The Healing of Memories

African Christian Responses to Politically Induced Trauma

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Foreword

Africa is a continent rich in natural resources, which have been the stimulus to much of the conflict that has haunted the continent over the centuries. External influences have often generated internal strife to promote acquisitive ends and religion has played its part in this enterprise. The traumatic legacy of these conflicts and the role of Christian faith in healing the memories is addressed in this important collection of chapters. Africa's most valuable resource, however, is one freely given to all who would avail themselves of it. This deep and well-loaded vein of spirituality that runs through every aspect of life on the continent. This phenomenon, which accounts for the remarkable resilience of the continent and its people is explored in all its richness and variety in the pages that follow. The examples are drawn from experience across this vast continent.

I grew up in Ghana as a boy and was christened there when it was the Gold Coast in a church whose foundations were laid by my paternal grandfather. This occurred after a titanic spiritual battle involving my grandfather *"Paa Akyeampong,"* as he was called, and the local fetish priest who invoked the animistic spirits against him. My grandfather lost his chieftaincy in the course of that battle but not his well-being and life, which had been the subject of continuous assault. His perseverance and robust faith meant that the church was eventually built. His is a story that is mirrored by the experience of many all over the continent.

The coexistence of traditional religious practice with Christian and Muslim worship remains a feature of African spirituality. This is not without its challenges and dangers. The force of communal spirituality also however presents opportunities for reconciliation and peace building. These are explored in the forthcoming chapters.

Ubuntu, Christianity, and Two Kinds of Reconciliation

Thaddeus Metz

The lion's share of talk of "reconciliation" in the literature on transitional justice, restorative justice and related views of how to respond to large-scale social conflict refers to a certain kind of *interpersonal* relationship between former enemies (for a few representative texts, see de Gruchy 2002; Bar-Siman-Tov 2004; Moellen____f 2007; Huyse and Salter 2008; Krog 2008; Philpott 2009; Quinn 2009; Murphy 2010; Metz 2015). Here, one naturally speaks of reconciliation "with" another party or "between" two parties. However, there is another important kind of reconciliation that is naturally expressed in terms of reconciliation "to," specifically reconciliation to the trauma one has experienced. This sort of reconciliation is largely *intrapersonal*, roughly a matter of a person coming to terms with how she has been mistreated and being able to move forward with her life.

In this chapter, I focus on this latter, underexplored kind of reconciliation, and seek to answer the question of how to foster it. How should victims, offenders, governments and others strive to heal the psychological trauma caused by systematic human rights violations? In posing this question, I am not interested in psychological matters, say, of empirically reliable techniques to use (for one classic source, see Herman 1992). My approach is instead philosophical, and specifically ethical. How is one to understand what it means to heal, or, in other words, precisely how should one construe the end of becoming reconciled to one's having been injured? In addition, what are the essential or morally desirable means to take to achieve this end?

I answer these questions by appealing to relational values characteristic of the indigenous sub-Saharan African philosophical tradition, which has not been done in what little literature there is on becoming reconciled to one's painful history (Dwyer 1999, esp. 85–87; Villa-Vicencio 2000; Hughes 2001, 126–28, 132). In particular, I invoke goods associated with the Southern African ethic of *ubuntu*, which, in the Nguni languages common there, connotes the idea that one should live a genuinely human way of life by relating communally. After providing a philosophical interpretation of *ubuntu*, I draw on it to consider why one should ultimately become reconciled "to," what it means to do so, and how people should go about fostering that. Along the way, I often compare the prescriptions of *ubuntu* with plain readings of prominent Christian principles such as the golden rule and the commandment to love one's neighbor. I note some similarities between them, but emphasize key differences with an eye to concluding that the approaches of *ubuntu* are worth taking seriously as alternatives.

AN *UBUNTU* ETHIC

In recent years there have been a number of literate, philosophical interpretations of the African ethical tradition.[1] Although there has of course been moral philosophy amongst the black peoples indigenous to the sub-Saharan region for several centuries, it was only with the recent demise of colonialism and rise of literacy that intricate written works have appeared. For example, one influential West African moral-political philosopher has argued that an attractive African ethic at bottom prescribes advancing the common good (Gyekye 1997), whereas two theologians from Central and East Africa have contended that it requires fostering an imperceptible vital energy that permeates everything in the universe (Bujo 1997; Magesa 1997).

By these accounts, the communitarianism that is well-known for being salient in sub-Saharan moral thought is of merely instrumental value; communal relationship is solely a means to promoting well-being or life-force. In contrast, according to the interpretation of sub-Saharan morality that I favor, grounded particularly on Southern African ideals associated with *ubuntu*, relationality is an end in itself. I cannot show here that this latter approach is preferable to its rivals; I advance it as merely one plausible philosophical interpretation of African mores.

A Person Is a Person through Other Persons

Specifically, I spell out an Afro-communal ethic in the context of a maxim widely taken particularly (but not solely) in Southern Africa to capture indigenous or traditional sub-Saharan morality: "A person is a person through other persons" (e.g., Mokgoro 1998, 16; Tutu 1999, 34–35; Mandela 2013, 227). Although this phrase is sometimes used to express a metaphysical claim (viz.; that one could not have become who one is without living in a certain society), it is also routinely meant to express a moral one. In particular, it is often a prescription to become a *real* or *complete* person (Wiredu 1992a; Menkiti 2004), or it is exhortation to exhibit *ubuntu*, the Nguni term for humanness or human excellence prominently used in the Republic of South Africa.

Such an approach is a self-realization or "perfectionist" ethic (Hurka 1993), enjoining one to perfect—to develop as much as possible—one's human-communal nature, similar to the foundation of Aristotelianism. The ultimate answer to the question of why one should live one way rather than another is the fact that it would make one a better person. There is a distinctively human and higher part of our nature, and a lower, animal self, and both can be realized to various degrees. That is, the thought is that one can be more or less of a human or person, and one's basic aim in life should be to develop one's humanness or personhood as much as one can. As one intellectual historian, discussing how several sub-Saharan peoples understand ethics and religion, remarks

> [i]n Africa, to be a human being is a project to be fulfilled by each individual. Being a human being is an ongoing process. Birth alone does not define humanity. One has to "become" a real *Muntu*. One becomes more fully human through one's "way of life," by behaving more ethically. (Nkulu-N'sengha 2009, 144)

Indeed, it is common for those from indigenous African cultures to describe those who have been wicked as "not persons," "zero-persons," or even "animals," while nonetheless continuing to recognize them as having an inherent dignity (Bhengu 1996, 27; Letseka 2000, 186; Dandala 2009, 260–61; Nkulu-N'sengha 2009, 144).

Turning to the second part of the maxim, one becomes a complete person "through other persons" or, as per the quote above, by behaving more ethically. Ethics, here, does not mean utilitarian long-term cost-benefit analysis or Kantian respect for individual rights to autonomy. Instead, it roughly means prizing communal or harmonious relationships with other persons. As one philosopher remarks of an *ubuntu* ethic, "Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into community with others. So although the goal is personal fulfillment, selfishness is excluded" (Shutte 2001, 30). It is common for ethicists working in the African tradition to maintain, or at least to suggest, that the *only* comprehensive respect in which one can exhibit human excellence is by relating to others communally or harmoniously.

Communion as an End

To begin to appreciate how one large swathe of African moral thought has been fundamentally relational, consider these remarks about sub-Saharan values and norms from theorists who are from places as diverse as Uganda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya:

> [I]n African societies, immorality is the word or deed which undermines fellowship. (Kasenene 1998, 21)

> Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum*—the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague. (Tutu 1999, 35)

> [O]ne should always live and behave in a way that maximises harmonious existence at present as well as in the future. (Murove 2007, 181)

> A life of cohesion, or positive integration with others, becomes a goal, one that people design modalities for achieving. Let us call this goal communalism, or, as other people have called it, communitarianism. In light of this goal, the virtues . . . also become desirable. (Masolo 2010, 240)

Talk of "fellowship," "harmony," "cohesion," and "communalism" is recurrent in the above quotations, which suggest that these are to be valued for their own sake. That approach differs from the idea that these ways of relating are valuable merely as a means to some other, final value, such as the common good or vital force. It is also distinct from the most salient philosophical approaches to morally right action in the contemporary West, which appeal at bottom to utility promotion, respect for autonomy, agreement in a social contract or God's will.[2]

The natural question is how one is to understand these relational values, or what I most often call "communion." Although others often speak of "community," I avoid that term since it might suggest that what is right is whatever a society accepts as right. Instead, communion is meant to be an objective standard, to which members of a society should adhere if they currently do not.

I again quote representative African theorists about what it means to live in communion and harmony with others, after which I draw on their comments to advance a principle to guide ethical thought, including controversies regarding how to become reconciled to ways in which one has been mistreated or harmed:

> Every member is expected to consider him/herself an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards achieving the good of all. (Gbadegesin 1991, 65)

> Harmony is achieved through close and sympathetic social relations within the group—thus the notion *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu/motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe* (a person is a person through other persons) which also implies that during one's life-time, one is . . . to achieve self-fulfillment through a set of collective social ideals. (Mokgoro 1998, 17)

> [T]he purpose of our life is community-service and community-belongingness. (Iroegbu 2005, 442)

> If you asked *ubuntu* advocates and philosophers: What principles inform and organise your life? . . . the answers would express commitment to the good of the community in which their identities were formed, and a need to experience their lives as bound up in that of their community. (Nkondo 2007, 91)

What is striking about these characterizations of how to commune, harmonize or otherwise exhibit *ubuntu* is that two distinct relational goods are repeatedly mentioned. On the one hand, there is considering oneself part of the whole, being close, belonging, and experiencing oneself as bound up with others. On the other hand, there is achieving the good of all, being sympathetic, serving others, and being committed to the good of one's society.

Elsewhere I have worked to distinguish and reconstruct these two facets of communal relating with some precision (e.g., Metz 2013; 2017a). For an overview, consider Figure 8.1:
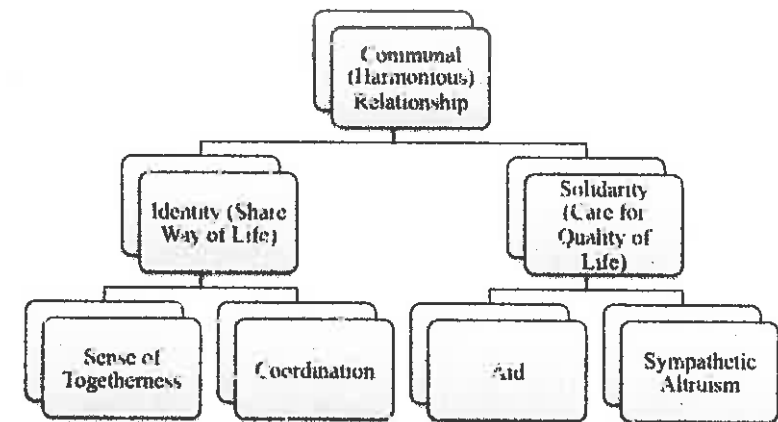

Figure 8.1

It is revealing to understand what I call the relationship of "identifying" with others or "sharing a way of life" with them (i.e., being close, belonging, etc.) to be the combination of exhibiting certain psychological attitudes of cohesion and cooperative behavior consequent to them. The attitudes include a tendency to think of oneself as a member of a group with the other and to refer to oneself as a "we" (rather than an "I"), a disposition to feel pride or shame in what the other or one's group does, and, at a higher level of intensity, an emotional appreciation of the other's nature and value. The cooperative behaviors include being transparent about the terms of interaction, allowing others to make voluntary choices, acting on the basis of trust, adopting common goals, and, at the extreme end, choosing for the reason that "this is who we are."

What I label the relationship of "exhibiting solidarity" with or "caring" for others (i.e., acting for the good of others, etc.) is similarly aptly construed as the combination of exhibiting certain psychological attitudes and engaging in helpful behavior. Here, the attitudes are ones positively oriented toward the other's good, and they include an empathetic awareness of what it is or would be like to be the other person as well as a sympathetic emotional reaction to this awareness. The actions are not merely those likely to be beneficial, that is, to improve the other's state, but also are ones done consequent to certain motives, say, for the sake of making the other better off or even a better person.

This specification of what it is to relate communally appears to capture well the moral value of many salient traditional practices south of the Sahara desert, or so has been argued elsewhere (e.g., Metz 2017a). For example, it is well known that many indigenous African peoples used consensus of some kind to resolve disputes, amongst either popularly appointed elders or all those affected who talked under the proverbial tree. These peoples are also famous for having mainly sought out reconciliation between the offender and his victims (including those indirectly affected) when a crime was committed, instead of, say, deterrence or retribution. In addition, they routinely employed collective harvesting and other forms of labor; rather than leaving it to an individual or his family to undertake a large job, all able-bodied members of a village would chip in to lend a hand. These and related ways of living are plausibly understood as grounded on the value of communion, understood as sharing a way of life and caring for one another's quality of life. They all are aptly conceived as ways of prizing relationships of, roughly, even-handed participation and mutual aid.

Personhood through Communion

Bringing things together, here are some concrete and explicit principled interpretations of the *ubuntu* maxim that "a person is a person through other

persons": one should strive to become a real person, which is matter of prizing those capable of identity and solidarity. Or, one ought to develop personhood, which means honoring people in virtue of their ability to be party to communal relationships of sharing a way of life and caring for others' quality of life.

Conversely, one lacking in human excellence, or who is "not a person," would be an individual who fails to respect those able to commune. Substantial vice or wrongdoing by this ethic consists of prizing the opposite, discordant relationships, namely those of acting on an "us versus them" attitude, subordinating others, harming them and doing so out of indifference to their good.

The above analysis is merely a sketch of one moral-philosophical interpretation of characteristically African values. There are several questions that could be posed of it, in order to render it more clear, systematic and attractive. For instance, with whom is one to commune, anyone who has the capacity to do so, those with whom one has already communed, or both with some kind of balance? Are only persons those with whom one should commune, or are certain parts of nature such as animals also apt parties to such a relationship? What does prizing communion, or honoring those in virtue of their ability to commune, mean for human rights, especially to live in ways different from the rest of one's fellows?

These questions deserve answers. However, answering them is not necessary in order to achieve the aim of this chapter, which is to consider how an ethic of becoming a real person by prizing communion with other persons bears on coming to terms with trauma and moving forward as well as how that compares with some familiar Christian approaches.

Similarities with Christianity

On the face of it, there are several similarities between the ethic of *ubuntu* as interpreted here and Christian morals. For one, the idea of honoring people in virtue of their communal nature suggests that they have a dignity, which is similar to the notion of human beings being sacred for having been created in the image of God.

For another, love is central to both traditions. Although African thinkers most often use the language of "communion," "harmony" and the like, what they are describing amounts to a kind of love (see Metz 2018). Love, in a broad sense and as a kind of behavior, is well captured by the idea of enjoying a sense of togetherness with another, participating cooperatively in projects with her, doing what one can to make her life go well, and doing so for her sake and out of sympathy. Prizing people in virtue of their capacity to love and be loved is not far off from the requirement to love one's neighbor as oneself.

For a third similarity, both *ubuntu* and Christianity eschew retributive approaches to wrongdoing, rejecting the principle of an eye for an eye. Instead of giving people the harm they might deserve for having done wrong in the past, both traditions require responding in ways that are expected to do some good in the future.[3]

In addition to these ethical likenesses, there are also metaphysical ones, about the existence of God and an afterlife. An armchair anthropology would suggest that these commonalities explain why Christianity spread so widely throughout the sub-Saharan region. Indeed, several of the most salient interpreters of traditional African thought have been Christian theologians, notably John S. Mbiti (1969), Peter J. Paris (1995), Bénézet Bujo (1997), and Desmond Tutu (1999).

Despite these foundational similarities, there are also important differences between *ubuntu* and Christian philosophical ethics, ones that have divergent implications for the issue of how to respond to trauma. The rest of this chapter brings out some of these differences in the course of considering how to understand healing in the light of *ubuntu*.

RECONCILING TO AND RECONCILING WITH

When most readers initially think of what it means to come to terms with psychological trauma caused by serious social conflict and to move forward, they will have welfarist considerations in mind. That is, they will suppose that it means that the victim is no longer grief stricken, depressed, miserable, anxious, obsessive, and disordered from post-traumatic stress or otherwise experiencing psychological harm. While these interests are surely part of any plausible account of what it means to become reconciled to a painful history, the *ubuntu* ethic suggests that there is more to it.

From the standpoint of an ethic requiring one to develop one's personhood by prizing communion with others, considerations of virtue are particularly salient. One's ultimate aim, from this perspective, is to become a real person or to live a genuinely human way of life. This aim is a matter of self-realization and not so much self-interest, a matter of becoming a better person in contrast to a person who is better off.

Such a moral-philosophical orientation suggests two primary aims inherent to grappling with psychological trauma. First, a person—and those in a position to help—ought to strive to repair damage done to her capacity to commune, her ability to enter into, sustain and enrich relationships of identity and solidarity. One substantial and typical effect of having been a victim of human rights violations is an inclination to withdraw from others and to isolate oneself. In particular, one tends not to trust others, and romantic love, the most intense form of communion, can become difficult. Healing

the memories, from a characteristically African perspective, must include becoming mentally healthy or virtuous understood as able to relate communally. Second, *ubuntu* prescribes actualizing this capacity to commune. It is not enough merely to have the ability to relate; one must also do some relating, in order to heal in a way that means living in a truly human way.

How is one to go about repairing one's ability to commune and exercising it? Some of that is for the psychologist and not the philosopher to answer. However, the philosopher may sensibly point out that part of exercising one's capacity to commune could be, and ideally would be, constituted by reconciling with those who had wrongfully injured one.

The *ubuntu* ethic articulated here naturally grounds an account of what it means to reconcile with others in terms of, roughly, behavioral communion (Metz 2011; 2015; 2017b). Reconciliation between enemies, as a stepping-stone or a bridge toward an ideal, largely involves actions such as cooperatively participating with others in ways that will in time mutually aid one another, and does not essentially include communal attitudes such as enjoying a sense of togetherness or sympathizing, desirable as these latter conditions might be. Reconciliation "between" and "with" also includes a disavowal of the substantial discord and enmity that took place, at least on the part of third parties such as an impartial commission, if not also those who were responsible for it.

When it comes to responsible parties, the three factors of cooperation, aid and disavowal mean that reconciliation for them involves: disclosing what they have done, listening to how victims have been affected by their actions, apologizing for them, committing to not doing them again, and undertaking to compensate for damage done. When it comes to victims, instead of retreating, they would speak up about how they have been hurt, be open to offenders' sincere acknowledgments of what they have done wrong, and, perhaps only after these things, interact with them on even-handed terms that are expected to be productive in realms such as politics and economics. An *ubuntu*-based form of reconciliation between enemies is not so thick as to require good feelings between them, nor so thin as to demand only peaceful coexistence (here, I agree with Villa-Vicencio 2000, 201, 208). It is instead "in between," for expecting parties to clear the air about what happened, to accept responsibility for wrongdoing, and then to interact in ways that are communal, hoping that good feelings might develop down the road.

Reconciling with offenders, as above, is one way for victims to become reconciled to their trauma. Above I noted that a key facet of becoming reconciled to trauma is relating communally, and the present point is that reconciling with those who have done wrong is precisely that.

However, even if reconciling with those who have wronged you is one way to relate communally, it is not the only way. Why not instead relate communally with those who have not mistreated you? Part of the answer is

that the demand for cohesion in the African ethical tradition prescribes heal-ing breaches that have occurred in the past and not letting them gape open, if that is feasible. For an analogy consider that, when it comes to friendships, it would be better to repair a broken friendship than to leave it broken and start a new one, supposing for the sake of argument that the future degree of friendliness would be comparable in the two cases.

Another part of the answer is that reconciling with offenders appears to be a promising means by which victims can become reconciled to their trau-matic past in two additional ways, namely, by repairing their ability to relate communally and by experiencing less harm. Most obviously, reconciliatory compensation could include the provision of therapy that would help repair victims ability to commune and overcome their grief (on the importance of reparation for healing, even from third-parties, see Orr 2000; and Walaza 2000). In addition, if offenders really did take responsibility for their mis-deeds and made it clear they would not do them again, then victims would be more able to trust, probably not just them but people more generally (Frayling 2009, 31; Govier 2009, 46, 48–49). Furthermore, speaking out about how one has been hurt and receiving acknowledgment that it indeed happened and was not justified can sometimes help victims feel vindicated and enjoy a greater sense of self-worth (Minow 1998, 70–72; Govier 2009, 42) as well as let go of anger and vengefulness (Villa-Vicencio 2000, 202–3; Walaza 2000, 251–53), emotions that would inhibit their ability to form bonds if suffused in their day-to-day lives. Finally, it appears that some of those victims who have told their stories to a sympathetic public forum have displayed fewer post-traumatic stress symptoms and less grief (Minow 1998, 61–70; Staub et al. 2005) and have had the opportunity to begin to confront what has hap-pened to them, better than letting it remain unprocessed and potentially mis-remembered and allowing it to distort their personality in unconscious ways (e.g., Henry 2000, 169–70, 173; Hicks 2001).

In all these respects, reconciliation between offenders and victims can be expected to enable the latter to become reconciled to how they have been mistreated. It is worth noting that reconciliation between offenders and vic-tims can also be expected to enable the former to become reconciled to how they have mistreated others. According to the *ubuntu* ethic, a primary aim of healing consequent to serious social conflict should be the development of personhood. This understanding of what needs to be healed reveals that offenders, too, are not unscathed, beyond whatever guilt they might feel.[4] They have failed to realize their personhood, by virtue of substantial discord they have exhibited toward innocent parties, something that Desmond Tutu has noted upon remarking that apartheid damaged not merely black people, but also the white people who supported it (1999, 35). In addition, after the conflict, they might remain unable to acknowledge to themselves what they

have done, that it was wrong, how wrong it was and that they are culpable for having done it, all of which are failures of moral-communal virtue. Having the "safe" opportunity to admit what one has done, to apologize for it, to offer to make amends, and to commit to not doing it again all count as therapeutic in themselves (cf. Hicks 2001, 143–48), from the perspective of *ubuntu*.

The African ethical tradition stands out for making the primary response to large-scale and intense social conflict reconciliation between those who were party to it. It is not that reconciliation is obviously incompatible with Chris-tian principles, but that they have not saliently promoted reconciliation, as more or less construed above, as partially constitutive of what it means to heal or of how to become reconciled to trauma. Instead, forgiveness, discussed below, is what has featured prominently in the Christian tradition.

Another respect in which the *ubuntu* ethic is unique, at least relative to standard Christian ethics, is the emphasis it places on victims' and offenders' excellence in its understanding of what needs to be healed. The maxim that a person is a person through other persons instructs one to foster one's person-hood above all, entailing that damage to one's personhood—to one's ability to exhibit human excellence, for example—is an important consideration when thinking about the unwelcome effects of social conflict. This focus on the ways in which human nature has been retarded rather than developed contrasts with a welfarist approach that is more common in general and in the Christian tradition in particular. Thinking about treating others the way we would like or want to be treated naturally directs one to focus on likes and wants (i.e., [subjective] well-being and woe). Similarly, the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself is normally conceived in terms of care for others, where the object of care is a person's well-being.[5] Reflection on the relational values characteristic of the African tradition reveals that it is not merely people's well-being that social conflict reduces, but also their human-ness, that of both victims and those who have mistreated them.

Punishment

When thinking about how to respond to traumatic social conflict in the light of Christian ethical principles, punishment of the guilty does not appear to be relevant. This is not merely because the Christian Bible explicitly prohib-its retributive or vengeful sentiments for human beings and reserves them for God (see Matt. 5:38–39; Rom. 12:19). There are several other facets of Christianity that appear to entail, as Leo Tolstoy (1894) believes, that punishment, violence, and coercion of any sort is unjustified in response to wrongdoing.

For a start, there are several additional remarks from the Bible suggesting not merely that evil imposed for the sake of retribution or revenge is wrong,

but that evil imposed for any reason is so. For two examples: "I tell you, do not resist an evil person" (Matt. 5:40), and "[d]o not repay anyone evil for evil." On the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink," "[d]o not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17, 20–21).

Furthermore, this approach to wrongdoing appears to follow from the two most prominent candidates for foundational Biblical ethical principles. First, consider the golden rule, roughly that you should treat others the way you would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31). Suppose someone has committed gross human rights violations, and you are in the position of a judge. Would you *want* to be punished if you were in the offender's shoes? Presumably not, making it wrong, by the golden rule, for you to inflict any penalty, as the philosopher Immanuel Kant pointed out long ago ([1785]2002, 48). Instead, following the golden rule, you as a judge should confer a benefit on the offender, since that is how you would want to be treated if you were him.

Second, think about the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself (Mark 12:31; Matt. 22:39; John 13:34–35). Would it be loving of yourself to submit to punishment? Presumably not, making it wrong to submit someone else to it. In the context of being instructed not to resist an evil person, one passage continues by appealing to love, saying, "[l]ove your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). Similarly, one finds, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27).

By a plain reading these quotations and the surrounding texts do *not* suggest, let alone explicitly say, that you should love your enemies by subjecting them to punishment, which would be good for them in the long run. That is a tempting move for a contemporary Christian to make, but it is difficult to square with the sentiment that "if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also" (Matt. 5:40; Luke 6:28). A natural reading of the Christian Bible is that it is not a human being's job to impose an evil on anyone who has done wrong in the course of politically induced social conflicts, neither for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the victim.

Of course there are ways of interpreting the Christian tradition that would make sense of why punishment can be justified. The current point is that the *ubuntu* ethic can more readily justify it as part of how to respond to large-scale social conflict.

As noted above, an *ubuntu* ethic can also be viewed as valuing love, but it does so in a way different from Christianity as construed above. Pacifism is not a salient feature of indigenous African thought, whereas the idea of using force to protect innocent parties is. "In African ethical thinking, violence in self-defence is justifiable" (Kasenene 1998, 41). By the present interpretation of *ubuntu*, one is to treat people as having a dignity in virtue of their capacity to relate communally, roughly, to love and be loved. If someone

misuses that capacity, and the only way to get him to stop or to otherwise protect innocent parties from harm is to use force against him, it is permissible; for using force in such a situation shows no disrespect of the guilty party's capacity to commune, while showing respect for the victim who has such a capacity but has not misused it (Metz 2010). In brief, discord against, or unloving treatment of, someone is justified when necessary and sufficient to prevent, end, or mend a comparable behavior on her part.

It follows from this ethical orientation that reconciliation between parties could well include punishment as part of the process. For one, it could be that victims are not willing to begin to reconcile with offenders until the latter have been punished in some way. For another, it might be that punishment is necessary in order to enable offenders to commit to not reoffending by, for example, getting them to understand what they did wrong and to have a change of heart. For a third, and more interestingly, it could be that reconciliation itself is well understood as partly consisting of some kind of hard treatment of offenders. Reconciliation, recall, involves compensation for victims, and a meaningful sort of compensation, one that expresses remorse, would involve some labor or other kind of sacrifice on the part of wrongdoer. Having the state, and not wrongdoers, compensate victims is possible, but would be a second best when it comes to disavowing injustice. Ideally, burdens should be placed on offenders, but burdens that would be productive in the sense of likely to benefit victims.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the last major concept discussed in this chapter concerning how to overcome traumatic social conflict. It remains an open question at this point of whether forgiveness is an essential feature of an *ubuntu*-oriented approach, in the way it is normally associated with Christianity.

Much of the literature suggests that reconciliation between offenders and victims requires forgiveness, so that, if an *ubuntu* ethic prescribes reconciliation as was argued above, then forgiveness must come in its wake. This view is naturally held by many Christian thinkers who have addressed reconciliation (e.g., Volf 2001; de Gruchy 2002, 170, 178–79; de Klerk 2010). In addition, there are more than a few outside the Christian tradition who likewise believe that reconciliation requires forgiveness (e.g., Yandell 1998; Staub and Pearlman 2001, 207; Philpott [2011] 2009, 589–90; Emerick 2017). Indeed, some whose views are grounded on an understanding of *ubuntu* hold this belief (Tutu 1999, 2009; Krog 2008).

However, I argue here that neither reconciliation "with" nor reconciliation "to," on the part of victims, requires forgiveness. Although forgiveness would often be desirable for fostering each of these forms of reconciliation, it is not essential. To buttress this claim, I cannot address all the reasoning proffered

by the above theorists and others. Instead, I mainly appeal to the account of reconciliation that I have argued is the companion to *ubuntu* as interpreted here, and show that it does not require forgiveness, or at least one salient conception of that.

By "forgiveness" I mean, at the core, letting go of negative emotions about someone insofar as she is perceived to have done you (or your associates) wrong, particularly those in which you wish her ill-will. Resentment is often mentioned, here, but there could be additional negative emotions that are relevant, such as contempt (McNaughton and Garrard 2017). When forgiving, one abandons emotions such as resentment and contempt neither because one has forgotten the wrong done, nor because one views the wrongdoer as lacking culpability for the wrong. Instead, one retains the critical belief that the other has done a culpable wrong, while giving up the negative feelings that tend to accompany such.

There are intricate debates in the philosophical literature about whether this account is the whole story about forgiveness, or even whether it is an essential part, but they are set aside here. This section works with an intuitive sense of forgiveness that many in particularly the Christian tradition would find familiar, for fitting well with abjuring punishment of the guilty.

Recall the conception of reconciliation "with" (or "between") in terms of partial communion that has been used in this chapter. Full communion is enjoying a sense of togetherness, participating cooperatively, engaging in mutual aid, and doing so consequent to sympathy and for the other's sake. Reconciliation with another involves roughly the cooperation and the aid, and not necessarily the positive attitudes. It consists of the behavioral facets of communion, plus disavowal of respects in which communion had been seriously undermined in the past.

So defined, it is clear that reconciling with an offender does not require forgiveness. Fully communing with her probably would, but merely interacting in ways that are cooperative and beneficent, while disavowing past injustice, does not. To be sure, sometimes a victim would not be inclined to reconcile with a wrongdoer without having first forgiven him. However, that is not necessary, as the following case suggests (taken from Metz 2015, 126–68). I once had a spat with a colleague at work, and, after clearing the air with him, and without much of an apology on his part, decided to continue to interact with him on a largely professional basis for the sake of our department. I attended meetings with him, gave him advice, pitched in to lend a hand on occasion, and all the other collegial things that academics are expected to do. However, for a long while I retained a lingering resentment of the way he had treated me, and still wished that he would feel some pain in the process of coming to understand himself better. Although I did not express these sentiments, I had not forgiven him—and yet I had reconciled with him, or so I submit.

In addition to the fact that reconciliation intuitively does not always have to follow from forgiveness, there is the point that sometimes forgiveness in fact follows from reconciliation, which is more evidence that the two are distinct, that reconciliation can exist without forgiveness also being present.[6] Engaging in cooperative projects with an offender and letting him do things that are expected to make one better off can help to reduce a tendency to demonize him. Getting to know him better in the context of joint activities can prompt one to see him as a human being with weaknesses, and perhaps then be inclined to let go of negative emotions in respect of his culpable wrongdoing.

So far I have argued that the notion of reconciliation "with" that is companion of the *ubuntu* ethic advanced in this chapter does not require forgiveness. Sometimes forgiveness might lead to reconciliation, and sometimes reconciliation might bring about forgiveness, but these causal relationships do not always obtain.[7] One can find reconciliation without forgiveness, and also forgiveness without reconciliation (say, if the guilty party has died).

What about the other two major facts of becoming reconciled "to" a traumatic past? Reconciling with others is one way to live humanly and so to count as "healing," by the *ubuntu* ethic. In addition, though, there is repairing people's ability to relate communally and experiencing less harm. With respect to the latter, there are studies suggesting that those who forgive experience less grief, stress and other impairments of subjective well-being (for just two examples, see Enright, Freedman, and Rique 1998; and Fitzgibbons 1998), and one scholar notes that "bitterness is a cancer that will destroy you," something suggested by "almost all the tragedies from the Greeks to Shakespeare" (Ellis 2001, 396). Finally, it is reasonable to expect that forgiveness might cultivate one's capacity to commune by, say, deepening one's empathy with others and improving one's grasp of human nature, at least insofar as coming to forgive, often involves "reframing" the offender, putting him into a larger social and historical context (see North 1998, esp. 24–28).

In this section I have argued that forgiveness can sometimes, perhaps often, foster healing as construed in the light of an *ubuntu* ethic. However, forgiveness does not appear to be constitutive of such healing, or even necessary in order to bring it about. This conclusion is yet another respect in which African values differ from Christian ones, since a characteristically Christian approach to healing painful memories would deem forgiveness to be essential.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON *UBUNTU*'S CONTRIBUTION

This chapter concludes with an overview of some of the salient differences between the Southern African ethic of *ubuntu* and a typical Christian

approach to repairing the psychological damage caused by large-scale social conflicts. Although love is at the heart of both ethics, their conceptions of what valuing love means for how to heal differ.

The African ethical tradition is firmly perfectionist, whereas the Christian one is more welfarist. Recall that this means that for *ubuntu*, the most important aim is to develop human excellence, roughly the virtues of being able to love and in fact loving. One is to realize excellence in oneself, but one way to do so is to foster it in others, enabling them to be loving as well. Within Christianity, one is invariably to act in loving ways, which normally means to engage in caring behavior that improves others' well-being. Applied to the matter of what it means to become reconciled to a traumatic past, the African ethic entails that one should first and foremost attend to people's damaged character, whereas the Christian one suggests one should mainly seek to relieve their pain.

In one sense, Christianity is demanding in respect of victims, in that it is naturally read as requiring forgiveness on the part of victims and forbidding the punishment of offenders. In contrast, the *ubuntu* ethic as articulated here permits punishment insofar as it would advance reconciliation between parties and does not require forgiveness, although it can acknowledge that the latter would often be good for offenders and also victims.

In another sense, however, it is the African approach that is demanding in respect of victims. It conceives of healing in terms of living humanly, which means prizing communal relationships, which, in turn, prescribes seeking reconciliation with wrongdoers. It appears, therefore, that victims have an obligation of some weight to engage in cooperative projects with their offenders that are expected to be of mutual benefit.[8] Such relationality is not as salient in Christianity. Here, one is expected to forgive one's wrongdoer, but not necessarily to continue to interact with him.

This chapter has not argued systematically that the African approach is to be preferred to the Christian one. It has mainly sought to articulate with some philosophical rigor a novel view of what an *ubuntu* ethic entails for how to understand psychological healing needed in the face of politically induced social conflicts, and to suggest that its prescriptions are prima facie plausible. The next stage of reflection would be to consider which tradition has the better interpretation of how to value love in the context of such healing, or whether they should perhaps be combined in some way (cf. Battle 1997; Tutu 1999).

NOTES

1. The next few paragraphs borrow from other publications, especially Metz (2016). What is meant to be new here is not the African moral theory, but its comparison with Christian ethics and its application to the question of how to foster healing.

2. For contrasts with the ethic of care, see Metz (2013).

3. A fourth similarity that one might suggest is the prominence of the golden rule in both traditions. Although I do not believe this principle captures as much about African morality as the interpretation of *ubuntu* given above, for a different view see Wiredu (1992b) and Azenabor (2008).

4. Cf. Hicks (2001) and Volf (2001, 46), who also make the case for a need to heal wrongdoers, although in part because of their feelings of shame and guilt.

5. See, for instance, the classic discussion of *agape* in Outka (1972).

6. Cf. Govier (2009, 48–49). She points out that sometimes cooperation can foster trust and incline an offender to acknowledge his wrongdoing, whereas my point is that sometimes cooperation can foster trust and incline a victim to forgive wrongdoing.

7. And, a point for the philosophers, even if they did, it would not follow that reconciliation is constituted by forgiveness.

8. Whether and, if so, when it is permissible to force someone to carry out this duty are separate matters. Just because one morally ought to or even must perform an action does not mean that others morally may coerce one to do so.

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