed to the psychologist its resources such as *pintakasi*, diverse culture, natural wonders (caves, falls, rivers, islets, and rain forest), indigenous skills (weaving, basketry, and sculpting) and many others. The community only had to discover how to nurture these resources so as to benefit its members.

- *Learn with the community*. A psychologist should listen to the community and trust its capacity. Lewis (1989) said that for a psychologist to bring about positive change in the community he/she has to discover and cultivate positive forces in the community. To this end, *pintakasi* is one of the community's positive forces.

- *Struggle with the community*. A psychologist had to take risks to find ways to be part of the community. He had to actively seek means to address the concerns of the people. He had to collaborate with the communities in the activities that had to address their concerns. The basic responsibility is to become a partner of the community. He had to work hand-in-hand with the people in responding to the concerns of the community.

- *Dream with the community*. A psychologist had to understand the goal and dreams of the community. Hence, a psychologist has to embrace and own the dreams of the community. This entails commitment not to leave them and to continue to find ways to improve their lives.

- *Partnership with the community*. A psychologist has to be conscious in not taking the "bida" (lead) role. Being a psychologist already imposes a "bida" syndrome. To avoid this, a psychologist tries to make sure that the people make the decisions and that they take an active role in implementing their decisions. It is not empowering if the people see the psychologist as their hero. A psychologist is empowering if the people get rid of "superior" roles. Empowering is about the community (of which I was part) struggling together to work for peace and address injustices.

- *Personal resources*. To deal with a community in a peril, counseling or debriefing is not enough. A psychologist had to exhaust other skills in working with the people such as community organizing, planning, project implementation, theater, and networking. A psychologist also had to understand and discover the resources of the community as well as his own personal resource.

10. Recognition of a Community Resource

Decenteceo (1997) said that different communities may give different values to different ways of burden bearing. In the study, the 30 communities of Kalamansig had upheld an important community value and relationship: *pintakasi*. They continue to utilize this tool in addressing a community concern. In the researcher's more than 20 years in community work, he realized that the communities in the Philippines have different ways of carrying their burdens. *Pintakasi* in Kalamansig is one way of *pagdadala* (community burden bearing). Hence, in the Philippines, there are different community burden bearing processes. The researcher found out that *pintakasi* was a century old community tool that remained useful to address a community concern. The psychologist had to discover those community processes.

11. Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions are made:

1. The exploration of *pintakasi* led to the accomplishing of something important for the people of Kalamansig and for the researcher. In the attempt to unravel the essentials of *pintakasi*, the following aspects were brought out: (a) describe *pintakasi*, (b) revise *pintakasi*, and (c) utilize revised *pintakasi*.

2. The study affirmed that *Pintakasi* is a Kalamansig community indigenous approach in responding to community concerns. This is used by the tribes of the Muslims, Manobos, and Christians.

3. *Pintakasi* could be used in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of community-proposed activities.

4. *Pintakasi* could be used in non-traditional activities such as activities that would address issues of peace and order. It was used in the following activities that were proposed by the participants: (a) organize the Tri-People Organization, (b) organize the community to respond to armed conflict, (c) organize community disaster management, (d) organize community prayer for peace, and (e) organize the evacuees.

5. By adding planning and evaluation, the participants became more aware that they could work together (*pintakasi*) to see their own needs and problems, look for possible responses, discover their own resources, and design their own program.

6. The elements of *pintakasi* help to empower psychologists/researchers. Empowering is about living and working in solidarity with the poor people so as to explore their own indigenous practices that would serve the best interest of the community.

7. The study also opens up other possibilities for the exploration of *pintakasi* to address the concerns of the communities of Kalamansig.

8. The participants' perceptions of *pintakasi* changed. These participants include the researcher, the Tri-People organization, and the communities.

At present, the researcher continues to work with the Tri-People Organization as a consultant. This is his commitment to the organization and the communities of Kalamansig.

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PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

The Trap of Complementary Victim Identities in Large Group Conflict

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THE TRAP OF COMPLEMENTARY VICTIM IDENTITIES IN LARGE GROUP CONFLICT[*]

Abstract

Modern large group conflicts tend to be protracted and intractable. The division between friend and foe is often along ethnic lines. Negotiation and mediation are very limited in these conflicts. This essay describes a socio-psychological factor for the intractability: The trap of complementary victim identities, which is a self-organizing dynamic in large group conflict systems. While following their interests to the best of their judgment, the conflicting parties are led into a stalemate. Their historically rooted mindsets cooperate in constructing a world of existential combat. The conflict between Georgia and its breakaway region Abkhazia serves as an illustration. Approaches to deal with socio-psychological factors in large group conflicts are discussed.

1. Complementary Victim Identities and the Self-Organization of Conflict Stalemates

Former Egyptian President Anwar el Sadat is credited with saying that the psychological barriers constituted 70% of the problem between Israel and Egypt in the 1970s. International peace

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[*]An article with similar content is currently in press with the German journal *Sicherheit + Frieden* [Security and Peace].

endeavors underestimate the fatal power of socio-psychological factors in large group relations. Revealing this dimension is a first step in deconstructing socio-psychological barriers to peace.

The secession conflict between Georgia and its breakaway region Abkhazia has resisted twenty years of efforts in diplomacy and mediation (Gruska, 2005; Kaufmann, 2007; Halbach, 2010). The conflict broke open with the fall of the Soviet Union and ever since then it keeps flaring up in skirmishes, displacements, and wars. Hundreds of thousands of people are affected by flight or displacement. Years of mutual embargoes hamper sound economic developments and foster social disparities and organized criminality. Valuable resources are bound in struggle and control rather than being available for sustainable developments and fruitful cooperation. The incompatible agendas of the conflicting parties regarding the status of Abkhazia continually threaten to bust the international negotiations initiated after the war in August 2008, known as the Geneva Talks.

Before moving on to my analysis of the conflict, I think it is important to situate myself. I am a mediator, systemic consultant and scholar of law and of peace and conflict studies. The field of peace and conflict studies is fed by a number of disciplines and approaches such as politology, socio-psychology, sociology, law, economics, history, systems theory, game theory, etc. My approach is primarily a socio-psychological and a systemic one: socio-psychological in the sense that it conceives large group conflict as a process driven also by collective fears and needs (Kelman, 2007) rather than a as mere product of rational calculation of objective interests; systemic in the sense that it focuses on relationships, structures, and dynamics within a social system rather than attributing qualities to elements of the system (Varga von Kibed, 2005).

Conflict researchers are increasingly analyzing psychological and systemic aspects of large group conflict escalation (Volkan, 2003, 2007; Coleman, 2006; Kelman, 2007, 2009; Kaufman, 2001; Lübbe, 2009; Simon, 2004; Wallach, 2006). The dynamics within such conflict systems may be described as an entrapment: Following their interests to the best of their judgment, actors are led into a dead-end that is thoroughly adverse to their interests. Paul Meerts (2005) analyzed traps in international negotiations. Stuart Kaufman (2006: 205) described the "symbolic politics trap" as a dilemma of political leaders who ascended through ethnicizing propaganda and would jeopardize their position with a de-escalation policy. Deadlocks in conflict systems tend to organize themselves through a mutual enhancement of the conflicting parties' actions. A self-organizing entrapment mechanism typical for ethnopolitical conflicts is exemplified in the following analysis of the Georgian-Abkhazian stalemate.

2. Ethnopolitical Conflict Escalation

The conflict on the status of Abkhazia is an ethnopolitical conflict. This does not mean that ethnic difference is the cause of the conflict. Ethnic groups can coexist peacefully and do so in many parts of the world. Ethnopolitical conflict means that the friend/foe division of the conflict follows ethnic lines. Crucial for the ethnic identity is a common narrative of the group's history, a shared chronicle of their origin and their triumphs and travails, or in the terminology of Vamik Volkan (2003, 2007): the glory and the trauma chapters of the group's chronicle. In that sense, ethnic groups are *Schicksalsgemeinschaften* (communities of fate). With a group's chronicle, specific fears and desires are connected—fears of repeating past collective trauma, such as

displacement, genocide, or forced assimilation, and desires for the reestablishment of past greatness, the return to a territory of origin, or for a compensation for a once suffered humiliation (Kühner, 2003).

In times of peace, the ethnic identity is weakly pronounced. The group permits ambiguous membership, and the ethnic affiliation coexists with the numerous other affiliations of the group members (Sen, 2006). That changes in times of tension and uncertainty. Factors promoting tension and uncertainty include sparse resources, especially when unjustly allocated, a weak national identity, often due to state structures superimposed on tribal traditions, and a political destabilization. People then tend to move together in more archaic communities, in *Schicksalsgemeinschaften*, while other affiliations abate. The collective hopes and fears become salient and political leaders exploit them to gather the group behind them (Kaufman, 2001; Volkan, 2007). As the conflict escalates, propaganda suggests that the time has come to correct everything that has ever gone wrong in the group's history, and that the "Others," as deemed inhuman by nature, must be eradicated. From this, displacements and killings may appear to be a necessary self-defense or, in very asymmetrical conflicts, a necessary cleansing to get rid of something evil (Lübbe, 2009). When violence finally breaks out, another collective trauma is added to the fate record. With years of tension and combat, culture and economy adapt to the situation, which further adds to the intractability of the conflict.

Endeavors built on realpolitik tend to underestimate the fatal power of this socio-psychological background to conflict. Ethnopoliticization cannot be turned on and off depending on political interests, but assumes an independent reality. This reality persists, even if the hopelessness, danger, and enormous costs of the ethnopolitical way of pursuing political interest have long ago become obvious (Lübbe, 2009).

3. Intractability by Mediation

Mediation, as a method to create win-win-solutions among conflicting parties with incompatible agendas, is unfit in such conflicts. Part of the successful mediation of a conflict is a transition from the incompatible positions of the conflict parties to their underlying specific wants and needs. On the level of wants and needs, solutions that satisfy all of the parties concerned may be found, solutions that are out of scope as long as merely positions are negotiated (Fisher, Ury, Patton, 1981). The transition from positions to wants and needs is thus a crucial step to find consensus solutions in a mediation process. In an ethnopoliticized conflict this transition is impeded. When historically rooted fears begin to rule perceptions of present reality as described, the incompatible positions of the parties in the actual conflict tend to become existentially overlayed: Letting go of their positions then amounts to self-abandonment in the parties' mindsets. The parties cannot abstain from their incompatible positions and in consequence stay narrowed down to a world of victory or defeat.

In the case of Georgia and Abkhazia, the main positions concern the status question. The position on the Georgian side is: *Abkhazia is and always will remain a part of Georgia*. The Abkhazian position is: *Abkhazia does not and will never again belong to Georgia*. These positions are indeed incompatible. In order to understand the existential significance of these

positions for the parties, we must identify the unresolved past dimension of the conflict. How do the conflicting parties construct their realities through the lens of the salient trauma chapters of their chronicles? Historically rooted fears of victimization can be found within their respective positions.

In the case of Abkhazia, it is the fear of extinction as a distinct minority group. It became salient with the raising ethno-nationalism of Georgian leaders associated with Georgia's transition into independence after the fall of the Soviet Union. It dates back to former experiences of suppression and displacement: With the foundation of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia had equal status with Georgia, but then experienced a decrease in autonomy. In 1931 Abkhazia was downgraded to an autonomous republic within Georgia. The Abkhazian fight for self-determination was cruelly suppressed under Stalin. Deportation and forced assimilation threatened to obliterate the Abkhazian minority as a distinct group. Similar incidents had happened under the Tsarist Empire, when tens of thousands where driven into exile, a trauma well remembered in Abkhazia (Kaufman, 2001; Wolleh, 2006).

The post-Soviet transition period with its ethnicising propaganda ("Georgia to the Georgians") was suitable for reactivating this trauma feature of the Abkhazian identity. Against this background, Abkhazia's absoluteness in the status question is comprehensible: The victim perspective forecasts another threat of extinction. The threat is that forced assimilation and displacement by the Georgians will extinguish the Abkhazian minority. The position *Independence from Georgia* in the victim perspective is an indispensable safeguard against this anticipated development. Tragically, Abkhazia advances a retraumatization by the vehemence of its defense. The more decidedly a minority strives not only for ethnic autonomy, but for secession, the more the majority will tend to use forced assimilation. The victim anticipation has a tendency of self-fulfillment.

Georgia's basic fear is to never be allowed to reach independence from major powers within intact borders: either domination or fragmentation seems to be the choice. This fear is rooted in repeated experiences of being occupied or incorporated with whole or part of its territory by the competing major powers surrounding it throughout history: Persians, Mongols, Osmans, and Russians. Time and again Georgia found itself in the borderland of spheres of influence of rival neighbors, whose roles were alternating between protecting power and oppressor (Kaufman, 2001). The fall of the Russian Empire brought a short time of independent statehood, but soon Georgia again lost its independence—and the Abkhazian territory—to the Soviet Union.

The Georgian fear equally became salient with the end of the Soviet domination: As Georgia was probing its freedom by turning itself westwards, Russia sustained the separatism of Georgian territories. From this perspective Abkhazia and South Ossetia appear as mines implanted to fragment Georgia as soon as it tries to evade Russian dominance (Halbach, 2010; Kaufman, 2001; Gruska, 2005). Letting go of the position *Abkhazia remains Georgian territory* in the victim perspective coincides with the final loss of Georgia's hope for independent statehood within stable borders. Georgia, like Abkhazia, increases the chance that their fears will come true by its defensive Western orientation and its attempts to force the seceded minorities back by arms. Never in post-Soviet times has Russia so blatantly demonstrated its superiority and claims

to rule the region as in the August 2008 war: Russian used its military force to end the Georgian attack on South Ossetia and Abkhazia and to penetrate deeply into Georgian territory.

4. The Trap of Complementary Victim Identities

This example illustrates how past collective trauma can affect current conflicts in an escalating and obstructive manner: In ethnopolitical conflict the ethnic affiliation and existential fears rooted in the ethnic groups' conceptions of history have become salient. It is a *conception* of history (Geschichts*bild*), not *the* history of the group, because the narratives constructing ethnic identity are selective and mythifying. History is always related in new and different ways, depending on who tells them when and in what context (Lübbe, 1989). Thus, collective identities are not fixed, but time-dependent and changeable (Erll, 2005; Kühner, 2003). In ethnopoliticized times, an unconscious "time collapse" (Volkan, 2004: 73) occurs: In the perception of the group, past experiences recorded as trauma and the current conflict cannot be told apart. This association renders specific positions to be existentially indispensable.

If in a conflict two parties meet with (a) incompatible and (b) existentially overlayed positions as described, the conflict is deadlocked. The parties are stuck in what I call the trap of complementary victim identities. Their historically rooted mindsets tragically cooperate in constructing a world of existential combat, thus reiterating harmful experiences. *Victim identity* means that each group is unconsciously occupied by salient traumatic chapters of its chronicle. The victim identities are *complementary* because the defense behavior of one party exactly triggers the basic fear of the other party and vice versa, resulting in a cross-catalytic cycle (A enhances B, B enhances A): Georgia's ethno-nationalism triggers the Abkhazian fear of extinction as a distinct ethnic group, and Abkhazia's separatism triggers Georgia's fear of fragmentation. And a *trap* it is, because through this mutual reinforcement the parties actually foster what they fear: a now real existential threat, which, once it is established, reveals that there is no escape. At best the conflict can be "held on ice." That would be the attractor—a game theory term for a stable condition towards which a dynamic system tends to evolve—of the conflict system under equal forces: a tinder box on ice, which is a common metaphor for the Caucasus.

The "trap of complementary victim identities" is not just another name for security dilemma, but there is a parallel: The security dilemma in international relations leads to a military buildup spiral, because the parties' feel threatened and military defense behaviors mutually reinforce each other. It is a cross-catalytic cycle, just as described above for the trap of complementary victim identities. But the trap of complementary victim identities is not seen as a dynamic simply arising due to the competition of players in a self-help system, as is the security dilemma (Herz 1950). It is a pattern likely to occur between large groups, when specific, concurrent, and historically rooted susceptibilities are triggered. The Gilovitch experiments (Gilovitch, 1981), which showed the dependency of political judgements on historical analogies, support the concept. When I speak of "specific susceptibilities" of large groups, I do not want to maintain an essentialist ancient hatreds thesis, implying that ethnic groups clash because of intrinsic incompatibilities. As I have already described, I see ethnic identities as constructed and

changeable in time and context, but not arbitrarily. Some constructions have tenacious lives and are more likely to arise then others.

5. Psycho-Political Approaches in Peace Work

The trap of complementary victim identities is of course not *the* cause for the intractability of the conflict. Such conflicts have no simple causation, but a complex, systemic, circular causation with many interdependent and mutually reinforcing factors and subsystems (Coleman, 2009; Wils et al., 2006). A prominent factor is international influence, especially the Russian-American competition in the region, which hampers the international efforts to stabilize the region (Gruska, 2005; Kaufmann, 2007; Halbach, 2010). In protracted conflicts the economic system also adapts to the splitting between the conflicting parties. This is true, too, in the media, in education, and science where one-sided depictions prevail, particularly under conditions of restricted freedom of opinion (Halbach, 2010; Kaufmann, 2007). In order to meet these complex interdependencies a multifarious and long term approach is needed (Ropers, 1997; Diamond/McDonald, 1996). It must include methods that allow the identity issues of the conflict to be addressed. Peace and conflict research and practice are developing what one could call psycho-political approaches. The next three sections provide some examples of these approaches.

6. Grassroots Dialogue Projects

Relational work between the conflict parties is usually done in dialogue projects, most of them at the grassroots level (Ropers, 2004). An example of a dialogue project explicitly addressing the unresolved past dimension is Dan Bar On's "To Reflect and Trust" groups (Bar On, 2008). Bar On brought together descendants of Holocaust perpetrators and descendants of Holocaust victims in storytelling projects. He found that they were all suffering from the past. Believing the Holocaust to be a relevant collective trauma in the unresolved past background of the Middle East conflict, Bar On included Palestinians in his later youth dialogue projects. Dialogue projects are often done with young people, perhaps mainly because they are within easier reach, and their attitudes are more susceptible to change. Different from Bar On's workshops, these projects often are simply meeting opportunities intended to promote experiences in which the "adverse Other" is perceived as neither very adverse nor very other.

Vamik Volkan (2004) argued that in such encounter projects, the precarious attitudes rooted in the collective identity would not be transformed, not even in the individual participants. The group identity is left outside—almost like a coat hung up at the door. Friendships are easily brokered through joint activities, but once at home, the mantle of collective hatred is worn again. Humans are capable of hatred towards the members of another group while also befriending individual members of that group. In consequence, Volkan (2004) facilitated dialogue projects based on a previous analysis of the conflict-relevant aspects of the group identities. This analysis was done by a multidisciplinary team, including historians. Members of the conflicting groups— for instance, Estonians and Russians in Estonia—then met under circumstances intended to trigger the group identity aspects rather than leave them out. This was done, for example, by choosing a venue that had been the site of a collective trauma relevant to the conflict in question. The parties should not seek friendship, but should maintain the mantle of their group identity.

These considerations address the problem of transfer. The difficulty to achieve a lasting change in the attitudes of the project participants is just one aspect of it. Another aspect is the question of how to reach a broader social effect within the respective communities. Dialogue projects at the grassroots level, even when effecting a long term change in attitude in the participants, transform a few young people, not the conflicting large groups. One approach to promote broader and sustainable effects is to let the participants design their own transfer projects (Ropers, 2004). This can go from a co-written statement that relates the experiences at home, in schools or other educational institutions, to establishing an NGO that follows the large-group understanding. The possibilities of promoting a social transfer of the changes in attitude achieved in the dialogue project depend on the possibilities of public action of the project participants within their

respective collectives. An obvious approach to achieving a broad impact is to work with pertinent participants who are influential within their respective groups.

7. Macropolitical Dialogue Approaches

The most direct lines of action are generally held by the political elite. The political elite, however, are more suited for strategic rather than relational communication. Strategic communication is targeted at the implementation of immutable agendas, whereas relational communication keeps the agenda open to change in the course of the dialogue. The political elite are selected, trained, and used to implement agendas, present themselves in official roles, communicate in jargons, and safeguard public images. The psycho-political conquest of new territory, however, requires openness to the side effects of changes in worldviews and perceptions of self and the "Other." The participants may undergo processes that involve feelings of dismay, pain, helplessness, or confusion. Impressive examples are the reports from Dan Bar On's above mentioned workshops (Bar On, 2008). They show how the young people that were taking part went through phases of denial and deep confusion before they gradually could accept that the opposite side also suffers.

Approached designed to address this problem include "problem solving workshops" and/or "interactive conflict resolution projects" (Burton, 1990; Kelman, 2007, 2009; Fisher, 2005). These are informal consultation or dialogue projects with participants from NGOs, scientific institutions, and participants near the decision making level. The informal settings allow for work on a deeper relational level than official negotiations in that they provide a space to address the basic fears and needs of the conflicting parties. The transfer idea is that, hopefully, the participants, by means of their professional contacts with decision makers, can achieve a transfer of converted attitudes to macro level politics. The approach is also called "1.5-track-diplomacy," indicating the intended shuttle of the participants connected to the macro level between the informal meetings and the macro-political sphere. There have been dialogue projects on the Caucasus conflicts that brought together civil society representatives and participants near the leadership levels. An example is the Stadtschlaining process, a series of informal workshops on the Abkhazian case, which came to a premature end with the Kodori crisis in 2006 (Wolleh, 2006). After the war in August 2008, a window of opportunity for such a macro level project will need time to reopen.

8. Consultation of Multipliers

While the political elite are unattainable for relational work, the majority of the population may be more inclined towards rapprochement. After the Caucasus war in August 2008, I attended talks on the Caucasus Crisis hosted by the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations of the Council of Europe, which is the civil society pillar of the Council of Europe. The participants were mainly NGO and think-tank representatives from the regions directly affected by the war, including Russia. The first of these talks took place in December 2008, four months after the war in August 2008. The constructive nature of these talks was deeply impressive. The participants—above all the female participants—openly showed their concern and needs, and the enormous distress that the war trauma left was palpable in many of the statements from all sides. A common ground of humanity thus became apparent above all friend/enemy dichotomies.

Over the course of the talks it became evident that a high readiness of cooperation and a wealth of ideas exist on this civil society level. However, frustration also exists because of a perceived hopelessness to reach the leaders' level, especially in Georgia. Times of crisis tend to foster a rise in personalities that are particularly difficult to bring into dialogical work. The Georgian leaders are focused on the alleged necessities of foreign politics and the status of the seceded minority regions. They disregard the needs of the population as well as important domestic issues like how to become a country that minorities want to be part of. This vertical cleavage—authoritarian leadership with a passive, enduring majority of population—is another factor stabilizing the conflict (Kaufmann, 2007).

One other approach might include working with multipliers—i.e., people who are involved in the conflict-ridden society and can operate on a wider scale than the common grassroots level. In areas with protracted large-group conflicts that are characterized by weak or authoritarian rule, ethnic strife, economies of violence, and multiple social problems, valuable intra-systemic resources can be found within civil society initiatives and people who can contribute to forming social opinions and attitudes.

Multipliers might include people who are involved in the media, education, art, science; as well as religious leaders, members of NGOs, political parties, unions, and foundations. Marco de Carvalho and Jörgen Klußmann have worked with this target group in Afghanistan (de Carvalho/Klußmann/Rahman, 2010). The participants could bring forward concerns related to their respective field of action, such as the question of a local mediator: "How can Pashtune and Tadjik people live together peacefully in the village again?" The issues were processed using a systemic simulation approach (described in Lübbe 2010). The actual condition of the system in question was depicted and the underlying dynamics between the represented system parts unfolded. More resourceful options of coexistence were configured in the simulation, and culturally adapted and locally owned solutions could be found. I consider such inner-systemic impulses to move towards a better condition of the system as more promising than attempts to change a system according to concepts superimposed from the outside.

9. Conclusion

Ultimately, the transformation of protracted large group conflicts requires an integration of psycho-political views and methods into the peace process in order to modify fatal constructions of reality (Wendt, 1999). This long term process indeed eventually demands a kind of self-abandonment. But not in the sense dreaded and fended off by the groups: What must be abandoned is not the identity of the group—understood as its path-dependent but changeable sense of uniqueness—but its victim identity. While caught in a victim identity, the group is occupied by selected chapters of its chronicle. This tragically limits its capabilities to cope with present issues and tends to subject the group to a reiteration of harmful experiences. With the abandonment of victim identities, more resourceful options of coexistence might reopen.

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Four Notes for a Politics of Peace

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FOUR NOTES FOR A POLITICS OF PEACE

Abstract

In this short essay, I bring together five philosophers—Emmanuel Levinas, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Alphonso Lingis, and Jacques Rancière—who are not often addressed in concert. What I find holding these thinkers together is an underlying spatial configuration of political phenomena enacted in forms of relationality. Together these four "notes" constitute the seeds of a project for a phenomenological political theory of virtue and relationality.

I.

Peace suffers in political thought from being persistently conceived as a reaction, as an amelioration or ending of something else (viz., conflict or war). From such a perspective peace is presented as a fragile secondary condition of human nature, a mere effect of the serious business of social and political affairs. Peace is defined negatively in terms of an essential relationship with its inevitable failure to be. Peace is thereby conceived as a matter of *distance*: It is a distancing from conflict; it is a distant ideal. It best exerts itself when contact with otherness is limited, when it is at a distance. Conceived in distance, peace is wrought with impotence. As such, political theory tends to keep its distance from peace as a serious political concept.

Impotent peace is a symptom of an underlying condition of political thought that refuses to put human beings at the center of politics. To make peace impotent is to divest social virtue (and thereby human relations) from the political.

To rectify peace as a political concept requires reanimating virtue and relationality as both the material and the milieu of the political. In place of distance, peace can be thought on a model of proximity. To do so is to leave behind a view of peace as a point of consensus among competitors and replace it with peace as a project of dissensus in world held in common. Peace, then, can be seen as a condition and a force with a propensity to become. Emmanuel Levinas suggests as much in his view of the primacy of the face-to-face encounter:

> It is necessary to ask oneself if peace, instead of being the result of the absorption of alterity [i.e., consensus], would not on the contrary be the *fraternal* mode of a proximity to the other (*autrui*), which would not simply be the failure to coincide with the other [i.e., dissensus] but would signify precisely the *surplus* of sociality over every solitude— the *surplus* of sociality and of love. We do not use this word, so often abused, lightly. (165)

A forceful concept of peace must locate the political among this surplus of sociality—a primordial commonness—and respecify relational virtues as political concepts. In light of the transformed conditions of relationality of contemporary life commonly referred to as globalization, we should also respecify proximity as a global concept.

In short, to arrive at proximity, we must distance ourselves from distance.

II.

The path to peace, as Antonio Negri claims, is an "exodus from the world as a collective construction of being" (60). This exodus is from the divided world of property to an indivisible world of the common. For Negri and Michael Hardt, "the common" is both the ecological framework of "the common wealth of the material world" and the socioeconomic framework of the "results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production" (*Commonwealth*, viii). Their altermodern project for a global, radical form of democracy is rooted in a constituent social power of the common that they call "the multitude." The two-pronged notion of the common—as both common material world and common sociality—stands over and against property, partitioning, and competition as the dominant modes of ecological orientation and socioeconomic production. Hardt and Negri's fundamental political concept for exploring the power of the common is *love*, taking Levinas one step further to include the environment. They define love as a form of biopolitical production of subjectivity through "encounters of singularities" that constitutes the common. Love is the creation of proximity: it is a force of openness, creativity, and collaboration that cannot be captured as private property. Love is both joy and an increase in common power. Love, it turns out, is the primary political concept holding together Hardt and Negri's entire project. It is quite a departure to elevate a performative, intersubjective virtue like love to the focal point for a political philosophy— particularly in times characterized by crisis, inequality, violence, and uncontainable circulations

of power. To turn to love as the production of the common is to refuse a view of politics dissociated from sociality. It is to place power in what is common, rather than what is scarce.

The turn to love is also a refusal to view virtue as a private, rather than a common, affair. For Hardt and Negri, "Love means precisely that our expansive encounters and continuous collaborations brings us joy" (*Multitude*, 351). For them, the common is the condition for the possibility of both peace and democracy, realizable only as global concepts. The common is the surplus of sociality over and against a modern political concept of property on which competition and consensus (and thereby impotent peace) depend. And love is how it is made.

Hardt and Negri are quick to point out that "just like the common itself, love is deeply ambivalent and susceptible to corruption" (*Commonwealth*, 182). When corrupted, love is captured by the logics of property, consensus, and lack. Corrupted love seeks (en)closures of identity and sameness. In a corrupted common, like a corrupted love, difference and therefore peace becomes a weakness. Obstacles to love abound in the core concepts of modern political philosophy: identity, property, and a conception of freedom as that in need of protection (defense). These three concepts define the contemporary political constitution of individuals, families, corporations, institutions, and nations. In other words, political being is articulated in a reactive mode as a scarce and fragile commodity at risk of assault. Exodus from this world, then, requires transforming love from a closed system to an open one, from an orientation of individuals seeking sameness (consensus) to one of singularities expressing difference while existing in common (dissensus).

Love, then, needs to be cultivated and maintained. It too is arrived at via exodus—from the politics of identity, property, and consensus.

III.

What is the vehicle of exodus? Underlying love, and propelling it, is trust. Love is an embrace of freedom, and trust is how it is performed. Its performance is a performance of freedom. Its enactment is an enactment of proximity. Trust is a curious phenomenon in that it is itself self-propelling and self-expansive. To trust someone presupposes risk and danger and the possibility of betrayal. Trust is trust precisely because it is outside of knowledge. It is, perhaps, even *the* outside of knowledge. As Alphonso Lingis observes, "In trust one adheres to something one sees only partially or unclearly or understands only vaguely or ambiguously. One attaches to someone whose words or whose movements one does not understand, whose reasons or motives one does not see" (64). Trust is an exodus from fear to dwell in a joyous sense of commonness, of common being. Trust builds upon itself, generating more trust through its performance.

But trust too can be corrupted. Inequalities depend on corrupted trust, as do populisms and ideologies. When corrupted, as Lingis argues, trust morphs into hatred and fear (which also exhibit self-generated accelerations and enactment—and which also reside outside of knowledge). It should be clear that failures of trust do not themselves negate trust. Fear and hatred are not acts of exodus, but acts of refuge, producing refugees who cling to the desperate solitude of the war of all against all.

Taken as a political concept, trust explodes the friend-enemy distinction. Trust does not seek distinctions, but welcomes difference. The friend-enemy distinction transfers politics to images and the imagination, providing a residence for fear and hatred. It builds distances. Trust, however, breaks through representations to grasp the immediacy and proximity of the singularity of otherness, thus revealing the common.

IV.

The revelation of the common is ecstatic. In grasping the surplus of sociality and love, the power of human creativity and collaboration that defines the common, distance dissolves. The political is revealed as proximity and as the purview of all. As Lingis writes, "ecstasy surges from the lower depths of the psyche, the body, and society. Those who find ecstasy do so not by visiting the shrines of civilization but by trudging the swamps of human destitution and misery. […] There is no such thing as private ecstasy. Since ecstasy is a breaking out of solitude, out of the self, since it is communication, it appears as an event in history" (169). Ecstasy presupposes a loss of self, which is to say the dissolution of subjectivity as identity and property. In its place is a transformed self: an irreducible singularity among others (multitude).
Yet ecstasy is also a form of communication, which is to say it is a matter of *contact*—a haptic, tactile force.

The common is ecstatic precisely because it is a mileu of contact that touches everyone. In other words, the ecstacy and revelation of the common is not just an ethical relation with alterity. Nor is it only a respecification of political subjects as singularities. It is also a transformation of the political field to a model of *dissensus* that reveals its own visibility. The visibility of the common is necessary to conceive a positive political concept of peace as a project of dissensus. In other words, what the common reveals is the bare presence (and thus the political force) of those who have previously been rendered invisible by way of structure, definition, and global inequalities: the impoverished, the vanquished, the others. As Jacques Rancière explains, "Dissensus is not a confrontation between interests or opinions. It is the demonstration of a gap in the sensible itself. Political demonstration makes visible that which has no reason to be seen; it places one world in another." (38). The becoming-visible of the common is an encounter of dissensus and an exodus. It is a radicalization and globalization of proximity. It is a struggle, as Negri says, "to create peace *ex nihilo*" (60). It places one world in another as a project and a destination.

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Ontological (Re)Articulations: Drawing on Feminism, Moving Toward a Culture of Peace

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ONTOLOGICAL (RE)ARTICULATIONS: DRAWING ON FEMINISM, MOVING TOWARD A CULTURE OF PEACE

Abstract

This essay focuses on how the pervasive understanding of ontology as immutable and stable has led to problematic understandings of gender that work against the creation of a culture of peace. I argue transitioning to "feminist ontologies" will lay the foundation for a more peaceful society. More specifically, I begin by defining a culture of peace, and then indicate why attention to gender in the context of peace is critical. Next, I move to literature focusing on feminism and the body in order to clarify the need for moving away from epistemological concerns toward ontological ones. I then offer justification for, and characteristics of, feminist ontology. Finally, I argue how feminist ontology can help us move toward a culture of peace.

Peace is an unfamiliar and poorly understood concept and reality. Perhaps it has been too seldom experienced—or in the case of some people, hardly tasted at all. (Fox, 2011, p. 16)

1. Introduction

As we read the news, watch television, and talk with our colleagues, family, and friends it is quite obvious the prevalence of violence and war in our world. Each day world leaders debate and confer about the ways conflicts could and should be handled. In each case, the issues involved are complex and require vast knowledge of the histories that have led to the current state of affairs. While these conversations, plans, and efforts are critical, so to is the need for research, options, and recommendations that focus on the way we come to this information. In other words, exploring what we assume to be true, and how those assumptions shape our interactions and expectations, offers a unique opportunity for moving toward a culture of peace. As such, in this essay I will focus on how the pervasive understanding of ontology as immutable and stable has led to problematic understandings of gender, and then argue that transitioning to "feminist ontologies" will lay the foundation for a more peaceful society. More specifically, I begin by defining a culture of peace, and then indicate why attention to gender in the context of peace is critical. Next, I move to literature focusing on feminism and the body in order to clarify the need for moving away from epistemological concerns toward ontological ones. I then offer justification for, and characteristics of, feminist ontology. Finally, I argue how feminist ontology can help us move toward a culture of peace.

2. Defining a Culture of Peace

Sarah Macharia (2007), draws on the United Nations' definition of a "culture of peace" and explains that it is "a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations" (p. 9). This definition is particularly valuable from my perspective as a Communication scholar because it highlights the power of dialogue and the importance of interaction in changing the world. To further clarify, Macharia (2007) offers a definition of peace from a feminist perspective. She claims peace is effectively defined by the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies as "not only the absence of war, violence and hostilities, but also the enjoyment of justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within society" (Macharia, 2007, p. 9). As a result of seeking the fullness of life, not just the absence of misery, this definition of peace emphasizes the extent to which a peaceful culture can positively shape existence.

Day to day life entails a reliance on common beliefs about femininity and masculinity. Often we move through interactions without questioning the gendered roles we fill or that we expect those around us to fill. In much of the discourse on war, conflict, and hostility the presumption is that women's involvement in such things is atypical, unusual, or a symptom of defect. On the other hand men's role in these things are naturalized and presumed part of appropriate masculinity. In fact, Michael Fox (2011) argues that in order to get to a more peaceful society we must get past "some pretty formidable and influential ideas" such as "that war brings out the best qualities in men; that it is a 'manly art'; [and] that it makes men out of boys; [. . .]" (p. 17). While Fox makes

explicit the discourse commonly surrounding men's role in violence and war, Macharia (2007) explains how women's involvement in preventing conflict is typically articulated. She writes, "reports from the field are categorical that involving women in peace processes improves the chances of achieving and sustaining peace. Numerous theorists interpret this observation as a propensity for peace innate in women, and a tendency toward violence in men" (Macharia 2007, p. 9-10). Both Macharia (2007) and I agree that this is a problematic interpretation that leads to "unsupportable generalizations" (p. 10). As such, a more valuable way to understand these reports is to examine "what it is about understandings of masculinity and femininity in each society that sanction, promote, and indeed make acceptable the attitudes and practices that lead to discord, violence and injustice" (Macharia, 2007, p. 10).

3. Feminism and the Body

While theorists have often delved into the epistemological debate about why societies maintain gendered expectations, the research fails to address ontology. Claire Colebrook (2000), in her discussion of the ways feminists have struggled to improve society, argues first wave movements seek equality, second wave movements work to identify and foster respect for differences, and third wave movements claim the body as a tool of identity articulation rather than an indication of consistency across individuals (p. 76). What becomes clear when examining the various waves of the feminist movements is that the body's ontology remains unspoken while the struggles waged center on epistemology. Suffragists and liberationists work to create change based on an identifiable subject position labeled "woman," hence the body has an intrinsic place in their claims. Nonetheless, the ontology of the body and what it entails goes unquestioned. Members of the first and second wave often fear that unless they can identify commonalties that exist among women they will be unable to create larger social change.

Although first and second wave feminists typically focus on commonalities and a unified notion of woman, third wave feminists turn their attention to a critique of "woman" as a category constrained by sexuality and identity. While these critiques are assuredly epistemological and valuable in bringing the body to the forefront, third wave feminists fail to break away from their predecessors' ontological footing. As gender identities multiply in the third wave, and woman is no longer a unified construct, so too should their ontological moorings. Consider that third wave theorists highlight the ways that women's bodies have historically constrained woman's agency, yet in their critique, the body itself is not the immutable locus of such constraint. In other words, women vary, but women vary throughout the confines of bodies always-already marked "woman". And, while efforts to change women's constraints allow feminists to engage epistemological questions of gender, they do not examine the relationship between their own ontological assumptions and epistemological (im)possibilities. Thus, working to change these constraints allows feminists to reinterpret the epistemology of gender constructs. They also encourage us to question what we know as a result of the prescribed relationships between the body and gender, but reshaping bodily constraints does not trouble the dependency of these relationships on a stable ontology. Clearly, members of each wave of the feminist movements have relied on the body to make arguments about how we should understand and treat one another, but they fail to question what we understand the body to be—what its essence is—as well as how our constructions of it shape our epistemologies.

Colebrook (2000) also brings to our attention the effects that representations of similarity and difference, derived from a normative male standard, have on the idea of a pre-representational body (p. 77). Ultimately, the question of a pre-representational body seems to be the result of scholars incorporating post-structural and postmodern theory into feminist theory. As post-structural and postmodern theory began to refocus our attention on the role of discourse in shaping and/or establishing what we perceive as material, the need for feminists to question the presumptions surrounding the body became preeminent.

This struggle is deeply rooted in the discourse and practice of the academy. Specifically, theory across academic disciplines and throughout history establishes woman's subjectivity and agency in relation to man. Traditionally, academics construct man as the measure of all things (Tavris 1992). As such, constructions of woman relegate her to an often invisible, secondary, and inferior position. In explaining resultant implications, Michelle Ballif (2001) posits woman as symptomatic of "male desire." She writes,

> Starting with a deprivileged relationship to the symbolic, Woman's fading begins before she appears. She is the impossible and absent subjectivity, the impossible and absent signification. Lacan tells us that *the* woman does not exist (*Feminine Sexuality* 137-61). That is, Woman has no essence, and thus, no presence. She "is" only in absentia in the fold of the Real, as a symptom of Male desire and subjectivity (*Feminine Sexuality* 170). (p. 16)

With this awareness of woman as man's other, feminist scholars from multiple disciplines ask whether we can ever adequately account for subjectivity if we construct identity based on the body[i]. Because the female body is defined as that which lacks, some feminists fear the construct of women's bodies will continue to limit and oppress them. According to Ballif (2001), constructing women as "man's other" is not just simple differentiation; rather, it is a violent act waged against women in an effort to maintain the status of patriarchy. She writes, "this phallogocentric thought has required a particular representation of woman: as the dialectical other to sustain the self-identity of the same (Man)" (p. 21). Because those ideologically aligned with patriarchy perpetuate the construction of woman through phallogocentric rationality, many feminist scholars argue that we must move away from viewing the body as an absolute and determining material construct.[ii] In this move away, feminists contend that we can attain a less oppressed subjectivity and/or identity. This is clearest when Colebrook (2000) writes,

> As [Moira] Gatens argued, feminists tended to position themselves on *either* side of this presupposed divide: either sex was an ahistorical and determining essence *or sex* was merely the effect of an entirely arbitrary and disembodied representation (Gatens 1996, 4). [Genevieve] Lloyd also diagnosed a similar dichotomy in theorizations of gender: "For one approach, the body exists independently of anything social; for the other, it is itself a product of mind and its operation of mind and its operations with symbols" (Lloyd 1982, 19). The distinction between sex and gender, therefore, regards the body from the dividing line between materiality and representation; what is not questioned is the nature and force of this division. (p. 78)

In essence, Colebrook, Gatens, and Lloyd demonstrate how artificial distinctions create difficulties in theorizing gender. As such, feminists have perpetuated the materiality/discursivity divide[iii] and reinforced problematics associated with the body in identity production. Having provided a brief overview of struggles within feminist scholarship focusing on the role of the body in identity construction, the question that emerges as this stage deals with how ontology has been characterized.

4. Justifying Feminist Ontology

Two scholars from the Communication discipline represent well the general perceptions and beliefs associated with ontology. James Hikins and Kenneth Zagacki (1988) write, "while it is important to account, sociologically, for how people define and redefine what is or is not real, it should be kept in mind that the ontologically objective state of affairs at any given time is what it is. People may debate the existence of Santa Claus, but their arguments will not bring him into existence" (p. 213). Hikins and Zagacki reaffirm the importance of, and emphasis on, that which is material, physical, natural, and tangible. Their essay critiques, and attempts to discredit, the generative nature of discourse, thus participating in the perpetuation of the materiality/discursivity divide. From a perspective such as this, there is no room for offering up alternative ontologies of any kind because "one" already is; interpretation changes nothing about existence. Because ontology is essence, there is no call for (re)investigation, and as such, no possibilities for re(articulating) ontology as fluid and malleable.

Although the position that Hikins and Zagacki take is consistent with the philosophical tradition and common understanding of ontology, work done by scholars such as Robert Hariman (1986) questions the "ontology of the verbal world" (p. 48). Hariman (1986) argues that rhetoric can situate "ontological claims within a social history of discourse and a dialectic of authority and marginality" (p. 51). As such, ontology would be "reformulate[d]" within the "activities of the *logos* as understood through the concept of *doxa*" (Hariman 1986, p.51). Hariman's (1986) arguments bring to our attention "the process of being constituted by the perception of the other" (p. 51). Accordingly, Hariman opens the door for questioning what we understand ontology to be. Hariman's position identifies the discursive nature of existence and clarifies the importance of building a feminist ontology. To the extent that Hariman recognizes the role of authority, privilege, status, logic, and reason, in creating ontology, he gives us the opportunity to investigate how traditional theory and scholarship in the academy have constructed a limited notion of ontology. Given the history of patriarchy that shapes the world we live in, we must reinterpret constructions of bodies—both the material/physical existence, as well as the discursive explanations.

Rather than an unquestionable, stable element of existence that precedes thought, experience, and discourse (our common understanding of ontology—often thought of as the body), ontology has actually always been the result of philosophical thought. Importantly, Hariman calls to our attention the role of the values of the philosophers who have theorized ontology up to this point. As is clear from the debate among feminists mentioned above, the gendered expectations of society have had significant impacts on our way of being in the world. Further, this understanding of ontology highlights the interdependent relationship between ontology and epistemology. The evaluative nature of doxa illuminates that how we express ontology

necessarily shapes epistemology and brings to the fore how critical (re)articulating ontology is in an effort to create a culture of peace.

5. Characteristics of Feminist Ontology

Because scholars have historically assumed ontologies of woman and man to be stable categories, offering feminist ontologies that acknowledge multiplicity destabilizes the categories of woman and man, and can potentially reshape our epistemological claims, how we interact with one another, and help us move toward a culture of peace. As Fox argues, "[. . .] we can try to move forward with the insights we've achieved and the tools we have for understanding and promoting the factors that make peace possible, with the aim of stimulating new and different thought and feeling processes that may promise better choices than those made in the past (2011, p. 18). As such, feminist ontologies should be articulations of possibility. While there are a myriad of constructions that can be articulated ontologically, I offer three characteristics in order to clarify how feminist ontologies can function as libratory and create the possibility of peace**:** (1) critical self-awareness, (2) instability, and (3) relationality.

(1) *Critical Self-Awareness*

Feminist ontologies entail critical self-awareness. As Hannah Rockwell explains, "[. . .] contestation and radical engagement are essential conditions of feminist scholarship – among feminist scholars as well as with scholarly paradigms that undermine gender equity" (Rockwell, 2008, p. 22). They are necessarily situated within lived experience while simultaneously exploring theoretical implications. Through self-awareness and critical reflexivity, a feminist ontology allows individuals to construct varied relationships with and to their bodies. The relationships we have with our bodies change how we interpret or "come to know" gender, gendered behavior, subjectivity, and agency. Because we can reflect on experience and explore how we interpret our bodies, the potential for new understandings of ontology emerge. This process encourages us to recognize the fluidity of ontology and rearticulate our epistemologies that have sedimented into stable notions of being.

(2) *Instability*

Feminist ontologies assume instability in subjectivity, and as a result, allow for multiple interpretations of agency, articulation, and identity. Rockwell explains, "[. . .] that speaking and writing subjects presents points of view that are always linked to an embodied life and historical social circumstances" (2008, p. 22). Because feminist ontologies are rooted in experience and focus on the power of discourse to construct and reconstruct, they are not limited by biology and gendered constraints that are perpetuated by individuals who subscribe to biological determinism. The instability that I am articulating may best be expressed as ontological contingency. From Aristotle to Derrida, the notion of contingency has received a great deal of attention. To be clear, I mean contingency to imply a focus on possibilities rather than certainty. My contention is that this experience of contingency is consistent with a feminist ontology because feminist ontologies are necessarily malleable.

(3) *Relationality*

Finally, feminist ontologies draw on notions of relationality. Feminist ontologies understand that materiality and discursivity work relationally to construct ontology. By recognizing the connections that exist between and among people and things, feminist ontologies perpetuate an individual's ability to interpret connection not as weakness, but as awareness and commitment to community and self. "While feminist research begins with concern for the basic rights of women, its influence expands well beyond the bounds of male/female power relationships. This expansion addresses marginalization or political oppression of all humanity with regard to the materiality of language and bodies" (Rockwell, 2008, p. 23). Thus, feminist ontologies presume variations in the social structure and our location within it. Feminist ontologies encourage us to read these changes as indicative of ontological change, not merely surface-level transformations. Feminist ontologies move and change not only in response to what is needed or wanted as an individual, but also in response to those around us. Working with, as well as against, the conditions in which we live is indicative of strength and openness. It is recognition of the contingent nature of a world that is too often constructed as predictable, stable, and some how predetermined.

6. Toward a Culture of Peace

In the end, my position is that in order to create a culture of peace we must (re)articulate ontology from a feminist perspective. Because we live in a culture that often allows gendered constructs to go unquestioned, starting here means starting at the root of how we understand existence. Victoria DeFrancisco and Catherine Palczewski (2007) explain, "hegemonic masculinity does not require all men to engage in overt toxic practices, but it does encourage men to remain silent to protect their own masculinity when others commit such practices. In doing so, they become complicit in the violence" (p. 147). Furthering this idea, Harry Brod asks, "How can we strengthen the mechanisms of resistance by which nonviolent men have avoided acting on society's prescriptions for male violence, and how can we eliminate such prescriptions? (pp. 52-53)" (DeFrancisco and Palczewski 2007, p. 148). The answer to his questions may well be avoiding the trap of interpreting these kinds of issues as solely an epistemological problem and instead focusing our attention on (re)articulating ontology from a feminist perspective. In this shift we create the possibility of changing the problematic ontologies of men and women, and allow for the development of a culture of peace.

Nina Lozano-Reich and Dana Cloud (2009) discuss "real world agency" and posit that, "what is missing is any analysis of systemic obstacles to individual agency in the context of oppression and inequality" (p. 222). Thus, by constructing feminist ontologies we make possible individual agency and create the possibility for a culture of peace because, as Rockwell (2008) contends, "[. . .] research on communication and gender focuses a critical eye on the powerful, and grants genuine empathy toward Others who suffer" (p. 23). Feminist ontologies work to maintain this awareness of "systems of obstacles" and empathic orientation. Thus, as we recognize the interdependent natures of embodiment and reflection, practice and theory, experience and articulation, and substance and ethereality we can propagate feminist ontologies that no longer fall prey to traditional, logocentric theory. In the move away from oppressive gender constructs we take an important step toward peace.

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[i] See, for example, Linda Alcoff (1988), Judith Butler (1993, 1995, 1999), Moira Gatens (1991), Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and Genevieve Lloyd (1982).

[ii] In brief, phallogocentrism highlights the dominance of the phallus in social relations. It emerged from the work of deconstructionists who question the centrality of the logos. Most importantly, my use of the phrase phallogocentric rationality in this essay is an effort to call to the fore the ways language perpetuates sexism and female oppression through its structure, reliance on fixed/stable categories, and presumptions of what constitutes knowledge.

[iii] In *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, Seyla Benhabib and Judith Butler (1995) offer their perspectives on the relationship between materiality and discursivity. For Benhabib, postmodernism has encouraged scholars to move in what she believes are potentially dangerous directions (p. 20). Benhabib's scholarship, which is indicative of materially oriented feminists, warns that individuals lose the ability to transform their realities and create larger social change if we fail to understand the body as corporeally indicative of identity. In response, Butler offers an explanation of the subject's agency deriving from iteration (p. 30). Her concern is that presuming a subject position that exists prior to discourse limits one's ability to question subjectivity at all. What becomes clear is that this debate is grounded in an understanding of ontology as immutable, and materiality and discursivity as oppositional. While Benhabib contends that we can transform epistemology but not ontology, Butler argues that we should focus on the power of discourse to construct both. Rather than recognizing that ontology is both/and, not either/or, both theorists cling to their own understanding of ontology and make epistemological claims bound to their individual perceptions. Clearly, Butler recognizes the malleability of identity, subjectivity, and agency, but she sees the body as limiting possibilities rather than contributing to the multiplicities, that discourse provides. Likewise, Benhabib's work to recuperate the body in feminist theory is valuable, but limits the role of discourse because she fears it destroys generalizable identities.

Compassionate Communication: The Power of Vulnerability

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COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION: THE POWER OF VULNERABLITY

Abstract
This essay opens with a narrative—a bit of performative writing—that evokes a particular moment of conflict and healing during a peaceful demonstration. The discussion then broadens to include the ways in which vulnerability, especially as practiced in what Marshall B. Rosenberg (2003) calls Nonviolent (or Compassionate) Communication (NVC), can be a powerful source of connection and peacemaking. The author, who studies and uses NVC in daily life and teaches a college course in Compassionate Communication, offers an overview of NVC and invites readers to learn more through exploring the list of resources provided.

1. Introduction

It is March 20, 2003, the morning after the USA begins to "shock and awe" Iraq. As I head to campus to teach, I take my cue from Jackie Kennedy. I dress deliberately: a simple black dress, a black lace shawl, which can be raised to become a veil. I get a call: "There's going to be a 'die-in' today at noon outside the Student Center." Perfect: I'm already dressed for it. Approaching the Student Center, I drape the veil over my face.

As I arrive, spontaneous sobs wrench me. Two students, young men I know, are dressed in white-paper "anti-chemical attack" suits. Others are strewn about, chalk-outlined, puddles of sticky red liquid dripping and pooling on the cold concrete. One of the "dead" quietly requests

"More blood" from another who kneels, doling out special effects with the intensity of a battlefield medic. This surreal performance is as close as I ever wish to come to war. It is horrifying. I find that suddenly I *am* the grieving widow. Thankfully, the stage is set to allow me to shudder and keen.

I make my way to a paper-suited favorite student. I cling to him and we mourn together, envisioning real bodies half a world away. To our left lies a coffin, covered in an American flag. The breeze tickles the fabric airborne. The protestors have improvised with small stone weights, but the insistent wind tugs, not beholden to convention. And then, commotion.

I see another favorite student arguing with a man I do not recognize. Their voices escalate: Who can speak for the dead? A soldier, or a soldier's sister? I watch idly, and it crosses my mind that we all want the same thing. But my white-suited companion is uneasy, fretting, "I don't know what to do in this situation." "Oh," I think, in mild surprise. "*I* know what to do."

Confident in my widow's weeds, I cross the few yards to Flag Man, and gently touch his arm. "Sir? Excuse me, sir," I say. "We're not trying to disrespect the flag. We just want to honor the dead." He turns, but cannot rail at me. He is distressed at the flag touching the ground, tethered by rocks.

I invite him, "Please, help me display it properly." But he leaves, distraught. Days later, I hear his voice outside my office and step out to meet him. I introduce myself. He admits that he had had to leave because he has seen buddies killed, and this demonstration had seemed to him a mockery. And by the way, he confides, the stars are to be positioned over the *head* of the casket. I thank him, empathize with his loss, and assure him that we intended no disrespect, but only grief. I mention my favorite bumper sticker, "You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake." *And he agrees.* We embrace.

This is the power of vulnerability. My male student in the white suit could not so easily have approached Flag Man. Armor is a form of weaponry. It says, "I don't trust you. I won't let you in." Black lace symbolizes mourning, dignity, respectability, vulnerability. *It has holes in it.* It says "I am grieving, but I will let you see my grief. I will let you in." And in this, paradoxically, there is strength… because it marks our possibility for connection.

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Three months later, I was to discover and fall in love with Compassionate Communication, or Nonviolent Communication (NVC).[1] NVC is the name given to a process described by

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[1] I began learning NVC on my own in 2003, reading and rereading books and watching videotapes of Marshall Rosenberg. NVC gradually came to impact every area of my life, and I decided to teach a class incorporating it, for the spring semester of 2007. I attended my first introductory training in September, 2006, and my first "residential" (several days, retreat-style) training in August, 2008. As of this writing, I have attended 44 days of training, most of it residential. And the class I first taught in 2007, which my chair expected might attract five students (as a one-time offering), was overflowing with 25. Now it is part of the official curriculum. I have taught it every year since then (and am currently teaching it for the 6th time). For the past few years I have also shared NVC through: volunteering at an elementary school (mostly working with students, but also teachers and parents); doing presentations on

psychologist-turned-peacemaker Marshall Rosenberg. NVC relies on ideas of nonviolent resistance and peaceful change as taught by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesus, Buddha, etc. Compassionate Communication, in effect, conveys upon us the power of the black lace shawl, the power of the open heart, no matter what we're wearing or not wearing.

NVC offers a way to use transparency and vulnerability to create and nurture deep connection with ourselves and others. That is its main purpose: to create connection, and thus to make compassionate giving possible and desirable. Through a basic process, we can radically change the quality of interaction, bringing emotional healing to ourselves, friends, loved ones, coworkers, acquaintances, strangers—anyone with whom we interact.

2. Philosophy

Gandhi is purported to have said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."[2] In other words, inner peace is a helpful and healing first step, a prerequisite to outer peace, as Rosenberg's successful international peacemaking efforts have shown. There are several fundamental ideas behind NVC, all of which are articulated in Rosenberg's (2003) Nonviolent Communication: We all share a set of universal human needs (respect, love, independence, safety, etc.).[3] *Once we get connected to ourselves and other people, we enjoy nothing more than meeting our own needs and the needs of others.* What keeps us apart is violence (and not only physical violence, but verbal violence: judgment, blame, diagnosis and evaluation) that prevents us from recognizing and sharing how we are feeling and what we would like. However, *any act of violence is 'merely' a tragic (sadly misguided) expression of unmet needs, likely to serve no one well.* Being a compassionate communicator involves recognizing that needs drive the whole system, not only the "negative" things in life. *Everything we do, we do from a desire to get needs met.*[4] (And that, in itself, is wonderful: it's just that we have learned patterns of speech and behavior that blame, manipulate and demand. These guilt- and fear-inducing strategies, although they may appear to "work" sometimes, actually decrease the chances that others will be genuinely excited about helping us meet our needs. And when we act out of a sense of obligation, everyone pays for it, eventually.)

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[2] college campuses (to sororities, student groups, the University Women's Professional Advancement organization, residents in dormitories, and community members); and presenting papers at the National Communication Association.

[2] Apparently this is disputed, attributed to him by his grandson Arun Gandhi, but denied by Brian Morton (2011) in a recent New York Times editorial.

[3] I have heard international students articulate how speaking in terms of individual needs has been a challenge for them, especially when they come from a collectivist culture. But these same students have recognized the ways in which even needs for independence, that are not always valued by a particular culture, do play a strong role in their emotional lives. (One student from China testified in class last week, in fact, "NVC really is a universal language!" and reported on how her NVC practice was helping her get along with her roommates, who were themselves starting to speak about their feelings with more vulnerability. In other words, the practice can "rub off" on others, even though they are not studying NVC themselves.)

[4] In this sense, terms like "manipulation" no longer make sense. Even the person doing the supposed "manipulating" is acting out of a desire for something important: perhaps it is wanting to contribute to someone else's life, perhaps it is a desire to protect oneself or another from some imagined threat, and so on.

3. Implications

Needs, far from being shameful or bad, are seen as beautiful and healthy in this view. In the words of Certified NVC trainer Susan Skye (2008), needs are "universal human qualities or values that, when experienced, enhance life." They are "what is alive in us," as Rosenberg (2003) says. In other words, when we connect with our own feelings and needs, we answer the question "How are you?" in candid and specific ways, and we can follow up with Rosenberg's (2003) trademark second question: "How could we make life more wonderful?" When you honestly share "what is alive in you," you give me a precious gift, because then I have some idea of what your needs are, and how to meet them. When I empathically receive your honest expressions of what is alive in you, nothing will give me more joy than helping you find ways to meet those needs. As Rosenberg (2003) says, *we find joy in "contributing to life."* So NVC involves *expressing honestly* and *receiving empathically*. And each can be turned *inward*, *to ourselves*, and *outward*, *to others*.[5]

4. Process

Below are the basic components of the practice**.** It is simple and challenging; it gets easier with practice, and the rewards are great. These are not necessarily "steps"—you do not always have to do them in this order, and sometimes you can do some, or all, silently. *Other people do not need to be practicing NVC, and may not even be aware that you are.* They may just feel relieved, and may enjoy a greater sense of support and mutual understanding than in a "regular" conversation where we try to comfort (but often make things worse) with advice, pity, reassurance or distraction.

In this process, we learn to:

- welcome (but not inflict on others) our own judging and blaming thoughts (for the clues they offer us about our feelings and needs);
- make observations without implying blame;
- identify, accept, experience and express our own feelings;
- discover, and welcome, the deeper needs that have caused those feelings;
- make clear requests of ourselves and others;
- and let go of the outcome.

We also learn to listen in this same manner, "translating" harsh language we have all learned to produce into a more compassionate "dialect" that allows our creative energy to solve problems. Rosenberg acknowledges that this is not "new," but a systematic way of practicing what many spiritual traditions teach or recommend. (For example, what Rosenberg (2003) systematizes as "a

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[5] I do not mean to essentialize, but it is a truism that men in many Western cultures are taught not to express or even recognize most of their own feelings (apart from anger), and women are taught not to express or even recognize most of their own needs. Whether or not this is true for each individual, the point is, learning and practicing NVC presents multiple challenges for each of us. I highly recommend learning with the support of other trainers and participants whenever possible. For those with fewer financial resources, there are free downloads and a free practice group on the NVC Academy, and there is a service at the Center for Nonviolent Communication that helps locate trainers and practice groups in your area. See References for details.

dance of honesty and empathy," other spiritual teachers represent through the "Golden Rule," or advice to be fully "present.")

5. Intrinsic or Extrinsic Motivation

Alfie Cohn (1993/1999) wrote an influential book called *Punished By Rewards*. Often we think that punishment and reward are opposites, like insults and compliments. But Rosenberg also sees this implicit danger even in rewards and compliments: they imply that it is OK for me to judge you. Although you may be a "good girl/boy" today, behind that approval is the suggestion that someday, if you don't do what I want, you will be a "bad girl/boy."

"What do you want the other person to do?" When we stop here, we may find that punishment or reward may seem "effective" tools to get the job done. But if we continue to a second question, "What do I want that other person's reasons for doing X to be?" then NVC clearly moves away from reward and punishment. Because in NVC, we want to encourage people to do what contributes to life, to give freely from the heart, to "do only that which counts as play" (Rosenberg, 2003)—all of these are ways of saying the same thing, that *we do not want action to be motivated by fear, shame, or guilt*.

In other words, we want students to be in school because they are excited to learn new things. We want partners/friends to remain together because they meet one another's needs for love, support, play and companionship. We want to offer our own gifts with a sense of joy in sharing with others, not from a sense of obligation that leads to resentment or depression. Sometimes it's hard to find the joy in doing what we have thought of as "obligations," but it's a matter of identifying what need of ours is being met through even activities that we have not much enjoyed. Once we have identified the underlying needs, we can make our choices conscious: Do we still want to do this? Sometimes we might decide that this action is still the best way we can think of to get a particular need met, and other times we decide that it is not worth it (and then we quit doing that activity). Either way, making the choice conscious is likely to meet our needs for autonomy and self-responsibility, and thus to decrease our discomfort (such as frustration, resentment or panic at what we thought of as being "trapped").

6. Living Compassionately

Compassionate communication is a loving process, but also a strong one. It does not mean being "permissive," or even "compromising." "Compromising" and "negotiating" share a connotation of giving up some of what I want, because I believe that both people's needs cannot be met simultaneously. (NVC is a *flexible practice*; encouraging us not to get "addicted" to our preferred strategies/requests for getting our needs met.) Because another fundamental premise of nonviolent communication is that *needs do not have to conflict, and everyone's needs are equally valuable*. Rosenberg (2003) and other NVC trainers (for example, at the NVC Training Institute, the Center for Living Compassion, the Center for Nonviolent Communication, or the NVC Academy)[6] call this "Abundance Consciousness," the win-win idea that there are many

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[6] In addition to attending trainings by each of these organizations, I have participated in live NVC Academy "teleclasses" and have purchased and downloaded many recordings on specialized topics such as working with

possible ways to meet any individual need. When we open ourselves to compassion (for ourselves and others), creative possibilities arise for valuing (and meeting) everyone's needs. (In contrast, most of us are well-educated in the opposite, in "Poverty (or Scarcity) Consciousness," the familiar idea that if you win, then I lose, and that the only way to solve a conflict is to find some middle ground in which we each get something, but also give something up.) NVC does not settle for compromising.

For example, your need for autonomy and my need for connection can both be met, perhaps even simultaneously. *It's the strategies that we choose to meet our needs that often conflict, and lead to friction*. If we talk about how we are feeling without making the other person "wrong" or responsible for our pain, then we are more likely to feel relaxed and trust that our needs matter. When we are willing to let go of our strategies, and are no longer trying to convince the other person that our way is the only way, we can find creative ways to get everyone's needs met. (You may choose to do something alone, and I may choose to connect with another friend, because I value both your need for freedom and my need for companionship. Or perhaps, having heard my need for connection and having experienced the relief of realizing that my request was not, in fact, a demand, you might be willing to spend time with me after all! In NVC we like to say that "shift happens.") So when we begin practicing NVC, instead of focusing on the outcome that we think we want (the strategy or request that we think will meet our needs) we focus on what NVC trainers and NVC "dance floor" creators Gina Lawrie and Bridget Belgrave call our *intention to connect*, and put our *attention in the present moment, at the heart* (ours and the other's).

Compassionate communication "works" because it is not trying to achieve a particular outcome, other than deeper connection to self and others.

This is not a persuasive technique or a secret weapon to get people to do what you want.

> When you put your attention at the heart,
> and listen for feelings and needs,
> rather than thoughts, judgments and evaluations,
> you will necessarily feel more compassionate
> toward yourself and others.

Flash back to March of 2003: Had I known NVC vocabulary at the time, I might have seen myself and the soldier as achieving a tender and vulnerable connection through our willingness to express our shared needs for mourning (honoring the lives of people lost). In expressing our sorrow, we both embodied and responded to mutual longings for respect and understanding. I must admit that I initially labeled him as "Flag Man" out of a sense of frustration and sadness at not having been able to "reach him" at the rally. But days later, he was more able to receive and trust my caring intentions. In his willingness to trust me with his inner life, he became "Mike," a full and complex person, a soldier who understood that war cannot be "won," that it is a tragedy

children, mediation, etc. I can recommend each of these paths to learning and practicing NVC with the support of others.

for all involved. And in that moment, no, we did not stop the war in Iraq, but we stopped the war between one veteran and one protestor.

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PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

Seven Poems for Peace and Democracy

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SEVEN POEMS FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

Abstract
The following pages contain seven original poems that address issues of peace, democracy, state-sponsored violence, political representation, and personal and collective reflection.

1. The Global College of Democracy

No one ever started a war over a wind turbine.
The wind belongs to all of us, not to nations, nor to stockholders.
The wind, and the sun, would teach us to share, not to hoard;
Would teach us to learn from each other, not to stifle ingenuity.
The wind would bring our global children together as together they master
The challenge of clean energy.
The wind, the sun, do not call foreign children "collateral damage."
The wind would give our spirits a genuine frontier, better than the moon,
For both the challenge and the blessings would belong to all of us.
The wind and the sun know no trade barriers, no ethnic hatred.
They are waiting for research institutes and local factories
To spring to life in Africa, long forgotten by Detroit.

The wind and the sun knock on all doors equally.
We quarrel over oil, and claim to fight our wars for democracy.
What is more democratic than the wind turning turbines for all, equally,
Providing electricity for all, equally,
And thus jobs and classrooms for all, equally?
Let us learn, equally and together, how to build
A clean and prosperous world.
No one ever fought a war over a wind turbine.

2. September Love

We never knew how much happiness could be gathered in a building.
We never knew how much love could be gathered in a building.
Those tall boxes of love might well have floated, like warm balloons,
Up into the sky toward heaven.
And those four planes so full of desperate love
Might well have journeyed even higher toward the source of love.

We lost the happiness, but we kept the love.
Undiminished, our love demands more than grief, more than memory.
Perhaps our love, put to use by hands still made of flesh, not ash,
Could build more than a monument,
Could lift more than only one nation toward a higher realm.
Perhaps our love could reach beyond the daily lives of those we lost,
To the daily lives of people who dream the same dreams,
But in a different language.

Then could our enormous love from September
Encompass all the Earth,
And bring some measure of happiness
To children still seeking tomorrow.

3. 'Twould Give Me No Pause

Say I've no pole-axe or cudgel or truncheon
As I'm strolling along with a basket for luncheon,
When lo!, a highwayman from the forest suddenly attacks,
With broadsword and dagger and scimitar and axe,
Stiletto, brass knuckles, a bicycle chain,
Blowpipe and zipgun, his grandmother's cane,
Harquebusses, blunderbusses, boomerangs and Lugers,
Pistolets and bayonets and deadly pea shooters.
Single-barreled, double-barreled, all beneath his crimson herald.
Choppers and gougers and hackers and eviscerators,

Rippers and clippers and snippers and demasculators,
Grizzly fingers twisters and foul disembowelers,
Devitalizers, rusty circumcizers, eye socket rowelers,
Cannons and stink bombs and death rays and KABOOM!
Doomed to a rheumy tomb in the gloom of a looming mushroom bloom.

'Twould give me no pause.
I'd rip him in thirds with my teeth and my claws.

4. Their Harmony Appalled

Though all of Albion shall glow with galaxies of plague pyres
Heaped with wood and draped with flesh,
Far greater flames I plan to ignite in the name of all we believe is right.
For I have mastered every secret, and now can nothing stop me!
I have but to attain the throne, the uncontested podium of truth:
When I as monarch speak, all men in their innocence shall diligently listen.
Then will their eyes opened in darkness
Be opened further still.

I shall send ambassadors like beetles creeping across the land
To meet with others too in glossy black.
They shall return, their breath a stench with words of honor.
From pulpit and parapet shall they issue their fiery pronouncements:
That land no more is earth
Whereon the rains give birth to the workings of each hand,
But rather, Nation where mortared stone is timeless laid.
While at home a mother sings a lullaby to her seventh child,
Then turns to darning socks and joking with her first,
Our ministers shall inform the hushed and solemn congregation
That toward the mother land a serpent is coiled;
The name of the mother queen has been soiled;
The Holy Mother has been despoiled!
Aye, then shall the old men bellow, and the young men march.

No more the practiced loving step behind the plow,
Nor march to tinkling bell and fiddler's bow the beau and belle,
But drumbeat-driven charge across the plain to meet the savage foe.
A leap and a lunge that drive deep the pike!
And then . . . Ha! The unanticipated pain, and blood, and stagger,
While each warrior's eyes stare wide upon the final sight they see:
No visages of wife and child who bedside bid farewell,
No windowed vision of boyhood tree and manhood farm
And ancient hills of ancient fathers;

Nay, a soldier's red and grit-filled eyes shall stare, and weep, and dim upon
His weakening hand wrapped helpless around the well-honed point
Of the profiteer's blade driven through his back.

And shall governments etch a cross upon the continent:
The transept soon a trough of red,
The nave twin holy paths bringing lambs
To this god in man's own image made.
Then, *then* need I but call upon the spheres to watch,
Their harmony appalled.
Unfastened from the firmament, stars shall fall at noon
To scorch the earth with infernal fire:
Conflagrations shall blanket nations in the consummation of our
Weddedness to war.
Leaving naught but a cross of human ash upon the blackened land.
Yea, shall we see how petty men can be.
And thereafter the sun and moon and plenitude of stars shall arch
In silent procession across the sky
Like mute mourners shuffling past a casket.

5. The Final Page

Each war becomes a ledger of evil,
And so are compiled the tomes which ever invite a further writing.

But the warrior who another martial page would scribe with scarlet ink,
Shall pen no word so precious, nor so renowned,
As the statesman who with his signature
Agrees to a treaty of peace,
Thus ending the bloody book that began
When man first honed his sword against another man.

6. My Brother's Keeper

But who are my brothers?
I was born in Buffalo.
Are my brothers therefore only Buffalonians?
Do I bestow my benevolence upon my brethren
In all the Empire State?
Or am I an American, brotherhood from sea to shining sea?
Is my brother the Palestinian who shared my college dormitory,
And broke bread with me?
Cain, your question remains unanswered.
I'll try again tomorrow.

7. It's Your Turn Now

"But Mary treasured up all these things
And pondered them in her heart."

All right, Mary, you've pondered long enough.
For two thousand years, the boys have had every opportunity,
And they're *still* fighting their wars.
It's your turn now.
The men are still tossing pennies to the poor.
It's your turn now.
The men have cut down most of the olive trees,
And have poisoned most of the wells.
Now it's your turn.

We do not need another sacrificial victim.
We need mother teaching daughter.
For centuries, mothers have sent their sons off to war.
Now it's time for mothers to send their daughters off
To build a lasting peace.
I'm sorry, Mary, but
It's your turn now.