

The Post-Troubles Troubles: The Politics of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

On the morning of July 7, 1997, I walked around the Drumcree community in Northern Ireland with my friend and colleague Fr. Brian Lennon. The previous day, the RUC and British troops had put through the annual Orange March down the Garvaghy Road for the third, and what may be the last, time. The residual hurt and bitterness of the local residents was overwhelming. Over the past twenty-four hours, not a few mothers had with a mixture of honor and regret publicly pledged their sons to the Provisional IRA. Fathers spoke of the shame and humiliation that they suffered at the hands of Protestants flaunting their ascendancy in order to remind Catholics of their second-class status. A mood of despair darkened any hope that a new spirit of cooperation and respect had broken down the ancient antagonisms of Ireland.

My thoughts wandered beyond the testaments of resentment and hate that we heard at every stop. I knew that the war had engulfed Northern Ireland for the past twenty-five years was probably over but that the hostility and distrust between Protestants and Catholics was alive and well. All had come to recognize that neither side had won or could win in the foreseeable future. Still, deep inside, everyone felt highly vulnerable to the prospect that his/her side might still lose. Despite the cease-fires, a life and death struggle continued although few understood the parameters of this new fight. Certainly, no one believed that it could be contained within civil discourse or trusted that violence would not still play a tragic part.

I am quite sure that I was the only Presbyterian minister in Drumcree that day, and the conversation that I carried on both within myself and with my Jesuit friend was equally singular. I kept asking what could reconciliation actually mean in the wake of what I had just experienced. Obviously, the antagonisms that surfaced around the Garvaghy Road parade were not momentary aberrations. They were instead the visible tips of giant icebergs of contentious local issues spread across the communities of Northern Ireland. Each of these submerged mountains of ice held the potential to undermine whatever the peace process in Northern Ireland might achieve. Furthermore, the community dynamics surrounding the crisis only encouraged “cul-de-sac politics” in which each side makes demands that negate the core ambitions of their opponents.¹ At bottom, neither side believed that the other was really for peace, and certainly not for a peace that they would count as peaceful. As one paramilitary leader has said about peace process more generally, “I fear peace because at the end of the day I know that I’ll be back in this prison visitin’ me children’s children.”²

Reconciliation seemed to suggest a willingness to come together for work, play, enrichment, and recreation that was at best a flight of fantasy amidst the broken grass and debris from last night’s rioting. Perhaps this distant hope requires more than the Protestants and Catholics of Portadown can give – too much forgetting, too much forgiving, too much tolerating, too much compromising. Maybe it would be better to seek some kind of coexistence instead, a mental separation outlawing common life. However, such an existence requires lines of division that define entities who stand disjoined, if not completely independent, from one another, and these lines of partition do not exist and probably cannot be drawn in such tightly entangled communities like those throughout Northern Ireland. Still, if reconciliation is too high a goal and coexistence is not an option, what is left but more of the same – more violence, more hate, more pain and death? To what can Northern Ireland and other divided societies turn to chart a peaceful future that is a departure from a warring past? Does reconciliation become a more realistic goal if the alternatives are either too costly or less practical?

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¹ Loyalist political leader Davie Ervine coined this phrase.

² John Paul Lederach reports this conversation in “Justpeace”(p27).

Much has happened since that morning in Drumcree. However, the issue of reconciliation remains acute. The Good Friday Agreement was the result of a deal that offered Protestants political stability and Catholics greater equality. However, it left unresolved many of the conflicting interests and aspirations over which there remains serious disagreement. Moreover, beneath the particulars of any dispute resides a fundamental difference that plagues all efforts to reach compromise. On the one hand, unionists see the Agreement as the normalization of political life. Meanwhile, nationalists view it as the beginning of a process that will transform social and political life. While it is certainly possible that both will occur, it seems highly unlikely that it will do so in a way that will satisfy both sides simultaneously.³ More likely, each side will see the other's actions as a violation of the essential spirit, if not the explicit wording, of the Agreement.⁴

At a deeper psychological level, neither side trusts the Agreement because it places them in political relationships with people whom, for historical reasons, they deeply distrust. In this context, pro-Agreement talk about reconciliation tends to lose political and social specificity because the rank and file of both sides have difficulty envisioning the other as a trustworthy political partner. As a result, politicians tend to appeal to the goal of reconciliation without stipulating the sacrifices that it entails. They commit publicly to a high-minded process without indicating clearly the painful steps involved. However, at the grassroots, the cost and risks associated with reaching concrete accommodation on issues of social and economic well-being and political and cultural identity remain crystal clear while the benefits and advantages appear uncertain, vague, and ethereal.

Clearly, if peace comes to Northern Ireland, it will be more than a settlement struck by political leaders. Peace must take form in a multiplicity of particular working agreements, arrangements, understandings, and associations that operate between and within local communities. It will mean building links between people who deeply doubt each other's trustworthiness. The arduous task of creating these kinds of partnerships in local settings is the tough work of reconciliation.

Still, what would reconciliation look like if it actually sought to address these kinds of practical goals? Given that only one-third of the negotiated settlements of civil wars from 1945 to 1993 have resulted in

³ Decommissioning is a case in point. Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd argue that unionists regard decommissioning as a public affirmation by the IRA to pursue normalized politics within Northern Ireland and an acknowledgement of the province's legitimacy as a political entity. (Ruane & Todd, 1999, p26-27) If the IRA were to decommission, it serve as both an indication that republicans had renounced their historical commitment to physical force and an assurance that they will not to use the threat of future violence to shape the political agenda. Decommissioning is, for unionists, a symbol of the stabilization of Northern Ireland.

However, decommissioning has a completely different meaning for nationalists. Instead, they view it as a consequence of changes in Northern Ireland that are still to come. The nationalist struggle has not been abandoned, but has entered a new and more effective phase. It is the continuation of past commitments, not their renunciation. It will mark the achievement of future goals, not the acquiescence to the status quo. Seen in this light, decommissioning is less about guns and more a contest over whether the forces of stabilization or transformation will dominate. If it is somehow resolved, other issues – police reform, Orange marches, etc. – wait in the wings.

⁴ Stephen Stedman, Senior Research Scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation (Stanford University), has conducted an extensive study of the implementation of sixteen peace agreements. In presentations to Community Dialogue and other Northern Ireland groups, he has noted that some people view a peace agreement as a contract that must be strictly implemented. Others view it as a process that reflects the changing relationship between the parties as the implementation process occurs. Obviously, people take different positions at different time, arguing for compliance when they agree with the stipulations in the agreement and for process when disagreeing. Needless to say, their opponents mirror the same stances only in reverse. All this is occurring while people at the grassroots ask where's the peace. What is happening in their communities could not be the peace that we promised by the agreement.

lasting, stable peace, what does it take for people who have tried to kill each other to live and work together? (Licklider 1995) How can a painful past, which gives meaning to identities that we embrace, be both remembered and yet put aside? These questions indicate a shift away from reconciliation's more familiar interpersonal orientation and toward larger social and political processes.⁵ The implications of this transition are largely unexplored.⁶ In the following, I offer the beginning outlines of a concept of reconciliation that attempts to speak to communities struggling to create a common future devoid of violent rifts. I end with six hypotheses that I abstract from this exploration. My hope is that these will give reconciliation a practical form that opens up new areas for further investigation.

The Political Meaning of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a concept with deep religious roots primarily in the Christian tradition. The term *reconciliation* comes from the Latin *conciliatus* – meaning to come together, to assemble. Originally, it referred first to the relationship between God and humankind, which then produced a subsequent change in the way people relate to one another. Medieval and early modern theology explored this second human dimension under the term *concordantia*. The focus of attention was the peaceful coexistence of different world religions with the intent of harmonizing them within the will of God. However, no real attempts were made to apply its insights to social/political realities. (Robinson-Hammerstein, 1994, p10)⁷

Only in the last century have theologians, troubled by the slaughter of the Holocaust, the horrendous violence of two world wars, and the human suffering engendered by ethnic cleansing and genocide, sought to explore the profound social and political ramifications that the notion of reconciliation contains. Some have suggested that reconciliation might best be understood as a process of “walking together” into a common future (Wink, 1998, p14). Yet, as theologians have turned their attention to the challenges of reconciling divided communities, they have received very little help from the social sciences. Only recently has this trend begun to change (Abu-Nimer, 2001).

Still, John Paul Lederach, one of the few who bridges the world of theology and social science, contends that few, if any, working models of reconciliation have emerged from the social sciences, political science, or the field of international relations.⁸ One obvious problem is the abstract and idealistic formulations often used to define reconciliation theologically.⁹ These concepts don't easily translate into

⁵ Lederach maintains that the interpersonal dynamics usually associated with reconciliation do not map well onto large-scale social processes (Lederach, 2000).

⁶ Susan Dwyer maintains that political and social reconciliation can occur even in situation where individual reconciliation is not possible. (Dwyer, 1999)

⁷ In medieval theology, the term reconciliation was reserved for the mending breaches between the church and heretics. Especially during the Spanish Inquisition, when the previous conviviality enjoyed by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities was replaced by forced conversions to Christianity, reconciliation came to mean compulsory assimilation to Christian political and religious hegemony. Similarly, in the Reformation, Protestant reformers were urged to “reconcile” themselves with the true Catholic Church. In both instances, the real concern was a social, religious, and political cohesion that is out of character with today's modern democratic ethos. (Robinson-Hammerstein, 1994, pp10-11)

⁸ In addition, Hizkias Assefa, Professor of Conflict Studies at Eastern Mennonite University, concludes that, when it comes to reconciliation, “there is not even much understanding of what it means, especially among social scientists.” (Assefa, 1999, p40) Worthington and Drinkard also write that the “scientific literature on reconciliation is weak.” (Everett Worthington & Dewitt Drinkard, 2000, p93-101)

⁹ One exception that I have found only very recently is the definition developed by Louis Kriesberg: “Reconciliation ... refers to accommodative ways members of adversary entities have come to regard each other after having engaged in intense, and often destructive struggle. They have become able to put aside feelings of hate, fear, and loathing, to put aside views of the other as dangerous and subhuman, and to put aside the desire for revenge and retribution. To put aside does not mean not to have such feelings,

testable political and social hypotheses.¹⁰ Of the few studies that do exist, almost all concentrate on truth commissions and/or human rights regimes and do not explore deeply the dynamics of reconciliation itself.¹¹ As a result, politicians and humanitarians have been forced to employ biblical, religious, or philosophical concepts that may be ill-suited for political and social purposes.

For example, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz has argued that the widespread use of reconciliation in public discourse is due, in part, to its lack of political and social specificity.¹² Politicians can appeal to it without having to stipulate what it entails or what is needed to promote it. He writes; “Reconciliation encompasses all things but it tends to be spoken of in a way that suggests processes of getting somewhere without indicating what steps or conditions or procedures are involved and how they can be brought about.” (Müller-Fahrenholz, 1997, p3) As a result, the political meaning of reconciliation fluctuates according to the point of view taken.

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One of the few social scientists who have tried to specify what reconciliation entails is Priscilla Hayner (Hayner, 1999). A noted authority on truth commissions, she notes that there are certain widely-shared basic assumptions about the reconciliation process. These include:

- (1) “that ending impunity requires justice in the courts,”
- (2) “that establishing the truth about past abuses helps a society put the past behind it,” and
- (3) “that reconciliation – either individual or societal – is dependent on a full knowledge of atrocities committed on both sides.” (p363)

These observations rest on the implicit presupposition that reconciliation is inseparably bound to the pursuit of justice, truth, and democratic interactions.¹³ However, Hayner also adds an element of caution. She writes:

Despite the benefit of watching past transitions to peace in Latin America and elsewhere, the relationship among justice, truth, and reconciliation, and the means by which these ends might be reached, is still unclear. ... Some of these assumptions have not been, and perhaps cannot be, fully tested as the factors influencing each transition are different and because the psychology of healing and reconciliation is imprecise. (p363)

perceptions, and goals, but not to make them paramount nor to act on them against the former adversary.” (Kriesberg, 1999)

Another is Susan Dwyer’s definition of reconciliation as narrative incorporation. (Dwyer, 1999)

¹⁰ Lederach writes: “Thus, Sister Peace becomes the national reconciliation process. Truth commissions are formed. Brother Mercy takes the form of national amnesty programs. Brother Justice is incarnated in the war tribunals. Each project brings an important aspect of reconciliation. Yet not one of these four colleagues is well understood in practical terms.” (Lederach, 1999, p64)

¹¹ See the proceedings of a valuable set of conferences held in South Africa prior to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Boraine, Levy, & Scheffer, 1994, and Boraine et al., 1995).

¹² Susan Dwyer argues that governments often hide inactivity behind the language of therapeutic healing. (Dwyer, 1999)

¹³ In a similar vein, Daan Borkhorst, drawing upon his vast experience with Amnesty International, argues that, while there are no standard models for achieving reconciliation, there are nevertheless certain minimum requirements (Bronkhorst 1995). They are:

- (1) the establishment of truth,
- (2) the strengthening of the rule of law,
- (3) the institution of democratic and verifiable procedures, and
- (4) the issuing of compensation and reparation.

Hayner's warning is well taken. Increasingly, critics have begun to question whether justice, truth, and democratic interactions actually form an unproblematic unity and whether they automatically lead to reconciliation. For example, Michael Ignatieff doubts whether attaining legal or retributive justice always promotes reconciliation (Ignatieff, 1997, pp164-190). He argues that the parties frequently experience the pursuit of justice differently. What one side sees as purgative the other views as scapegoating. For Ignatieff, whether justice heals or exacerbates wounds remains an open question. Similarly, Martha Minow maintains that criminal trials, war tribunals, and the rule of law do not seek to reconstruct relationships and heal wounds in any direct sense (Minow, 1998). In fact, reconciliation is not really a legal goal except from perhaps an extremely abstract point of view. She concludes: "All of the practical dimensions of prosecution could work against the goal of healing, reconciliation, and full truth-telling." (p89)

Neither does the contention that truth is a constitutive part of reconciliation fare better. Ignatieff argues that truth is related to identity and that the notion of a common shared truth absent a shared common identity is inconceivable. War, violence, and distrust create communities of fear, and this fear of the other becomes an integral part of their sense of separateness. The "truth" that matters most is not factual or narrative, but moral and interpretive. Rather than a chronology of events, hostile groups construct stories of suffering and victimization. Efforts to transcend divisions by sharing the pain that both sides have endured help considerably, but acknowledging suffering is not the same as admitting responsibility and assigning blame. When truth approaches the question of accountability, a contest emerges over whose story will triumph. In these instances, truth and reconciliation often part ways.

Other critics, especially a Belfast-based think tank called Democratic Dialogue, argue that democratic institutions need a pluralist context to function in a reconciling manner (Hennessey & Wilson, 1997). They conclude that democracy conceived in majoritarian terms merely provides a new vehicle for the pursuit of old grievances. A democracy that functions only in this expressive mode represents not an espousal of the equality and dialogue needed for reconciliation, but instead its refusal. Democracy must first seek to create a relationship that furthers understanding. If it is reduced to producing mandates, it will divide more than unite. A democracy that does not strive to foster partnership will impede, not advance, reconciliation.

The sum of these critiques is that reconciliation remains as much a mystery as it did before. For reconciliation to occur, minimum standards must be met. Yet, to meet these standards, the sides must have been reconciled. In fact, if anything, it seems that reconciliation makes justice, truth, and democratic interaction possible more than the other way around. In the end, we are left pretty much where we started with little headway having been made toward understanding the dynamic of reconciliation.

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Primatologist Frans de Waal uses an anecdote to illustrate what peace means when it is not embellished with the rhetoric of justice, non-violence, and security (de Waal 1989, p 231). The story holds for reconciliation unadorned with justice, truth, and democratic interactions as well. Three ten-year-old Dutch boys found a wallet containing five thousand-guilder notes, went on a spending spree, and were eventually picked up by the police. It was later discovered that the boys had only about two thousand guilder left and, when added to the merchandise they had bought, only three thousand guilder could be accounted for. What had become of the rest of the money? Well, it seems that the boys had thrown two of the thousand guilder notes into a canal to solve the problem of dividing the five notes equally among themselves.

This story witnesses to the paramount importance we assign to maintaining relationships that we believe to be valuable and worthwhile. In fact, de Waal thinks that peace is more about the concrete ways we create and preserve these relationships than about establishing states of cooperative or harmonious behavior *per se*. Wrapping peace in the trapping of justice, non-violence, and security obscures this fundamental insight. The same can be said for reconciliation. Both concern the creation and maintenance of relationships of proven value and worth. Without these, there was nothing upon which peace or reconciliation – except in the most minimal sense of an imposed, coerced order – might rest.

Serious conflicts are bound to occur whenever groups come into sustained contact with one another. A willingness to repair these disruptions is an indication of the high regard in which we hold the relationship. Furthermore, this willingness to repair relationship is what reconciliation is fundamentally about. Reconciliation begins when divided groups feel that, despite their differences, they nevertheless have reason to belong together.

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Belonging together is what human community is all about. In *The Human Condition*, the renowned political philosopher Hannah Arendt argues that two factors plague the attempts of human beings to live together in community. (Arendt, 1958, pp236-247) First, life is irreversible. It cannot be replayed when the outcomes prove destructive or unsatisfying. We cannot erase the hurt we have caused nor undo the harm we have done no matter how unintentional or unforeseen it may have been. We live in a world where grievances accumulate – indeed, they multiply exponentially!

Secondly, life is unpredictable. The future is unknowable, and even the small part that we can foresee is full of surprises. Surrounded by chaotic uncertainty, we find ourselves and those around us essentially unreliable. We cannot guarantee who we will become or how we will act tomorrow. Even less can we vouch for the feelings, actions, and commitments of others. The potential for evil resides in every heart and, if not active malice, then the tendency to inflate the importance of our own egocentric drives, perceptions, and prejudices. All in all, life is a sea of vulnerability.

Arendt contends that we find remedies to these daunting predicaments in our ability to forgive and to make promises. She writes:

Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to a single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer's apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell. Without being bound to the fulfillment of promises, we would never be able to keep our identities [commonality]; we would be condemned to wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of each man's lonely heart, caught in the contradictions and equivocalities – a darkness which only the light shed over the public realm through the presence of others, who confirm the identity [commonality] between the one who promises and the one who fulfils, can dispel. (p237)¹⁴

These two human faculties ground the possibility of political and social existence and prescribe the principles that govern our common life together.¹⁵ Since reconciliation is ultimately about learning to live together again, it may be reasonable to expect that exploring forgiveness and promise might disclose some of the more fundamental dynamics concerning reconciliation. Still, it is not immediately clear if either of these provide an adequate foundation for reconciling divided society. Both warrant further investigation.

For the purposes of this paper, I want to leave aside forgiveness and focus on promise-making. In doing so, I am bypassing a critical emotional component. None of the issues dividing Northern Ireland are simply conflicts of interests. They involve feelings so deep that some will prefer to inflict pain on their opponents rather than enjoy mutual benefits with them. In fact, Ruane and Todd suggest that the

¹⁴ I prefer the term *commonality* to *identity*. It is clear that Arendt is talking about that which makes unity of our separateness, the something that binds us together. Her use of *identity* is obviously correct. However, it is confusing when the topic of reflection is reconciliation in divided societies; that is, when there are two competing identities, and the concern is to construct a common political life.

¹⁵ Forgiveness and promises inherently involve other people whereas more classical notions are derived from a person's supposed mastery of himself – or, I presume, herself, although it is never put this way. Even the notion of forgiving oneself or making promises to oneself depends upon a bifurcation of the self in which one part of me forgives or makes a promise to another part of me. (Goffman, 1971)

Agreement could fail due solely to the emotional depth and intensity it evokes. (Ruane & Todd, 1999, p23) They write: “The implementation of the Agreement demands that each community give political respect to, and place its political trust in, those who have been responsible for the most painful of its feelings and memories and who – to add further to their distress – continue to affirm the justice of their cause and the rightness of their actions....” By deferring the topic of forgiveness to a later time, I do not want to suggest that it is somehow not as central to reconciliation as promise-making.¹⁶

Promising

Arendt argues that promise-making arises in response to the combination of two unalterable facts about the way we live. First, we live with others, and our lives are, in part, determined what others do. Secondly, we possess a measure of freedom and can choose to act in a variety of self-serving and/or altruistic ways. However, this freedom also makes us inherently unreliable. Put together, these two insights mean that, like it or not, we create the future with those around us in an inherently shaky partnership. This predicament is simply the price we pay for living in a world populated with others, and the only stable way out is the making of promises.

The alternatives to promise-making for mastering human affairs all involve some form of dominating or coercing others. In fact, Arendt argues that making promises is the only recourse that does not rely on the brute force. (p244) The capacity to make promises allows a public space to arise in which people can freely come together to discover common purposes and to engage in common actions. We gain a measure of control over a chaotic and potentially dangerous future by the mutual promises we make to each other in the present. In sum, promise-making creates the possibility of a commonality of free association within which we can build a predictable and safe future.

Arendt maintains the force that binds people together is mutual promise. The power to connect lies not in the creation of identical interests or desires, but rather in agreed purposes affirmed through mutual pledge. People do not make promises about things that are harmonious. Instead, we make promises about matter over which we may disagree or have conflicts. Although Arendt does not explicitly address this point, promise-making obviously builds trustworthy and beneficial relationships in the face of contention and diversity.

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Career diplomat Harold Saunders writes:

Only governments can write peace treaties, but only human beings – citizens outside governments – can transform conflictual relationships between people into peaceful relationships. (xvii)

He goes on to argue that formal peace agreements “will not produce peace until they are embedded in a political process for transforming a broadening range of relationships over time – a process planted in the practices of a healthy civil society.” (xxiii) For Saunders, this aspect – what he calls the human dimension – is best conceptualized as a **relationship**. Obviously, some relationships are constructive, and some are destructive. Still, by probing them, people gain the capacity to change them in ways that promote peaceful interaction.

The most extreme cases of destructive relationships are enemies. In *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt develops a technical, but important, definition of the enemy. He argues all politics is about the degrees of association and dissociation. The enemy is *other, different, alien, and strange* to the extent that no commonality exists between us and them. The breach is total, and this severance produces an entity of

¹⁶ Although I cannot explore it, I want to note Susan Dwyer’s intriguing point that reconciliation and forgiveness are conceptually independent. Reconciliation may or may not involve forgiveness – or apology, for that matter. (Dwyer, 1999)

unmitigated threat. Enemies seek the destruction of our way of life. Their mere existence represents the negation of who we are, our existential being, our identity both individually and as a people. The preservation of our political and social life is now at issue in even the most minor disputes. Compromise or forbearance cannot be countenanced because all disagreements are extreme in makeup. By definition, the enemy is a foe whose existence must be eliminated.

At this stage of furthest dissociation, killing and violence appear not simply as impending possibilities, but as urgent imperatives. Life is full of various forms of rivalry and opposition. Economics, morality, aesthetics, etc. – all have forms of competition suited to their particular domains. What marks off enemies from other types of antagonists is this lurking prospect of violence and killing. In all other areas of strife, killing is a serious violation of the established norms of human conduct. One cannot make a plausible case for killing economic rivals, proponents of differing moral viewpoints, or adherents of opposing aesthetic tastes. However, the fact that one's rival is deemed an enemy changes all this. Killing and violence are intrinsic to the very notion of enemies and are always actively contemplated. When killing and violence vanish as viable options, enemies cease to be enemies and become instead rivals, adversaries, opponents, or competitors.

Drawing on Schmitt's friend/enemies distinction, Chantal Mouffe argues a pluralistic democratic order rests on a shift from enemy to adversary. (Mouffe, 1993) Like Schmitt, she maintains that a political world without conflict is a dangerous illusion because all political identities are relational and depend upon a constitutive other, a difference that determined the boundary between *us* and *them*. Antagonisms unavoidably arise along this demarcation, and the possibility always exists that these disagreements will take the most extreme form of friend/enemy. The challenge is to defuse the element of hostility that is latent in all political identities and to create instead an agonistic pluralism.¹⁷ She writes:

(T)he opponent should be considered not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated. We will fight against his ideas but we will not question his right to defend them. The category of the 'enemy' does not disappear but is displaced; it remains pertinent with respect to those who do not accept the democratic 'rules of the game' and who thereby exclude themselves from the political community. (p4)

The result is a tentative *we* based not upon agreement but upon resistance to fragmentation. The enemy becomes an adversary through the affirmation of common ground. (Mouffe, 1999, p4)

Against this framework, the political meaning reconciliation comes into focus. It is violence and killing that disrupts political relationships and creates the breaches that must be mended.¹⁸ Political reconciliation must therefore replace the extreme dissociation that defines enemies with increasing measures of association. This association is marked not necessarily by unanimity, amity, or conformity, but by an agonistic partnership. Disagreements don't pose the ultimate danger that enemies represent because of the common ground that this partnership affirms. When viewed from this perspective, reconciliation becomes promising to think and act like a *we*.

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Saunders suggests that "thinking as a 'we' produces a recognizable shift of mental gears." (Saunders, 1999, p33) It is discernibly different than thinking about *us* and *them*. A *we* relationship comprises more than the sum of the two partners because it creates possibilities that neither side could achieve when acting

¹⁷ In *Crowds and Power*, Elias Canetti argues that parliamentary systems rests upon a psychology of opposing armies who have left the battlefield. The parties fight on but in a form that has renounced killing. The vote replaces bloodshed, and losing no longer endangers life. The parliament is an renunciation of death as a instrument of decision. (pp188-190)

¹⁸ See Fintan O'Toole, Oct 5, 2000

alone. (p37) In fact, he argues that an “effective problem-solving relationship can prove so useful that it is perceived as a valuable interest that must be protected for its own sake.” (p42)

However, the meaning and scope of promising to think and act like a *we* is far from clear. Many things might be included or excluded depending upon their intent or effect. A short story entitled “Enemies” by acclaimed novelist Tim O’Brien illuminates what is involved (O’Brien 1990). O’Brien tells of a vicious fistfight that broke out between Lee Struck and Dave Jensen while on they were patrol in the Vietnam War. It was over a missing jackknife that Dave suspected Lee had stolen. The fight went on for sometime – back and forth, back and forth. Dave was bigger and stronger and eventually gained the upper hand. After pinning Lee to the ground, he commenced hitting Lee on the nose, repeatedly and hard. Eventually, Lee’s nose made sharp popping sound like a firecracker. It was obviously broken, yet Dave just kept pounding away with short effective punches. Finally, the rest of their squad had to pull Dave off Lee, and Lee was flown off to have his nose patched with a metal splint.

After Lee returned two days later, Dave began to worry. It was Vietnam after all, and people carried guns. Lee had issued no threats of revenge, but Dave was very aware that a palpable tension existed between them. He began taking special precautions – keeping his back covered, noting to dig his foxhole on the side furthest from Lee, avoiding situations where they would come face to face. When on patrol, he took special care to note Lee’s whereabouts. Lee was constantly in Dave’s mind, and he could not find a moment’s relaxation.

After a period of time, Dave lost control. One afternoon, something in him snapped, and he started shooting wildly in the air and shouting Lee’s name. Eventually, he collapsed into a stupor-like trance for several hours. No one was brave enough to approach him. Later that night, he borrowed a pistol and, taking it by the barrel, broke his own nose. Afterwards, he approached Lee’s foxhole, showed him his broken nose, and asked if things were now square between them.

Dave’s school-yard sense of justice makes this story ring true to our ears. However, the story is more about the need for reconciliation than justice. That Lee was, in fact, guilty and that he, in a sense, deserved what he got could not itself settle things. Dave had to have more than Lee’s resentful acquiescence to the way things stood between them, an embittered resignation that could easily betray or turn malevolent in ominous circumstances. Although Dave had positive relationships with the other platoon members, these could not compensate for his bad relationship with Lee. The prospect of *us/them* divisions in which Lee might turn a blind eye toward Dave during a shootout or attack could prove fatal.

To survive the dangers of war, Dave needed Lee’s active assistance and partnership. Relying on his other pals would not insure his safety. Lee was the partner Dave needed in order to create a viable future for himself. Without him, Dave was vulnerable, exposed, and, in a very real sense, incomplete. As an individual, he could not go it alone. His security was entangled with Lee’s. Their survival as well as the safety of their platoon – indeed, any platoon in war – depended upon *we-thinking and we-acting*. Dave, therefore, felt compelled to reconcile with Lee.

Dave had to mend his relationship with Lee but had few and only crude tools to do the job. The only way that he could figure was to suffer the same injury he had inflicted on Lee, thereby creating reciprocity in pain. Still, why did this act of self-imposed injury work? The reason is that Dave’s penitence confirmed, without any possibility of doubt, that the commonality between them was stronger than the breach.

At the core of every community stands a cluster of commonalities that link its members together. Nevertheless, this unity is not unblemished. There also exists a significant number of breaches mingled about as well. For an assembly to be a community, the commonalities must matter more than the breaches. However, in violently divided society, the opposite is true as the breaches overshadow the commonality. Still, polarization and division never completely eclipse the ties that bind people together. For most people, life carries on much as it did before the war intervened. They do not engage in fighting, do not kill their neighbors, and do not vilify their fellow citizens. Indeed, many positive linkages survive the tensions and divisions that separate even the most polarized communities.

Mary Anderson calls these ligament local capacities for peace. (Anderson, 1999) She argues that they existed before the war and continue despite the violence that ravishes the communities.¹⁹ In these, people find common interest, common goals and aspirations, and common projects to enhance their common life. More importantly, these capacities provide the base for future peace. Anderson writes:

“They are the existing – and potential – building blocks of systems of political and economic interaction that can ensure stable, peaceful, and just futures for societies once in conflict.” (p24)

Promising to think and act like a *we* means focusing on these commonalities with the goal of enhancing day to day existence in mutually beneficial ways. Former US Ambassador to Sarajevo John Menzies calls this kind of activity building down differences. (Rasmussen, 2001, p115) It engages the most basic functional aspects of common life – turning on water or electricity, opening telephone lines in areas where their adversaries live. He saw people within the former Yugoslavia worked through their anger and animosity at this very practical level. He claims that basic functional cooperation can act as a precursor to reconciliation.

This kind of functional cooperation seeks to entangle the well-being of both sides so that they sink or swim together. In fact, the essence of thinking like a *we* is creating entangled futures. It also reflects a realization that all hegemonic goals and actions are not only out of bounds, but also self-defeating. Neither side can achieve its aspiration without the consent and, in many cases, the active support of the other. All future outcomes are interwoven so that neither side can hope to benefit at the expense of the other. (Sisk, 1995, p15)²⁰

¹⁹ Anderson identifies five overlapping categories of peace capacities and connectors: (1) *systems and institutions*, (2) *attitudes and actions*, (3) *shared values and interests*, (4) *common experiences*, and (5) *symbols and occasions*.

²⁰ With this point in mind, it is insightful to examine the March 1989 memorandum that Mandela sent to President Botha. In it, Mandela made a concrete offer on behalf of the ANC to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the South African conflict. First, he assured Botha that he was disturbed by the prospect of “a South Africa split into two hostile camps – black on one side ... and white on the other, slaughtering one another.” (Mandela, 1995, p546) Secondly, he rejected the demands presented by a governmental team with whom he was engaged in secret talks: (1) renunciation of violence, (2) a break with the South African Communist Party, and (3) forgoing majority rule. However, Mandela left room for movement. He was adamant only in the case of majority rule, stating: “Majority rule and internal peace are like two sides of a single coin, white South Africa simply has to accept that there will never be peace and stability in this country until the principle is fully applied.” (p547)

Mandela then suggested that the real dilemma facing the government and the ANC was the need to find a way to reconcile two political issues. The first was the ANC demand for majority rule within a unitary state. The second concerned white apprehension that majority rule would lead to black domination. He proposed that they proceed by first discussing how to create the conditions for proper negotiation. Once these were in place, they could then turn to the task of resolving the outstanding substantive issues. Mandela ended his letter by making the obvious plain: “I must point out that the move I have taken provides you with the opportunity to overcome the current deadlock, and to normalize the country’s political situation. I hope you will seize it without delay.” (p547)

By framing the political future of South Africa as a problem of reconciling two legitimate demands, Mandela invited the government to link its future with the ANC’s. Objectively, the situation on the ground was an obvious stalemate that neither side had any realistic hope of breaking. Any attempt to win unilaterally by either side meant that both lost. There would be no victory for Afrikaners without ANC victories, and vice versa. Politics could only proceed from the realization that their bottom-lines were now irrevocably enjoined – they would win and lose together. This new form of political accounting – *entangled futures* – now drove the interactions between the Afrikaner and South African black communities.

Trust: Creating the Missing Element

For reconciliation to occur, both sides must believe that the other's *promise to act and think like a we* is actually trustworthy. (Fisher, 2001, p36, Rasmussen, 2001, p104) While trust may be described in a variety of ways depending on the social context, it is useful to begin with the more minimal features defined as a expectation that those with whom we interact will not try to harm us..²¹ Clearly, this starting point recognizes that trust is relevant only in circumstances where there is an element of risk. However, situations of vulnerability also raise the possibility that distrust, rather than trust, is more warranted. The two are obviously link in the sense that they always arise in tandem. Moreover, both have an open-ended character such that trust or distrust migrate from one set of conditions to another until either one or the other begins to characterize the entire relationship.²²

The problem for reconciliation is that distrust, rather than trust, permeates interactions between former enemies. The fact that one needs trust in order to build trust only compounds the situation further. A seemingly insurmountable paradox arises because the trust one needs beforehand is, in fact, the trust that one is hoping to create. (Smith & Berg, 1987, p110, pp115-120)²³ The problem becomes "how to trust what logically makes little sense until the kind of assurance and growth associated with trusting has been created." (p120)

Smith and Berg use the Prisoners' Dilemma game to illustrate their point.²⁴ In it, the players are forced to confront the question of whether the player sitting opposite them will act in self-interested ways rather than on behalf of their jointed interests. They do not know beforehand if the other player is a partner or an opponent. Treating this person as an opponent will certainly ensure that he or she will become one. However, one cannot be sure that he or she is a partner either. The only way to find out is by trusting that this is the case and seeing if the trust was warranted. Trust must somehow be shifted from a content-based decision which can provide no reliable foundation for trusting to one involving a process of interaction that makes the emergence of trust possible.

²¹ Govier, 1997, pp3-29, p32; Laurence Thomas, 1989, p181-183. Interestingly, Thomas develops his insights by reflecting on the fundamental belief that others are not inclined to try to kill us. He considers this belief so basic that it is characterized by the extent to which we take this proposition for granted. He sees is as essential for psychological health and social well-being. However, in enemy relationships, it is precisely this issue of whether someone will try to kill us that is center stage.

²² It is important to note that trust has cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. (Lewis & Weigart, 1985) While I will be dealing primarily with the cognitive and behavioral features of trust, the emotional components are equally important. I will take these up when addressing the forgiveness dimension of reconciliation of Arendt's framework.

²³ Smith and Berg define the paradox of trust as "a cycle that depends upon itself to get started." (Smith & Berg, 1987, p115)

²⁴ The Prisoners' Dilemma is to two person, non-zero sum game in which participants have a choice to play either C (cooperate) or D (defect). The payoff structure is DC>CC>DD>CD.

		Player A	
		C	D
Player B	C	3,3	0,5
	D	5,0	1,1

In any one move, it is in the best interest of both players to defect since no matter what the other player choice they get more points. However, this strategy will result in both sides choosing DD, and CC will always yield more points. The dilemma is how to overcome immediate self-interests in favor of long-term mutual benefits.

In light of this paradox, it is worth giving serious attention to a series of events involving paramilitary prisoners in the Crumlin Road jail during the early days of the Troubles.²⁵ When violence first broke out in the late 1960s, the Crumlin Road jail administration had a non-segregation policy for paramilitary prisoners.²⁶ The paramilitaries who were being arrested on the street represented the most alienated and hostile sections of society. Across community lines, they viewed each other as bitter enemies whom they would kill if they got the chance. They knew full well that they would suffer the same fate if the other side were given the opportunity. Needless to say, the situation was explosive.²⁷

The situation reached a critical point when, on December 4, 1971, the UVF bombed McGurk's Bar in retaliation to the IRA bombing of the Four Step Inn two months earlier. Often bomb explosions could be heard within the prison, and since most bombings were the work of the IRA, republican prisoners usually cheered. Because McGurk's Bar was close to the Crumlin Road Jail, the blast was extremely loud, but a deafening silence followed the initial cheers as prisoners learned of the death toll – fifteen killed and eight injured. Next morning, the atmosphere was dangerously volatile. After fighting broke out between loyalist and republican prisoners in the dining hall, the commanding officers of the various paramilitary factions struck a deal that amounted to a “no-conflict” policy.²⁸

The sole motivation was the need to minimize risk. Not only was trust completely lacking, but active distrust and suspicion, not to mention intense loathing and animosity, reigned supreme. Still, despite moments of strain, the agreement by and large worked. These relationships, which can be described best as antagonistic co-operation, were carried over to Long Kesh where the prisoners were moved in 1972 when special category status was conferred and segregation instituted.²⁹ Eventually, a camp council involving the UVF, UDA, Provisional IRA, Official IRA and INLA was formed.

Initially, the council met weekly to talk about prisoners' right and prison conditions. The first coordinated action taken in common cause occurred in response to restrictions imposed on all visitations because a Provisional IRA prisoner had escaped from the waiting area.³⁰ However, this cooperative relationship soon extended to other common issues. In August 1974, the prisoner launched a food protest in which prisoners from the different sides shared food parcels with those who threw their prison food

²⁵ Colin Crawford (*Defenders or Criminals?: Loyalist Prisoners and Criminalisation*) and Marion Green (*The Prison experience – A Loyalist Perspective*) offer a fuller account of these events.

²⁶ All sentenced prisoners had to share cellular accommodations in a very cramped and overcrowded section of the jail known as A Wing. Often, three inmates slept in units designed for one person while double cells frequently housed up to six. Dining and working facilities were also communal. The remand prisoner, who were held for a few weeks at most, were lodged in B and C wings. (Garland, 2001, p119)

²⁷ At the time, a violent feud also raged between the Official and Provisional factions of the IRA. The loyalist prisoners agreed to house the Officials in their section, acting as a buffer between the two rival republican groups and thus protecting them.

²⁸ These leaders were Peter Monaghan (Official IRA), Billy McKee (Provisional IRA) and Gusto Spence (UVF loyalist paramilitary). They agreed to tolerate no forms of triumphalism and to hold overt cultural or sectarian activities to a minimum. Each commanding officer took responsibility for his men's behavior toward the other groups.

²⁹ The prisoners still shared visiting areas and medical facilities, and fighting became common. Again, the commanding officers agreed that the brawls could and should stop and formed a non-aggression pact that represented a further step toward an active working relationship.

³⁰ These new rules seriously infringed upon prisoner privacy and were a source of serious discontent. For fourteen weeks, all special category prisoners refused to request or receive visitors. Outside the prison, loyalist and republican communities demonstrated their solidarity by burning buses, hijacking cars, and blocking roads. Finally, the administration relented and restored visitation privacy to the former state. The commanding officers even received pledges to improve overall visitation arrangements.

“over the wire.”³¹ Clearly, these actions confounded those paramilitaries waging war on the outside who had had no comparable experience of accommodation and reciprocity.

The most dramatic illustration of the growing strength of the prisoners’ relationship occurred in October 1974 over the mistreatment of prisoners by prison officers. Tension had been mounting for sometime until a particularly egregious prison guard was assaulted.³² Prison officials asked that those responsible for the attack be turned over for disciplinary action, but the PIRA refused to comply. The confrontation escalated to the point that the PIRA began to burn the camp. During the evening, republicans burned every compound in Long Kesh to the ground except the two where the loyalists had congregated to secure their own safety.³³ Although loyalists did not take part in the burning, they helped rescue injured republican prisoners treating them with medical supplies that they had raided from the compound hospital. By morning, the army threatened to overwhelm the prisoners in a bloody showdown. Loyalist leaders intervened with prison officials to reach an agreement that allowed the republican prisoners to return unharmed to their burnt-out compounds.

From the very beginning, the perception of a common enemy in the prison administration helped to enhance the relationship between republican and loyalist prisoners. (Garland, 2001, p121) However, they soon discovered that they shared much more. There was an overall common lifestyle, but even more significantly, they had a shared experience of poverty. (p122) Reflection back, Gusto Spence remembers, “We began to cooperate on prison matter and consequently began a campaign of prison reform. I do not regret it and take much satisfaction knowing that such dialogue and cooperation could be carried even further, and perhaps a basis for bigger things could be achieved namely the ultimate – Peace!” (p122)

Clearly, something significant was occurring. Gusto Spence wrote in a pamphlet published at the time:

“The sharing of responsibility must become our aim, the removal of fear from our streets, the eradication of injustice, oppression and discrimination our sacred duty, and then, not until then, will all our inhabitants walk forward in dignity, in pride and equality, knowing that all their aspirations are recognized, and that at long last they can attain and enjoy the happiness and contentment that has so long avoided them. ...

In the absence of political stability and justice there will be violence, and to achieve peace one has to be prepared to take that extra step – it’s known as COMPROMISE.”
(Garlands, 2001, 198)

As the level of sectarian killing in the mid 70s reached troubling heights, the camp council held an Anti-Sectarian Assassination Conference, which was attended by outside paramilitary leaders. Although the conference had limited success in reducing the rate of killings, it represented a significant step in efforts to reach accord on matter beyond prison issues. (p200) Later, the camp council proposed holding a series of sixteen joint seminars on some very contentious topics. However, the prison administration ruled against it. (p208) In a masterful study of these events, Colin Crawford concludes that “from 1974 to 1976, loyalists and republicans achieved such a degree of accommodation in the compounds of Long Kesh that it could

³¹ Even after the loyalist prisoners called off their protest, they continued to support protesting republicans with food parcels and purchases from the prison store. In large measure, loyalists were willing to give up their own supplies to affirm the relationship they had begun with republicans.

³² The PIRA compound leader petitioned that a certain officer be removed from their wing. It was a standard request that occurred when prisoner dissatisfaction rose to the point that the safety of the officer could no longer be assured. However, in this case, the officer refused to leave and was assaulted as a result.

³³ The camp council had previously issued threats that the camp would be burned if the security force beat a prisoner without justification. However, the PIRA had acted without council approval. As a result, the loyalist prisoners refused to participate. Still, no-conflict policy stood as PIRA leaders gave the UVF assurances that they would not be attacked. (Garland, 2001, p183-4)

reasonably be described as the forerunner of the peace process announced some twenty years later.” (Crawford, 1999, p35)

Nowhere is this more evident than in the proposal put forth by the camp council to establish a resettlement office in Belfast to help transition prisoners back into their communities.³⁴ While there was much common ground linking the paramilitaries on prisoner welfare issues, the most groundbreaking aspect was the creation of a coordinating committee that would provide for structured interaction between the welfare wings of all the paramilitaries active Northern Ireland. Although designed to address and promote the common concerns of prisoners, the potential to expand into larger political issues was both apparent and clearly the intention of the planners. (Garland, 2001, 194-98) In effect, they had proposed a community forum that would have engaged the warring factions in political dialogue. In doing so, the prisoners were attempting to transplant the relationship that they had cultivated in Long Kesh into the wider community. Unfortunately, the political establishment saw this possible development as a threat and squelched the plan.³⁵

* * *

Like Smith and Berg, Robert Axelrod uses the Prisoners’ Dilemma to explore situations where something like trust begins to emerge. In *The Evolution of Cooperation*, he writes about the widespread live-and-let-live system that emerged during WW1. (Axelrod, 1984) Despite a climate of extreme hostility and violence, cooperative behavior between the parties arose quite spontaneously in a number of battlefield settings. Axelrod reports that the earliest instances may have been associated with mealtime breaks in which both sides divided by a no-man’s land enjoyed quiet respites from the war. They grew to include other aspects of the life that the war had imposed upon them. In one instance, an hour in the morning was dedicated to “private business,” and safe areas were marked off free from snipers. Sometime, these recesses were announced by verbal or visual signal. Bad weather offered breaks that often grew into ritualized patterns of mutual restraint. Restraint in one domain frequently encouraged great latitudes of reprieve in other areas.

What helped maintain the live-and-let-live system and gave it stability was ability of each side to retaliate if necessary. Axelrod notes that German snipers showed prowess by firing at certain spots on the walls of a cottage until holes had been blasted through as a reminder that they could do the same to enemy soldiers if they so wished. Often, the artillery aimed shots slightly off target to demonstrate what they could hit if antagonized. They policed the system of mutual restraint both by showing what defection would bring and by indicating that cooperation was their choice, not something imposed by weakness.

Axelrod concludes that this cooperative system of mutual restraint tended to make the two sides actually care about each other’s welfare when they realized that their own welfare was tied to that of the other side.³⁶ This recognition laid the foundation for a cooperative arrangement to emerge. Because

³⁴ Although loyalist and republicans initially circulated separate documents, the camp council was able to unify them into a common proposal back by all the paramilitaries imprisoned at Long Kesh.

³⁵ The Resettlement Office would have provided for the kind of contact and communication between the divided communities of Northern Ireland that the prisoners had experienced with each other in Long Kesh. It would have exposed grassroots communities to the issues and concerns that they shared in common. As this exposure and recognition of commonality grew, the forum, under the supervision and with the approval of the paramilitaries themselves, could have begun addressing the wider and larger concerns that fueled the conflict. Given the political vacuum that existed in cross-community relations at the time, the forum held the potential to transform the social structure of Northern Ireland by creating a working class alliance that transcended sectarian identities.

³⁶ Perhaps the most illustrative example was when German troops accidentally fired a salvo while a British company was enjoying tea. Both sides hunkered down preparing for battle, and British soldier swore at the German for their violation of trust. To everyone amazement, a brave German soldier climbed out of

Axelrod's primary concern is to demonstrate that cooperative systems can emerge from self-interested behavior in a chaotic environment, he mostly sidesteps issues of trust rather than addressing them explicitly. Although some form of trust obviously developed within the live-and-let-live system that he explores, no more than the faintest outlines come into clear view.

* * *

In the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau poses an illustration to convey the dilemmas associated with the emergence of civil society. (Rousseau, 1974, p215) Presumably inspired by a fable of Aesop that was popular in eighteenth century France, he imagines a hunting party stalking a deer. Suddenly, a rabbit that could be easily caught appears before the party. The hunt depends upon each person holding his post, and a deer is clearly a much larger prize than a rabbit. Still, the temptation to snare the rabbit for oneself is great, but it leaves the rest holding an empty bag.

Drawing on this passage, modern theorists have used it to depict the tension between individual and collective interests and have formalized it as a two person, non-zero sum game known as the Stag Hunt. (Waltz, 1959, pp167-170; Jervis, 1978)³⁷ However, the Stag Hunt also highlights an important aspect of trust that may not be immediately apparent. The choice to pursue the rabbit or to stay the post does not rest solely with one's own assessment of individual and collective interests. It also depends upon what one thinks the others will do. Even if an individual hunter decides to keep aim on the deer, the hunt can be spoiled by what other hunters decide to do. Therefore what one thinks that the others will decide to do becomes paramount. However, there is an additional twist: what the others do also depends upon what they think you will do. The decision to trust enters a spiraling circle of reference in which what I do depends upon what I think you will do, which depends upon what you think I will do, which depends upon what I think you think I will do, which depends upon what you think I think you will do, which ... and so on. Game theorists call this type of mutual understanding common knowledge.³⁸

From this point of view, the task of creating trust can be linked to the development of common knowledge. Still it is not yet apparent exactly what the sides would need to know about each other and know that the other side knew, etc. for trust to arise. Clearly, it is impossible to answer this question in the abstract. Trust-building must be tailored to the particular divisions that polarized relationships exhibit. Still, two general insights are helpful.

Defined as a "belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another," trust can be divided into separate, but linked, types: calculus-based trust and identification-based

his bunker and issued an apology, saying: "We are very sorry about that; we hope no one was hurt. It is not our fault, it is the damned Prussian artillery." (Axelrod, 1984, p85)

³⁷ The payoff structure for the Stag Hunt is as follows

		Player A	
		C	D
Player B	C	4,4	1,3
	D	3,1	2,2

³⁸ Technically, common knowledge arises in relationship to a coordination problem that is usually explained by the following puzzle. You are to meet a friend in New York, but you have not arranged a time or place. Where to you go and at what time? Your answer will be determined by where and when you think your friend will go and so on. What you finally decide will depend upon knowledge that you are sure that you hold in common.

trust. (Lewicki and Wiethoff, 2000, p87)³⁹ Primarily task orientated, calculus-based trust (CBT) is the product of calculations concerning the benefits received from sustaining the relationship versus cost of severing it while identification-based trust (IBT) rests upon each party identifying with the other side's aspirations and intentions. On the other hand, IBT depends upon both parties understanding and appreciating one another's wants to the point that they can act effectively on the other's behalf. (p89)⁴⁰

CBT is the more basic of the two and has the most immediate relevance for divided societies. It can involve both rewards and threats and can emerge even if one other side acts against the self-interest of the other as long as it is possible to predict accurately these occasions and to protect oneself against harmful outcomes. CBT is probably the type of trust that began to develop between the Northern Ireland paramilitary prisoners and between the soldiers within the live-and-let-live system of WW1. Clearly, as these two examples illustrate, some elemental forms of CBT can arise in violent situations. In both instances, there was common knowledge of mutual self-interests that led to a reciprocal course of actions. In this light, the first task for trust-building becomes identifying complementary self-interests and building reliable links between them.

Still, relationship built on CBT will probably not suffice over the long-term when political stability is the goal. In these circumstances, there needs to be at least a rudimentary basis for a collective identity incorporating commonly shared values, joint efforts, and entangled outcomes. However, the same self-interests that allow CBT to develop can also lay the groundwork for IBT. The transition to a firmer foundation rests with increased compatibility and reliability. (Lewicki and Wiethoff, 2000, pp101-103)

The second insight involves the need to build down distrust. Distrust is not merely the absence of trust, but is rather a separate experience. While trust suggests the anticipation of positive results, distrust evokes negative expectations. Clearly, elements of trust and distrust coexist side-by-side in any given relationship (as do elements of CBT and IBT).⁴¹ The problem is often to manage ways of keeping issues that elicit distrust from interfering with the building of CBT. The second task of trust building is to create safeguards that allow the parties to interact with the confidence that they will not be fundamentally harmed or severely disadvantaged by the actions for the other.

Both of these tasks – (1) identifying complementary self-interests and building reliable links between them, and (2) creating safeguards that allow the parties to interact with the confidence that they will not be fundamentally harmed or severely disadvantaged by the actions for the other – need to be grounded in common knowledge. It is not sufficient for parties to know that compatible and linked self-interests exist or that reliable safeguards are possible. They must also know that the other side knows, and that other side

³⁹ In an earlier article entitled "Trust in Relationships," Lewicki and Bunker argue that trust pertains to situations in which (1) the future is open to question or ambiguous, (2) outcomes are dependent upon the behavior of others, and (3) the consequences of harmful episodes are greater than beneficial incidents. They also maintain that trust can arise within competitive as well as cooperative systems. (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995)

⁴⁰ The ultimate standard for gauging IBT's strength is when one side acts more zealously for the other side's interest than the other side would act in its own behalf. (Lewicki and Wiethoff, 2000, p89)

⁴¹ Lewicki and Wiethoff produce a grid that yields four components:

- **Calculus-based trust (CBT):** confident positive expectation regarding another's behavior stemming from the belief that anticipated benefits will outweigh likely costs.
- **Identity-based trust (IBT):** confident positive expectations regarding another's behavior stemming from perceived compatibility concerning values, goals, and emotional attachment.
- **Calculus-based distrust (CBD):** confident negative expectations regarding another's behavior grounded in the belief that anticipate costs will outweigh likely benefits.
- **Identity-based distrust (IBD):** confident negative expectations regarding another's behavior grounded in perceived incompatibility concerning values, goals, and emotional attachment.

knows that they know, etc. It is here that the importance of dialogue comes into play. Dialogue can be seen as a mechanism for creating this kind of common knowledge.

Reconciliation: Creating a Present for Healing the Past and Charting the Future

John Paul Lederach notes that the reconciliation process in countries like South Africa, El Salvador, and Argentina, assume a certain sequencing of past, present, and future. Reconciliation depends first upon ascertaining past wrongs, identifying offenders, and acknowledging victims. Social healing begins as a society confronts its terrible past. Confession, both individual and communal, provides the foundation upon which the restoration of relationships proceeds and is often accompanied by amnesty, which may help move the society beyond recrimination and vengeance. For the most part, retributive justice or accountability frequently plays a minor role.⁴² Establishing what happened in the past makes possible living together in the present and moving together into a positive future. This particular approach procedure draws heavily from a style of personal transformation that presented in the New Testament.

Still, Lederach argues that there are no set formulas or procedures that are applicable to all situations.⁴³ He cites the work of the Network for Peace and Development in Nicaragua as an interesting contrast. Most of the Network's members are demobilized soldiers from both sides – the Sandinista government and the Nicaraguan Resistance – and were once bitter enemies. They were also mostly lower rank foot soldiers who faced considerable economic hardship after the conflict ended. As they came to know one another, these former enemies found that they faced many of the same problems. Two themes emerged: (1) how to deal with the conflicts that perpetuated violence and prevented their forward progress, and (2) how to create practical solutions that addressed their economic and survival needs. Their answers involved recognizing that they were principally driven by immediate subsistence concerns and that they shared a common plight and needed to work together. They began to receive training in small-scale local development projects as well as in reconciliation and mediation skills. Five years earlier, they would have been hated enemies carrying guns. Now they were partners creating a common future.

The Network for Peace and Development offers a completely different approach to reconciliation. Lederach writes:

The common need for survival has created interdependence in the present. The people focused on the present and on what is needed to move forward the future for their families. However, they have almost completely bracketed that past and set it aside for now. It is too close, too painful, and too full of unanswered questions and ambiguous actions.

The past is still a matter over which they deeply disagree, and serious confrontations often break out when it is considered. It is the common immediate needs that they shared in the present that makes new relationships possible. They are trying to relate to each other without having to agree about who was right and wrong in the former conflict. The past is simply put on hold until a later time when it can be broached in a more positive fashion. A commitment to one another in the present makes building a common future possible and a return, hopefully someday, to issues concerning the past.

However, even these two models do not exhaust the possibilities. When Lederach visited Cambodia in 1994 as part of a training team working with officials from the various factions in the government, he discovered another approach. Many of these people had had direct experiences of violence while others had in various ways been perpetrators. Still, they worked together as partners knowing that they had acutely feared some of their current colleagues and even heavily suffered at their own hands. When asked how it was possible to work with people who imposed such torment on them, they responded that they did

⁴² On practical terms, as in South Africa, El Salvador, and Argentina, amnesty and downplaying accountability are often preconditions written into the peace agreement itself.

⁴³ I would also argue, and I think that Lederach would agree, that there is more than one standard Christian approach to reconciliation.

it for their children and grandchildren, so that they would not have to endure similar anguish. The past was too painful, and the present was too bitter. They could not face either directly. They had to keep their eyes focused on the future if they were to have any hope of rebuilding their society. It was a common hope for a better future that allowed them to bracket the past, even more severely than those in Nicaragua had done, and to cope with an unnerving present.

These three approaches caution against rigid formulas or approaches. In Lederach's words, "reconciliation is not like baking a cake." (p78) Healing relationships are more complex than any of these models can fully capture. Undoubtedly, these paradigms overlap in some instances while noticeable gaps appear in others. Elements of the past, the present, and the future intermingle with each other and exert themselves despite all attempts to seal them off. The best that can be hoped for is insight into the best sequence for dealing with them.

(My guess is that Northern Ireland should probably focus on the present. Its past is too controversial and will not be addressed until history no longer privileges one preferred course of events over another. In a similar respect, the future is also too contentious to offer the kind of foundation need for building constructive relationships. Will the future of Northern Ireland be unionist or nationalist in character? Only the present is left. While it is also not without controversy, focusing on the present still offers the best prospects for discovering commonality and entangling well-being.)

* * *

I want to end by extracting six propositions from this paper. I have tried to make a persuasive, but not a conclusive, case for each of them. By no means is the list exhaustive, nor do I expect it to be irrefutable. Some of my points will undoubtedly raise legitimate concerns and criticisms. All of them will probably need modification or at least clarification. Instead of a finished product, I offer this list as a springboard for further discussion. They are:

1. Reconciliation begins with a sense that we belong together in relationships of proven worth and value.
2. Reconciliation principally occurs between social and political agents and is only secondarily concerned with institutions that can function to strengthen communal relationships.
3. Reconciliation fundamentally involves promising to act and think like a *we*.
4. Reconciliation builds upon commonalities with the goal of enhancing day-to-day existence in mutually beneficial ways.
5. Reconciliation seeks to promote trustworthy partnerships in the midst of severe distrust through the creation of "common knowledge."
6. Reconciliation must address the past, the present, and the future through a strategy of sequencing that allows for the development of constructive relationships.

Postscript

Originally, this exploratory essay was the first step in an extended study on the relationship between dialogue and reconciliation.⁴⁴ One year into the project, we have discovered that many feel that the notion of reconciliation has been hijacked by a community relations approach that aims at calming volatile

⁴⁴ Our most important discovery to date is a sharp distinction between the goals of dialogue and the goals normally associated with the pursuit of reconciliation. Dialogue aims primarily at greater mutual *understanding*, while reconciliation involves the creation of *partnerships*. A tension exists because greater understanding may or may not lead to greater willingness to embrace partnership.

interfaces in the service of pacification.⁴⁵ Beyond this, we have encounter considerable resistance to the relational terms that I have used to describe reconciliation. In the day-today world of practical and pragmatic considerations, terms like *partnership*, *relationship*, and *we-ness* – concepts that I place at the core of reconciliation – seem to carry connotations of harmony and concord that seem far-fetched or even irrelevant given the rocky politics Northern Ireland is currently experiencing.⁴⁶ Finally, the concept of reconciliation seems to have lofty religious connotations that some have difficulty endorsing. In the end, they doubt whether reconciliation with its implied partnerships and sense of shared fate and common identity can be an appropriate and realistic goal.

This skepticism about reconciliation raises the possibility that coexistence might provide a more constructive framework for peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. This perspective challenges my earlier statement that the communities of Northern Ireland are too intertwined for coexistence to work. In reassessing this view, I have discovered that the relationship between coexistence and reconciliation is more complex than I originally thought. Perhaps coexistence and reconciliation can go hand in hand (Rasmussen, 2001, p113).⁴⁷

Louis Kriesberg defines coexistence as “an accommodation between members of different communities ... who live together without one collectively trying to destroy or severely harm the other.” (Kriesberg, 2001, p48) Coexistence can involve considerable competition and conflict provided there are legitimate non-violent channels. Significant differences in cultural patterns and values as well as large gaps in economic and political power can also exist. However, coexistence at this minimal level represents only a bare bones peace.

Still, coexistence requires more than nominal accommodation marked by intolerance and injustice to be stable and enduring. Kriesberg argues that some degree of reconciliation is often a necessary component. (pp60-61) While coexistence can vary according to the degree of integration involved and to the extent to which it is imposed (rather than freely accepted), both sides must transform their previous enemy interactions into constructive relationships if more than minimal contact within a coerced order is to occur. (p49) Indeed, Kriesberg contends that progress toward a stable and just coexistence is itself an indication of significant reconciliation.

Kriesberg notes that greater mutuality of control and increased accommodation of differences does not always lead to more integration. (p59) As groups experience a lifting of coercion, some may seek independence or greater separation from each other. A case in point is the Middle East where less Israeli control has lead to calls for more autonomy and greater separation for the Palestinians. While some in Northern Ireland may prefer this option, the Good Friday Agreement has instead sought to entwine rather

⁴⁵ Mari Fitzduff, former Director of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, refers to the continual discussion in Northern Ireland concerning the most appropriate terms to use when describing this type of work. She notes that reconciliation, which was rarely used prior to the 1994 cease-fires, rose to prominence. By the last 1990s, interdependence had become more common. Recently, coexistence has entered the forefront. However, she claims that coexistence is mainly associated with cultural validation and the implied need for separate community domains. (Fitzduff, 2001, p271)

⁴⁶ Perhaps even more telling in this regard is the objection that reconciliation implies prior conciliatory relationships that were never present in Northern Ireland. There is no memory of a past when partnership really worked on a broad scale between nationalist and unionist communities. As a result, people have few, if any, innate understandings or tacit agreements that reconciliation might attempt to reconstruct. For many, it remains questionable whether partnership is either possible or desirable. In contrast, Susan Dwyer argues that reconciliation defined as narrative incorporation is appropriate to situations “where there is no prior positive relation to be restored.” (Dwyer, 1999, p96)

⁴⁷ Rasmussen argues that “communities in divided societies must first learn to cooperate and coexist before any true chance for reconciliation can occur on any large scale.” (p113) Rasmussen make reconciliation an outcome whereas I have cast it more a process that includes the first stages of cooperation and coexistence. Still, he highlights the link that I had previously overlooked between the two.

than separate the communities of Northern Ireland. Consequentially, those who remain skeptical about the need for reconciliation are implicitly challenging the basic tenets of the power-sharing arrangements that peace process itself is trying to advance.

It is here that the insights of Hannah Arendt present their challenge anew. Arendt argued that promise-making was the only alternative to brute force in the conduct of human affairs. (Arendt, 1958, p244) Kriesberg raises the same issue by contending that domination and coercion are the only recourse for those who refuse to seek reconciliation. If they are right, then those who reject the need to seek reconciliation need to face squarely the Hobbesian consequences of their decision.⁴⁸ The future will bring greater, not less, British political and military coercion as the communities fight with one another over the terms of the common existence – policing, marching, fair employment, etc.

Perhaps Arendt and Kriesberg are wrong, and a stable option between reconciliation and coercion can be found. John Locke sought to avoid the hostility generated when the needs and desires of people conflict by positing an environment of superabundance where there is enough for everyone. (Locke, *The Two Treatises of Government*, p ii, 27)⁴⁹ Clearly, increased social welfare would help alleviate some of the conflict, but it is doubtful that it will remove all the issues. In those that remain, it seems certain that the relational component will continue to be key.

How this relationship is conceptualized and thematized may or may not play an important part in charting the future course of events in Northern Ireland. Still, thinking clearly and insightfully about the kind of relationships that we want is one of the few tools we have for determining what we will ultimately get. Especially regarding peace, we are unlikely to get more and will probably have to do with less than we plan for.

⁴⁸ In *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes: “And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies.” (p105) In the same vein, he also writes in *De Cive*: “For although any man might say of every thing, *this is mine*, yet could he not enjoy it, by reason of his neighbor, who having equal right and equal power, would pretend the same thing to be his.” (p117) He proposed to control this endemic rivalry and hostility it produced through the imposition of order by a strong sovereign.

⁴⁹ Locke wrote: “He (God) gave it (the world in common) to the industrious and rational, ... not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentions.” (II, 34) Then again, Locke was a Prod.

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