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Spirituality and religion in the response to the adversities of war and armed conflict

ABSTRACT

The various possible responses that human beings may display in circumstances of extreme adversity are categorized within a broad anthropological framework, namely, medical or pathological, creative and artistic, ideological and political, and spiritual and religious responses. The understanding of their dynamic healing and coping mechanisms is conceptualized within self theory and the explanatory value of each of those manners of responding to adversity. A concise review of the literature is presented for each one of those models as they affect the prevention and outcome of traumatic impact of adverse events. This is specifically suitable to the medical pathological model and to the creative and artistic responses. In particular, art therapy in a programmed and deliberate manner promotes the channelling of traumatic anxieties into a reconstructive process of historical continuity, social re-integration and renovation of the self required for the cementation of hope and the projection of energies towards the construction of a future. Ideological and political coping mechanisms are of major importance in the preparation and outcome of the military facing the traumas of combat and POW experience in, for example, the Korean and the Vietnam wars, and in today's armies and civilian populations, including the Middle East.

As for the role of religion and spirituality in response to trauma, the paper concentrates specifically on the idea of forgiveness in the construction of a peace and reconciliation process, as garnered from a review of the literature available from experiences in Argentina, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and the ongoing Israel Palestinian situation. Other variables are added to construct a model which is used to analyze the data gathered from public documents. The analysis is guided by the hypothesis that religious beliefs and spirituality, specifically forgiveness

under certain conditions, are related to social coping and stability, and to favourable attitudes to reconciliation and a just peace.

Besides, basic information is extracted from four individual cases taken from published biographies and film documentaries, and analyzed in terms of ideology and modes of response as presented by the subjects. The paper concludes with implications for conflict resolution and attitudes to peace, both for the individuals involved and the contending parties.

RESPONSES TO ADVERSITY. CLASSIFICATION

Human beings have a wide repertoire of responses to adverse events and other major stresses. Those responses often coexist and evolve with the passage of time and varying circumstances. For instance, it is accepted that the most frequent pathological manifestation of trauma -PTSD- only occurs in 16-20 % of those persons subjected to any event which will meet the criterion A of the DSM-IV for the diagnosis of PTSD.¹ Other minor manifestations are frequent but, though they may or not be not disabling, they do not come to the attention of psychological and health care professions.² Why an individual case should manifest one or another type of response does not concern us here. Suffice to say that the choice of responses is determined by the nature and severity of the adverse event, whether it involves bodily harm or not, the subject's individual biological attributes, history and social circumstances, and above all the cultural context which will provide a world view with different opportunities for one type of response or another. A brief classification of responses to adversity follows:

1. Pathological responses
 - PTSD
 - Grief reactions and depressive disorders
 - Substance abuse disorder
 - Social phobias
 - Cognitive decay
 - "Moral injury"

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2. Creative and Artistic
 - Drama and fiction of universal literature
 - Biographies
 - Art therapy
 - Pedagogical approaches
 - Cinema
3. Ideological and political
 - Social and political activism
 - Brain washing
 - Collaborationism
4. Spiritual and Religious
 - Spiritual transformation and conversion
 - Religions of the oppressed³
 - Conversion illness. Shaman's crisis
 - Saints and new born Christians

NON RELIGIOUS RESPONSES

The pathological and medical responses to an adverse event with traumatic potential have been by definition dealt within the province of the medical and psychological professions. From the time of modern medicine in the 19th century to the recent Vietnam and Middle East wars all great armed conflicts have been described from the point of view of their medical consequences. The disorder category PTSD, a legacy of the Vietnam War, has been so well received that it has become part of the common universal language to describe the most frequent medical psychological consequences of armed conflict trauma. Other mental and behavioural consequences have also been described in association with combat experience and PTSD, such as substance abuse, cognitive decay⁴ and "moral injury."⁵ It is important to mention this kind of response to the adversities of war because it often coexists with other responses such as the ideological and political, and the religious or spiritual responses. Take, for instance, the case of General Lieut. Romeo Dallaire, a Canadian military and a religious person, who headed the Rwanda UN mission six weeks after the onset of the genocide in April 1984. Stigma and under-reporting of psychological consequences of battle front experience are very prevalent in the armed forces⁶ and yet Lieut. General Dallaire had the insight and the courage to accept he had a nervous breakdown, namely PTSD, while in due time he continued his own healing process by writing his memoirs and engaging in political activism.⁷

Adversity and trauma have been the staple material for the great works of literature and art of mankind. The great poems *The Iliad*, *Ramayana*, *Gilgamesh*, began with a major war or conflict, misfortune or loss, disorder and death, which seem to be mankind's constant companions. The author or authors of those works put their talents to elaborate and master the disrupting and puzzling forces of those events. Very often in those poems, long before the modern liberal society banned religion and God from public affairs, religion

and their various divinities were daily social common experience. Centuries later with the evolution of a public and universal morality, disorder, self interest, hatred, and vengeance were opposed by the search for order, altruism, love and forgiveness. They demonstrate the need for a traumatized person or a whole people to recreate, reorder and master the traumatic experience, to integrate it into its consciousness, to metabolize and absorb it into the historical life narrative and, by a process of reflection, to cement his own identity.

In art therapy the creative and artistic potential of children and adults has been tapped to provide for the individual a venue to the re-integration of the self, the reflective, defining and cohesive nucleus of the individual, which had been fractured as a result of the trauma. At a macro or social level the massive losses of war, the irreparable harm of death of thousands and millions have been the subject of great art monuments which as a centre of national attention and celebrations intended to adjust the public psyche to those traumas.

Cinema, as a form of literature of vanguard, provides multiple and constant recreations of the trauma of war in today's world. The Jewish holocaust, the Spanish Civil war, and, as it unfolds these days, the Middle East, including the Israeli Palestinian occupation and conflict, have been a great source of material for literature and films. Those recreations, at times to the degree of a repetition compulsion, provide both for actors and public at large the opportunities for familiarity and mastery with those extreme events all too close to death which by their nature disturb the normal order and have potential for disintegration of both the individual, social groups and nations.

The experience of the military is of paramount importance in understanding the role of ideological preparation and responses among soldiers exposed to combat. The Korean War was a watershed in our sophistication to understand what could help a soldier in facing severe stress, specifically the prisoner of war experience, while subjected to advanced method of psychological influencing and control. Why did 60% of USA POWs collaborate with the enemy and so many died, while by contrast in a group of 279 Turkish POW soldiers, under similar circumstances, none collaborated and none died?^{8, 9} The idea that "brain washing" was a crude organic process was the subject of much propaganda and material for fiction and films, for instance, *The Manchurian Candidate* and *The IPCRESS File*. In psychiatry it had unfortunate consequences with the "de-patterning" Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT) techniques of Ewen Cameron.¹⁰ The answer was much simpler. The technique of brain washing was largely a psychological group phenomenon in which ideological preparation and group cohesiveness were significant factors. The hypothesis that those variables (consistent ideology and

group cohesiveness) were critical in the combat performance and the resilience of soldiers was confirmed with the analysis of non western armies in battle.¹¹ One presumes that modern armies have taken those lessons seriously. The reports in the Western forces on casualties of the recent Gulf war do not leave much room for reassurance.¹² The recent efforts at soldiers' preparation for the stress of combat seem enlightened but are so far untested in properly designed evaluation programs.⁵

All those modalities of response of the human spirit to mayor disrupting or catastrophic events, as described above, have a common goal, the return to the *status quo* before the events in question, that is, the return to the origins, when order, peace and harmony reigned. Nowhere is clearer this attempt to repair chaos by returning to the origins than in the case of revivalist movements. When a society or cultural group feels threatened from the outside with disintegration, a very common reaction is to create a renovation of the culture, with religion often involved, which will strengthen the community from within and resist the intrusion from without.³ The best explanations, at least the most sensible and commonly accepted, we can provide for this process of healing lies in the body of knowledge known as Self Theory.¹³ This is also the most cohesive explanation of the harm done by trauma as in PTSD and of the reparative process which takes place spontaneously or in therapy.^{14, 15} This body of knowledge serves well as an explanatory model, particularly if it is expanded with the ideas of man as a historical animal ("Man lives within history", of Heidegger, and Ortega and Gasset) and of a being whose essence is bound to its environment. The latter is expressed best by Ortega y Gasset's (*Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia*). That is to say, for the consciousness of the self to be integrated and made whole it has to have continuity with its past and be able to project itself towards the future. This consciousness gives meaning, wholeness and fulfilment to the experience of living; the contrary would be alienation and fragmentation of the self.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS RESPONSES: EXPLANATORY MODEL AND METHOD

One would expect that, because soldiers in combat face death constantly, either by witnessing it, causing it or by their proximity in situations of danger, wounding and mutilation, the literature of studies on this subject would be copious in the military. It is true that the role of spirituality and religion in the military is often documented in reports by army chaplains. Those reports, unfortunately, lack a research design and are mostly retrospective and anecdotal. ("Yes, God was present". "My faith, my religion helped me".)

On the other hand theology, the cultural science or philosophy behind spirituality and organized religions' beliefs and practices, is plentiful in ideas and practices to restore peace and harmony to individuals and collectivities

affected by adversity. When the adversity is man-made, as is the case in torture, war or persecution, the key concept behind the process of restitution to a previous order and harmony is forgiveness and reconciliation. Other theological concepts, such as redemption, are at times used in the treatment of soldiers with PTSD.¹⁶

Studies of torture victims in religious societies, such as Tibet's Buddhists, show that prisoner victims of torture and control groups did not differ in PTSD and Hopkins Symptom Check List (HSCL-25) scores. The author concluded that the articulation of suffering is much more complex in Buddhism than perceived in the units and scores of the Western rating scales.¹⁷ Our modern science is necessarily reductionist and no scale can answer the question of some prisoners, "How can there be so much evil in the world?" Other studies with samples of religious groups subjected to torture concluded that religious faith contributed significantly to the resistance to the stress of torture and prevented pathological consequences.^{18, 19} This is consistent with other studies which found that political or ideological preparation and consistency in torture victims provided some resistance or "immunization" to torture and its psychological sequelae.²⁰

Even in modern or secular societies, such as Israel, studies have looked at the issue of forgiveness and revenge amongst youth in the opposite camps of the conflict. Among Jewish and Palestinian adolescents living in Israel PTSD symptoms, forgiveness and revenge scores are higher among Israeli Palestinian, as one would expect in groups which also had higher levels of objective stress and negative life events consistent with their minority status. Desire for revenge and attitude to forgiveness was correlated with higher scores of PTSD and depression. The authors conclude that forgiveness promotes healing and should be fostered in therapy.²¹

In North America forgiveness and reconciliation have become a bit of a growth industry. It is applied by lawyers and counsellors to marital couples and in family conflict resolution or therapy.²² *Therapeutic forgiveness is conceptualized as a four station process of insight, understanding, giving the opportunity for compensation, and overt forgiving.*²³

Eventually this review of the literature was completed with the analysis of the reports on the various cases of attempts at reconciliation and peace in countries which have experienced war and violent conflict in the previous three decades. It concluded with a theoretical frame work and a model for analysis of reconciliation proposals. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the two of key ideas on this model.

DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

It was, however, by chance that I fell upon the essential nature of the process and of the main intervening variables

in the process of reconciliation and peace. Robert Cox, the editor of the Buenos Aires Spectator, the main English language newspaper in Argentina, published an article a few days after April 26, 1983, the day of the declaration of the end of the military dictatorship and the so called Dirty War (1975-1983). For nearly two decades gross violations of its citizen's rights were committed by the Argentinean state. Cox argued that since a covenant between state and citizens had been broken, to reconstitute their relationship to the former state of peace and harmony a number of measures had to be taken. (Cox, 1983) I paraphrase them, more or less, as follow:

- Investigations of wrong doings and finding the truth,
- Public hearing and acknowledgement of wrong doing,
- Apology and amendments
- Justice and punishment for those found guilty and
- Restitution to the offended parties for their losses and suffering.

When I read it, it dawned on me that it had a striking resemblance to the principles that Catholic children were taught to prepare for confession and the forgiveness of sins. In Catholic doctrine this is what is necessary for a good confession:²⁴

1. Examination of conscience
2. Heartfelt grieving
3. Firm proposal of amendment
4. Confession of the sins
5. Fulfil the penitence.

In Christian theology confession is a sacrament (in fact, called the sacrament of Reconciliation) to re-establish the peace and harmony between God and man broken by sin, that is, the contravention of divine law. Likewise, in criminal and civil law a crime is a violation of the law of the state or the statutes of the land. This parallelism between religious doctrine and secular law should not surprise anybody given that the Middle Ages in Europe saw for long centuries the fundamental influence of the Christian Church through its values, institutions and general culture on the development of a civilization which has become known as the Western civilization. Specifically and for the same reason the national and international legislation, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is essentially compatible with Christian beliefs and values. All one has to do, when required, is to translate secular for religious language to see the clear correspondence between Christian values and legal principles and practices. The answer to the theological question of When does God or do we forgive? is guided by the attributes of God as infinitely loving and merciful. Forgiveness as a disposition is always present in God and should be also in Christians. The expectations of the necessary conditions for confession or reconciliation are part of the process of forgiveness. In the Epistle to the Ephesians (4:32) by Paul, the Father is described as the

source and the Son as the vessel or as the instrument by which forgiveness is conveyed. (...“be forgiving to each other as God forgave you in Christ”). In the parallel passage of Colossians 3:13-14, it is reiterated: “Forgive each other as soon as the quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same”. Biblical commentators remind us that the Christian theology of reconciliation and forgiveness has its precedent in the old Hebrew texts under the name of atonement, celebrated specifically on the feast of Yom Kippur. Maimonides gives an outline of the requirements for atonement in sins between man and God. (*Hil. Teshuva* 1:1-4) Islam, the other main monotheistic religion, provides in a very similar manner for the forgiveness of sins. The God who named Himself The Beneficent (Ar-Rahman) and The Merciful (Ar-Rahim) is also The Forgiving (Al-Ghafoor) (The Koran, 39:53)

FOUR CASES OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSIONS

Keeping this in mind we have reviewed the literature, chosen a sample and analyzed the key and other relevant documents on four important processes of reconciliation following mayor armed conflicts, both national and international, conducted in the last three decades. The method followed has been a narrative analysis of the texts from reliable sources already published in books, journals or the internet. Included also were reports and other material on the historical and political context and the condition which preceded the process directed to reconciliation and peace. From this analysis were expunged the following variables, listed below with their religious equivalent in italics,

1. Trust in the law (parties representation, equality, fairness) / *Faith in God*
2. Truth. Investigation / *Examination of own conscience*
3. Accept accountability / *Remorse*
4. Never again measures (*Nunca Más*) / *Promise of amendment*
5. Justice seen, public hearings / *Confession*
6. Restitution, symbolic and material / *Penitence*
7. Forgiveness, not vengeance / *Pardon of offences*
8. Reconciliation. Lasting peace / *Inner peace, State of Grace*

Thus, articulating those variables one can build a theoretical framework for the analysis and prediction, in fact, the promotion of movements of reconciliation and peace after mayor violent conflicts in which wrong doings or violations of human and legal rights of persons and collectivities have occurred. All first seven variables would act independently to predict the dependent or outcome variable, which would be successful reconciliation and peace. The method may seem naïve, yet in more sophisticated forms it is used in the formulation of scientific economic

and political analysis and decisions. In fact, economics is replete with such econometric models. As in psychosocial dynamics, change or "movement in any one part of the spider web of an economic system reverberates throughout the whole". "The art is in the general equilibrium considerations and the output is in the satisfaction (the utility) to its members" more than in good and services. This is the efficiency of an equilibrium of a competitive market economy.²⁵ As we do in clinical and epidemiological psychiatric research, where variables are generally multiple and often soft, and regression analysis may yield confusing results, the study of political decisions of this nature called for a model more inclusive and less arbitrary on the selection of variables,

Argentina's Nunca Más Report, 1984:

In Argentina in 1984 President Raúl Alfonsín created the National Commission on the Disappeared Persons (*Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (CONADEP). It became an organization, part of the process known as the National Reorganization Process to investigate the fate of the "disappeared" (*desaparecidos*, in Spanish) or victims of forced disappearance by the state or their agents, and other human rights violations during the "Dirty War" of the military dictatorship (1976-1983). About 9 000 persons (some NGOs estimate over 20 000) were forcefully disappeared by the state forces. Reading this 500 page book with precise data, tables, photos, sketches and last days of detailed personal biographies is not for the faint-hearted. Among the victims are included mostly the socially and politically active youth, but also babies, children, women and the elderly. Members of all professions were victimized: lawyers (N: 107), doctors, soldiers, diplomats, journalists and religious persons. Over 30 priests, including two bishops, and seminarians were disappeared along with over a dozen lay religious workers.

The Commission is credited with facilitating the prosecution of the members of the criminal military junta, the transition to democracy, bringing the satisfaction of justice to the families, and restoring the peace and harmony that had been lost during the conflict. Follow up has showed that restitutions, as far it was possible, have been made and that, indeed, the peace has lasted.

The Report *Nunca Más* is a secular investigative document. The words confessions, forgiveness, reconciliation or truth do not figure in the report. It does not follow directly any theological concept but it is definitely inspired by faith in democracy and the protection of the essential rights of citizens against such horrors in the future.²⁶ The role of the Church towards the ideology behind the violent repression of the State is merely one of spiritual guidance in its social mission. It condemned the military governments of

Latin America at the III Conference of Latin American Bishops in Puebla in 1979, by rejecting the National Security Doctrine as elitist, anti democratic, developing a repression in a state of permanent war against Soviet and international communism "pretending a defense of the Christian Western Civilization".^{27, 28}

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1994

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*,²⁹ gives a detailed account of the philosophy, proceedings and conclusion of the National Commission, which he chaired, on the crimes committed during the apartheid governments of South Africa. Let us emphasize that Tutu reveals the influence of a relevant spirituality on the achievements of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "Forgiveness is both a theological and a political matter, a pathway to reconciliation". He did not propose a general amnesty, that is, a blanket forget-and-forgive toward the crimes and the perpetrators. A case in point was the police officers who were not given amnesty for the torture and murder of Steve Biko, an activist medical student.³⁰ Amnesty was given on certain conditions, namely,

- 1) Exclusively for crimes committed for political motives, not personal but in fulfilment of orders of party or group policy,
- 2) Free disclosure of the amnesty applicant in a public hearing and
- 3) Proportionality of the means and actions of the perpetrators to the objectives of his actions.

It was thought that the acceptance of responsibility and the shame of a public confession would be individually redeeming factors and of great benefit to national healing. He openly rejected the option of another Nuremberg judgement of Apartheid as a judgement of the victors. In South Africa post Apartheid circumstances were different and behind his spiritual solution there was also a realistic and shrewd political decision. As to the philosophy behind the Commission and its procedures he repeatedly stated that "forgiveness is not only a theological concept it is also a political necessity", and his conclusion was that "without forgiveness there is no future".^{29, 31} *The whole process of the Commission was viewed by its Chair as a transition from a violent and racist regimen to a democratic legal political system. (This is something with which the Spanish people are very familiar in their own La Transición from the totalitarian military regime of General Franco to the democracy which followed upon his death in 1975).* Beyond South Africa and with apartheid behind him, Archbishop Tutu made appropriate remarks to the peace and reconciliation processes in Rwanda, with the American Natives, Ireland, and Israel and the Palestinian under Israeli

occupation, countries he visited and whose situations he knew first hand.

Follow up on the recommendations of the Commission shows that symbolic reparations and returning justice to the families and their good name to persons victimized as terrorists have taken place and continue to take place. A case in point is the case of Ahmed Timol, a school teacher tortured and thrown to his death out of the police headquarters' balcony in Johannesburg pretending it was a case of suicide.³² However, the governments elected with the defeat of the apartheid regime have not been able to compel the industrial corporations, which benefited by the African labour exploitation permitted by the apartheid system, to pay restitution for their wrong doings. In fact, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission model has been deeply criticized. "Amnesty is necessary for democracy to come in but the process of reparation (symbolic and material) has been slow... Evasion of responsibility by corporations and individuals who benefited from the regime of exploitation, low wages...Aligning itself with business, government has forced victims to align themselves in class actions reparation law suits...The rich-poor gap, one of the worst in the world, is worse now than when apartheid was dismantled. Nowhere has there been told the story of victimization of the majority...in the educational system, house demolitions..."³³ Indeed, the government has opposed the class actions of victims against over 50 US, Canadian and EU companies for abuses during the apartheid regime under the Alien Tort Statute of 1789, part of the Judiciary Act of the US First Congress, in the New York District Court of Appeal.³⁴

Northern Ireland. Good Friday Agreement, 1998

The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, in her book "Love in Chaos, Spiritual Growth and the Search for Peace in Northern Ireland" meditates with the guidance of Catholic spirituality on the role of love and forgiveness in the peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.³⁵ As historical background suffice to say that Ireland after 450 years of British invasion and colonization, in 1918 following World War I, succeeded to gain independence for 26 counties in the South of the island (known as Republic of Ireland or Eire) with six counties remaining under British rule in the North with the name of Ulster. The relationships between the Catholic minority and the protestant majority in the North were sour and mistrusting. The violent years of The Troubles, up to the 1970s, were only the repetition of cyclical violence which erupted every decade since the independence and partition of the land. After the 1960s a new climate seemed to develop and after many attempts, reconciliation finally took place on Good Friday 1998 and an Agreement was signed in May that year.

The Agreement took place between two people who are deeply religious, both Christian, a fact which did not stop them from inflicting much carnage and suffering to each other. Finally, the common language of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace imposed a bridge between those two communities and peace settled in. McAleese uses a language familiar to both parties, "God has no favourites. Captive and captor are his cherished children", something which should sound familiar to doctors who have treated enemy prisoners or victims and perpetrators of torture. Again, like Tutu and many others, McAleese has found parallels between Ireland and other counties in conflict when she speaks of the task of reconciling the Catholic God and the Protestant God, Allah of Islam and the Jehovah of Israel, and the God of the Hutus and the Tutsi, the Serbian and the Croats God, and the God of White racism and the God of Black oppression.

Archbishop Tutu visited Ireland in September of that year and in his preface to the book of Mary McAleese wonders whether the example of the reconciliation in South Africa had facilitated the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. It would appear that the task of reconciliation began with determined and hopeful groups on either camp, or spreading the message of forgiveness and reconciliation "a person at a time". Even Kofi Anan, when he was visiting Iraq as UN Secretary General and achieved a small diplomatic triumph, and was asked how he did it, he said, "Never underestimate the power of prayer".

Kosovo (brief lived) Agreement Commission, 2002

The Balkans have had a chequered history and with so many changes of boundaries over the centuries and the creation of different states for the same heterogeneous populations that they were often called the drifting or "flying states". The same family could have lived under two or three different states in one single generation. What it does do for people's sense of identity is matter for conjecture. (Epidemiological studies in the 1970s have shown Croatia to have a high prevalence of Schizophrenia. No comments on migrations and identity were provided).^{36, 37} In 1918, after the First World War, the federated state of Yugoslavia was created which remained trouble free until 1981, when the head of the State Josip Tito died. Gradually the federation unravelled and Croatia and Slovenia seceded in 1991 and 1995. In 1991 "ethnic cleansing" was perpetrated by Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian forces. In 1995 the Dayton Accord was signed to bring peace to the war in Yugoslavia. President Slobodan Milosevic was re-elected and suppressed Albanian population in Kosovo to protect the Serbian minority. NATO intervened by bombing Serbian targets and Milosevic was deposed.^{38, 39} New elected President Kosturica created the Reconciliation Commission in 2002 which lasted a year, in

fact, two years short of its mandate. What happened? It has been pointed out that the commission lacked appropriate ethnic and religious group representation, did not have popular support and lacked resources. Religious leaders have continued with small audiences the process of spiritual renewal and with a view to community and political stability.⁴⁰

FOUR INDIVIDUAL CASE RESPONSES

A mother loses five children.⁴¹

A journalist and film maker who was present in Gaza during the Israeli invasion of December 27, 2008, to January 18, 2009, on the 14 of that month of January interviewed and filmed two the survivors of two families who lost their children during the shelling and bombing. A mother, Mrs. Baloushi saw her five children killed, Jawaher, Rena, Samar, Erram and Ther, aged from 4 to 17 years of age. The other family, the Handam family, lost three children aged from 5 to 11 years, Lana, Ismael and Haya. In their grief and still deeply affected, the mothers could hardly say more that "God will help us". Modest people, deeply religious and hardly educated, at that moment one could not expect them to say much more. There was not a word of anger or revenge, not even a demand for justice, all they had was their faith in God and all they could ask for was pity. When the grieving is over one can expect that the resolution of their losses and the disturbance in their lives will depend on how far their families and communities organize themselves and are able to provide for these families the prerequisite for healing, that is, a network of material, social and personal support, including professional psycho social services, and those spiritual variables listed in our conceptual scheme leading to reconciliation and peace to which these families are already fundamentally oriented.

A father loses three children and a niece.^{42, 43}

A young physician, born and resident in Gaza, Harvard trained and with the rare privilege to work in an Israeli hospital, in the bombardment and shelling of December-January 2008-2009 lost three of his daughters, Maya, 13 years old, Aya, 13, and Bessan, 21, and his niece Noor of about 17 years of age. His case acquired great notoriety not only because he was perfectly trilingual in Arabic, Hebrew and English and was well connected, but also because of his message and reaction to his losses. He spoke of Love not Hatred (I shall not Hate, is the title of his book), dialogue and humanization of the perpetrators of his losses, that is, the Israelis and their soldiers. In his account of the invasion he gives plenty of details of the damage caused by the bombing, the many years of the Israeli occupation and of the long and disastrous siege of Gaza. He attributes the invasion and

destruction of Gaza to "craziness... the blind stupidity of attacking the citizens of Gaza and claiming that the rampage was aimed at stopping the Hamas missiles falling into Israel". Dr Abuelaish falls often into the myth of symmetry or mutuality, that is, that the Israeli and the Palestinian are equally responsible for the conflict, the suffering and terrible losses on either side. This author depoliticizes the issue. Although he quotes from the report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on the siege of Gaza:

"Humanitarian action can be no substitute for the credible political steps that are needed to bring about these changes...The alternative is a further descent into misery with every passing day".

In spite of those words, he proposes that his medical altruism and his generous attitude for dialogue with the Israeli across the health field will be a bridge for peace. There is little in his narrative to link his work to the larger issues of political representation, equality of power in negotiations or opportunities before a body of credible truth finders. He gives credit to the Goldstone Report, but he does not make demands for its implementation, the scrutiny of its findings in public or suggests what may be the alternatives to compel both parties before a truly representative impartial mediating body. Although he is a religious man he does not mention the explicit variables of forgiveness and reconciliation as expressed in our model and as prerequisite components in the negotiations for truth, justice and a lasting peace. His story is rich in details but short in structure, and, as the musicologist Robert Greenberg said, God is in the structure not in the details, that is, if one wants to understand the whole composition. To Dr. Abuelaish's credit it should be said that it is remarkable that in the midst of turmoil and grieving over his recent loss he has had the energy and generosity of telling his story as sincerely as he does.⁴⁵

A mother loses her daughter.⁴⁴

Nurit Peled-Elhanan is an Israeli peace activist, one of the founders of the Bereaved Families for Peace. After the death of Elhanan's 13 year-old daughter, Smadar, in 1997, victim of a Palestinian suicide bombing attack, she became an outspoken critic of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. She aligned herself with the Palestinian mother of a young man killed by an Israeli soldier. She maintained that the bomber who killed her daughter was as much of a victim as the soldier who killed the Palestinian young man; both are victims of the occupation. She does not appear to be a religious woman but her actions, on the other hand, show no desire for revenge. By her activism she tries to raise the level of self awareness of the Israeli people and their governments on the motives and consequences of the occupation. She hopes that they may see and accept the

truth as it is or may be accepted by many other Israelis, Jews, Palestinians and credible international bodies of experts and legislators, such as the International Court of Justice and the UN. In keeping with our model for reconciliation her efforts are directed to fulfill the variables put forward in our model.⁴⁵

A doctor is very frustrated and humiliated.⁴⁶

In contrast to Dr. Abuelaish this doctor Kanaaneh responds to a more limited and different category of adversity in a different manner. Dr Hatim Kanaaneh is also a Palestinian physician born and residing in Galilee, a formal part of Israel. He trained in public health in Harvard University, but decided to serve his community in Galilee. He got a job with the Israeli Ministry of Health and began working in the small community of his birth. For him, like for the vast majority of Palestinians and for the Palestinians as a nation, the great adverse event in his life was the war of invasion and occupation of Palestinian lands by the Jewish people under the rationale and banner of Zionism, which began in 1948. (The Israeli call it the War of Independence and the Palestinian call it *Al nakbah*, the disaster)

The goals in his response to this adversity as physician and as a member of his community are:

1. To improve the health and welfare of the Palestinian community inside Israel.
2. To increase awareness and community mobilization.
3. To promote the environmental protection of Galilee.

The focus of his awareness project are a). "Co existence" (*Tayush*, in Hebrew) between a large oppressive majority (Jewish) and an oppressed minority (Palestinian), and b). The struggle over land. His means are a) Promotion of professional public health, b) to create an NGO, Galilee Society, with other public health minded physicians, c) enlist his brothers and friends in his campaign, and d) to cultivate his garden and writing as personal psychotherapy. He witnessed the racist discrimination and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and was frustrated by the cynicism, hypocrisy, double standards in allocating resources to Israeli and Palestinian villages in health care, public services and education. Eventually he resigned his position with the Ministry of Health and continued to work and see the fruits of his work with the Galilee Society in the development of a public health under-structure in Galilee's Arab villages.

What did he accomplish on the road to reconciliation and lasting peace? Did he fulfil any of the requirements or variables listed in our model? There is a genuine search for truth for himself, his community and the members of the Israeli community he met on his daily work, and there is frustration in not seeing the search for truth and justice respected. He is faithful to his history and to the sentiments

of his deeply religious community, though he is a secular person. In spite of all his impotence in the search for a true coexistence he is still more hopeful of a peaceful reconciliation that most people in Palestine would be prepared to be under the prevailing circumstances.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the sample of the four commissions shows that Argentina, South Africa, and Ireland scored well in all variables selected for the process or reconciliation with the conclusion or outcome that peace and reasonable harmony have lasted since their reports were published to date. The key concepts of a credible process which would establish the truth and justice tempered by forgiveness or partial amnesty were present in those cases with a successful outcome. In the case of Kosovo the lack of representation and popular recognition of the parties in the process or negotiations, and the lack of resources, indicating little political will, predicted a poor result in the proceedings of the commission. It does not mean that the absence of a commission will condemn Kosovo to return to the disharmony or even the violent conflicts of recent history; certainly not. Healing, as it happens often in medicine, may also take place in the absence of treatment, pointing out, not that miracles are possible, but that we do not know all the variables which may intervene in healing. When governments fail, individuals and the organized civil society may create the ferment with force governments to act in a democratic direction.

One should learn from the experience of failure. The failure of the Kosovo agreement process is particularly relevant to the one hundred times repeated failures of the Israel-Palestine negotiations. In both regions three religious and ethnic identities overlap on the same lands, and so far coexistence in justice and peace has eluded them. A look at the prerequisites or variables listed in our method of analysis will point out what is missing before peace based on truth and reconciliation can be achieved.

The analysis of the four individual responses to a mayor adversity in armed conflict (in three cases the worst that there can be, the loss of one's own children) presented in this paper was shown to be very different in the main surviving protagonists. Three of the individuals belonged to normally religious Muslim communities; two of them invoked the name of God and the afterlife, seeking consolation in their losses (Mrs B and Mrs H) and Dr A consoled his surviving children saying that their dead sisters, cousin and recently deceased mother will be together in heaven.

Dr. HK, a man of public health professional orientation and of clear political and activist ideology, received the support of his religious community. The Israeli mother (Mrs

P-E) does not appear to be a religious person, fitting with her membership in a secular society (I will not debate here whether Israel is a secular society or not. I take at face value the opinion of the historian Ilam Pappé "that it is secular".)⁴⁷ Her response is clearly within the ideological and political category, specifically humanitarian activism.

It is in those realms of spirituality or politics that those individuals define their adversity and develop an appropriate language and help seeking pattern. Those processes of self definition and help seeking will cross paths and interact with other manners of response, be they pathological and medical, or creative and artistic. Any of them or in combination should provide the individual with a measure of solace, peace, restitution and healing.

How is the methodology developed in this paper relevant to psychiatry? (The paper also seems to stray into the fields of religion, political decisions, social justice and human rights.) I find the answer to this question within our own professional field. At the last regional meeting of the World Psychiatric Association in Marrakech it was said that we are in need of a new paradigm in psychiatry.⁴⁸ It was also said that the failure of the health care system (the USA was cited specifically, but would be applicable to a good few other countries) is a failure of social justice.⁴⁹ A new paradigm should continue to make provisions for the inclusion of social, economic and cultural rights in our philosophy and practice of mental health care delivery, as explicit in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, United Nations, 1976. (United Nations, 1976) The new paradigm should add the understanding that concepts and techniques including a spiritual dimension are not necessarily antagonistic to or incompatible with the rational and scientific base of our discipline. Indeed, the spiritual and religious dimension carries no essential contradiction of the rational base of our profession. Thomas Aquinas broke a new path when he said in the 14th century that to know God, the supreme Truth, beside the Revelation based on faith, human beings have the use of reason. Because of his attitude to religion and reason he is credited (by CK Chesterton in his book "Aquinas, the Dumb Ox") with opening the field of thought to modern science. The pairing of theological ideas and the socio-political process of peace-making have proven beneficial in at least two of the examples cited in this paper and in three of them altogether the religious sentiments were a ferment within civil societies yearning for peace.

With regards to the mental health of victims it is significant the potential beneficial effect when community group organize into legal class actions against an offending party. It makes sense from a theoretical point of view since the legal profession is an important part of the formal or professional network of social support of persons and communities. The beneficial effect of organizing

communities around a critical issue has been demonstrated since the early study on survivors of the Buffalo Creek Dam Disaster in the Appalachian Mountains in 1972.^{50, 51} One would expect that the class actions against international corporations under the Alien Tort Act of 1789 will continue and settlements, in and more frequently out of court, will continue to take place.

This is to be taken into account specifically in those cases of individual survivors of human rights abuses testifying before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in which low forgiveness was associated with poorer psychiatric health.⁵² In our practice of psychiatry we are familiar with spiritual and religious themes brought to us by our patients. I trust this paper makes us more effective in helping our patients and their communities in coping with the adversities and traumas of war and armed conflicts.

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