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“NEXT TIME, TRY LOOKING IT UP IN YOUR GUT!!”: Tolerance, Civility, and Healthy Conflict in a Tea Party Era

Jason A. Springs

ON OCTOBER 17, 2005, the hyper-conservative political pundit and cultural icon Stephen Colbert introduced the concept “truthiness” during the inaugural episode of his show, *The Colbert Report*. Colbert explained The Word as follows:

Now I’m sure some of the Word Police, the wordanistas over at Webster’s are gonna say, “Hey, that’s not a word.” Well, anybody who knows me knows that I’m no fan of dictionaries or reference books. They’re elitist. Constantly telling us what is or isn’t true, or what did or didn’t happen. Who’s Britannica to tell me the Panama Canal was finished in 1914? If I want to say it happened in 1941, that’s my right. I don’t trust books. They’re all fact, no heart. And that’s exactly what’s pulling our country apart today. Because face it, folks, we are a divided nation. Not between Democrats and Republicans, or Conservatives and Liberals, or tops and bottoms. No, we are divided between those who think with their head, and those who know with their heart. Consider Harriet Miers. If you *think* about Harriet Miers, of course her nomination’s absurd. But the President didn’t say he thought about his selection. He said “I know her heart.” Notice how he said nothing about her brain? He didn’t have to. He *feels* the truth about Harriet Miers. And what about Iraq? If you *think* about it, maybe there are a few missing pieces to the rationale for war. But doesn’t taking Saddam out *feel* like the right thing? Right here? Right here in the gut? Because that’s where the truth comes from ladies and gentlemen, the gut. Do you know you have more nerve endings in your stomach than in your head? Look it up. Now somebody’s gonna say, “I did look that up, and it’s wrong.” Well mister, that’s because you looked it up in a book. Next time, try looking it up in your gut. I did, and my gut tells me that’s how our nervous system works. Now I know some of you may not trust your gut yet. But with my help, you will. The *truthiness* is: anyone can read the news to you. I promise to *feel* the news *at* you.

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At one level, Colbert's diatribe about "truthiness" is an instance of political satire pure and simple. And yet, taken to mean simply the opposite of what it says, *The Word's* message is as clear as it is monochromatic: the opposite of fact is feeling or wishful thinking, and much of political and media culture today ideologically exudes, calls forth, and manipulates feelings, casting reason and empirical evidence in opposition to what it parades as intuition and common sense. In contemporary North American public discourse, such oppositions typically take the form of antagonism between so-called "intellectualist elitism" that extols the force of the better argument, factual evidence, and measured exchange of reasons, on one hand, and what is sometimes derided as "know-nothing" populism that affirms the sufficiency of common sense or self-evidence of moral intuitions or religious truths, on another. The former espouses open-mindedness, fallibilism, and tolerance toward reasonable differences. The latter claims that self-evident or intuitively plain truths compel those who will recognize them to stand against the latent relativism which in fact underlies the alleged moral high ground of "tolerance."¹

Understood as a value that aims to mediate potentially explosive conditions of deep religious and moral diversity, tolerance has deep roots in Enlightenment rationalism. This tradition of thinking understands tolerance to be a correlate of the human capacity to entertain and evaluate a range of alternatives, and to then reasonably select among them. So conceived, tolerance stands in contrast to the urgings of passion, affect, and visceral inclinations.² From this perspective, the dictates of "the gut" that manifest themselves in the passionate character of attachments, convictions, prejudices, and sentiments risk rendering some people impervious to "the force of the better argument" and factual evidence. "The gut," one might say, anchors a perspective inclined to suspect meticulous and measured reason-exchange as either the mark of smooth-talking sophistry—cleverly "making the weaker argument appear the stronger, and the stronger the weaker"—or as "intellectual bullying." The present paper is an attempt to think transformatively about, and perhaps beyond, such oppositional framing.

In this paper I argue that the hope for engaging in democratic discourse across the deep divisions in current U.S. public life depends less upon further calls for more tolerance, and more upon

thinking of ways to constructively reframe conflict and intolerance. Is it possible to distinguish between constructive and destructive forms of intolerance? If so, what are the prospects for re-orienting analysis of current practices and processes so that things that look like simple intolerance (and thus, candidates for marginalization or exclusion from political processes) could be reconceived and re-directed for constructive purposes? Is there such a thing as healthy conflict? If so, how might we describe it?

Answers to these questions may be found in various strands of the “religion-in-public-life” debates that have unfolded over recent decades among religious ethicists and political philosophers, and in conflict transformation literature in peace studies.³ The former demonstrate that a properly construed tradition of democratic practices provides a means of mediating conflict amid the challenges presented by deep religious and moral pluralism. With respect to the latter, I will develop the notion that conflict ought not to be papered over with a veneer of tolerance, and then valorized as an achievement of peace.⁴ Rather, we should think in terms of “healthy conflict,” where volatile—even apparently intransigent—disagreements are confronted in an attempt to creatively transform the oppositional frames that hold those disagreements in place.

In Part I, I consider the questions posed above in light of a particularly intense episode of religiously-motivated conflict. In Part II, I examine how the need for distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy forms of conflict emerged as a pressing point of debate in the field of religious ethics. In Parts III through V, I carry forward the underdeveloped strands of this debate by describing a framework for thinking in terms of healthy conflict.

I. WHEN THE CULTURE WARS CAME TO CAMPUS

For a scholar of religion and conflict in public life it was nearly a dream come true. President Obama had accepted an invitation to give the year’s commencement address and to receive an honorary degree from the university where I teach. A number of students, administrators and faculty, and alumni expressed outrage. In this, they were joined by (seemingly) legions of outside groups. The objections centered on the President’s positions on abortion and stem cell research, which stood at odds with the

official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. This was a first; while Notre Dame had hosted presidents for commencement in the past, it had never done so in the context of the so-called “culture wars” that have dominated the U.S. political scene since the early 1980s.

Within weeks of the announcement activists and protestors descended upon the campus. Randall Terry, previously of Operation Rescue, set up headquarters in a rented house a mile or so away. Each morning several dozen protesters lined the main entryway to campus with signs and the occasional bullhorn. Many held four-foot by four-foot color placards portraying the bloody remains of late-term aborted fetuses. Others held signs that read: “Stop killing our children,” “thousands more murdered today,” “Shame on Notre Dame,” and “Our lady is weeping.” For the weeks leading up to commencement a bi-plane circled over the campus non-stop, pulling behind it a giant, bright-colored banner picturing yet another bloody, aborted fetus. A “truth truck” circulated through town pulling behind it large portraits of the University’s president and President Obama at either hand of Judas Iscariot.

Mary Ann Glendon, previously U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican and currently a professor at Harvard Law School, was slated to address the graduating class at commencement, and to receive the Laetere Medal—the University’s highest honor, awarded annually to an influential American Catholic. Having learned that Obama was to receive an honorary degree, Glendon withdrew. Stating that she favored serious debate, Glendon nonetheless noted that honoring Obama expressly contradicted the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ charge that Catholic institutions “should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles.” In such cases, the Bishops held that opponents “should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions” (Glendon, “Declining”).

With the culture-warriors all around us, my Senior Seminar in Religion, Multiculturalism, and Conflict was working through the Introduction to the updated edition of John Rawls’ *Political Liberalism*. My students were eager to discuss the events unfolding around us in light of their reading, perhaps especially because Randall Terry and company had promised to turn the Commencement into a “circus.” Our seminar room conversations un-

folded quite differently from the exchanges going on at the entryway to campus. The class disagreed passionately about the merits of Rawls' claim that stability and reasonableness of public deliberation require religiously committed citizens to restrain their religion-specific reasoning when engaging in public discourse about matters of basic justice. Yet, wherever they stood on that question, the students universally agreed the protestors bearing signs declaring that "Abortion is not something we will dialogue about" were doing something wrong.

Advocating "serious dialogue" between rival viewpoints became the way by which University administrators justified Obama's invitation in the face of mounting public criticism. The protestors' signs responded directly to this justification. My students all agreed that such refusal of dialogue portrayed a particularly grave vice. It was symptomatic of an egregious form of intolerance—a kind of unreasonable, conversation-stopping fundamentalism—uncompromising in its views to the point of refusing dialogue or debate altogether. The students thought it clear that reasoned debate required a measure of tolerance, and thus that tolerance and dialogue are goods that any citizen of a democracy ought to acknowledge, however strongly he or she feels about a particular issue. This insight emerged as "moral high ground" in our discussions. My students considered that they were willing to enter serious dialogue with those whose views they opposed, and they considered the protesters unwilling.

I pressed them: intuitive as this position appeared to them, did it account for the possibility that the deeply conflicting views presented by this case might simply be irreconcilable? Insofar as it provided a warrant for dismissing those deemed intolerant, the students' notion of tolerance risked underwriting its own refusal of engagement. The protesters at the campus gates did not refuse engagement altogether, else they would not have been standing where they were. The graphic signs of aborted fetuses they held up aimed to evoke revulsion and disgust in those who passed by. There was engagement here, even if those involved refused explicit conversation in the form of the reciprocal exchange of reasons. The prospects for constructive intervention thus seemed to depend upon recognizing the protesters' particular mode of engagement, grappling with its nuances, and imagining some form of response (other than dismissal). What were the

prospects for doing this without merely rendering more invidious the oppositions that already marked out that context?

II. RELIGIOUS DISSENSION AND HEALTHY CONFLICT

“If religious differences are likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future, how are we to reason with one another respectfully, productively, on issues of public importance? And how might we build coalitions among citizens of various persuasions to fight effectively for a just social order?” (Stout, “Pragmatism” 441). These questions are two of the most pivotal to emerge from the religion and public life debates that have unfolded among ethicists and philosophers over the last three decades. In rehearsing them, Jeffrey Stout gestured toward forms of public engagement that he described as “achievable by our efforts, in which citizens who disagree on religious and ethical questions create a political discussion that is more genuinely democratic in form and content than the one we’re having now.” Engaging the seemingly stultifying forms of conflict that arise in religiously diverse and culturally plural contexts *more democratically* involves expanding the compass of the kinds of reasons that might be employed in public, in addition to widening the circle of participants. To these ends, Stout invited his interlocutors—in particular, fellow citizens motivated by deep religious commitments and strong moral convictions—to “love justice, think hard about civility, and then say what they wish to the rest of us, whether that happens to be religious in content or not” (“Pragmatism” 434).

John Kelsay responded by pointing out that expanding the compass of argument and engagement would call upon skills and tools common to comparative ethical analysis: “listening carefully to others, interpreting them as reason-givers like oneself and one’s near companions, arguing with them in the spirit of fellow seekers, and with the possibility of personal and social expansion” (Kelsay 698). Kelsay added that such practices and skills avail themselves for democratic purposes not because they hold the key to *resolving* conflict over the most pressing and persistent controversies; rather, they afford fairly ordinary means by which fellow citizens might understand and meaningfully engage each other in “healthy conflict” over divisive, seemingly intractable issues.⁵

Critics of *Democracy and Tradition* claimed that encouraging fellow citizens to enter public political discourse and to think hard about civility—even to cultivate its virtues—and then inviting them to speak in the terms that they saw fit was a bit naïve. Indeed, some argued that the overriding concern with the nature and basis of epistemic justification in giving and asking for reasons made Stout's proposals ideal for scholarly circles, but ill-suited for lay audiences.⁶ Could the cultivation of deliberative virtues by which fellow-citizens hold one another accountable for the validity of their inferences through the measured exchange of reasons really overcome the combative, shrill, and strident character of contemporary political discourse?

This question has presented itself starkly in the age of Barack Obama, whose stated aims have been to inspire and elevate the character and content of political discourse. From those who persisted for years in their demands that Obama hand over his Kenyan birth certificate or who insist that he is a closet Muslim, to the Tea Party movement, to those shouting down Congressional representatives at Town Hall meetings in protest of “death panels” supposedly mandated by the 2009 health-care reform, to gun-toting attendees at Presidential town hall meetings, to ineffective “fact-check” websites, to Rep. Joe Wilson's irrepressible cry “You lie!” during a presidential address to a joint session of Congress, to much of what gets broadcast by Fox News and the other twenty-four-hour corporate media networks—all these lead some to the conclusion that civil, mutually respectful argument is an illusion, a figment of an idealistic democratic imagination.⁷

One response to such unhandsome conditions is to say that the items cited reflect a marginal (if vocal) fringe element, and that the vociferousness with which these voices project themselves into public life simply demonstrates how removed they are from the mainstream. In this sense, things are actually not as bad as they seem.⁸ A second response is to damn the fray as irrational, emotivist, and as further evidence that what aims to pass for democratic discourse really boils down to “pseudo-democratic babble,” the arbitrary contest of will against will in “civil war carried on by other means” (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 236). In such circumstances the parties refuse to listen to one another, rebuff norms of reciprocity, and deny that their opponents are fellow-seekers. The only proper approach is thus to ensure the

defeat or the conversion of one's opponents. In this case the circumstances of our public life give rise to deep skepticism about the viability of democratic practices, especially with respect to the arbitration of religiously motivated conflict.

In this respect, it is worth remembering that such skepticism about democratic practices did much to set contemporary debates about religion in public life in motion in the first place. Recall, for instance, the closing pages of *After Virtue*, where Alasdair MacIntyre indexed what he characterized as the incapacity of liberal democracies to actually resolve moral conflict. The laws of liberal states, and the U.S. Supreme Court in particular, basically serve "peace-making" or "truce-keeping" functions. "What our laws show is the extent and degree to which conflict has to be suppressed," he wrote (236). The argument suggested that, in a society as litigious as the contemporary United States—where the weightier a social or moral issue is, the more likely it is to be decided by the Supreme Court—the impossibility of meaningful moral conflict is compensated for by the functioning of the state, which "imposes a bureaucratized unity on a society which lacks genuine moral consensus" (236). Of course, on this view, even legal adjudication does not actually hold conflict in abeyance. Rather, the contest of preferences gets pushed back one level, playing out (for instance) in the form of opposing efforts to influence (or altogether obstruct) the procedures by which pivotal judicial rulings get made (i.e., through Supreme Court and other judicial appointments).⁹

Advocates of healthy conflict must think transformatively about the conditions that motivate such skeptical complaints. They should resist the dual temptation: either to make invidious or overly polarizing contrasts, thus exacerbating conflict, or to diminish the depth and severity of disagreements in question, perhaps in hopes of making them go away. We need to find ways of reframing intolerance, identifying the constructive potentialities of conflict and developing strategies for engagement between citizens.

III. WHEN TOLERANCE IS NOT ENOUGH

In our contemporary context, "tolerance" is a term widely endorsed as an antidote for the negative effects of religious and moral difference. Yet, work by Robert Wuthnow has suggested

that it is also a concept practically devoid of content.¹⁰ In fact, contemporary discourse seems susceptible to Herbert Marcuse's critique of "pure tolerance."¹¹

Marcuse claimed that tolerance in the 1960s was widely understood as cultivated indifference. He further claimed that the accompanying behaviors—restrained aversion, or suppression of revulsion at perceived deviance—were insidiously repressive. First, while heralding itself as impartial, tolerance was quite partisan. It amounted to default support of a social and political status quo, "the already established machinery of discrimination" (Marcuse 36). If "pure tolerance" successfully fostered a more or less tranquil coexistence between volatile opponents, it did so at the cost of leaving the root causes of potential conflict—things like racial discrimination and economic injustice—untouched. Secondly, Marcuse claimed that as a prevailing feature of broadly accepted common sense, tolerance had morphed "from an active to a passive state, from practice to non-practice" (34). A nearly unquestioned "civic virtue" thus actually served to discourage approaches designed to expose unjust conditions and to inspire positive change.¹²

Similarly today: a thin veneer of tolerant, "live-and-let-live" detachment frequently veils or represses more deep-seated attitudes, rendering these more explosive when they finally surface.¹³ To tolerate is to "bear with" or "endure"—to sublimate disapproval of—practices or beliefs that one recognizes as "objectionable or deviant" (Little 3).¹⁴ Taken as the primary approach to political and religiously-motivated conflict, such a conception risks leaving citizens under-prepared for circumstances in which passions boil over and people are unresponsive to calls for peaceful co-existence. From this perspective, tolerance is like antibiotics—over-reliance can actually lead to immunity from the antidote, rather than the disease.

How, then, to grapple with the possibility that incivility and intolerance may not be merely nagging accidents to which democratic processes and practitioners are occasionally prone, but rather elements intrinsic to those processes and practices? After all, Walt Whitman described the American democratic experiment of his own day as an "appalling spectacle" saturated by "melodramatic screaming, patriotic and jingoistic gestures," and a "mass of petty banter" (West 189-90).¹⁵ Our context is thus not

so unique. If such behaviors are endemic to democratic practices, then it will not do to aim at eliminating them once and for all. Moreover, gauging the viability of democratic practices—and the healthiness of the conflict therein—by the degree to which such elements have been successfully contained or rooted out may be a formula for despair. The challenge, rather, is to develop an account of democratic practice that aims to think creatively about the persistence of incivility and intolerance. How is this possible?

IV. SPEAKING TRUTHINESS TO POWER

Nearly a decade before Stephen Colbert made his critical intervention on behalf of “truthiness,” political philosopher William Connolly was investigating the discursive, political and cultural consequence of “the gut,” or what he calls “the thought-imbued feelings built into the stomach” (*Secularist* 176). Historically, the visceral registers presented a fault-line broadly understood to divide prejudice, passion, experience, and belief associated with religious commitment from reasonableness, fact, and tolerance. This approach has been central to the ascendance of secularism in Europe and North America generally, and similarly indispensable to the framing of the “culture wars” in contemporary politics (3).

Connolly sought to subvert this dichotomy, arguing that visceral registers are in fact inextricable from our rational capacities. They are thus as susceptible to engagement as reason. He writes:

[W]e now know, the stomach has a simple cortical organization of its own. This infrasensible center stores thought-imbued feelings of sadness, anxiety, happiness, disgust, anger, and revenge to be activated under particular circumstances, as when, for example, an intense feeling of disgust rises up when you observe someone picking his nose and eating it. Or when you observe public signs of a practice of sexuality that disturbs the sense of naturalness sedimented into your own. . . . [I]t is no longer feasible to treat “the sensible” as simply dumb, or automatic, or equipped with only slight capacities for sublimation and augmentation. The sensible. . . [is a] domain in which we think, within which intensities of cultural appraisal are stored, and through which we value and devalue. . . . The visceral register, moreover, can be drawn on to thicken an intersubjective ethos of generous engagement between

diverse constituencies or to harden strife between partisans.” (*Secularist* 175, 177)¹⁶

Such claims take seriously the truth in “truthiness.” The pivotal premise here is that the visceral register is not easily transcended. In fact, it is really not transcendable at all. At times “thought-imbued intensities” well up into the frame of consciousness. Sometimes they operate at a level below conscious recognition, yet inform and frame perception and experience. To dismiss or belittle them as irrational, or conceive of them as something that must be contained for the sake of democratic discourse, is to ignore important aspects of political engagement.

From the vantage point Connolly describes, finding a means by which to engage “truthiness” is indispensable to contemporary democracy. As such, the “visceral registers” seem critical to any notion of “healthy conflict.” How else can we conceive of creative interventions in the seemingly intransigent, allegedly irrational behaviors that characterize contemporary public life.

Of course, to re-conceive of visceral registers as a medium through which many of one’s fellow-citizens engage in public and political life is not to grant those registers unquestionable authority. The deliverances of “the gut” are not simply impositions of “brute data of the body.” Though they may well up quickly—and overflow and grasp one in ways that are unruly—they are, nonetheless, discursively nested. In other words, the gut is not *sui generis*, essentially private, or uncontestable. And its deliverances do not stand entirely outside the “space of reasons.” Strongly felt, visceral reactions can be analyzed with respect to justice. In principle, they may be subject to suasion, revision, and adjustment.¹⁷

What Connolly’s suggestion rules out is any *de facto* dismissal of the deliverances of “the gut” as purely and simply prohibitive of meaningful engagement, and thus to be excluded or repressed by default. In fact, a viscerally reflective perspective aims to remain attuned to ways that “the gut”—even at its most unruly—may well convey insight and wisdom. This argument seems indispensable for a model of healthy conflict.

Reframed in this way, visceral registers may be engaged creatively, even if those expressing them resist or refuse explication and deliberative exchange. This is a crucial point, especially in contexts like the one described at the outset of this essay. For a

model of healthy conflict to remain sufficiently expansive under such circumstances, its advocates must hold open the possibility of “discourse” about the deliverances of the gut. While “the visceral” cannot be reduced into propositionally articulated claims, it may yet be addressed in a more extended form of “conversation.”¹⁸

Clearly, explicating normative attitudes in the form of commitments and assertions that can be inferentially tracked for their internal coherence and truth is indispensable for democratic exchange (and communication generally). This is especially the case in circumstances that are amenable to patient and charitable engagement. However, the pivotal point here is that a viable model of healthy conflict must take account of those contexts in which patient, conversational modes of engagement are not available, or are refused. The measured exchange of reasons may quickly be overpowered by the internal contradictions of the visceral, especially when these lead to strident behaviors. Some circumstances require modes of engagement that reach beyond standard conceptions of deliberative conversation. Connolly’s analysis obliges us to envision a type of political encounter characterized by generosity, in that it seeks at one and the same time to struggle with what it opposes and to respect the opponent. Here, “generosity” aims to prevent what Connolly calls “an ethos of cultural revenge.” To put it another way, generosity involves the cultivation of what he elsewhere calls “agonistic respect,” a sensibility that recognizes the inescapability and severity of conflict over issues about which people care deeply.¹⁹ One might speak of promoting a “generous ethos” involving an expanded recognition of the variety of registers in which political engagement occurs. The aim is to reframe and operationalize these features of deep conflict in ways that are constructive. The question is: how shall we accomplish this?

In response to this question, I should like to call attention to developments in peace and conflict studies. Conversation between these literatures might contribute to, complicate, and enrich, the notion of healthy conflict to which Kelsay gestures above. In the following section, I outline these developments.

V. STRATEGIC NONVIOLENCE

Prevailing conceptions of tolerance aim to promote a stable, well-ordered, and peaceful society. On this view, stability and peace are understood to be conditions of relative tranquility created through the pre-emption, containment, or resolution of conflict. On this account, conflict is antithetical to social stability; it is the opposite of peace. From the conflict-transformation perspective, however, such thinking simply perpetuates the problem it seeks to resolve. This judgment rests, in part, on the way that appeals for tolerance reflect a “negative” conception of peace.

Negative peace is predicated on the assumption that “conflict” designates a problematic condition, an interruption or departure from the normal state of affairs. To resolve conflict is thus to restore the status quo. The resulting conception of peace thereby focuses on the absence of conflict. “Negative peace” is highly contested among scholars because it seems to elide the systemic causes of conflict. To put this another way, a focus on tolerance leaves untouched those structural, cultural, and relational forms of injustice that typically hold in place and perpetuate violence of various forms. Conflict resolution focuses so intently on managing and mitigating overt circumstances of conflict in the interest of facilitating the emergence of peaceful conditions that, however inadvertently, it leaves “the root structural causes of conflict. . . untouched,” if it addresses the question of such structural causes and conditions at all (Lederach, *Preparing* 16).²⁰

Conflict-transformation specialists agree that pursuit of peace in its “negative dimension”—reduction, containment, and cessation of explicit situational conflict—remains necessary. In some cases, it is urgent. Yet for the transformational model a focus on negative peace is insufficient. Transformationists emphasize the necessity of building the conditions of a “positive peace” through “the integration of human society” and the development of “a pattern of cooperation and integration between human groups” (Galtung 29).²¹ Without this intentional and sustained pursuit of justice, and the accompanying attention to of structural and cultural violence, “peace” becomes a cover for continuing oppression. Recall Marcuse’s critique of pure tolerance: as he had it, surface-level conditions of tranquility often mask pervasive structural and cultural forms of violence. The resulting conditions may be placid, but they are also unjust.²²

Of particular relevance to my effort to expand upon the notion of “healthy conflict” emerging from the religion-in-public-life debates is the fact that conflict transformationists view violence, rather than conflict, as the converse of peace. While standing against violence in all its forms (direct, structural, and cultural), advocates of conflict transformation are adamant in the view that “violence is not simply the intensification of conflict” (Zehr 182-83). Conflict transformation re-conceptualizes conflict, seeing it as a driver of systemic change (Lederach, *Preparing* 18). Indeed, conflict transformation promotes explicit engagement in conflict in two ways: the first may be termed “situational,” and the second, “structural.”

At the situational level, conflict is conceived as a catalyst that can be deployed for strategic reasons. Here conflict may be “healthy” insofar as participants engage one another in ways that expose unjust conditions and facilitate positive change. As an example, consider Martin Luther King Jr.’s description of the intentional effort by participants in the Civil Rights movement to instigate “tension” and “crisis packed” circumstances in order to compel confrontation over conditions of racial injustice. King argued that conflict precipitated by direct, nonviolent forms of civil disobedience would illuminate unjust conditions and facilitate change by prodding opponents into negotiation.²³ If nonviolence provoked violent responses from defenders of the status quo, it might still serve the cause insofar as such violence undermined the legitimacy of existing arrangements.²⁴

One might think it intuitive that a hallmark of healthy conflict is the extent to which the parties in question are willing to tolerate the views of their opponents, with compromise and negotiated settlements as objectives. And yet, according to proponents of conflict transformation, King’s analysis points in another direction. King’s aim in compelling his opponents to enter into negotiation was not to arrive at a compromise. He aimed to abolish unjust laws. To be sure, a willingness to negotiate and even to compromise were crucial, when strategically appropriate. Nevertheless, negotiated settlement and compromise were *relative* goods—good insofar as they served the ends of justice.²⁵ In instances like the Montgomery Bus Boycott, for instance, a refusal to comply with racist laws disrupted existing patterns of race relations. Conflict transformation evaluates such disruptions in terms

of their potential for transformation. Acts of resistance may transform the elements of conflict if they can serve as “reframing enactments.” The Montgomery Bus Boycott brought economic and social pressure to bear upon those in power. It did so not only to resist (with the aim of abolishing) racist laws, but also in the hope of inspiring new “ways of thinking” about the nature of the relationship between whites—some of whom believed themselves to be free of harshly racist attitudes and commitments, but were nonetheless beneficiaries and perpetrators of racist social structures—and their black fellow-citizens.²⁶ In such a case, rejection of piecemeal negotiation and compromise was the appropriate response rather than pursuing tolerant compromise: the virtue at stake is justice, rather than or at least more than tolerance.

It is important that King operated with a conception of justice in which realism regarding the dynamics of power was joined with respect for the humanity of one’s opponents. More precisely, King described the use of conflict as a dialectic between love and power.²⁷ Love compels one to refuse to cooperate with evil. In the civil rights movement, this refusal took the form of prophetic speech, righteous anger, and civil disobedience.²⁸ It was, however, the same love that infused any denunciation and prophetic witness to truth with respect for the humanity and dignity of King’s opponents. Indeed, King spoke of desiring an opponent’s good (in particular, freedom from racism), despite the fact that the opponent’s actions were directed at preserving conditions properly denounced as evil.

For King, love compelled engagement with power at the same time that it qualified its use. It *compelled* an engagement with power in the form of the refusal to cooperate with or actively resist oppressive social structures and attitudes. Love also placed limits on the use of power by requiring that coercive action and civil disobedience be nonviolent. Tempered by love, such “militant nonviolence” ought never to eliminate the hope for reconciliation with one’s adversary.²⁹ For King, nonviolence entailed the hope that one’s opponent’s frame of reference might be altered or reframed, inspiring a recognition of injustice and a desire for change. The aim, as it had been attributed to Gandhi, was to bring one’s adversaries to their senses, not to their knees.

Of course, King exemplifies a highly rarified, goal-directed, and strategic conception of conflict as a means to constructive

change. His use of conflict was intentional and precisely targeted.³⁰ Often, things proceed in a different fashion. Conflict erupts unexpectedly, unpredictably, and moves in ways that contrast problematically with King's approach, which ties conflict to an organized effort. It is for this reason that conflict transformation ties situational analysis to a reconceptualization of conflict at the structural level. Conflict transformation promotes building capacities that will enable participants to deal with various types of conflicts. Here the notion that conflict is not a problem with an essence that may be addressed, but rather a phenomenon built into social and political life, is key. Wherever there is relationship there will be conflict.³¹ The operative questions are what kind of conflict; how it relates to a particular pattern of relationships; and thus what goals engagement might serve.³²

At the structural level, conflict transformation would identify conflict as healthy insofar as engagement might illuminate, reframe, and hopefully alter aspects of the relevant patterns of injustice. The aim is to critically assess the structural and cultural dimensions of the relational contexts and histories in which those patterns are inscribed. The model opts for the trope of transformation (rather than resolution) because it expects the persistent resurgence of conflict—particularly as regards matters that parties may identify as non-negotiable or that prove to be intractable in practice—though it expects such resurgence to evolve and manifest itself differently over time.

One way conflict transformation attempts to reframe the elements of “sudden” conflict involves treating situational aspects of conflict as a window into systemic causes. Returning to the example of civil rights, it seems important that King came to recognize that overcoming the conditions of racism could not simply be a matter of abolishing discriminatory laws and passing new, non-discriminatory ones. Certainly, it entailed this. But those surface-level circumstances afforded opportunities to shed light on the deeper transformations that were necessary—transformations in which King found himself implicated. King gradually came to the realization that many of the movement's greatest successes would ultimately fail if they did not lead to further transformation of structures inscribing inequalities related to race and class.³³ By the time of his death, King saw these as matters requiring atten-

tion to foreign, as well as domestic affairs, and thus began to connect civil rights to a critique of imperialism.

VI. FROM KING TO COLBERT

To indicate what the above approach to healthy conflict might look like in our current context, I now want to draw together the various strands of “healthy conflict” I have been sketching. Conflict transformationists press us to go beyond analyses of democratic deliberation. We are not to ask *whether* conflict will or will not arise, or to think about how to avoid or even to contain and resolve it, when necessary. Instead, we should ask, “How can people develop capacities for engaging one another creatively, constructively, and in ways that transform the elements of the conflict in the interests of justice?” and “What resources are available for this?” Just as importantly, the conflict transformation frame suggests we measure the viability of democratic practices less by their power to resolve conflict once and for all, and more by their usefulness in illuminating conditions of injustice, spurring the pursuit of justice and the reduction of structural violence.

How does my effort to sketch an expanded conception of healthy conflict fare when summarized with reference to Kelsay’s sketch of it above? What, for instance, are we to make of the prospect of directing conflict toward “the possibility of personal and social expansion” in an era marked by the refusal of patient and conversational exchange, where the parties refuse to listen to one another or rebuff norms of reciprocity? What would it mean to think about healthy conflict in relation to, for example, the Tea Party movement that emerged following the election of Barack Obama?

A number of social critics and public intellectuals have struggled to understand and respond to the Tea Party.³⁴ An intervention that seems to approximate the approach for which I have argued is that of Stanley Fish. Fish pointed to the way that Tea Party efforts succeeded in altering political discourse in the midterm elections of 2010. He argued that critics’ dismissal of the Tea Party as deliberately incoherent in fact only fueled its effectiveness. Such criticisms proved self-defeating precisely because they conformed to a received framing of public discourse in which measured rationalism is juxtaposed with “the gut.” Fish

countered this by appealing to the Greek myth of Antaeus. He wrote:

The Greek mythological figure Antaeus won victory after victory because his opponents repeatedly threw him to the ground, not realizing that it was the earth (in the figure of his mother, Gaia) that nourished him and gave him renewed strength. The Tea Party's strength comes from the down-to-earth rhetoric it responds to and proclaims, and whenever high-brow critics heap the dirt of scorn and derision upon the party, its powers increase. . . . That won't work. Better, perhaps, to take a cue from Hercules, who figured out the source of Antaeus's strength and defeated him by embracing him in a bear hug, lifting him up high, and preventing him from touching the ground. Don't sling mud down in the dust where your opponents thrive. Instead, engage them as if you thought that the concerns they express (if not their forms of expression) are worthy of serious consideration, as indeed they are. Lift them up to the level of reasons and evidence and see how they fare in the rarified air of rational debate where they just might suffer the fate of Antaeus. (*New York Times*, Sept. 27, 2010)

Here Fish makes an unexpected move, at least from the vantage point of many accounts of deliberative democracy. He proposes to seriously consider, rather than to dismiss, the concerns that drive the Tea Party. Nevertheless, his positive proposal—"lift[ing their concerns] up to the level of reasons and evidence and. . . rational debate"—reverts to a conventional deliberative response. I think such a response is likely to be ineffective, precisely because it reinstates the dichotomous framing of public discourse that the Tea Party used to its advantage. That framing pins the ideals of rational debate, measured reason-exchange, and evidence to the very forms of engagement that many who claim the Tea Party mantle despise. They pit their own appeals to visceral populism and "down-to-earth rhetoric" against such "elitist approaches." Thus, Fish's proposition to seriously engage voices that from a standard deliberative democratic vantage point invite dismissal is consistent with my account of healthy conflict. And yet, his prescriptive proposal, to draw public discourse *fully* within the ambit of measured, evidence-based debate, falls short of the model of healthy conflict on offer here. Healthy conflict, as I have sketched it above, opens the door to—in fact, impels the use of—the full breadth of rhetorical modes of engagement in situations that frustrate and defy the basic parameters of deliberative exchange.

According to conflict-transformation literature, the idea of healthy conflict conceptualizes conflict as unavoidable. It is a phenomenon intrinsic to social and political relationship. Healthy conflict acknowledges the potential irremediability of some oppositions, as well as the non-reducibility of passionate, visceral registers in matters citizens perceive to be of vital importance. Healthy conflict attempts to identify modes of engagement that permit creative grappling with those elements in a particular context that suggest injustice. With reference to the Tea Party, I take the reason/gut dichotomy as an illustrative piece of a relational configuration that perpetuates conflict. This dualism seems to be particularly intransigent in the present context. I argue that navigating the obstacles it presents to “interpreting one’s opponents as reason-givers like oneself” requires acknowledging, and then creative and expansive grappling with, the visceral registers of “the gut.”

Framed in the terms of healthy conflict, a particular citizen’s logical inconsistencies, or even his or her outright refusal of dialogue, ought not to occasion charges of conversation-stopping irrationalism or of simple discursive viciousness. Rather, such behaviors invite closer examination—or a look through different lenses—at the way a citizen’s motivating concerns, orienting commitments, relational patterns, and objectives take the place of “logical consistency” in the case in question. Reframing of this sort presents one (albeit small) example of transforming the elements of the conflict. It avoids the *de facto* disqualification of modes of expression that some would term nonsensical.

At the same time, such a conception of engagement does not absolve the parties in a conflict of the duty to assess the substance of one another’s commitments, with particular attention to the dimensions of justice and power. And in fact, identifying the aim of justice as a mark of healthy conflict means that one cannot play down the fact that many conflicts will involve disputes about the nature and basis of justice. This means that any struggle for justice must be accompanied by efforts to establish and promote a particular account of that ideal.³⁵ Again, the primary question becomes how to deal creatively and innovatively with the elements present in a conflict over the very meaning of social norms.

With regard to the reason/gut dichotomy, a conception of healthy conflict that reflects upon the unyielding nature of the visceral registers provides a means of challenging the power differences built into the organization of “public discourse” and “public life.” Marshalling and unleashing visceral “force” may have the effect of disrupting a relational context in which “the force of the better reason” is believed to hold sway. Of course, disrupting public discourse may itself be an intentional tactic, to the extent that deliberative incoherence and rage may serve the program of one party more than others. The operative questions are: To what ends does a particular appeal to the gut aim? What will be its effects? Is it surreptitious or forthright? Does it involve intentional manipulation? If so, by whom? And, of course, how shall citizens contend with it? It is with these questions that we not only rejoin Connolly, but perhaps even more instructively, Stephen Colbert. Connolly himself proposes a strategy of

Expos[ing] the tactics of those who do not themselves call attention to them; you introduce counterstrategies of cultural-corporeal infusion attached to a more generous vision of public life; and you publicize, as you proceed, how these counterstrategies themselves impinge upon the affectively rich, nonconscious layers of life. The way in which Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart mimic and exaggerate the orchestration of image, voice, music, sound, and rhythm by media stars such as Bill O’Reilly provides one starting point. They do not simply expose factual misstatements—an inadequate response to influences exerted in part upon affective states situated below the refined intellect. Instead, they fight fire with fire, reenacting media strategies of inculcation by parodying them. (“Experience,” 70)

I would add here that the key to the effectiveness of such an intervention is not that Colbert simply parodies elements of cultural and political conflict, but that he inhabits a role out of which he spins an alternative discursive frame. Habitation of this role portrays an alteration of the discourse through reframing it (“reframing enactment” in the terms of conflict transformation), opening possibilities for speaking provocatively and in ways that might, in effect, involve a transposition of perspective.

Transposing perspective in this sense involves more than finding a way of hearing those for whom there would otherwise be no hope for dialogue. Someone like Colbert resists dichotomies by confusing them. The inhabited role, admittedly fictional at some moments, cuts in upon “real life” at others, yet without produc-

ing any simple synthesis.³⁶ Claims that are incoherent or invalid from a logical point of view, empirically false, or in conflict with the self-interests of those who make them, are re-conceptualized through rhetoric. In bringing this spin and manipulation to light, the performance refocuses attention on the questions: What aims and objectives are at stake? What are the motivations of particular agents? What is the basis and character of the account of justice which undergirds their efforts? How best might one initiate counter-narratives and strengthen efforts aimed at justice?

Tempting though it might be, I am not proposing here a model of engagement that sets as its standard the comic artistry of Stephen Colbert (and the room full of writers who compose his material). However, to say that the *Colbert Report* is nothing more than passive entertainment misses the incisiveness of the intervention. While it cannot displace the difficult on-the-ground work of combating injustice and pursuing peace in its positive dimensions, such performances nonetheless illuminate the value—even the indispensability—of atypical modes of engagement: as Stephen Colbert says of Stephen Colbert, “embody[ing] the bullshit until hopefully you can smell it” (*Rolling Stone*, Sept. 2009).³⁷ Moreover, in the case of Colbert, the performance accomplishes its task by targeting—even utilizing—the intensities of “the gut.”³⁸

CONCLUSION

I walked to campus on the morning of President Obama’s Commencement address. As in the previous weeks, crowds assembled at the front entryway, waving the many signs I had come to expect. Counter-protesters had gathered as well. One person with a bullhorn chanted over and over the lines: “Abortion on demand, and without apology/ without this basic right, women cannot be free!” As I proceeded past the Performing Arts Center, a woman was praying on her knees surrounded by a ring of police, themselves surrounded by a ring of camera-clad media. She was one among many arrested that day for trespassing while praying on the campus grounds in an act of civil disobedience.

President Obama was in peak form in the speech he delivered. He built all the right bridges. He spoke of how his work as a community organizer led him to collaborate with Chicago’s Car-

dinal Bernardin and local Catholic churches. He recounted his own journey to becoming a Christian. He anchored the speech in the claim that, though the divisions ran deep on this issue, surely everyone could agree that abortion is a heart-wrenching decision with deep moral and spiritual dimensions, and that it is desirable to reduce the total number of abortions—and the number of unwanted pregnancies.³⁹

The news networks were present in force, and several of them broadcast the ceremony live and uninterrupted. Faculty had been told to anticipate hecklers, and indeed two or three in attendance shouted at Obama at different points with “Abortion is murder. Stop killing our children!” One of them was disruptive enough to ignite among a large portion of the audience a repetition of Obama’s 2008 campaign slogan “Yes we can!” That was quickly over-taken by the collective mantra from the graduating class, “We are ND!” The media got elements of the spectacle they anticipated, though the event was far from the circus promised by Randall Terry. Certainly no typical commencement ceremony, it was nonetheless respectful, even civil.

As one who supported the President’s invitation and honorary degree, and was inclined to find persuasive his account of a civil and patient search for common ground in light of heated opposition, I found the opening moments of his speech elating. It was perhaps eight or ten minutes into Obama’s address that I first noticed what began as a scratching irritation of background noise—initially, barely noticeable, perhaps like the chirping of crickets. Gradually the sound pushed itself forward into my awareness and rose to full pitch, grabbing hold of my attention. The sounds morphed into a high-pitched chorus—loud, incessant, rhythmic. It was the sound of babies crying. There was no identifiable direction from which the sounds were coming. They came from all sides, as I strained to track them. The sounds were distracting, irritating, chilling. The sound of crying inserted itself viscerally into Obama’s high rhetoric and his elegant case for tolerance and common ground regarding the controversies that framed the day.⁴⁰

Outside, a few hundred meters from the Joyce Center, as many as two thousand people had gathered—priests, faculty, students, some of whom had boycotted their Commencement, and their families. The priests held mass, speakers addressed their audi-

ences, and people prayed together. Some in attendance would later reflect on the spectacle of the preceding weeks, and the protestors at the gates in particular. They were outsiders, some suggested. They detracted from the propriety and respectfulness of the student-led opposition to the position represented by President Obama. They had relied on disruption, shock, and pagantry. They had abandoned the best weapon at the disposal of those who opposed abortion: arguments.

I was not entirely certain of this. Clearly, there had been no argument to counter President Obama's from the commencement platform, no formal exchange of reasons or tracking of claims and counter-claims. However, what had been wedged into the event (and into much of the preceding weeks) involved visceral disruption and the creation of dissonance as forms of insurgent intervention. The effect of this intervention had been to alter the deliberative frame of those moments, a reframing in light of which I was not certain how to respond. Coming to recognize and contend with this as a form of being viscerally engaged was only a starting point, of course. To recognize this as engagement is not to *replace* practices of tracking inferences and holding one another accountable to the implications of their claims. It is, rather, to conceive of those practices more expansively, and to do so as a necessary step in crafting a sufficiently capacious account of healthy conflict for a moment in which conflict seems to be intractable. The aim is to engage in conflict transformatively, rather than simply to tolerate difference. This seems indispensable for those who would traverse the dichotomous oppositions that currently frame public life, and who wish to resist the temptations of blanket condemnation of opponents (on the one hand), and despair or shoulder-shrugging refusal (on the other).⁴¹

NOTES

1. For a meticulous articulation of the former, see McKinnon, *Toleration*. For examples of the latter, see Hostetler and McDowell, *New Tolerance*, and Stetson and Conti, *Truth About Intolerance*.
2. Modern conceptions of toleration emerged largely, though not exclusively, in the form of an opposition between reason and independent thinking, on one hand, and religious superstition, fanaticism, and the alleged arbitrariness of the claims of traditional authority, on the other. To take an example

that would become particularly influential in the U.S. context, in works such as “A Letter Concerning Toleration” and “The Reasonableness of Christianity,” John Locke made the case that religious beliefs which were held reasonably stood in stark contrast to the dangerous dictates of urge, inclination and prejudice most exemplified by the “religious enthusiasts” of his day. Locke argued that such enthusiasts neglected their epistemic duties in that they refused to weigh and measure the reasonableness of what they took to be moments of direct enlightenment from God. They thus mistook their own passions and interests for God’s special revelation to them. They suffered, Locke wrote, from a “warmed or overweening brain” (IV, xix, 7), and “melancholy. . . mixed with devotion” (iv, xix, 5). The result was socially dangerous. “Their minds being thus prepared, whatever groundless opinion comes to settle itself strongly upon their fancies, is an illumination from the Spirit of God, and presently of divine authority: and whatsoever odd action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do, that impulse is concluded to be a call or direction from heaven, and must be obeyed” (IV, xix, 6). As a correlate of a reasonable approach to religious belief, tolerance would promote social stability and peace. For an account of the opposition between reason and tolerance, and passion and fanaticism as it emerged in Locke’s work, see Wolterstorff (118-19). For a broader account, see Fisher (chap. 3).

3. I use the phrase “the religion-in-public-life debates” here to designate to a range texts and exchanges over recent decades (see the bibliography for numerous examples). Drawing pivotal insights from the “religion-in-public-life” debates in philosophical and religious ethics into conversation with insights from the conflict transformation literature in peace studies is a particular contribution that this article aims to make. Mine is not the first attempt to bring conflict transformation into the ambit of broader conversations in the study of religion. Earlier efforts include Appleby, *Ambivalence*, esp. Chapter 6; Little and Appleby, “Religious Peacebuilding”; Little, “Peace, Justice, and Religion.” Omer provides perhaps the most meticulous positioning available so far of religion and conflict literature in the broader study of religion vis-à-vis conflict transformation and peacebuilding literature in peace studies in her article, “Can a Critic be a Caretaker Too?”
4. The tendency to focus orientationally upon deadly conflict and explicit forms of violence is most apparent in the seminal account of religion and conflict transformation articulated by Little and Appleby. As I discuss below, the multidimensional account for which I am arguing has been the subject of much debate in peace research literature for several decades. This dimension of the literature has recently found more refined articulation in Lederach and Appleby, “Strategic Peacebuilding.” The present article aims to contribute to, and press forward, the strategy expressed in the more recent literature.
5. Kelsay’s point responded directly to Sumner Twiss’s claim that “the theme of moral conflict resolution is, for Stout, the principle and proper aim of comparative ethics” (Twiss 653). Stout endorsed Kelsay’s characterization to the extent that it aided in illuminating his motivating concern as not merely resolving moral conflicts, but also as “aiming for justice, practical wisdom, and civic friendship as conceived by democratic lights.” As I demonstrate below, these positive dimensions of Stout’s approach to moral conflict place his project in close proximity to conflict transformation literature (“Comment” 724).

6. Criticisms along these lines were perhaps most trenchantly leveled by Gilbert Meilaender in his review of *Democracy and Tradition*. Paul Weithman touched on similar concerns in his review in *Faith and Philosophy*. Stout's own responses to criticisms of this kind can be found throughout his later text, *Blessed Are the Organized*.
7. Susan Herbst addresses some of these examples in *Rude Democracy*. For a particularly trenchant diagnosis of the toxic effects of contemporary media in public discourse, see Jamieson and Capella, *Echo Chamber*. Journalist Kate Zernike provides observational description of the emergence and development of the Tea Party in *Boiling Mad*. For pointed examples, see Friedman, "Too Good to Check"; Pew Research Center, "Growing Number"; and CBS News/NYT Poll, "One in Four Americans."
8. Such a position comes through particularly clearly in Galston and Nivola, "Delineating the Problem."
9. In a more recent essay, MacIntyre has reflected explicitly on the goods that are available through conflict when it is situated in an epistemic context that is sufficiently unified. In the absence of such coherence, he has reiterated in his current work, conflict in liberal-democratic contexts tends to inspire what he calls "pseudo-democratic babble," which he takes to be exemplified by much grassroots political activism in the contemporary United States. To counter this, MacIntyre has proposed forms of censorship in contemporary U.S. public discourse modeled on the laws that criminalize holocaust denial in various European states. See MacIntyre, "Toleration"; and his Phillip Quinn Memorial Lecture, "Intolerance, Censorship, and Other Requirements of Rationality."
10. See Wuthnow (*America* 286-87).
11. See Marcuse ("Repressive Tolerance" 32-59).
12. Marcuse's caution is that, even if acknowledged as a key ingredient for peace and social stability, there are great dangers in mistaking tolerance as sufficient in itself, and in overlooking its capacity to take on vicious and repressive forms.
13. The "Responses to Religious Diversity Project" (1999-2005) found that, while 80% of the representative survey sample agreed that tolerance of religious diversity is good for America, 60% of the same sample favored the U.S. government monitoring and collecting information about Muslim religious groups in the United States (51% favored the same for Hindu religious groups; 48% for Buddhist religious groups). Nearly 40% of the same sample favored making it harder for Muslims to settle in the United States, and 66% favored "keeping a close watch on all foreigners" in the United States. Wuthnow offers a sobering analysis of this segment of the project's findings in "Religious Diversity". Full results of the Responses to Religious Diversity Project (1999-2005) appear at: <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/DIVERSTY.asp>. More recent survey work remains largely consistent with the findings of Wuthnow's project. See Pew Research Center, "Public Remains Conflicted."
14. I take this definition of tolerance from David Little ("Tolerance, Equal Freedom" 3-4).
15. See further Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (1871), as quoted in Cornel West, "Prospects." This insight, Scott Appleby points out, is familiar to historians of American politics, some of whom have documented that instances of incivility—at times even in the form of fistfights on the floor of Congress—were once daily news.

16. Connolly is far from the first to uncover this insight. He traces the genealogy of his own interest in it back to Nietzsche's claim that "we think with our stomachs," referring to "thoughts behind your thoughts and thoughts behind those thoughts" and "'concealed gardens and plantings' below the threshold of reflective surveillance." It would be insufficient to trace the relevant concerns only to Nietzsche, however. Identifying another precursor no less influential, Ingrid Creppel and Stephen Toulmin have dealt at length (each in different ways) with Michel de Montaigne's articulation of "toleration" as a process of acknowledging and grappling with what might be called the incorrigibility of embodiment. Montaigne's conception of what it means to "tolerate" differences reflects the insights of renaissance-humanism rather than a Cartesian conception, which aimed to overcome authoritarian and prejudice-based intolerance with sober and calculated rationalism. For Montaigne, "tolerance" of external oppositions could emerge only in the wake of recognition of, and grappling with, the multiplicity of one's own internal proclivities toward intolerance, and especially each person's recognition of the multiplicity of selves in him or herself—conflicting desires, "inconstancy," internal particularities—and that these multiple selves harbor intolerances toward one another. See Toulmin (*Cosmopolis* 37-40) and Creppel (*Toleration* 65-90).
17. I expand upon this point in conversation with Connolly in my essay "'Dis-mantling the Master's House'" (esp. 436-40). Connolly devotes his book *Neuropolitics* to delineating a program of concrete micro-political strategies by which one might cultivate one's sensibilities—one's "gut" reactions—in ways that overcome inclinations toward resentment and revenge. The point is consistent with Stout's characterization of "normative attitudes" that are non-inferentially elicited in perception and experience (*Democracy* 213-24). Stout develops the point derived from Wilfrid Sellars' *Empiricism*. See Stout ("Davidson, Rorty, and Brandom" 36-37).
18. This point does not stand far from the philosophical background that inspired John Kelsay's gloss of Stout's proposal as pointing importantly in the direction of "healthy conflict." In fact, Robert Brandom, whose *Making It Explicit* afforded many of the philosophical materials with which Stout constructed his account of democratic practices in *Democracy and Tradition*, demonstrated much earlier (and at great analytical length) that logical consistency in thought and assertion is not an absolute good, and thus, that localizable *inconsistency* need not be viewed as intrinsically and entirely epistemically vitiating. See Rescher and Brandom (*Logic of Inconsistency* 136-41). Examining in detail the extent to which the work by Brandom and Rescher on this can accommodate, and perhaps inform, the approach I am sketching here would carry me too far from my present argument to undertake in this context, and will likely require an article-length treatment on its own.
19. On the "ethos of cultural revenge," see Connolly (*Capitalism* 4); on his account of agonistic respect, see Connolly (*Secularist* 157).
20. For a key account of the differences between conflict resolution and conflict transformation, see Botes, "Conflict Transformation."
21. In his 1964 editorial on the subject, Johan Galtung defined "negative peace" as 'the absence of violence, the absence of war,' and positive peace as "the integration of human society." Debates ensued over the extent to which the burgeoning field of peace research ought to concern itself only with "negative peace," rather than peace in both its negative and positive forms. In a follow-up essay of 1968, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,"

Galtung came to expand upon “negative peace” as “the absence of organized violence between such major human groups as nations, but also between racial and ethnic groups because of the magnitude that can be reached by internal wars” and positive peace as “a pattern of cooperation and integration between major human groups.” Kathleen Maas-Weigert incisively recounts the genesis and development of these distinctions in her article, “Structural Violence.”

22. The deficiency of conceiving conflict resolution in abstraction from justice is the pivotal insight to which Stout pointed when he responded to Sumner Twiss’s characterization of his conception of comparative ethics as “moral conflict resolution.” Stout responded that “merely resolving moral conflicts is not an adequate goal, even in relatively limited contexts. One reason for this is that a conflict can be resolved when two parties who were once at loggerheads come to share the same vicious or mistaken moral judgments” (724).
23. King wrote: “My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension.’ I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue” (“Birmingham Jail” 86-87).
24. This effect is referred to by Gene Sharp as “political jiu-jitsu”: “By combining nonviolent discipline with solidarity and persistence in struggle, the nonviolent actionists cause the violence of the opponent’s repression to be expressed in the worst possible light.” In responding non-violently to violent efforts to repress resistance, “the violence of the opponents may rebound to undermine their own position” (*Nonviolent Action* 657). See also “Beyond Just War” 235-36.
25. Exemplified in the writing and work of King, and by Mahatma Gandhi before him, this pivotal insight about negotiation and compromise in transformative justice has been distilled in the writings of Gene Sharp. See, in particular, “The Dangers of Negotiations” passages in *From Dictatorship* (9-10). Sharp argues that, when framed by an imbalance of power, piecemeal negotiations, partial concessions, and compromise agreements typically benefit the group in power. Such a pattern of effects produced by “partial or temporary concessions” by authorities in power is further substantiated by Ackerman and Kruegler in *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict* (325).
26. See Kriesberg (“Transforming Conflicts” chap. 3).
27. “What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love” (King, “Where do We Go?” 172).

28. King wrote that even the most deeply engrained anger, if constructively reframed and creatively utilized, could motivate and fuel a campaign of “militant, massive nonviolence,” rather than simply devolve into rioting (“Showdown,” *A Testament of Hope* 69).
29. See “Conversations with Martin Luther King” (*A Testament of Hope* 661).
30. See, for instance, King’s address, “Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom” (*I Have A Dream* 132-34). “Our most powerful nonviolent weapon is, as would be expected, also our most demanding, that is organization. To produce change, people must be organized to work together in units of power” (133).
31. While it does not begin with King’s Christian commitment to agape love *per se*, conflict transformation lenses can accommodate his tradition-specific orientation because it conceives of conflict as, most basically, a feature of human relationality. Relationship is a central concept around which the other insights in the complex revolve. However, conflict transformation construes relationship loosely enough to serve an orientation that might accommodate any number of more tradition-specific relational conceptions. For this reason, it is not identical to, yet is consistent with, Gandhi’s commitment to “ahimsa”—meaning literally “non-injury,” but which for Gandhi, came to be construed as a positive state of love. Arguably, the role of relationship in conflict transformation could similarly accommodate Connolly’s conception of “agonistic respect.” On the points of similarity between Gandhi’s “ahimsa” and King’s account of agape, see Kilgore (“Influence of Gandhi” 236-43). For a detailed account of the orientational role of relationship in conflict transformation, see Lederach (*Moral Imagination* 31-40). For an example of conflict transformation lenses applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, see Omer, *When Peace is Not Enough*.
32. For two key statements about this starting point for the model, see Lederach and Appleby (“Strategic Peacebuilding” 19-24) and Lederach, *Little Book*.
33. King’s later thinking about the necessity of systemic analysis and structural transformation of oppressive conditions is perhaps most succinctly contained in his 1967 address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, “Where do We Go From Here?”
34. A sample would include Lilla, “Tea Party Jacobins”; Bernstein, “Very Angry Tea Party”; Fish, “Antaeus and the Tea Party”; and Bromwich, “Why Has Obama.” For important background on the Tea Party movement, see Mayer, “Covert Operations.” For scholarly assessment see Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin, “The Tea Party.”
35. For an expanded account the role of “hegemonic struggle” in developing an orientational account of justice, see Springs, “On Giving.”
36. Perhaps the most pivotal example of this is Stephen Colbert’s formulation of a Political Action Committee and Super PAC in the wake of the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* 558 U.S. (2010) ruling. See, for instance, Carr, “Comic’s PAC.”
37. The full question and answer reads: “[Strauss] TELL ME ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WAY YOU AND JON STEWART DECONSTRUCT THE NEWS. [Colbert] Jon deconstructs the news in a really brilliant comedic style. I take the sausage backwards, and I restuff the sausage. We deconstruct, but then we don’t show anybody our deconstruction. We reconstruct—we falsely construct the hypocrisy. And I embody the bullshit until hopefully you can smell it.”

38. Instances of “preposterous comedy” afford what Ralph Ellison called “indispensable agency” by opening up “redeeming perspectives on our rampant incongruities” (“An Extravagance” 658). In my judgment, the point is consistent with Montaigne’s account of “tolerance” (op.cit.). The incisiveness of Colbert’s comic artistry, however, does not only consist in illuminating the rampant incongruities in his audience members. As Danielle Allen points out, Ellison claimed that the pivotal difference between the capacities and efforts of an artist (of whatever sort) vs. a skillful trickster or con man consist in their respective moral intentions. This observation, Allen continues, parallels Aristotle’s claim that the difference between the sophist and the rhetorician lies in each one’s *prohairesis* (roughly, moral purpose or commitment). Thus, to construe Colbert as a rhetorician of comic artistry (in Ellison’s sense) might locate the most salient ethical and critical value of his “preposterous comedy” in, as Colbert phrased it, “embody[ing] the bullshit until hopefully you can smell it,” with the relevant sense of “bullshit” being the one explained by Harry Frankfurt. See Frankfurt’s “On Bullshit” and Allen’s “A Multilingual America?” (272, 279n22). Stout’s response to Allen’s important exposition of Ellison on this point follows in the same issue of *Soundings*, in “Responses.”
39. “When we open up our hearts and our minds to those who may not think precisely like we do or believe precisely what we believe—that’s when we discover at least the possibility of common ground. That’s when we begin to say, ‘Maybe we won’t agree on abortion, but we can still agree that this heart-wrenching decision for any woman is not made casually, it has both moral and spiritual dimensions.’” The full text appears as an appendix to Herbst (*Rude Democracy* 68-100, 149-59).
40. For one example, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWJPOfiQKwA>: 15:00.
41. I presented an early version of this paper to the Religion, Ethics & Philosophy colloquium at Florida State University in November 2010. I am grateful for especially incisive criticisms and questions raised by the students there, and for conversations with Aline Kalbian, Martin Kavka, and John Kelsay. Later revisions benefitted from comments and questions put to me by colleagues Scott Appleby, Dan Philpott, and Atalia Omer, and continuing conversations with John Paul Lederach and David Cortright.

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