

***Afro-Communitarianism and the Nature of  
Reconciliation***

**By**

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**I declare that this is my own work, and that all sources have been appropriately referenced.**

**Abstract:**

In this dissertation I sketch a conception of personhood as understood from within an Afro-communitarian worldview, and argue that this understanding of personhood has implications for understanding the concept of reconciliation. Understanding 'being human' as a collective, communal enterprise has implications for how responsibility, justice, forgiveness and humanization (all cognate concepts of reconciliation) are conceptualized. In line with this understanding of reconciliation and its cognate concepts, I argue that the humanization of self and other (according to the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood) is required for addressing the 'inferiority' and concurrent 'superiority' racial complexes as diagnosed by Franz Fanon and Steve Biko. These complexes reach deeply within individual and collective psyches and political identities, and I argue that political solutions to protracted conflict (in South Africa and other racially charged contexts) which do not address these deeply entrenched pathologies will be inadequate according to an Afro-communitarian framework.

**Keywords:** Reconciliation, Afro-communitarianism, African communitarianism, *ubuntu*, personhood, collective responsibility, restorative justice, forgiveness, humanization.

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## Introduction

“...the great gift still has to come from Africa - giving the world a more human face.”<sup>1</sup>

Steve Biko

In this dissertation I sketch a conception of Afro-communitarian personhood, and tease out the implications this has for understanding the concept of reconciliation as understood from within an Afro-communitarian worldview. My aim in this project is not to argue for understanding personhood in accordance with Afro-communitarianism, rather, I am interested in revealing the significant consequences for understanding reconciliation, that follow from such a notion of personhood. In other words, I concentrate on the conditional claim ‘*If you have an Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood, then what would that mean for your understanding of the concept of reconciliation?*’

I believe that there are at least three advantages to pursuing a deeper understanding of this view of the person and how this affects the conception of reconciliation. One is that by developing concepts which have their roots in Africa leads toward the decolonization of the (African) mind and intellectual landscape.<sup>2</sup> Secondly it captures some core empirical evidence about being human which the dominant Western liberal individualistic understanding of being human cannot account for. Finally, it exposes the source of some current misunderstandings and difficulties that plague the reconciliation project in South Africa.

The second claim, that this view captures some core empirical evidence about being human, and the third, that it could shed light on some current misunderstandings in the contemporary South African context, will be addressed throughout the rest of the dissertation. Explaining the first advantage (that this kind of development of concepts with their roots in Africa has the prospect of working towards the decolonization of the mind) is not dealt with in detail in the rest of the dissertation, however it will allow the reader to view this project in its proper context. Here, therefore, follows a brief explanation of this project as located within the field of African philosophy.

What is African philosophy? Bruce Janz captures what I believe to be a central feature of African philosophy in the following:

This is the core of philosophy, its ability to bring...life to the surface and reflect on it, creating new territory, extending the range of life by creating new concepts. Concepts do not so much point to the past (or, not only to the past), but also to the future, as they

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Bantu Biko, ‘Some African cultural concepts’ in *The African philosophy Reader*, Pieter H Coetzee (ed), Routledge, 1998

<sup>2</sup> See Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Heinemann, 1986

open the possibility of new forms of expression and new self-understandings. And, they also point to the present, to the place on which we stand and the life that matters.<sup>1</sup>

African philosophy, according to Janz, thus draws and creates concepts from the place of 'Africa'. As a result, it can be instrumental in the decolonization of the African mind. This is possible through providing an alternative framework for knowledge, which 'de-centers' the assumed (Western) centers of knowledge.

The discipline of African philosophy originates in tragedy, out of pain, confusion and rage stemming from colonial destruction; destruction that is responsible for what Fanon calls the 'negro neurosis' caused by what Biko would describe as the unbearable fusion of colonized and colonizer...[T]he birth of African philosophy as an academic discipline is largely responsible for its character and, crucially, for its distinctive creative possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

Through focusing on and creating concepts with their roots in Africa, the 'negro neurosis' (or inferiority complex) is undermined. Through emphasizing the knowledge and contributions of Africa to the intellectual landscape, the African mind can start to escape the belief that it is inferior to everything Western. This dissertation is a project of African philosophy, when understanding African philosophy as 'philosophy in place'. The methodology is to start from the individual's particular place – not only geographically, but also contextually, as 'Africa' denotes more than a geographical location – recognize that this could affect one's ideas, and therefore focus on what the individual's own specific context can offer for understanding, creating and investigating concepts. The concept to be interrogated from 'this place', Africa, is the concept of reconciliation.

I am interested in analyzing what the concept of 'reconciliation' entails within societies in transition<sup>3</sup> from one political context to another, in other words political and social reconciliation between groups. I therefore embark on an examination of reconciliation as a political venture between social groups, specifically 'racial' groups in South Africa. In order to do so, two central issues need to be taken into account if I am to perform philosophy in *this* place, namely (1) the particularities arising from the cultural understanding of specific concepts with regards to reconciliation in South Africa (which is encapsulated in the concept of Afro-communitarianism), and (2) the recognition that, as a white African, my engagement with the concept of Afro-communitarianism needs to be sensitive to my identity and position as part of the colonizing culture in Africa, and be aware that my engagement with Afro-communitarianism could result in the kind of colonial assimilation (and therefore destruction) of indigenous ideas unless the project is self-reflexive. In looking at reconciliation in this place, South Africa, the question of 'race' (including my

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Janz 'Philosophy As If Place Mattered: The Situation of African Philosophy,' Havi Carel and David Gomez, eds. *What Philosophy Is*. London: Continuum Publishers, 2004: p111.

<sup>2</sup> Pedro Tabensky, 'Post-colonial heart of African philosophy', *South African Journal of Philosophy* Vol 27, no 4, 2008

<sup>3</sup> I am interested in African societies in particular; however, it might be possible to extend this analysis to other societies as well.

own) remains central,<sup>1</sup> and cannot be avoided without overlooking some central aspects of the situation.

Proponents of the standard philosophical methodology of articulating universal truths might ask, why not simply speak of reconciliation as such, without the qualification of an 'African perspective'? Is the ideal of philosophy not to distil concepts to their abstract meanings, in other words to rid us of the subjective perspectives and opinions (our 'place', in my case South Africa) which we find ourselves in? This kind of decontextualized philosophizing, I contend, is however exactly the type of project which would result in colonial assimilation (and therefore destruction) of indigenous ideas. This is because what is put forward as 'universal' tends to simply reinforce a specific perspective (of those with power) as the absolute truth. Therefore to start from this assumed universal risks destroying and negating indigenous ideas and thus reinforcing the dominant and powerful perspective. Bruce Janz eloquently sets out the core of the problem with regards to the particularity of 'Africa' and the universals we assume 'philosophy' to be about; he writes,

More so than other philosophical traditions, African philosophy struggles with a central tension within its very name. On the one hand, philosophy has tended to contemplate universals, regarding them either as the foundation or beginning point of thought or as the goal of thought, and seeing them as a nonnegotiable requirement of philosophy (of course, some philosophers in the twentieth century have been suspicious of universals); on the other, the term 'African' designates a particularity (albeit a problematic, possibly constructed or imposed category).<sup>2</sup>

How can one resolve this alleged tension inherent in the notion of African philosophy? The question of what African philosophy is has unfortunately often become a way of trying to convince the Western world that Africans can engage with the West on an equal intellectual footing.<sup>3</sup> This is best interpreted in the post-colonial context as an effect of the so-called inferiority complex which Franz Fanon diagnoses in colonized peoples in *Black Skin White Mask*, and the difficulty of having to deal with a legacy of colonialism without simply affirming the values which the West has ascribed to the colonized peoples of Africa (as the *Négritude* tradition has been interpreted).<sup>4</sup> Colonized cultures have, in many instances, become thoroughly assimilated to colonizing cultures. This has the result that the *specificity* of the socio-historic place from which the colonized's perspective would otherwise have been formed is lost, and with it the opportunity (for anyone) to engage with this

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<sup>1</sup> I will argue for this claim in chapter 1. For now, I will simply assume it.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Janz, "African Philosophy" from the *Edinburgh Companion to 20th Century Philosophies*. Edinburgh University Press, 2007, 69

<sup>3</sup> The accounts of African philosophy by Janz and Tabensky do not fall prey to this objection, and this is one of the reasons that I utilize their accounts on African philosophy.

<sup>4</sup> The original articulation of this objection was in Sartre, J-P., 1976, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S.W.Allen, Paris: Présence Africaine. Also see F. Abiola Irele's 'Negritude: literature and ideology' in *Philosophy from Africa*, edited by PH Coetzee and APJ Roux (second edition), Oxford University Press, 2002 for an analysis of this objection.



perspective.<sup>1</sup> There has not been, however, a complete assimilation of the African peoples into Western cultures, and there is therefore the possibility to engage with a worldview and framework which can enrich the dominant paradigm.<sup>2</sup> It is possible to engage with this perspective in order to perform philosophy in place (as Janz would put it)—from *my* place, *my* context and *my* phenomenal world. Attention to particular situations and contexts (in my case South Africa) can, I believe, bring to light universals, a new way of looking at concepts, or aspects of concepts which have thus far not been emphasized, or even recognized.

As this philosophical undertaking is however still ultimately *aimed at* universals, this dissertation is not a project of ethno-philosophy, which is typically concerned with a project of recovery.<sup>3</sup> African ethno-philosophers record and aim to recover the folk philosophy of specific African cultures. Though this focuses on the particularities within the African context, this does not align with philosophy in place, as philosophy in place utilises the particular as a *starting point* for critical engagement. There is another school of African philosophical thought more in keeping with the understanding of philosophy in place, which focuses on the post-colonial condition in Africa as a ‘place’ in which philosophy is done. These philosophers follow in the intellectual footsteps of Franz Fanon and Steve Biko (among others), by attempting to deal with the inferiority and superiority complexes which are said to be the result of colonialism, and is claimed to make a psychological cripple of the postcolonial subject.<sup>4</sup>

Fanon writes that “the juxtaposition of the black and white races has resulted in a massive psycho-existential complex.”<sup>5</sup> His book, *Black Skin, White Masks* “is meant to liberate the black man from the arsenal of complexes that germinated in the colonial situation.”<sup>6</sup> Fanon makes it clear that he only means his analysis to be specific to his particular time and place, and also that he does not intend for the analysis to be applicable to every black ‘man’<sup>7</sup> in these conditions. It is however true, he claims, that one can identify some broad trends along the lines of the diagnosis he makes. I

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<sup>1</sup> The question of whether a people had a philosophy before the arrival of the colonizers and the written tradition, is one which I do not address simply because (following Bruce Janz) I believe that this question itself, and attempts to excavate from the past a philosophy and proof of its existence, is an insult to Africans, as it puts the burden of proof on Africans to try and convince the Western world of academia that they are worthy participants in intellectual dialogues, and by putting pressure on African scholars in this way, the inferiority complex is perpetuated. Instead of engaging with questions of whether there is an African philosophy, I take for granted that there is.

<sup>2</sup> I do not mean to indicate that as the inferiority complex is still at play, that this undermines or negates the numerous other virtues which have grown from African soil. For example, as Murove writes, “in the light of its historical context, African ethics must thus be seen as a moral cluster that is immensely old, deeply embedded in the cultures of the continent, still strong, and the survivor of massively powerful, disruptive, outside influences. That indicates a resilience and inner strength which non-Africans need to know about.” (2009, p8)

<sup>3</sup> Examples of ethno-philosophers include Placide Temples, Leopold Senghor, and John Mbiti.

<sup>4</sup> See Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Biko’s *I write what I like*.

<sup>5</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, translated by Richard Philcox, 2008 p xvi

<sup>6</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, translated by Richard Philcox, 2008 p 14

<sup>7</sup> This is the term Fanon utilises, in keeping with his time. Fanon’s analysis is notoriously sexist in places. While recognizing this, I do not believe that this needs to undermine some excellent points he does raise, and it is these I intend to work with.

believe it is productive to see how much his diagnosis could be relevant to the South African context today, and my proposition is that the inferiority and superiority complexes can have significant explanatory value in contemporary South Africa (*especially* when combined with discourse on ‘whiteness’<sup>1</sup>). If it is the case that there are racial inferiority and superiority pathologies still at work here, “the product of a psychological-economic structure,”<sup>2</sup> what does that mean for racial reconciliation? Fanon’s focus is on the black person’s phenomenological experience and creation of identity, which he argues to be subject to an inferiority complex, which can in turn be ascribed to a two-stage process. The first stage is economic and material inferiority, the result of colonial subjugation and exploitation. The second, Fanon argues, comes about when this economic inferiority is internalized, and becomes a psychological pathology.<sup>3</sup> A parallel white superiority complex is formed through similar stages, namely economic and material *superiority* which is internalized and becomes a complex of entitlement and belief in one’s superior worth. My focus during the course of this dissertation will be mostly on this superiority pathology, as I see the failure to effectively deal with this as one of the greatest obstacles to reconciliation in South Africa.

Both these pathologies, I will argue, dehumanize the person (both black and white). The humanization of self and other (according to the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood) is therefore required for addressing the ‘inferiority’ and concurrent ‘superiority’ racial complexes as diagnosed by Franz Fanon and Steve Biko. In essence, this means there has to be a collective humanization project for the success of racial reconciliation in South Africa. Such a collective humanization process is (as we will see in the final chapters of the dissertation), exactly what Afro-communitarianism would prescribe, and thus an Afro-communitarian conception of reconciliation would be adept at dealing with these societal pathologies. These complexes reach deeply within individual and collective psyches and political identities, and I argue that purely political solutions to protracted conflict (in South Africa and other racially charged contexts) which do not address these deeply entrenched issues will be inadequate according to an Afro-communitarian framework.

The Afro-communitarian conceptual framework can be understood as a metaphysical and/or an ethical understanding of personhood. In South Africa, the particular instantiation of this conceptual framework is *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu*, a Nguni term often translated as ‘I am because we are’<sup>4</sup> provides a starting point for some of my conceptual explorations. As my project centrally engages with this

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<sup>1</sup> I will address the meaning and issues of ‘whiteness’ in more detail in chapters 1, 2, 6 and 7. For the moment, a brief description of what is meant with the term will suffice. It is a term used in whiteness studies, which is meant to refer to white people’s assumptions of their position being ‘normal’ and their views ‘right’, the way they do and view things as just being ‘the way things are’.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, translated by Richard Philcox, 2008 p 18

<sup>3</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, translated by Richard Philcox, 2008 p xv

<sup>4</sup> Desmond Tutu, Introduction to *The Words and Inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi - PEACE*, PQ Blackwell, 2007 p 3 Tutu phrases this as ‘I am because other people are’.

term *ubuntu*, which is most often understood as ethnophilosophical, I wish to clarify that despite the centrality I give to *ubuntu*, I am not engaging in ethnophilosophy. Though *ubuntu* is an ethnophilosophical term in the sense that it is meant to be a descriptive term for a concept in some African cultures which cannot be easily translated, my project does not aim to be one of ethnophilosophy.

Rather, I take my project as one of post-colonial African philosophy, as explained above, and understood as the project of philosophy as dealing with and responding to problems inherent in the post-colonial situation in Africa. As the project I am engaging in is one of post-colonial African philosophy, none of the claims about *ubuntu* I put forward in this dissertation are meant to essentialize indigenous Africans or their views.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, as a white South African, I need to tread carefully in order not to fall prey to Steve Biko's criticisms of the white liberal.<sup>2</sup> Biko criticized the white liberal for trying to force integration through conversation with blacks, but that this conversation was not conducted on an equal footing. Biko's criticism is that the white liberal still wants to lead, still wants to tell the black person what he should be doing, and what the solutions for liberation are. In order to remain cognisant of this criticism, my project is aimed primarily at my fellow white citizens, and I attempt to take heed of Biko's suggestions on how I can be part of the liberation project in this regard – namely, to deal with white racism. One way to do that, I believe, is to understand the implicit view of reconciliation present in the *ubuntu* worldview, and explain this to fellow white Africans, as this could clarify why there are certain reactions and expectations in the South African context. In my discussion of *ubuntu*, I am therefore careful not to impose my own views on the peoples who have a tradition of *ubuntu*, or insist that my understanding of *ubuntu* is what will 'liberate' and reconcile South Africa. An explication of some ideas with regards to *ubuntu* and how they might relate to reconciliation could help some white liberals (in Biko's terms) to see that there are ways of dealing with the situation which emerge from indigenous black thinking. For these white liberals to see that there is in fact a coherent view emerging not from them, nor from their cultural and religious views such as Christianity, or any other Western influences, but an entirely different (and perhaps better) perspective on reconciliation, should start the conversation about the reconciliation project on a more equal footing.

In terms of the *ubuntu* worldview that is proposed, the fact that it originated within a certain time frame of rural traditional Africa of the past, does not eliminate the possibility that an adapted understanding of this type of subjectivity and ethical schema could exist and flourish in other

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/african-sage/> "Ethnophilosophy had falsely popularized the view that traditional Africa was a place of philosophical unanimity and that African traditions encouraged unanimity regarding beliefs and values. If this were true it would allow no room for individual thinkers like, say, Socrates or Descartes, with their own independent views on such matters."

<sup>2</sup> See Biko's 'Black Souls in White Skins?' in *I write What I like: Selected Writings by Steve Biko*

contexts in our day and age, not only for indigenous Africans, but also in other contexts. My aim is, however, not to set out the philosophy of *ubuntu* as it might have existed “authentically” (as I do not pretend that I would be able to understand what that would look like), but rather to use it as a philosophical construct, as a catalyst for ideas to relate it to reconciliation and engage with the concept of reconciliation from a different angle, a different perspective. This is in line with utilising ideas as a starting point for critical engagement as in the tradition of philosophy in place.

The tradition of African philosophy as I mean to use it here, (as post-colonial philosophy in this place, Africa) therefore takes the insight of particulars possibly giving rise to universals seriously, and seeks to provide a different perspective on various philosophical problems. This could empower Africa and Africans through challenging the accepted Western philosophical paradigm, and illuminate insights which the dominant paradigm systematically ignores. In this way, the African philosopher can contribute to the philosophical tradition through the recognition that the intellectual landscape has been dominated by Western perspectives without recognizing them as such.<sup>1</sup> The African philosopher that takes this approach is, however, still essentially interested in universals. As Kwasi Wiredu writes, “the African philosopher may be making contributions to general conceptual understanding. In other words the universal may arise out of a concern with the particular.”<sup>2</sup> It is through my focus on reconciliation in this particular place of South Africa, and the racial and ethnic relations within South Africa, that I hope to shed new light on the universal concept of reconciliation. In engaging with reconciliation as the concept would be understood from the worldview of Afro-communitarianism, a conception of reconciliation which is different from what is available in the mainstream literature comes to light. The fact is that accepting the dominant Euro-centric view without question, leaves us with a poorer understanding of the world. Different perspectives are important, and can get us closer to the truth.

This is not a novel insight, and one of the most famous proponents of this view is Friedrich Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morals*, who argues that all seemingly objective judgments are actually concealed perspectives. As Nietzsche states “there is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity’ be.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, as we can never have a ‘view from nowhere’, and since we must always view the world from only one place at a time, we each need the other (person) in order to give

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<sup>1</sup> This can be directly related to the concept of whiteness, which assumes that the Western, ‘white’, dominant perspective is ‘just the way things are’.

<sup>2</sup> Kwasi Wiredu cited in Richard Bell, *Understanding African Philosophy*, Routledge, 2002 p 20

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: Essay III: 12*

meaning to the world, in order to complement our own views.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge constitutes a form of power, since it implicitly affirms the ‘objective’ truth and validity of the perspective from which it is made;<sup>2</sup> it is informed and formed by our interests. We “necessarily know an object from the standpoint of certain interests that direct our attention to only certain aspects of the object of knowledge.”<sup>3</sup> Through our theorising, we understand things in a particular way, and this means that we cement power in certain paradigms – social reality is largely constructed by the paradigms we hold as dominant.<sup>4</sup> Knowing and understanding this ought to result in a quest for objective truth (as opposed to ‘objective truth’) which always admits to the possibility that accepted ‘truths’ could be false. This quest for truth requires an engagement with all perspectives for the reason that there is always the possibility that they might shed some light on the truth (which, perhaps, can never be fully realized, but which we *can* get closer to).

In my research, it has become clear that some African scholars have put forward an alternative worldview to the dominant Euro-centric view, which, I will argue, when taken as one’s starting point, profoundly affects one’s understanding of reconciliation. From my particular perspective and place, I will engage with racial reconciliation, and attempt to understand how a particular form of Afro-communitarianism, *ubuntu*, might cast new light on the concept. To re-assert, I do not claim that the *ubuntu* worldview I will set out in this dissertation is *my* perspective, but I will be engaging with what (being situated in this context) I have come across in the literature on Afro-communitarianism, and engage with claims about reconciliation made by people who do declare this perspective. In engaging with reconciliation in this way, I hope to show that serious intellectual engagement with the worldview of Afro-communitarianism can give us novel insights about reconciliation. As a Euro-African<sup>5</sup> I have engaged with the importance of community, and especially of race and community in terms of personal identity, and my context within African academia has demanded a thorough engagement with what has been claimed to be unique indigenous philosophical and ethical

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<sup>1</sup> Debra Bergoffen, "From Husserl to Beauvoir: Gendering the Perceiving Subject," *Metaphilosophy*. vol.27. Nos 1&2 (January/ April 1996):p54

<sup>2</sup> Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia,1990:p131

<sup>3</sup> Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*, Routledge, 2002:20

<sup>4</sup> Very simplified examples of socially constructed concepts that explains what is meant here are ‘money’, and being ‘famous’. These concepts rely on socially agreed norms for their value and meaning.

<sup>5</sup> In using this term I hope to drive home the possible parallels between the situations of African-Americans and white Africans. Though the reasons for departure of their ancestors from their original continents obviously differ and are very distinct, there are still similarities with regards to being a minority on their new continent, as well as being perceived as ‘not belonging’ in certain ways, and the fact that they are easily recognized by morphological features which are imbued with stereotypical characteristics. The fact is that even though there has been some cultural continuation with culture as practiced in their original locations; there has also been a rupture of culture and history for both these peoples. Though both groups might return to the places of their racial ancestry, the geographical and cultural influences and differences have breached their continuous narrative with the past, and so returning to their ancestral continents they might feel that they do not ‘belong’ in this context, as much as they might feel (and are in some cases explicitly reminded by the majority) that they do not ‘belong’ in their current context.

frameworks. This has led me to investigate claims about Afro-communitarianism, and specifically *ubuntu*, which has formed the basis of the approach to reconciliation which I will outline in the rest of the dissertation.

In starting to investigate the concept of reconciliation, research in the South African situation suggests that there is something at work in this context which is unique, and has its roots in an African metaphysics and ethic. In analyzing and engaging with the post-apartheid situation in South Africa, the *ubuntu* ethic and its possible impact on the concept of reconciliation in the South African context is often mentioned, be it to highlight or dispel the importance of it. Strangely though, as much as it is mentioned in the literature on reconciliation, there has not been a sustained analysis of how, exactly, coming from the conceptual framework of Afro-communitarianism might affect one's understanding of reconciliation. Therefore, from my position in the philosophical community in South Africa, it seems that investigating the possibilities of *ubuntu* as an ethic, and its impact on the concept of reconciliation is called for, even if it is to end up dispelling it as a clichéd and empty term.<sup>1</sup> What has become apparent to me is that if the *ubuntu* ethic is in fact unique and if it entails an ethic which is different from ones found elsewhere in the world, then it would be interesting to see how this would affect the process and understanding of the term of reconciliation.

In other words, in engaging in philosophy from my specific place, it is necessary to engage with what has been a common *political* justification and explanation for some aspects of the reconciliation process in the South African context, which in this case is *ubuntu*. These justifications have however mostly been seen as part of the political process of nation building, rhetoric which has been employed for political goals.<sup>2</sup> Once starting to engage with *ubuntu* conceptually, it became clear that the ideas I have found embedded in the concept and its possible implications for reconciliation are great, and deserve further investigation and explication, which is what I aim to do throughout the rest of this project.

The analysis of post-apartheid South Africa and its continuing struggle for reconciliation from the point of view of Afro-communitarianism brings to the table a perspective and an invitation for multi-perspectival dialogue, and my intention is to add a perspective which has not been sufficiently explored to the investigation on reconciliation, in order to gain a better understanding of the term. As a Euro-African trained predominantly in analytic Western philosophy, I will apply these intellectual tools to the investigation of reconciliation in conjunction with insights gained from the

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<sup>1</sup> It is certainly the case that *ubuntu* has been over used to the extent that it might have, in today's context, lost all of its original meaning, and even that it has become such an all encompassing term that it has become meaningless. This does not however mean that the term did not capture something very definite in past cultures, or that a strand of how it is utilized today might not be useful and relevant, and it is this meaning that I will try to uncover and work with.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example Verdoolaege, A. 2007. *Reconciliation discourse: the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins; and Wilson, R.A. 2001. *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa – Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Afro-communitarian tradition. My hope is that this account of reconciliation from an African perspective might challenge some reconciliation theorists working in other contexts to see how aspects of it might address, and perhaps improve, their own views on the matter.<sup>1</sup> With the explanation of where this project fits within the landscape of African philosophy out of the way, an introduction to the structure of the actual argument is in order.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the question ‘what would reconciliation after protracted political conflict entail?’ The reader is introduced to the continuing stumbling blocks for racial reconciliation in South Africa, and therefore the chapter motivates the importance of the current project within the specific context of South Africa. In order to do so, the chapter describes the post apartheid South African economic, social and historical context which is the origin of, and perpetuator of, problems for racial reconciliation in the present day.<sup>2</sup> The problems of reconciliation include (the practical and political aspect) that we have not reached racial reconciliation in South Africa, and the (theoretical and conceptual aspect) that we do not have consensus as a society with regards to what racial reconciliation amounts to.

These two issues (the practical/political and the theoretical/conceptual) are related insofar as South Africa has (at least partly) not reached reconciliation because different sectors of the population have different expectations of the process and the outcomes of the reconciliation project, as their understandings of the concept of reconciliation differ radically. This is not to say that there needs to be consensus with regards to the meaning of reconciliation, but it does require that the dialogue with regards to its meaning continue.<sup>3</sup> This chapter therefore provides some evidence for the claim that the practical and political problem of reconciliation is still an urgent issue for South Africa through presenting an interpretation of some salient features in the contemporary political landscape. South Africa can properly be classified as having a ‘conflictive ethos’ and the result of this classification is that racial reconciliation, however construed by different sectors of the population, is not yet a reality in the South African context. What is meant by the concept of ‘race’ will be stipulated in order to clarify what the ‘race’ in racial reconciliation refers to, and to explain why this concept is central to the South African conflictive ethos. Once the political issue has been articulated, I turn to the literature in search of some philosophical accounts of reconciliation which could help guide South Africa’s reconciliation process. A problematic conception of reconciliation

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles Taylor, ‘The Politics of Recognition,’ in *Multiculturalism*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994) on the importance of engaging with other worldviews in order to find things of value in them, and to bring us closer to ‘the good’.

<sup>2</sup> The focus is specifically on South Africa, but I believe that the views that I will defend apply to other sub-Saharan African countries as well, where race still plays a large role in the political landscape.

<sup>3</sup> See for example the discussion of the concept in *In the Balance: South Africans Debate Reconciliation*, Fanie du Toit and Erik Doxtader (eds), Jacana, 2010 This dissertation is meant to continue the dialogue with regards to what reconciliation means.

held by many white South Africans, who understand reconciliation and transformation to be in tension with one another, is analyzed and critiqued. Some philosophical accounts (by Darrell Moellendorf, Trudy Govier & Wilhelm Verwoerd, and Desmond Tutu) are then compared and contrasted with this problematically superficial account of reconciliation. As Tutu himself grounds his conception of reconciliation on what I will call Afro-communitarianism, it is worth exploring what this entails. As Tutu does not argue for or defend a sustained theoretical defense of his position, it is necessary to carefully articulate the Afro-communitarian account of the person and the consequent ethical theory, which I believe Tutu's account takes as its starting point. This is the goal of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 introduces and engages with the notion of Afro-communitarianism, which will be used to interrogate different aspects of the concept of reconciliation in the rest of the dissertation. A possible metaphysical understanding of 'personhood' in the Afro-communitarian tradition is conveyed through accounts by Desmond Tutu, Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, Michael Onyebuchi Eze and Antjie Krog. We will see from these accounts that an Afro-communitarian metaphysical understanding of personhood is fundamentally an ethic.<sup>1</sup> As Afro-communitarian personhood relies on the creation of the person through her community, and personhood is understood to be centrally about being ethical and accepting one's resulting moral duties and responsibilities, this means that the Afro-communitarian understanding of the person entails a particular kind of ethic. To investigate more closely what such an ethic might require, an influential account of an African moral theory in the literature by Thaddeus Metz is critically analyzed. I propose an alternative account to the one Metz articulates in *'An African Moral Theory'* which allows us to better analyze the concept of reconciliation and some of its cognates, and which captures the understanding of the person and ethics of Tutu. This alternative interpretation of the Afro-communitarian ethic is a virtue ethic, but it differs centrally from its Western counterparts. In order to clarify this conception of virtue, I compare it to the view of virtue implicit in Samantha Vice's paper 'How do I live in this strange place'.<sup>2</sup> This comparison highlights how her account of virtue is problematic from an Afro-communitarian perspective, and this can serve as a good example of the (conceptual and political) misunderstandings that can arise when the idea of personhood is understood in different ways. In comparing Vice's view of virtue to the Afro-communitarian virtue ethic, the question of responsibility becomes central. Vice's recommendation with regards to what white people in South Africa's responsibilities are, and how they should respond to that, is that white people concentrate

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Thaddeus Metz, 'African and Western moral theories in a bioethical context', *Developing World Bioethics* Volume 10 Number 1, 2009 p 51; Kwasi Wiredu, 'The African Concept of Personhood', *African-American Perspectives on Biomedical Ethics*, 1992; Ifeanyi Menkiti, 'On the Normative conception of a person' in *A Companion to African philosophy*, 2004 Kwasi Wiredu (ed)

<sup>2</sup> Samantha Vice, 'How do I live in this strange place?' *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010



on repairing their moral selves, while cultivating a certain type of 'active silence' in the political sphere. The next chapter then explores the concept of responsibility from an Afro-communitarian virtue ethic, in order to ascertain what an Afro-communitarian would recommend *in lieu* of Vice's proposal.

In Chapter 3 I discuss responsibility for structural and collective crimes, such as those committed during apartheid, and I argue that, according to the Afro-communitarian, crimes of this nature involve collective and shared responsibility on the part of some groups. The idea of collective and shared responsibility is a contentious one, when other (individual-focused) foundational moral theories are used, and there is a substantial literature which tackles the issue of collective agency which needs to be in place in order for collective and/or shared responsibility to escape accusations of injustice. However, according to the Afro-communitarian conception of the person, the 'collective self', and the African moral theory this view of the person entails, collective and shared responsibility is conceptually not problematic, but rather assumed. Furthermore, once the relationship between personhood, the collective self, and collective virtue is understood, it becomes difficult to see how one can consider reconciliation in the absence of some notion of collective responsibility. Responsibility, for the Afro-communitarian, necessarily entails some shared and collective aspects, for the reason that it is the *collective self* whom is held responsible. Three models of collective responsibility (the solidarity, conspiracy and cost-benefit models) are described and related to the Afro-communitarian position. These models are then applied to the post-apartheid South African case. Once it is established that collective responsibility is necessary for reconciliation in the South African context when the Afro-communitarian worldview is one's starting point, the answer to the question of whether there is racial collective responsibility is found to be a qualified 'yes'. As Afro-communitarianism could be employed to argue that the social group 'whites' share some responsibility for apartheid, the question of what this responsibility would prescribe instead of an active silence on the part of white South Africans, leads directly to the question of justice. Instead of active silence, what is needed on the part of white South Africans is the recognition of shared responsibility, and supporting justice through relinquishing some privileges unjustly accrued. The next chapter therefore focuses on the concept of justice.

Chapter 4 focuses on the concept of justice as understood from an Afro-communitarian view of the person. Tutu's views on justice are analyzed, and the concept of restorative justice, (argued in some literature to be the type of justice involved in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission) is introduced. Mamhood Mamdani argues against an understanding of justice which is too lenient, claiming that *short term* reconciliation is in tension with, and even inimical to, justice. The understanding of *short term* reconciliation at stake is however the superficial and problematic

one discussed in chapter 1, which juxtaposes reconciliation with transformation. Mamdani argues that a *robust and durable* reconciliation requires justice which is not in line with the understanding of the TRC's restorative justice. My contention is that Mamdani's position commits a straw man fallacy, as restorative justice properly construed would not be affected by his objection, but would, in fact, support the recommendations for durable reconciliation he proposes. Restorative justice and the relationship between reconciliation, retribution, reparation and justice, according to Afro-communitarianism, means that justice cannot take place without the implicated group(s) recognizing responsibility, and offering reparations for the harms that took place and from which they drew benefit. But what would the recognition and resulting reparation of this entail? One possible implication in terms of economic reform and structural changes is that affirmative action is a type of compensatory justice which is apt in the South African context. The perception of injustice on the part of many whites in present day South Africa with regards to affirmative action is, I argue, a result of the individualistic, decontextualised and dehistoricised concept of the person that they ascribe to. Restorative justice in relation to Afro-communitarianism *requires* responsibility to be taken by (especially) the perpetrator and beneficiary groups, for the harms which transpired, whereas both retributive and rehabilitative justice can transpire without responsibility being assumed on the part of the perpetrators (and/or beneficiaries) of harm. The necessity for collective responsibility for justice and reconciliation according to Afro-communitarianism is an explanation for the anger and resentment towards the white population by some of the formerly oppressed population in the present socio-economic context within which such collective responsibility is largely absent. This is *especially* the case as, through the TRC, forgiveness was conditionally extended towards some perpetrators of apartheid crimes, (and I will argue symbolically extended to all beneficiaries). As will be seen in the next chapter, forgiveness is expected to 'draw out' taking responsibility from the perpetrator according to the Afro-communitarian worldview, in a 'circle of forgiveness'. In the next chapter the concept of forgiveness according to the Afro-communitarian account is interrogated in more detail.

Chapter 5 discusses the role of victim or survivor groups in the process of reconciliation according to Afro-communitarianism, through exploring the concept of forgiveness according to this worldview. (Nevertheless, this chapter is still aimed at whites in South Africa in line with my stated aim for the thesis, not because they are the ones who need to forgive, but because it is to whites that I am trying to explain the expectations that accompany Afro-communitarian forgiveness.) The reader is briefly introduced to the dominant understanding of the concept of forgiveness where it is centrally understood as overcoming one's resentment (or other retributive reactive attitudes). Rather than understanding forgiveness as an overcoming of resentment towards the perpetrator,

the Afro-communitarian view of forgiveness is therapeutic, with the aim not only to heal the victim, but also the perpetrator. The concept of Afro-communitarian forgiveness in Antjie Krog's paper 'This thing called reconciliation: Forgiveness as part of a interconnectedness-towards-wholeness'<sup>1</sup> is explored. Her account will then be modified and expanded, specifically focusing on the fact that Afro-communitarianism sees forgiveness as opening up the possibility for a relationship with perpetrators and beneficiaries of harm. The chapter also relates back to previous chapters with regards to the necessity for responsibility (as the central role of perpetrator/beneficiary groups), since change and responsibility on the part of perpetrators/beneficiaries is what completes the 'circle of forgiveness'. The concept of forgiveness in conjunction with restorative justice, when understood from an Afro-communitarian framework, denotes a central mechanism of therapeutic collective humanization through allowing both victim/survivor and perpetrator/beneficiary to 'become wholly human' after harm caused during protracted conflict undermined their humanity. Once the conceptual understanding of forgiveness and justice under the Afro-communitarian view has been characterized as a central *mechanism* of 'humanization', it becomes necessary to investigate what this term of 'humanization' entails within the worldview of Afro-communitarianism.

Chapter 6 investigates the concept of humanization, as it becomes clear that this concept, which lies at the core of the Afro-communitarian worldview, is the common thread and justification behind the understandings of responsibility, justice, and forgiveness proposed in the dissertation thus far. It encapsulates what lies at the core of reconciliation for the Afro-communitarian worldview, and also highlights why reconciliation is such an important (perhaps the ultimate) virtue to strive for according to Afro-communitarianism. The humanization of self and other according to this worldview is required for addressing, (and eventual healing of) the 'inferiority' and concurrent 'superiority' complexes as diagnosed by Franz Fanon and Steve Biko. These complexes reach deeply within individual and collective psyches and identities, and political solutions which do not address these deep seated issues will be inadequate according to Afro-communitarianism. The concept of 'human' as understood by Afro-communitarianism (and explained in detail in Chapter 2) is therefore harnessed in order to investigate what exactly is meant by the insight, common in African thought, that "in an unjust society the oppressors and the oppressed are both denied their humanity".<sup>2</sup> General features of dehumanization are articulated, and some specific types of dehumanization (demonization, idolization, paternalism, indifference and idealization) shed more light on the general concept. Some commonly used mechanisms for dehumanization are also discussed and the utilization of the imagination is discussed as a possible process of re-humanization. The imagination, I will argue, ought to be utilized in order to attempt to understand the depth of emotions involved in

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<sup>1</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Nelson Mandela cited in Richard Bell, *Understanding African Philosophy*, Routledge, 2002, p86.

the other person's relationships, which is a direct result of the complexity and depth of the inner lives of humans. What makes us human, according to Afro-communitarianism, is our capacity for meaningful interpersonal relationships we are necessarily entangled in, and it is shown how each of the types of dehumanization affects the possibility for a healthy relationship between different parties.

The final chapter summarizes the conception of reconciliation when understood from the background moral theory of Afro-communitarianism in light of the insights gained through investigating the concepts of responsibility, justice, forgiveness and humanization. The dissertation concludes by explaining the advantages of pursuing this view of 'human being' further in the context of reconciliation. First a few reasons why this understanding of reconciliation might be superior to those with a different moral framework is suggested from some empirical evidence in social psychology. How projects such as this one might support and work towards the decolonization of the mind and intellectual landscape<sup>1</sup> is supported through an explanation of its possible effects on the 'inferiority' and 'superiority' complexes. Finally, I reiterate the ways in which this project can allow for a productive analysis of some contemporary misunderstandings and complications that still afflict the reconciliation project in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> As prescribed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Heinemann, 1986

## **Chapter 1: The problem of post-apartheid racial reconciliation**

This chapter introduces the reader to the question ‘what would reconciliation after protracted political conflict entail?’ Continuing stumbling blocks for racial reconciliation in South Africa are highlighted, such that the chapter motivates the importance of the current project within the specific context of South Africa. In order to do so, the chapter briefly describes the post apartheid South African economic, social and historical context, as this is the source of, and sustains, problems for racial reconciliation in the present day.<sup>1</sup> The problem of racial reconciliation has at least two aspects, which include (the practical and political issue) that we have not reached racial reconciliation in South Africa, and the (theoretical and conceptual issue) that we do not have consensus as a society with regards to what racial reconciliation amounts to. South Africa has (at least partly) not reached reconciliation because different sectors of the population have different expectations of the process and the outcome, as their understandings of the concept of reconciliation differ radically.<sup>2</sup> Though this is not the only stumbling block for the reconciliation project in South Africa,<sup>3</sup> this is the main issue I will focus on in this dissertation. In this chapter I provide some evidence for the claim that the problem of racial reconciliation is still a relevant issue for South Africa, and give some reasons why the concept of race cannot (yet?) be discarded for exclusively class based explanations in the context of South African reconciliation.

### **The South African situation**

As my focus is on reconciliation in the South African present day context here follows a brief introduction to the relevant South African history and contemporary situation, with a focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process, as well as the contemporary, post-TRC situation. This empirical description and political analysis is meant to provide evidence of the relevance of the first aspect of the problem of racial reconciliation in South Africa, namely the continued political and practical need for reconciliation.

As is well known, South Africa under apartheid discriminated against most of its inhabitants on the basis of race. Policies on race determined which schools one attended, which area one could live in, which employment one was eligible for, who one could have romantic relations with, and so on, to name but a few relevant policies. As apartheid relied so much on categorizations made in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> The focus is specifically on South Africa, but I believe that the views that I will defend apply to other sub-Saharan African countries as well, where race still plays a large role in perpetuation injustice..

<sup>2</sup> See for example the discussion of the concept in *In The Balance: South Africans Debate Reconciliation*, Fanie du Toit and Erik Doxtader (eds), Jacana, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Another central issue is that people are not willing to make the huge sacrifices that might be necessary. Thanks to Pedro Tabensky for highlighting this point.

race, the latter will remain central in discussing the South African situation throughout my dissertation.<sup>1</sup>

After the first democratic elections in 1994, the first President of the new South Africa, Nelson Mandela, and his cabinet, using the resources of government, began a process of reconciliation. The process was conceived in order to address the atrocities of the apartheid era, and in an attempt to bridge the perceived racial differences which had been so ingrained during the apartheid years. In particular, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (according to its stated aims) was set up as a first step towards reconciliation.<sup>2</sup>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) had six main purposes: (1) the creation of a thorough record of the scope, character, and foundations of the human rights violations which occurred under apartheid; (2) to identify and make public the responsible parties; (3) to offer a public forum for the victims to convey their losses; (4) to make recommendations to prevent the possibility of future violations of human rights; (5) to make reparations to victims; and (6) to award conditional amnesty to those who made full admission of their contribution in such abuses, and who could demonstrate a purely political motive for their crimes.<sup>3</sup>

The TRC consisted of three subcommittees: namely the Human Rights Committee, the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, and the Amnesty Committee. The Human Rights Committee had the task of conducting public hearings for victims and survivors of the apartheid regime. The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee was responsible for recommendations of reparation measures, as well as the recommendations for measures to prevent the repetition of human rights violations in the future.<sup>4</sup> The Amnesty Committee heard applications for amnesty and granted amnesty if necessary conditions were met.<sup>5</sup> Amnesty was granted to individual perpetrators in return for full disclosure of human rights violations if it could be shown that the violations had a purely political objective.

The public hearings consisted of amnesty hearings, political party hearings and institutional hearings, which helped shed light on the operations and the theoretical underpinnings of the apartheid system. Among the institutions investigated were the media, legal community, health sector, business, labor and prisons. According to Verwoerd and Mabizela, “[t]hese hearings allowed

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<sup>1</sup> What exactly is meant by the term ‘race’ throughout the rest of the dissertation will be stipulated later in the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The TRC can also be interpreted as the mechanism which was utilised by the new government to largely maintain the economic status quo. This more cynical interpretation, though probable, is not one that fits with the discourse surrounding the TRC, which includes the Afro-communitarian view I will engage during the course of the dissertation. I will therefore not focus on this possible interpretation, but rather on the stated aims of the TRC here.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Cunneen ‘Reparations and restorative justice: responding to the gross violation of human rights’ in Heather Strang and Jonathan Braithwaite (eds), *Restorative Justice and Civil Society*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2001 p86

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Verwoerd and Mahlubi ‘Chief’ Mabizela (eds), *Truths drawn in Jest*, David Philip Publishers, 2000 p6

<sup>5</sup> Alex Boraine, ‘Truth and reconciliation in South Africa: the third way’, in *Truth v. justice: the morality of truth commissions*, Robert I. Rotberg & Dennis Thompson (eds), 2000 p146

the TRC to explore the roles various social institutions played in committing or resisting or facilitating human rights violations [and] contributed to the formation of recommendations to prevent future human rights abuse.”<sup>1</sup> However it is debatable if the exposition of some of the structural features of apartheid has had a significant impact on certain citizens’ understanding of the history of South Africa. It is open to question whether the TRC did in fact meet its stated goals, and it is to this that I now turn the discussion.

The TRC process has been criticized for many reasons, and one of the most damning criticisms sees the TRC as a process which dishonored black people in denying them justice, and forced them to forgive those who had harmed them. For example,

Black South Africans have been, as South African philosopher Mabogo P More has argued, humiliated by the TRC. The rancor of that humiliation permeates the air. Yes, some truth made its way to the public spaces. But public spaces cannot become genuine political spaces without a meeting of human beings on both human and humane terms. Denigration and expendability are poor grounds on which to build a polity and a praxis of freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Additional assessments of the TRC process have also criticized it for undermining justice<sup>3</sup>, while other important criticisms include that it was not able to enforce the financial reparations which it recommended, and that it focused too much on individual perpetrators and victims as opposed to the systemic oppression<sup>4</sup> central to the apartheid regime.

On the other side of the debate, some have argued that there were important positive contributions towards peace and reconciliation achieved by the TRC. South Africa’s political transition has been hailed internationally as a ‘miracle’, and held up as a model for reconciliation in other parts of the world. That the use of violence for liberation and revolution is an often necessary, but dangerous, tactic is one which this strategy of reconciliation might have been meant to temper. The TRC took a different approach to the retributive ‘Nuremburg trial’ style method of dealing with the aftermath of gross human rights violations. This more reconciliatory approach aimed to address the fact that, as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu both claimed, in an unjust society the oppressors and the oppressed are equally in need of liberation, since they are both denied their

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Verwoerd and Mahlubi ‘Chief’ Mabizela (eds), *Truths drawn in Jest*, David Philip Publishers, 2000 p16

<sup>2</sup> Foreword by Lewis Gordon to *I write what I like: Selected Writings by Steve Biko*, University of Chicago press, 2002 pxii

<sup>3</sup> See for example Mahmood Mamdani. *When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?* Imprint Pretoria, HSRC, 1998. and see the anthology *Truth v. Justice* edited by Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson, Princeton University Press, 2000, for arguments for and against the view that the TRC undermined justice.

<sup>4</sup> For a paper which argues for both the financial and structural objections, see ‘Dealing with Systematic Economic Injustice’ by Sampie Terreblanche in *Looking Back, Reaching Forward* edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio, and Wilhelm Verwoerd. 2000. London: Zed Books. Terreblanche takes this line of argument further in his most recent book *Lost in Transformation: South Africa’s search for a new future since 1986* (KMM Review Publishing Company, Sandton. 2012), where he argues that there was a compromise reached between the white economic and black political elites in order to maintain the economic status quo of capitalism after the demise of apartheid

humanity.<sup>1</sup> The TRC showed a commitment to the development of a human rights culture in South Africa, through “resisting the temptation to demonize and dehumanize our enemies.”<sup>2</sup> The process itself was meant to foster and encourage wider public debate on the future for South Africa, and deliberation on the way forward and how to try and ensure that future race relations were not marred by the legacy of apartheid. Building a society that respects human rights means starting to build an environment of rational dialogue and moral deliberation in which each is allowed to voice their opinion without fear of persecution. One of the TRC’s main stated aims was to be “committed to the development of a human rights culture and a respect for the rule of law in South Africa. In this sense the commission was not so much about the past as it was about coming to terms with contemporary challenges and future goals.”<sup>3</sup> In this way, the TRC claimed to point toward the possibility of a peaceful and respectful co-existence for all South Africans.<sup>4</sup> In not demanding retribution, the TRC required victims to show compassion and mercy toward their oppressors,<sup>5</sup> and in that way attempted to break the cycle of violence which had plagued the country for so long.

Certain facts revealed during the TRC process provided the foundations for assembling new bonds between people (as well as reinforcing existing, unrecognized bonds) which were not premised on inequality.<sup>6</sup> The existing bonds could be identified through careful scrutiny of previously unrecognized similarities between the formerly oppressed and the formerly oppressive sectors of society.<sup>7</sup> Based on these similarities and the (unrecognized) bonds that exist because of them, new sources of cohesion could be established. Values which are shared by many of the formerly oppressed as well as former oppressors were uncovered through creating the space for narratives in which the narrators’ values and desires came to the fore, and could be brought to the attention of different communities. A good example of previously unrecognized similarities is the importance of religion for both sectors, especially as the ANC was presented as ‘atheistic communists’ to the white public by the apartheid government. This uncovering of shared values is in line with the TRC’s stated aim to promote the recognition of humanity for all, and these shared values could be utilized in order to build new relationships (bonds) between groups based on previously unrecognized shared values.

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson Mandela cited in Richard Bell, *Understanding African Philosophy*, Routledge, 2002: p86

<sup>2</sup> Verwoerd and Mahlubi ‘Chief’ Mabizela (eds), *Truths drawn in Jest*, David Philip Publishers, 2000: p10

<sup>3</sup> Alex Boraine, ‘Truth and reconciliation in South Africa: the third way’, in *Truth v. justice: the morality of truth commissions*, Robert I. Rotberg & Dennis Thompson (eds), 2000 p150

<sup>4</sup> Alex Boraine, ‘Truth and reconciliation in South Africa: the third way’, in *Truth v. justice: the morality of truth commissions*, Robert I. Rotberg & Dennis Thompson (eds), 2000 p142

<sup>5</sup> It is of course exactly this enforced mercy which Magobo P More argues (see above citation) which humiliated black South Africans, and meant that they were not respected as equal under the law.

<sup>6</sup> Clifford Shearing ‘Transforming security: a South African experiment’ in Heather Strang and Jonathan Braithwaite (eds), *Restorative Justice and Civil Society*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2001 p27

<sup>7</sup> In the case of South Africa, the types of bonds being reinforced, during the course of the TRC, as well as today, would have to be carefully scrutinized in order to avoid perpetuation of the regimes of oppression.



The idea inherent in much of the stated aims of the TRC is that an understanding of the past is necessary for the possibility of a united vision of the future. By interrogating the past, and coming to a shared understanding of it, there might be the possibility of articulating shared goals for the future of the country, based on the uncovered shared values of different groups.

It has however also been argued by critics of the commission that the TRC was a way of aiming for 'reconciliation' which was in actual fact instrumental in preserving an oppressive status quo<sup>1</sup>. In other words, without some surety that genuine economic transformation<sup>2</sup> would occur, to work for peaceful co-existence between the very rich in their mansions (even if some of the very rich were now black), and the very poor in their surrounding slums, would reinforce the hierarchical systemic economic oppression<sup>3</sup> in existence. Today, the existence of a relatively small contemporary black middle class, and the continually widening of the gap between the post-apartheid rich and poor could be cited as evidence in support of this view.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to this possible interpretation of the outcome<sup>5</sup> of the TRC, it seems that the majority of white South Africans' response to the TRC process was not as positive as one would have hoped. The public hearings were attended by mostly people from previously disadvantaged race groups<sup>6</sup> and white faces present were the exception rather than the rule. The head of the commission, then Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the Commission itself, received bad publicity in the Afrikaner press, and the TRC was mockingly dubbed the 'Snot en Trane Kommissie'<sup>7</sup>, (directly translated as the 'Snot and Tears' Commission.) Though the TRC was not well attended, or even supported by the majority of white South Africans, it has become common for some white South Africans in the present to cite the TRC as having sufficiently dealt with the past, and to lament that we are not simply "moving on" as a country. Overall, poor black citizens in general seem to lament the fact that reconciliation shortchanged them of compensatory justice, and the demands for the transformation of the economy and better services are steadily increasing. In light of the conclusion of the TRC, and the years that have passed since then, it seems relevant to ask whether South Africa is still on a path to reconciliation.

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<sup>1</sup> Most critics would say this was an unintentional result. Sampie Terreblanche, however, seems to argue that it was intentional in his book *Lost in Transformation*.

<sup>2</sup> 'Transformation' is the term used in South African discourse to denote the modification of past and current racially determined economic trends to one which better reflects the country's overall racial constitution.

<sup>3</sup> This could be understood to be part of the problem articulated by Desmond Tutu's comment that the ANC "stopped the gravy train just long enough to get on themselves." Carlin, John, PBS Frontline. Retrieved 25 July 2011 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mandela/interviews/tutu.html>

<sup>4</sup> See Sampie Terreblanche, 2012, *Lost in Transformation*, KMM Review Publishing Company, Sandton, for a similar interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> It could, off course also be argued that it was not only the outcome of the TRC, but part of its goal. I do not believe this scale of scheming was however involved in setting up the TRC, and I will assume that the intentions behind it were benevolent.

<sup>6</sup> 'Black' in the black consciousness understanding of the term.

<sup>7</sup> see Mark Sanders, 'Remembering Apartheid', *Diacritics*, Volume 32, Number 3-4, Fall-Winter 2002 pp. 60-80

One important issue to note is that some important matters were not dealt with in the TRC, as its focus was only on gross human rights violations.<sup>1</sup> The TRC did perform the first step towards reconciliation for certain crimes, in that there could no longer be reasonable denial about some gross human rights violations which had occurred. Other important issues which were not dealt with during the TRC hearings, such as forced removals, the systematic economic exploitation of people in the apartheid era,<sup>2</sup> as well as the breaking down of families and social structures due to migrant labor, and the land issue, still demand attention.

Today, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), and numerous other projects aim to continue the process of reconciliation in the country. The focus on social and economic development and transformation in some government projects can be interpreted as a way of attempting to deal with the issue of reconciliation as well, even though these attempts cannot unambiguously be interpreted as aiming at reconciliation. In particular, transformation of the economy has been interpreted to be inimical to reconciliation by some white South Africans. Transformation is at the heart of affirmative action, Black Economic Empowerment, and economic reforms, and can be argued to support reconciliation (however an explicit argument needs to be made for it, which seems lacking in the political sphere). That transformation and reconciliation are in fact mutually supportive, and that transformation is a necessary condition for reconciliation, is therefore a position which needs to be argued for and which explicitly needs to be set out.<sup>3</sup> I will return to this issue in detail in chapter 4.

In spite of all these projects and attempts at reconciliation, the South Africa of today is still fraught with mutual racist suspicion, mistrust, misperception and negative stereotyping; hardly the 'rainbow nation'<sup>4</sup> Desmond Tutu had in mind when he coined the phrase. The reality of the South African apartheid legacy is still apparent in attitudes, group and individual identities and racial economic disparity. Racist attitudes and concurrent dispositions are apparent both overtly and on a more covert and subconscious level. In terms of racist attitudes, footage of an incident in 2008 at the

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<sup>1</sup> Fiona Ross also argues that the emphasis on gross human rights violations during the TRC resulted in "a biased account of the past" (*New South African Keywords*, eds. Nick Shepherd and Steven Robbins) which exclude female experience.

<sup>2</sup> Black Economic Empowerment and Affirmative Action programs are in place to attempt to deal with these issues, but seem to have failed in some respects, as it is very often argued to be reverse discrimination by many of the white population, and cited as reasons for emigration by many skilled professionals. A case in 2009 of four police employees not being promoted for the reason that they were white, even though the posts then stayed unfilled, as no qualified black professionals were available, has again put a spotlight on affirmative action practices. (See *Mail and Guardian online* archives, 20 August 2009 <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-08-19-govt-settles-in-affirmative-action-test-case> accessed 2009/09/07) I will discuss this issue in more detail in chapter 4.

<sup>3</sup> Sally Matthews argues for transformation as a precondition for reconciliation in her paper 'Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all Campaign' in *TRANSFORMATION* 74 (2010). Though her argument is persuasive, it seems to not be widely accepted in the country at large. The recent race debate in South Africa sparked by Samantha Vice's paper "How do we live in this strange place?" (*Journal of Social Philosophy* 41 (3):323-342) offers many examples of responses in popular literature and the media where transformation is deemed to be contra-reconciliation. These issues will be dealt with in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>4</sup> This term is meant to denote unity in diversity, and harmony, as used in South African discourse.

University of the Free State<sup>1</sup> showed white students humiliating and degrading black staff members in a mock initiation ritual. Far from this being an isolated incident of a few young people with bad attitudes, as many believed at the time, a report on racism in tertiary institutions<sup>2</sup> across the country shocked many with its revelations of structural and individual racism, quite apart from the apparent overall failure of transformation<sup>3</sup> in these institutions. Apart from such overtly racist attitudes as displayed in this incident, race is still a central feature of people's identities in South Africa.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps most importantly, in socio-economic terms the country's 'two nation economy' (comprising the formal, first world economy and the informal economy), as it is called, mostly still maps onto the racial categories of privileged white and disadvantaged black groups.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps related to this, transformation is typically rejected by most 'previously advantaged' South African citizens, who still seem to hope for 'easy' or 'cheap' reconciliation, which does not have to address central and deeply ingrained structural economic disparities and problems which still affect the country. Such a rejection of transformation can be seen as one example of the continued existence of a 'conflictive ethos' in South Africa.

### **South Africa: a society with a conflictive ethos**

With reference to an account of protracted conflict articulated by Daniel Bar-Tal, I argue in this section that South Africa is still properly classified as having a 'conflictive ethos'<sup>6</sup>. A conflictive ethos encompasses habits, attitudes and beliefs which perpetuate a situation of hostility and which is present in an intractable conflict. I will argue that, however the concept of 'reconciliation' is conceived of, a society in which people's mindsets enable and sustain a situation of antagonism in this way (as captured by the 'conflictive ethos') cannot be understood as a society that is reconciled. It seems plausible to hold that a necessary condition for a society being reconciled is that the majority of people in that society recognize it as reconciled. A society in which the majority does not recognize their society as reconciled cannot be argued to be so by a third party.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>1</sup> Video footage still available on youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxODMIEKUz4&feature=related> accessed 2009/09/08. Full video available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8N-h8anSuE&feature=fvw>

<sup>2</sup> Report summary available at <http://www.mg.co.za/uploads/2009/04/30/executive-summary.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The lack of transformation I have in mind here is the failure of universities in post-apartheid South Africa to overcome the apartheid legacy – universities are still able to be classified as 'formerly white and privileged' as opposed to 'formerly black and disadvantaged'. There has been a lack of transformation in terms of equality of resources available to the different universities in question.

<sup>4</sup> See G. Stevens, V. Franchi, & T. Swart (Eds.). *A race against time: Psychology and challenges to deracialisation in South Africa*. Epping: ABC Press. (2006) for a collection of papers on the importance race still plays in identity construction in post-apartheid South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Census2011/Products.asp> for statistics from the latest census.

<sup>6</sup> Bar-Tal's work focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the paradigm case for 'protracted conflict'. Though there are obvious differences between this case and the South African situation, there are enough similarities for this account to be easily adaptable for my purposes.

<sup>7</sup> It is of course possible that a society might think that they are reconciled when they are not, but it seems that it is not possible for a society which sees itself as *not* being reconciled to be so. This has to do with the fact that reconciliation

predominance of this conflictive ethos, I argue, entails that racial reconciliation, however it is conceived of by different sectors of the population, is not yet a reality in the South African context, as a conflictive ethos encompasses the above mentioned 'habits, attitudes and beliefs' which maintain a situation of hostility between races.

It will also become apparent as we proceed, that a robust and nuanced understanding of the *concept* of reconciliation can itself play a transformative role in the reconciliation process, or even be a realization of reconciliation itself.<sup>1</sup>

In developing his notion of a 'conflictive ethos,' Bar-Tal discusses one of the most tenacious and protracted conflicts in the modern world; that between Israel and Palestine. He argues from this case study that protracted conflicts affect people's core psychologies through their identity and subjectivity being *constituted* by the conflict in specific ways. I believe that Bar-Tal's account provides a fruitful starting point for looking at the importance of identity in the contexts both of protracted conflict and in its alternative; reconciliation.

Bar-Tal argues that, during long term conflicts, a 'conflictive ethos' is subconsciously constructed by the society's members as a means of being able to cope with the difficult situation of protracted conflict.<sup>2</sup> The conflictive ethos is a collective psychological defense mechanism which ascribes the situation with a deep and important meaning that makes it easier for the participants in the conflict to cope.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, this ethos, which is constructed in order to allow people to survive in a situation which is psychologically grueling, actually stokes the fires of the conflict, so that it perpetuates the conflict which it is created to deal with in the first place. To make the situation bearable, it has to be ascribed a particular meaning, and yet it is exactly this meaning which requires the type of Manichean understandings of self and other which does not allow either group to recognize the other group as anything but an enemy.

In order to make sense of the conflict and its context, Bar-Tal argues, society members form their beliefs through "selective information processing and biased interpretation of acquired

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applies to relationships between groups and individuals, and it is not possible to be reconciled without knowing it, as it is not possible to forgive without knowing it. It is an action, and there needs to be some form of intentionality and conscious decision making involved. It is however possible to think that you are reconciled when you are not, if self-deception is at work, and the relationship between the different parties is not *in fact* repaired.

<sup>1</sup> This point will be analyzed in more detail later in the dissertation, when Sally Matthews' paper 'Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all Campaign' in *TRANSFORMATION* 74 (2010) is discussed at length.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that, even if the duration of explicit, violent conflict is not that long, the ethos of conflict would have been in the process of being constructed in order for the violence to erupt.

<sup>3</sup> This insight of Bar-Tal echoes Victor Frankl's contention that people have the need for meaning, and that without such meaning, they cannot (and do not even want to) survive. See Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, (1959, Washington Square Press) which describes this position with reference to his time spent in a concentration camp during the Second World War.

information”.<sup>1</sup> An example of this ‘selective processing’ is that people who find themselves in a situation of protracted conflict ignore evidence that would undermine their belief that the enemy is ‘evil’. Any counterexample of a person in the enemy group not behaving in accordance with their preconceived notions of ‘the enemy’ is either ignored, or the person is marked as an exception to the rule. The scale and duration of atrocities expressive of an ethos of conflict are to some extent the result of the societal beliefs people have formed in this way. These beliefs “construct society members’ view of the conflict and motivate them to act.”<sup>2</sup> The structure of beliefs formed in order to create meaning in what might often seem a senseless nihilistic situation, shapes and informs the perceptions, attitudes, motivations and actions of individuals and groups. The beliefs and attitudes are created by the conflict, and then end up perpetuating the conflict—they ultimately end up reinforcing one another, which is one of the central reasons that it is so difficult to resolve a protracted conflict.<sup>3</sup>

By definition, a conflictive ethos is incompatible with reconciliation. It is important to understand that the criteria for a conflictive ethos (and thus for a society in need of reconciliation) are very specific, and that it does not entail that all disagreement in society is necessarily bad. On the contrary, there can and will be dissent in a healthy pluralistic society. A conflictive ethos thus needs to be carefully distinguished from the kinds of dissent and agonistic relations that are present in healthy pluralistic societies.

Bar-Tal lists eight core elements of a conflictive ethos. These are:

- 1) the belief in the justness of one’s group’s goals, which justifies and explains the rationale behind the conflict;
- 2) the desire for, focus on, and anxiety around, personal and group security, and the conditions for its achievement;
- 3) an unquestioned positive self-image of the collective of whom one is a member in this conflict;
- 4) single-minded concentration on one’s victimization and the harms that have been perpetrated against one’s group;
- 5) the deligitimization of the opponent through strategies of dehumanization;
- 6) patriotism which generates loyalty to the group and its cause;
- 7) forced unity of the in-group in the face of the other group, by suspending internal conflict; and

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal “From Intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis” *Political psychology*, Vol 21 No 2 (2000): p353 and also see, e.g., the analysis of Israelis’ and Palestinians’ beliefs in Bar-Tal. (1990). ‘Israeli-Palestinian conflict: A cognitive analysis’. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, pp7-29

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal “From Intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis” *Political psychology*, Vol 21 No 2 (2000) p353

<sup>3</sup> The formation of beliefs and their role in perpetuating the conflict can be understood in a similar way as the determination of beliefs by socio-economic conditions, and these beliefs then perpetuating those conditions, as Karl Marx has famously argued.

8) peace as the ultimate stated aim and desire of the group (even and especially against all the evidence apparent that perpetuation of the conflict is the actual result of their actions).<sup>1</sup>

Before turning to an examination of each of these points, it is worth noting that Bar-Tal's account is hardly exhaustive, and specifically focuses on the psychological aspects of a society which has operated under the conditions of a protracted conflict. Social psychology of groups is an important aspect of reconciliation to investigate, but should be understood in conjunction with other criteria, such as economic reform and institutional transformation, which Bar-Tal's account does not explicitly encompass.

Still, the political landscape of Africa and other post-colonial societies can be productively interpreted in the light of Bar-Tal's account, taking into consideration the turmoil in the post-colonial context that continues even after these countries gained independence from colonial powers. The failure to overcome the conflictive ethos instilled in these societies through the colonial project and revolutionary movements during anti-colonial struggles could be the reason why so many countries have struggled to maintain a peaceful and prosperous society. Revolutionary movements which have utilized violence in order to further their goals, *require* (according to Bar-Tal) a conflictive ethos in order to motivate their members to act for the movement, and sacrifice what is necessary in order for the revolution to be successful. The problem is that once the political change which the revolutionary movement fought for is gained, the revolutionary movement itself seems ill-equipped to rule peacefully and democratically, as it has fostered a conflictive ethos in order to further the goals of the revolution.<sup>2</sup> On the flip side, the (former) oppressors are also not willing to recognize and admit collaboration in and perpetuation of injustice. This gives them the impetus to keep interpreting the situation in a way which makes them either innocent bystanders in the past regime, and victims of injustice in the past and present regime. This "selective information processing and biased interpretation of acquired information"<sup>3</sup> perpetuates the conflictive ethos through its incapacity to deal with the truth of the situation.

I deem it necessary to look at the South African case in more detail, as a closer look at the political discourse and rhetoric in the country shows that the conflictive ethos of respective

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal "From Intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis" *Political psychology*, Vol. 21 No 2 (2000)

<sup>2</sup> This issue is captured well in the following quote from the famous 1967 Film by Gillo Pontecorvo *The Battle of Algiers*; "it's hard enough to start a revolution, even harder to sustain it, and hardest of all to win it. But it's only afterwards once we've won, that the real difficulties begin." (Ben M'Hidi to Ali La Pointe)

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal "From Intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis" *Political psychology*, Vol 21 No 2 (2000): p353 and also see, e.g., the analysis of Israelis' and Palestinians' beliefs in Bar-Tal. (1990). 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict: A cognitive analysis'. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, pp7-29

'revolutionary' movements,<sup>1</sup> is still evident. When looking at Bar-Tal's criteria, one can give evidence that South Africa is still steeped in a conflictive ethos, and has as not yet reached an ethos of peace (which may include healthy dissent).

With regards to 1), the belief in the justness of one's group's goals, which justifies and explains the rationale behind the conflict, South Africa has many distinct social groups who see themselves as having goals for justice that are opposed to, and in competition with, those of other groups. An example of issues in which opposing groups assume that their position is legitimate and just, include changing the names of cities, airports, streets and so forth, from figures who were associated with colonialism and apartheid, to figures associated with the struggle against apartheid. It is argued by some groups that this is disrespectful to their history, and also simply wastes money that could better be spent on other, more important projects. On the other hand, other groups assume that these are central and important projects towards overcoming the apartheid legacy. In terms of land reform, it is assumed by land owners that they deserve their land as they have worked hard to build up the businesses that depend on their land, and also that land redistribution is not the best way of dealing with the colonial and apartheid legacy, seeing as it (they claim) results in economically viable projects becoming unproductive as result of lack of skills on the part of the new owners. However, from the perspective of other groups, the land was stolen from the indigenous population, and so land redistribution is a necessary step in overcoming the colonial and apartheid legacy. Another example of groups in South Africa which hold opposing views with regards to the justness of their own goals, are the groups who believe in the justice of affirmative action (AA) and black economic empowerment (BEE) policies on the one hand, and groups that claim these policies are unjust on the other. This schism in South African society is central in terms of undermining racial reconciliation, yet neither side provides adequate arguments for the justice of its respective goals. The opposing views on the justness of these goals for fast-tracking transformation, causes much animosity between races, results in the perpetuation of racial polarization, and the perception of victimization along racial lines.<sup>2</sup> Though even pluralistic societies with a peace ethos would have dissent, the factor which makes these types of disagreements conflictive in the South African context is the continued decontextualization and denial of the consequences of racial identity by opponents to AA and BEE policies on the one hand, and the perception that AA and BEE need not be justified with rational arguments on the other. These debates are conflictive as so often they disintegrate into *ad hominem* accusations of racism, and move away from rational debating about the issues. They reinforce racial

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<sup>1</sup> Note that I do not only include the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) etc. in this, but also far right movements such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), as this far right group provides a good example of the type of reasoning that is typical of the conflictive ethos, and as they see themselves as a revolutionary movement.

<sup>2</sup> The issue of affirmative action will be taken up in detail in chapter 4. It is only meant as an illustration of Bar-Tal's first criterion here.

polarization which is such a central part of the conflictive ethos in this particular country as a result of ‘apartheid master narratives’ about race. On the one hand, to argue that affirmative action along racial lines (as opposed to, say, economic standing) might not be a ‘just’ goal can gain one a reputation for being ‘anti-transformation,’ or down-right racist, and therefore a rational justification for the policies are not given, as the ‘rightness’ of it is assumed. On the other hand, any argument that *is* made for the claim against affirmative action along racial lines can all too readily be appropriated by the group of South Africans who want ‘easy’ or ‘cheap’ reconciliation, and even used as evidence that they themselves are the victims of injustice.

The second element of a conflictive ethos on Bar-Tal’s list—the desire for, focus on, and anxiety around, personal and group security, and the conditions for its achievement—is something which is evident in many ways in the South African context. Many whites believe that violent farm murders are unofficially endorsed by the government, and there remains a “widespread perception among the farming community that FA [farm attacks]... [are] an orchestrated phenomenon, motivated by the desire to drive [white] farmers off their land.”<sup>1</sup> High crime rates in other sectors of society abound, and they too are often cast in racial terms. The exodus of many skilled white professionals to other countries is in part at least for the reason that they, *qua* whites, do not feel secure and safe in the country. The case of Brandon Huntley (prominent in 2009), who applied for refugee status in Canada arguing that as a white person in South Africa he was being persecuted, is an example of a high profile case in which anxiety around security cast in terms of race is apparent.<sup>2</sup> The insecurity that is felt on the part of many white South Africans is based on the fact *that they are white*, and they see this as a cause of their persecution.

However, there is also a continued feeling of economic insecurity for the majority of the black population, and it is this feeling of economic insecurity which feeds the desire for, focus on, and anxiety around, personal and group security, and the conditions for its achievement. An example of how this insecurity has manifested could be the xenophobic attacks in 2008, at which time violent attacks of foreign nationals in the townships was justified by claims that the foreign nationals take jobs and opportunities which are by rights those of South African citizens.<sup>3</sup> In at least the poor sectors of the black population, it is thus clear that there is a real fear and anxiety around economic security.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/farmattacks/\\_pdf/part1.pdf](http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/farmattacks/_pdf/part1.pdf) There are even claims of a white genocide.

<sup>2</sup> Note that I am only commenting on the perception of this by some, and that I am not saying that their perception is based on any relevant or sound evidence. For the Huntley case, see for example <http://mg.co.za/article/2009-09-04-canada-appeals-controversial-refugee-case>

<sup>3</sup> For recent analyses of the events, see Landau, L (ed) 2011. *Exorcising the Demons Within: Xenophobia, Violence, and Statecraft in Contemporary South Africa*, Wits University Press



The third element of a conflictive ethos—an unquestioned positive self-image of the collective of whom one is a member in this conflict—is also still apparent, not only among whites, but also in many black sectors of the population.<sup>1</sup> It is not *only* that the group has an unquestioned (at least consciously) positive image of itself; but also that they see the goals of the group as being unquestionably right and just, which positions the group and its collective goals on the moral high ground.<sup>2</sup> This can explicitly be linked back to the first criterion discussed above, and could be what drives the conception amongst some that black South Africans cannot be racist. For example, in the case of Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment, the fact that it is a ‘just’ and rightful way to compensate for past injustices is assumed by the formerly oppressed group, without arguments for its ‘justness’ being offered. Groups, such as the ANC, who were against apartheid, are therefore assumed to occupy the moral high ground, despite the fact that human rights violations were also uncovered in its operations during the struggle. The ANC as a party, and individuals within it, are also seen in an unrealistically positive light, and any criticisms of them are urged to be kept internal to the party. Some white citizens, on the other hand, have denied that they were supporters of apartheid, and deny that they were (and are) still its beneficiaries. Of the minority of white people who do not deny their support for the apartheid regime, their self-image is still positive, in that they claim that things were ‘better for everyone’ under apartheid.<sup>3</sup>

The fourth element—single-mindedly concentrating on one’s victimization and the harms that have been perpetrated against one’s group—is very visible in terms of what people have come to call ‘playing the race card’<sup>4</sup> in South Africa. Criticism against black individuals and institutions by whites is often seen as being racist *simply because* it is leveled by white individuals (and vice versa). Criticism from whites is therefore not easily tolerated. For example, opposition to the use of the category of ‘race’ being used as a proxy for disadvantage in affirmative action policies is often immediately regarded as racist (as explained above), without even looking at whether the argument to support that conclusion is sound or not. Many young whites, on the other hand, concentrate on

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<sup>1</sup> This positive self-image need not undermine or contradict the possibility of an inferiority complex being present at the same time (to be discussed later in the dissertation), but rather can be meant to target this inferiority complex in some ways. I will discuss this in further detail in chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Jansen provides an analysis of how indirect knowledge is passed on to younger generations in his book *Knowledge in the Blood*. He summarises the ways in which the white students at the University of Pretori have this kind of positive image of the goals of their group and its collective goals. His book also makes mention of the indirect knowledge passed on to black students and how that shapes beliefs in the group and its collective goals.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example

<<http://www.canada.com/life/years+apartheid+ideology+endures+rural+South+Africa+town/855552/story.html>> and <<http://why-we-are-white-refugees.blogspot.com/2011/07/walter-williams-on-mandeladay-blacks.html>>

<sup>4</sup> See article <<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=75821>> for a journalists’ analysis of this phenomenon.

what they see as the ‘harm’ which is being perpetrated towards them by affirmative action<sup>1</sup> and in the form of the high crime rates which they perceive to be racially targeted.<sup>2</sup>

The fifth element—the deligitimization of the opponent through strategies of dehumanization—is apparent not only in some white communities towards blacks, but also in some black individuals and communities towards other races or ethnic groups. Racist stereotypes (as one example of continued dehumanization) still abound, even in the most educated sectors of society, as is clear from the recent report on racism<sup>3</sup> in Tertiary institutions, and determine attitudes and behavior towards others. Stereotypes operate through the dehumanization of the person who is stereotyped, as she is understood to display only the stereotypical features of her group. This denies the stereotyped person her humanity, as part of our humanity consists in our ability to change, and being stereotyped means you are perceived as having certain essential characteristics which you cannot overcome. South Africans of all races and classes seem to still hold some racist and racial stereotypes, and dehumanize others through their perceptions of them as instantiating a stereotype in this way.<sup>4</sup>

The sixth element—patriotism which generates loyalty to the group and its cause—can similarly be seen in relatively recent South African political events. The formation of the Congress of the People (COPE) in 2008 as a split off from the ruling African National Congress (ANC) generated a lot of discourse about ‘traitors to the cause’. The discourse around the event was steeped in accusations from both sides that the ‘people’ have been and are being betrayed by the other party. Thus, the betrayal is understood as not only betrayal towards a political party or project, but to ‘the people’, in other words ‘our people’—the in-group. As the ANC was the liberation movement (and utilized violent means to some extent through its armed wing, *Umkhonto we sizwe*), it needed to build its structures around loyalty and in-group/out-group rhetoric, and as explained earlier, this is central to a conflictive ethos. That the political party is still plagued by this type of discourse arguably shows that it has failed to make the transition to a political party (with an ethos of peace) from a liberation (and revolutionary) movement (with a conflictive ethos) with a definite need for a rigid ‘us vs. them’ mentality and rhetoric. The popularity of apartheid revolutionary songs such as “Umshini wami” (translated as ‘Hand me my machine gun’), which has become the signature song for Jacob

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent study on attitudes to affirmative action, see Pienaar, J. 2009. Perceptions of Affirmative Action and the Potential Unintended consequences thereof in the work environment: A study of the designated and non-designated groups in South Africa. MA thesis (Industrial Psychology) at the university of Stellenbosch. Especially the section on ‘The racism (in reverse) debate: reverse discrimination’ p 30. Also see HSRC Review - Volume 8 - No. 3 - September 2010 [http://www.hsrc.ac.za/HSRC\\_Review\\_Article-205.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/HSRC_Review_Article-205.phtml)

<sup>2</sup> See the Brandon Huntley example raised above for an example of a young white man having this perception of being targeted as a victim of crime for his race.

<sup>3</sup> Executive summary of report available at <http://www.mg.co.za/uploads/2009/04/30/executive-summary.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> For a recent qualitative study on attitudes towards other races, and the role race still plays in identity formation and self-image, see ‘First year students’ narratives of ‘race’ and racism in post-apartheid South Africa’ Kirstan Puttick, unpublished MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand. 2011

Zuma, current president of the ruling African National Congress and the country, is another way of keeping the 'us vs. them' mentality alive. These struggle songs and their popularity can also be linked back to anxiety around group security. For example, the anxiety that was caused by the singing of another struggle song 'Dubula iBhunu' (Translated as 'Shoot the Boer'), caused concerned groups to have the singing of the song banned as hate speech.<sup>1</sup> A similar analysis can be made about some white extremist groups, who also foster this kind of 'us vs. them' mentality. The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) reinforces separation and alienation of white Afrikaners from the rest of the inhabitants of South Africa, through its calls for an Afrikaner state. The Afrikaner is depicted by the AWB as having been robbed of his land and the rightful fruits of his labour, emphasizing the 'victim' mentality at play.<sup>2</sup> The fact that this kind of rhetoric is politically expedient could itself be an indication of the continuing presence of a conflictive ethos in South Africa.<sup>3</sup>

The seventh element on Bar-Tal's list of criteria for a conflictive ethos is internal unity within groups forged through ignoring or temporarily suspending internal conflict. This is apparent in some discourse around race in South Africa. The fact that individuals in the black population have very different interests when taking their respective socio-economic positions into account is often ignored or downplayed by black people as a group, when the differences in interests between the new black bourgeoisie and the working class are becoming more glaringly obvious by the day.<sup>4</sup> The lack of action from the government and ruling party with regards to corruption and incompetence by members of parliament and government officials (even when there is ample evidence) could also be cited as a result of this continued belief in unity against an external enemy (even though this can only be part of the explanation, as undoubtedly self-interest also plays a role). Another example of ignoring internal conflict is the continued support of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist party (SACP) during election campaigns of the third part of the Tripartite alliance (the ANC), when the policies espoused by the ANC are often what is lobbied against in non-election times.

The final element—peace as the ultimate desire of the society, despite evidence that perpetuation of the conflict is the actual result of the current trend of actions—can also be seen in

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<sup>1</sup> The South African High Court ruled that the song was incitement to violence and hate speech on 26 March 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://awb.co.za/> For another example of the 'us vs. them' mentality from a white perspective, see Parkin, L and Stanton, G. 2012. 'Why are Afrikaner and Boer farmers being murdered in South Africa?' <http://www.whitenationnetwork.com/paper/archives/4545>

<sup>3</sup> Though the 'us vs. them' strategy is one which is ubiquitous in politics, the difference here is that it is not the country and its citizens which is cast as the in-group (as was the case in the infamous 'war on terror' rhetoric employed by George W Bush), but rather that the in-group is a *sector* of the society in question, and that only one group can represent the true interests of the 'people', meaning the black working class.

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis which addresses this issue, see Sandile Memela's 'Rich black poor black' <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/sandilememela/2012/10/08/rich-black-poor-black/>. He claims that this attitude of ignoring the class differences in the black community has existed throughout the country's history, but that it is not serving the country's poor citizens.

the South African context. Though there does seem to be a general desire for peace in South African society, possible ways of discouraging conflicts of interest are not supported by important sectors in the society, despite the fact that this leads to undermining the conditions for peace (such as real, substantial change in the economic landscape). Instead of recognizing that there are structural economic changes that need to be implemented for continued peace, there are allegations by some whites that people in the country who are still poor are so because they are lazy, do not have a good work ethic, have bad character or fall in with criminal elements. This denial of the continued importance of the structural and institutional legacy of apartheid holds that the people who are not happy with the status quo have not done enough to uplift themselves, and thus there are no actions that they, as the advantaged people in the country who have benefitted from the past injustice, have to do. They claim that they have what they do because they are hard working and stay away from criminal elements. By disregarding the continued legacy of apartheid in terms of education and life chances, they continue to act in a way which could lead to future violence, while claiming that all they want is peace. In other words, though there is the express desire for peace, there is little attempt to remove the obstacles to such a peace.

I have argued that South Africa qualifies as a society with, what Bar-Tal terms, a “conflictive ethos”. In the next section I will demonstrate that the social groups who are embroiled in this conflict can best be classified according to race. Some theorists might balk at this claim, arguing that class is the most important factor to take into account, so let me clarify the continued importance of race in the South African context.

### **The continued importance of race in the South Africa context<sup>1</sup>**

As is apparent from the previous sections, the concept of race is still an all important one in the South African context. As Samantha Vice writes,

...philosophers have duties *qua* philosophers to engage with their context; in South Africa, this must be to engage with race and oppression. Although an honest and sincere public dialogue about race has not yet happened in South Africa—the subject is too close to the bone for many and too much is at stake and too confused—race is the unacknowledged elephant in the room that affects pretty much everything, in and outside academia.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the importance of dealing with race relations in South Africa does not imply that this is the only issue that needs to be dealt with. There are obviously other very important issues (such as xenophobia, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance, political intolerance, deeply embedded patriarchy and the prevalence of violence throughout society) that also need urgent attention for South Africa to mature into a tolerant democracy. I do not, however, take the view (as does Christi van der Westhuizen in *In the Balance: South Africans Debate Reconciliation, 2010*) that reconciliation in South Africa is therefore not usefully cast as a race issue. As much as all these other phenomena are important to address for social justice, the race issue is one which is central to reconciliation in the post-apartheid context, and to include these issues as central to reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa is to confuse the concept of reconciliation with social justice. This ought to become clear in chapter 4 on justice.

<sup>2</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 41 No 3 Fall 2010 p 323

This chapter so far has provided some evidence for the claim that the practical and political issue of racial reconciliation is still a highly relevant issue for South Africa. What is meant by the concept of 'race' is clarified in this section in order to spell out what the 'race' in 'racial reconciliation' refers to, and to explain why this concept is central to the South African conflictive ethos and to individual and group identities.

Many South Africans see race as still being central to identity, and as reconciliation (as will be argued) is centrally about identity, this makes race a necessary concept and category to take into account for an understanding of what reconciliation would entail in the South African context. When I refer to race in this dissertation, I am referring to a socially and historically constructed category which has had, and continues to have, a great effect on people's life choices, opportunities and challenges. The term "race" is never meant to pick out more than that in my work, and especially does not refer to any essentialist or biological understanding of the term. 'Race' as a biological term, refers to nothing more than morphological features and therefore does not translate into any pre-determined moral or intellectual capacities. There is only one human race in the biological sense, and so speaking of 'races' is only legitimate when it is recognised that race is a socially constructed category.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of its colonial and apartheid history, and the role that race played in this history, race is still an important sociological category in South Africa today<sup>2</sup>. This is as a result of the erroneous beliefs that earlier generations (and unfortunately, some of the current generation) had about racial determinism of moral and intellectual characteristics, and the consequences of these beliefs on how people were treated. The history of oppression, denial of opportunities and poverty, all rationalised by this outdated belief in biological racial difference and hierarchy, has shaped the opportunities, self-esteem, and group identities of so called 'race-groups' to this day, and continues to do so. The continued difference in life expectations according to race in South Africa<sup>3</sup> can be interpreted as one indicator which could be used to measure whether someone is able to live a flourishing life. Not having the capacity to live a flourishing life is a prime example of how prejudice against a group in the past has caused particular circumstances (in this case, not being able to lead flourishing lives), which in turn perpetuates the prejudice.<sup>4</sup> Being able to lead a flourishing life is affected by economic position, as one's economic situation determines the quality of nutrition,

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<sup>1</sup> See Andreassen, R. (2000). 'Race: Biological reality or social construct?' *Philosophy of Science*, 67, S653-S666. And Taylor, P, 2000, "Appiah's Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Reality of Race," *Social Theory and Practice* 26 (1): 103-128. And 2004, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper, A (2008). Review of 'Why race matters in South Africa' by MacDonald, M (2006). *Africa Today*, 54, 131-133.

<sup>3</sup> See Institute for Race Relations surveys and press releases <http://www.sairr.org.za/>

<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon has been discussed at length in feminist literature, with regards to (for example) the intellectual capabilities of women. Once women were perceived to be not as intellectually capable, they were (still are in some contexts) not prioritized in (or even excluded from) education, which in turn skews the statistical presence of women who excel in intellectual endeavors.

medical care and education one can afford. People find themselves in their current social positions as a result of the circumstances in which their parents are raising them. Some very basic examples of this include the impact of the quality of nutrition on the development of young children, as well as the proven importance of mental stimulation at an early age, and how that affects people's chances later in life. If parents are unable to provide the kind of environment in which these factors are adequately attended to as a result of their impoverished state, mostly due to their identities constructed as 'non-white' under apartheid, this gives a straightforward explanation of how the race classifications of apartheid still impact young people today. In other words, the structural racial inequalities in South Africa seem to persist, and as a result an average black person will have far less chances for a flourishing life than the average white person. But the fact that less black people lead a flourishing life perpetuates some people's prejudices against black people. This is possible as they ignore the structural causes of their failure to lead flourishing lives, and blame their failure on the individuals themselves, such as blaming their failure on laziness or choosing to fall in with criminal elements.

In conjunction with this, the historical legacy and classification of the population according to 'race' classifications in South Africa has resulted in a strong identification of individuals with their ascribed 'race groups'. As a result, it is difficult to imagine that race would not still play a central role in the current South African political landscape. Racial identity is still central to how most people think of themselves, even if there are some in the country who claim to not think of themselves in this way. Racial identity was, and to a large extent still is, a major determinant of people's life chances in South Africa, and it therefore continues to play a central role in how people classify themselves, and also how they are classified and treated by others. An explanation of how a (strictly speaking) non-existing biological category can have this impact on people's identity centres on how the perception of these different 'races' as having different qualities can have very real effects. For example, empirical studies have shown that applying positive or negative labels to children affect their performance in the classroom; each label acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>1</sup> In the same way, expectations and the ascription of stereotypical features of a race group to individuals, and treating them as if they already instantiate these features, could affect their behavior to align with expectations.

It is therefore not only in terms of the statistical economic differences between 'races' which still sees economic power divided predominantly according to race<sup>2</sup>, that makes it central to the reconciliation project in South Africa. Just as important as that is the psychological factor that many

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<sup>1</sup> See Rosenthal, Robert; Jacobson, Lenore (1992). *Pygmalion in the classroom* (Expanded ed.). New York: Irvington This is exactly the type of mechanism at work in the inferiority and superiority complexes diagnosed by Fanon and Biko, and to be discussed in further detail in chapter 6.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.sairr.org.za](http://www.sairr.org.za) Press Release 1 Feb 2011 'White income eight times higher than African'

people in South Africa perceive their race as being central to their identities; many “South Africans tend to think of themselves in racial terms first before they think of other aspects of their identity.”<sup>1</sup> Race plays such an important part in the lives of most South Africans, on both a material and a symbolic level, that to even attempt to speak of reconciliation in the country without central attention to race is untenable. Race then, in this sociological sense, denotes *more* than mere morphological features (or even average economic disparities) but rather points towards certain *meanings* attached to these features in the society’s symbolic order.<sup>2</sup> Even when people are inclined to dismiss race-talk, I would argue that people who are taking this stance are simply unaware of the deep racial construction of their identity. For example,

It is by now standard, for instance, to think of whiteness as consisting in the occupation of “a social location of structural privilege in the right kind of racialized society,” as well as the occupation of the epistemic position of seeing the world “whitely.” “Whiteness,” Paul Taylor writes, “tends to involve a commitment to the centrality of white people and their perspectives”: “The way they [whites] see the world just is the way the world is, and the way they get around in the world just is the right way to get around.” The political, social and economic advantages that accrue to being white are then “normalized, and rendered unremarkable.”<sup>3</sup>

White privilege can then be understood “as unconscious psychical and somatic habits, constituted by ‘mental and physical patterns of engagement with the world that operate without conscious attention or reflection’; our very identities are constituted by these patterns of behavior.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, white identity is constructed in specific ways, and it is exactly this construction which allows whites to make the call to look beyond race, as the position of whites is one of the norm, ‘normalized’ in the Foucauldian sense.

In the same way, black identity is constructed in specific ways. In terms of the symbolic order<sup>5</sup>, it seems that in many ways, Franz Fanon’s diagnosis of an inherited inferiority complex in black Antilleans, is highly relevant in the South African context today. The general form that this pathology takes, according to Fanon, is “the internalization of the colonizer’s values by the colonized, which

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<sup>1</sup> Ryland Fischer “Breaking the Silence about Race” *SA Reconciliation Barometer Newsletter*, Vol. 5 Iss. 3 , November 2007, p11

<sup>2</sup> See G. Stevens, V. Franchi, & T. Swart (Eds.). *A race against time: Psychology and challenges to deracialisation in South Africa*. Epping: ABC Press. (2006) for a collection of papers on the importance race still plays in identity construction in post-apartheid South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol 41 No 3 Fall 2010 p 324

<sup>4</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol 41 No 3 Fall 2010 p 325

<sup>5</sup> The symbolic order in which white is seen as good, pure, and black as its opposite, namely evil, tainted. That there are still these stereotypes, and that it is embedded deep within most of our collective psyches, is something which becomes apparent in the famous social psychology experiment known as the ‘Clarks’ dolls experiment’ in which young African-American children were asked to pick a doll, choosing between a black and white doll. The vast majority of children picked the white doll, justifying their choice through claims that the black doll was ‘bad’, ‘naughty’ etc. First performed in the 1930’s, the experiment was reproduced in 2006, with very similar results to those in the 1930’s. This experiment has not been performed in South Africa to my knowledge, but it is at least reasonably possible that the patterns would look similar in South Africa, especially since there has been such a long history of oppression and psychological inferiorizing.

leads to self-hatred and contempt”.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the values of the coloniser or oppressor, which judge the colonized to be inferior and backward, are internalised by the colonised herself, and thus she suffers a loss of self-esteem and starts to hate herself and what she represents in the worldview of the oppressor. As Fanon reports, the fact of his blackness made it the case that people would react to him in specific ways which made his race (and the acknowledgement of what blackness is perceived to mean under the white gaze) impossible to escape.<sup>2</sup> The fact that people around him reacted to him in accordance with specific racial stereotypes meant that he could either accept these ascribed features (and internalise them), or he had to react against them, and continuously set out to prove that he did not have these features. Either way, the manner in which others reacted to his blackness was something that he necessarily had to respond to and take into account in his life. Indeed, what his life would be was largely determined by how he chose to respond to the racist “white gaze”.<sup>3</sup>

In the South African context, the founder of the black consciousness movement, Steve Bantu Biko, claimed that colonialism (of which apartheid was an extension) left many blacks in South Africa with an inferiority complex which in some ways made a psychological cripple of the postcolonial subject.<sup>4</sup> In order to deal with the possible social and psychological repercussions of race classifications under apartheid, it is necessary *not* to ignore the deep repercussions these classifications have had on South African society as a whole. To make this diagnosis of the presence of the inferiority complex (and accompanying white superiority complex, which can be interpreted as the sense of entitlement that accompanies ‘whiteness’ as discussed above) does not, of course, mean that all black people have an inferiority complex (or that all whites have a superiority complex) It does, however, mean that the symbolic order still exists in our society, and that black people who do not suffer from this psychological inferiority complex (and whites who do not suffer the superiority complex) are in the minority, and have overcome the obstacles to a healthy self-esteem with difficulty, and against many odds.<sup>5</sup> This means that in terms of its classification as a society with a conflictive ethos, South Africa is faced with the psychological predicaments (in conjunction with the more obvious economic issues) of post-apartheid racial reconciliation. The importance of group psychology and identity (which have historically been constructed in specific ways) explains why the

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<sup>1</sup> Pedro Tabensky, ‘Post-colonial heart of African philosophy’, *SAJP* Vol 27, no 4, 2008

<sup>2</sup> See Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*

<sup>3</sup> Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*. See especially his chapter ‘The lived experience of the black’

<sup>4</sup> See Steve Biko’s *I write what I like*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins

<sup>5</sup> A relevant parallel can be drawn with women’s views of themselves in terms of the ‘feminine beauty ideal’ which is ever present in the media and society as a whole. Women are expected to live up to this ever changing ideal, and though there are a few women who are able to form their self-esteem without reference to this ideal, most women will be unable to escape at least some impact of this ideal and how they fail to live up to it on a psychological level. See *Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, (1994) Edited by Karen A. Callaghan for a collection of papers on the Feminine beauty ideal and its relationship to patriarchy.



concept of race (and the resulting racism), is so central to the South African conflictive ethos and to individual and group identities formed in this context.

Once it becomes clear that the conflictive ethos in South Africa centres largely on the racial identities of groups, of solidarity with one's own race (the in-group), and animosity against others (the out-group), the importance of race and dealing with it as a determinant of one's life possibilities is plain. Ignoring the importance that race still plays within such a historically racially delineated society would distort the perception and description of the situation. To imagine that the legal changes which inscribed equality of opportunity into the constitution are enough to guarantee a level playing field after centuries of racially entrenched inequalities, is very naïve indeed, and also very insensitive to the workings of injustice.

Thus, in South Africa, to deny that 'race' is an important social category which needs to be taken into account for reconciliation, is an attempt to ignore the group identities which are in need of reconciliation. As South Africa is still in need of reconciliation, as I have argued so far in this chapter, to deny that reconciliation needs to take place between racial groups, and to deny that race is still a relevant category in contemporary South Africa, is not a viable interpretation. If this was truly possible, this might be one way to ensure lasting good will amongst people in South Africa (at the expense of a celebration of diversity – and thus the 'rainbow nation'), but the reality is that we are all affected by deeply ingrained subconscious racist stereotypes and classifications. These subconscious beliefs influence our identity, our relationships, and our beliefs, and will continue to do so unless they are continuously questioned and interrogated. To deny that this is the case would be to deny a vast amount of research and literature<sup>1</sup> which has provided evidence for the lasting psychological associations and symbolic meanings attached to 'black' and 'white'. Even in countries that do not have the apartheid history of South Africa, race is still symbolically represented according to the dominant Western hierarchy, which stipulates that everything white is pure, clean, and good, and that everything black is the opposite.

To be sure, it is important to be aware that the continued centrality of race in terms of group and individual identities could possibly reinforce animosity between groups. One reaction to this possibility of perpetuating animosity is that we need to deal with the race issue in South Africa by

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<sup>1</sup> As mentioned in footnote above, a good example of this is the Kenneth and Mamie Clark "doll experiment" which was recently reproduced again in the United States. The results, (that black children saw whiteness as being 'good' and blackness as 'bad') was no different from the first time the experiments were performed in the forties. Also see Clovis L. White and Peter J. Burke, Ethnic Role Identity among Black and White College Students: An Interactionist Approach, *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Jul., 1987), pp. 310-331; Lincoln Quillian and Devah Pager, Black Neighbors, Higher Crime? The Role of Racial Stereotypes in Evaluations of Neighborhood Crime, *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 107, No. 3 (November 2001), pp. 717-767; Steven A. Tuch, Jack K. 1997. Martin. Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change. Praeger Publishers; Sagar, H. Andrew and Schofield, Janet W. 1980. Racial and behavioral cues in Black and White children's perceptions of ambiguously aggressive acts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 39(4), Oct 1980, 590-598; Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Apr., 1997), pp. 375-401

simply starting to treat each other as part of the 'human race', and to foster a kind of 'color-blindness'<sup>1</sup> which would prescribe moving beyond racial classifications immediately. The type of reconciliation that is espoused by people who want to move beyond race classifications immediately has been described by Sally Matthews as being 'cheap' or 'easy' reconciliation. Cheap and easy reconciliation, which would prescribe that we forget the past and immediately move beyond classifications of race to a color-blind society can be related to a view of reconciliation held by many white South Africans. This notion is very problematic, and will be discussed in detail in the following section.

### **Differing Interpretations of Reconciliation**

Now the political issue has been fully articulated, I turn to the literature in search of philosophical accounts of reconciliation as a guide to South Africa's reconciliation process. I first introduce some general concepts and terminology. Second is an analysis and critique of the simplistic conception of reconciliation held by many white South Africans; who understand reconciliation and transformation to be in tension with one another, Thirdly, philosophical accounts by Darrell Moellendorf, Trudy Govier & Wilhelm Verwoerd, and Desmond Tutu are compared and contrasted with this simplistic conception of reconciliation. Finally, as Tutu does not give a sustained philosophical defense of his position (which he explicitly grounds in Afro-communitarianism), it is necessary, in order to better understand his position, to carefully articulate the Afro-communitarian account of personhood and the consequent ethical theory, which Tutu takes as his starting point.

Sally Matthews argues in her paper "Differing Interpretations of Reconciliation in South Africa: a Discussion of the Home for All Campaign"<sup>2</sup> that there are different conceptions of reconciliation at work in South African political discourse, and that one of these conceptions of reconciliation is particularly detrimental to the reconciliation process.

In her analysis of reconciliation, Matthews introduces the reader to some central distinctions, namely between forward and backward looking accounts of reconciliation, as well as between minimalist and maximalist accounts. These ways of theorizing about reconciliation are found across the literature, and it will serve us well to have a basic understanding of them before going further. First, let us look more closely at the maximalist/minimalist distinction. Matthews writes,

Reconciliation can be defined in minimalist (or 'thin') and maximalist (or 'thick') ways. Minimalist approaches to reconciliation stress peaceful co-existence, while maximalist

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<sup>1</sup> It is however also important to note that acknowledging the importance of the category of race does not immediately translate into an argument for affirmative action which uses race as proxy for disadvantage. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> Sally Matthews, "Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign" TRANSFORMATION 74, 2010 pp 1 - 22

definitions stress the more pro-active building of trust and friendship between previously estranged groups. Other understandings fall somewhere in between, presenting reconciliation as a matter of mutual respect and some willingness to cooperate, but not much more than this.<sup>1</sup>

The spectrum or scale of maximalist to minimalist<sup>2</sup> accounts of reconciliation refers to the amount of emotional involvement and personal change which such accounts hold needs to occur for reconciliation to be possible. Distinctions between minimal and maximal emotional content concern the “type of reconciliation involved—whether one is seeking merely nonviolent coexistence, decent neighborly relations, or the restoration of a close friendship or an intimate love affair.”<sup>3</sup> Reconciliation can thus occur on any point on this spectrum of emotional investment, ranging from minimal involvement to maximal emotional entanglement. So, merely attaining nonviolent coexistence would be minimal reconciliation, while the restoration of a close friendship or an intimate love affair would be a maximalist account of reconciliation.

While reconciliation is *firstly* a future orientated concept, in that it aims to bring about a certain state of affairs, in the literature it is understood to be either forward or backward looking, or, at least, different accounts put more focus on one rather than the other. Matthews writes,

Reconciliation can be said to be about ‘how to recollect the past in the name of making the future’. Some understandings focus more on the future urging us to put the past behind us and work towards a common future. Others insist that we continue to engage with the past in order to decide how to make the future.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, whereas all accounts of reconciliation focus on the future with the aim of bringing about a state of affairs in which the relationships in question are in a better state than at present, there are different amounts of focus on how the past in the ‘forward’ and ‘backward’ looking accounts will bring about this better state of affairs. Forward looking accounts of reconciliation stress that past categories and ways of understanding society need to be discarded in order to attain a reconciled society in the future. For example, in South Africa, this could be applied in terms of stressing that race categories ought to be completely discarded, and that we should let bygones be bygones. Therefore, race categories ought not to be used in redressing the injustices of the past, instead, the society should deal with its legacy without referring to these categorizations. Backward looking accounts, in contrast, claim that

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<sup>1</sup> Sally Matthews, “*Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign*” TRANSFORMATION 74, 2010 p6

<sup>2</sup> Minimalism and maximalism are, I submit, unfortunate terms, as they are quantitative, and yet they refer to qualitative features of reconciliation. The minimalism to maximalism terminology is however often used, so I will continue utilizing these terms.

<sup>3</sup>Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, ‘Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation’. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 180 - 1

<sup>4</sup> Sally Matthews, “*Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign*” TRANSFORMATION 74, 2010 p5

engaging with the past is necessary in order to overcome these categories in the future. The importance of memory and how the past impacts the present and the future is emphasised according to backward looking accounts.

These distinctions and ways of understanding reconciliation are apparent in accounts of reconciliation across the literature. In order to have a better grasp of which kind of accounts fit into these categories, let us look at a few accounts in more detail. In addition to introducing the reader to different ways of conceptualizing reconciliation, analyzing these accounts in detail provides the impetus for exploring the Afro-communitarian conception of reconciliation in the latter part of the dissertation.

### ***Sally Matthews – the problematic view of many South African whites***

Matthews explains two ways of understanding reconciliation in her abovementioned paper, one very minimalist, another maximalist. I focus here on an explanation of the minimalistic (and future directed) conception of reconciliation she claims is held by many white South Africans and which she considers problematic. This conception sees reconciliation and transformation (“the set of policies designed by the government and the private sector to redress past racial discriminations and to redistribute wealth and income to previously disadvantaged groups”<sup>1</sup>) as two projects in tension with each other, and stresses “peaceful co-existence”<sup>2</sup> with a future directed focus. Though a future directed focus does not have a necessary relationship with minimalism, in this case, the focus on the future means ‘moving on’ (the future directed focus), ‘without major changes being necessary’ (the minimalistic aspect). In other words, this conception of reconciliation supports focusing on the future, to the exclusion of engaging with past events which has determined present social structures. Matthews cites Archille Mbembe who notes that many beneficiaries of the former regime see reconciliation as meaning that “blacks should forget about South Africa’s fractured past and move on”.<sup>3</sup> People subscribing to this conception of reconciliation seem committed to the view that the past should be buried and forgotten, and that the country’s citizens should now move forward oblivious to the fact that the present condition of all people living in South Africa today, including the scope of available opportunities, is largely determined by the legacy of apartheid. This take on reconciliation is one which I believe is well encapsulated by the following cartoon by political satirist Jonathan Shapiro.

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<sup>1</sup> Mbembe, A (2008) ‘Passages to freedom: the politics of racial reconciliation in South Africa’, *Public Culture* 20(1) p3

<sup>2</sup> Sally Matthews, “*Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign*” *TRANSFORMATION* 74, 2010 p6

<sup>3</sup> Mbembe, A (2008) ‘Passages to freedom: the politics of racial reconciliation in South Africa’, *Public Culture* 20(1). Cited in Matthews p5



Many white South Africans are unwilling to take on any responsibility for the benefits they received as a result of the unjust apartheid system, and do not believe they ought to be ‘burdened’ by the past (they are therefore trying to make very little emotional investment, and the conception of reconciliation is for this reason minimalistic). There is little recognition of the centuries of burden that still affects the majority of black people in South Africa today. Unfortunately, as Matthews shows, it is undeniable that large sectors of the white South African population subscribe to this conception of reconciliation. Proponents of this view regard “any action that alienates significant numbers of white South Africans as being inimical to reconciliation.”<sup>2</sup> Matthews analyzes comments by spokespeople representing mainly white organizations in South Africa, such as the Freedom Front Plus, the Democratic Alliance, and Afriforum, as evidence for this interpretation of reconciliation amongst some sectors of South African Society. This conception of reconciliation is one where the past and its atrocities and inequities ought to be forgiven and forgotten, while incessantly reassuring whites of their “continued (secure, comfortable, relatively privileged) future in South Africa.”<sup>3</sup> This understanding of reconciliation can be classified as a ‘minimalist’ (or ‘thin’) or, as Matthews also calls it, a ‘narrow’ conception of reconciliation.

One possible way of interpreting the problem with the general white South African view on reconciliation is that they do not really want reconciliation, but rather use the word to defend their class (and race) interests. Such minimal reconciliation is thus reconciliation in name only, as it does not in fact have the aim of changing relationships, unless that change happens without any

<sup>1</sup> Mail and Guardian online, Zapiro, December 20, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Sally Matthews, “Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign” TRANSFORMATION 74, 2010 p4

<sup>3</sup> Sally Matthews, “Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign” TRANSFORMATION 74, 2010 p5

substantial effort on their part or impact on their lives. So, if this minimal conception of reconciliation, as set out by Matthews and found amongst many white South Africans, is problematic, how else can we think about the concept of reconciliation?

What is available in the literature in terms of a robust conceptual understanding of reconciliation which captures the path South Africa needs to follow in order for its young democracy to mature? There have been several attempts at articulating what exactly a project of reconciliation in South Africa ought to entail, and in this section I select some accounts<sup>1</sup> in order to highlight important conceptual issues. These accounts address the second issue raised at the beginning of the chapter, namely what exact concept of 'reconciliation' should be strived for in South Africa? If we do not agree what conception of reconciliation as a society we should strive for, this will undermine the project of reconciliation itself, as different sectors of society will expect different levels of effort and different results from the process of reconciliation. The lack of agreement as to what reconciliation entails complicates and confuses the issue, and can become one of the main barriers for progress in reconciliation; hence the need for continued debate in South Africa about what reconciliation means for each group and what outcomes would fulfill their concept of reconciliation.

If different sectors of the population employ different conceptions of reconciliation, this works against the possibility of any of the conceptions being fulfilled. As different sectors simply talk past each other, not much progress within the project of reconciliation can be made unless there is first *some* agreement as to what it would actually entail, and what understandings would definitely be excluded. What one sector might see as necessary for reconciliation—for example reforms in the economy to support transformation—other sectors see as inimical to reconciliation. Matthews' paper sets out vividly the problem that arises for the project of reconciliation when different conceptions of the term are at play. I will return to the maximal conception of reconciliation held by the "Home for All" Campaign that Matthews discusses (and supports) in her paper later in the chapter. Before doing this, I turn my attention to Darrel Moellendorf, who gives an account of reconciliation which is relatively minimal, and yet not as problematic as the one Matthews found prevalent amongst some white South Africans.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many more, but I focus on these accounts as I believe they are representative of some schools of thought with regards to reconciliation, and that they capture these schools of thought well. Some other accounts include Mamdani, M (2000a) 'The truth according to the TRC', in I Amadiume and A An-Na'im (eds) *The Politics of Memory: truth, healing and social justice*. London: Zed books; Mbembe, A (2008) 'Passages to freedom: the politics of racial reconciliation in South Africa', *Public Culture* 20(1); Nagy, R (2004) 'The ambiguities of reconciliation and responsibility in South Africa', *Political Studies* 52. For accounts of reconciliation which does not focus specifically on the South African case, see Andrew Schaap, *Political Reconciliation*, Routledge, 2005; Short, D (2005) 'Reconciliation and the problem of internal colonialism', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26(3); Crocker, D (2000) 'Truth commissions, transitional justice, and civil society', in R Roteberg and D Thompson (eds) *Truth v Justice: the morality of truth commissions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Doxtader, E (2003) 'Reconciliation – a rhetorical concept/ion', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89(4); M Walker, *Moral repair: reconstructing moral relations after wrongdoing*, Cambridge University Press, 2006; Lederach, JP, *The Journey toward reconciliation*, Herald press, 1999.

### **Darrel Moellendorf – attitudinal and institutional change**

Darrel Moellendorf sets out the conditions for political reconciliation in his paper ‘Reconciliation as a Political Value’<sup>1</sup>, using South Africa as his case study. He is concerned with “a political community in which former strangers view and treat each other as equal citizens” and claims that this “is partially constitutive of reconciliation as a normative goal for political purposes”<sup>2</sup> Moellendorf gives an account of reconciliation as “societal reconciliation, taken as a normative ideal, a goal that a polity might pursue through its public policy”<sup>3</sup> where “reconciliation exists when a minimal basis for politics based on democratic equality is secured”.<sup>4</sup> His account of reconciliation includes both forward and backward looking aspects. He claims there is a need to deal with the past (the backward looking element), as well as the need for the basis for reasonable hope for a stable and non-violent society in the future (the forward looking element). Political reconciliation according to Moellendorf sets basic parameters—anti-discrimination laws and so forth, but does not necessarily leak into the hearts and minds of the people involved in the agreement.

For Moellendorf, reconciliation is less than complete social justice, and so we ought not have expectations of political reconciliation that are too demanding. The requirement to start treating former ‘strangers’ as citizens, is, according to his account, already a large shift in terms of positive societal transition. Political reconciliation sets the baseline for the possibility of full social justice, and puts in place the institutional and structural features necessary for the society to move towards more complete social justice.

Moellendorf argues that reconciliation comprises both institutional *and* attitudinal requirements, and so cannot be merely an issue of policy. In terms of policy and institutional change, Moellendorf’s expectation (and first necessary requirement for political reconciliation) is that the society’s legal and economic structures change to include protection of all citizens, not treating any inhabitants as ‘second class’ or inferior with regards to human rights. Moellendorf also argues that institutional regret for the injustices which occurred is a second necessary requirement for political reconciliation. The institutions include governments, business and community organizations; Regret can be shown by changing the names of roads, cities, airports etc. from names affiliated with the old regime, to names affiliated with the new; public apologies and public commemorations for victims of the unjust system. Institutional regret has the function of expressing “regret because they acknowledge that the injustices ought not to have happened.”<sup>5</sup> This means there need not be recognition on the part of individuals or groups of their *complicity* or *benefit* from the injustice, but

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp205-221, Blackwell Publishing

<sup>2</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp206, Blackwell.

<sup>3</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp205, Blackwell.

<sup>4</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp206, Blackwell.

<sup>5</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp211, Blackwell.

merely that there is public recognition and commemoration of the fact that the injustices that occurred were wrong, and should not have happened. Though this is on the policy level, it does seem to require some attitudinal change in order for this to be acceptable to citizens in the relevant society. In other words, Moellendorf does expect *some* changes of attitude from individuals and groups involved.

With regards to the attitudinal aspect of political reconciliation, he argues that reconciliation as a political value cannot require or force individuals to change their actual attitudes *towards each other* dramatically, as this would conflict with the liberties of agents, in particular their right to freedom of thought.<sup>1</sup> The attitudinal requirement of reconciliation is rather a comparative endorsement of *social relations* (i.e. political rights and freedoms of social groups and/or individuals) at present, accepting them as “better than certain alternatives.”<sup>2</sup> This requirement entails a general acceptance of the institutional order. All parties involved need to agree that even though they might want a different situation, the actual situation is the best compromise in order for the society to be peaceful and without overt violence. Respecting all others in the society as equal citizens, with a formal recognition of their equal rights, liberties and protection under the law, is a necessary feature of this comparative endorsement.

Though Moellendorf does also argue that there are certain socio-economic rights that need to be in place in order for citizens to take part in the relevant democracy, his account lies towards the more minimal end of the spectrum of reconciliation. The reason I classify his account as such, is that he does not require substantial attitudinal changes towards each other between the social groups who need to be reconciled.

In light of South Africa’s current political landscape (as set out in a previous section of this chapter), Moellendorf’s minimal requirements for reconciliation seem insufficient. The recurrent issues with regards to changing place names, affirmative action, land reform, the singing of struggle songs, the perpetual denial of recognition from alleged beneficiaries that they in fact are beneficiaries of the unjust system, and the continual calls for distributive justice from formerly disadvantaged groups, shows an antagonistic spirit present in the political realm which perpetuates racial animosity and discomfort. If Moellendorf’s account of reconciliation does not seem to capture (at least for some parts of the South African community), what is needed for racial reconciliation in South Africa, is there another option which looks more promising? An account based on building trust provides a possibility which could deal with some of these issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp212, Blackwell.

<sup>2</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp207, Blackwell.



### ***Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd – the importance of trust***

Govier and Verwoerd interpret reconciliation as “requiring the reestablishment of trust”<sup>1</sup>, and argue for an account of reconciliation which has as its core element the restoring or creating of trust between different parties who were previously in conflict. They argue that reconciliation is needed after any conflict, as the trust the different parties may have had in each other has been undermined. In cases where no previous trust existed between the relevant parties, the trust required for reconciliation to occur needs to be created. But why does reconciliation require trust, and what does it mean to restore trust?

Trust is “an attitude of confident expectation” that the person(s) or group(s) “trusted will act...in a competent and acceptably motivated way, so that despite vulnerability, the trusting person or persons will not be harmed.”<sup>2</sup> Relating Govier and Verwoerd’s account of reconciliation with Bar-Tal’s peace ethos highlights the importance of trust in both accounts. There are implicit levels of trust present in all the day to day interactions in societies with a peace ethos, and these elevated levels of trust are required in order for society to function beyond mere survival for members of the society, to allow for the possibility of them leading flourishing lives. The absence of this implicit trust (at least between different groups) is partly what makes it difficult to live in a society with a conflictive ethos. The economic and social institutions of any society require trust in the institutions as well as between different interacting members of society in order to function. Failure of trust has, for example, been shown to lead to market failures.<sup>3</sup> Govier and Verwoerd argue that reconciliation can be defined as the “building and sustaining of a relationship with sufficient closeness and trust to handle the conflicts and problems that will inevitably arise in the course of time.”<sup>4</sup> They claim this is applicable to reconciliation on all levels of social relations. This means that the concept of reconciliation is best understood in accordance with what *type* of relationship is seen as the goal of reconciliation within the specific context. In other words, what reconciliation means for two lovers, or for work colleagues, will be different as it depends on the level of trust that needs to be (re)established – a work colleague does not need to be trusted nearly as deeply as does a lover. Reconciliation understood in this way is relative to the context, the past relationship between parties involved, and also to what kind of relationship is hoped for. In other words, in the aftermath of a conflict, any reduction of tension between different parties (whether individuals or groups) can be understood as reconciliation, yet whether that reconciliation is sufficient for sustained amicable

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<sup>1</sup>Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, ‘Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation’. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 183

<sup>2</sup>Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, ‘Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation’. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 185

<sup>3</sup>Korczynski, M 2000. ‘The Political Economy of Trust’, *Journal of Management Studies*, Volume 37, Issue 1

<sup>4</sup>Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, ‘Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation’. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 185-6

relations will depend on the future relationship, and trust, necessary between the reconciled parties. Govier and Verwoerd therefore argue that reduction of tension through the restoring of trust can be cast on the minimalist/maximalist spectrum (explained previously), which specifies the type of reconciliation aimed for. On their account, this scale refers to how deeply or superficially the different persons in the relationship need to be able to trust the other party, and what exactly, emotionally speaking, building such trust would involve. In conjunction with this, they also specify that any project of reconciliation needs to take into account the numbers of people involved. Issues of quantity, as they explain, are concerned with the “level at which reconciliation is sought—whether it is national, community, small group or interpersonal.”<sup>1</sup>

Their view is that the debate about reconciliation is often confused, as people mean different things when they refer to ‘reconciliation’. The fact that people do not agree about the meaning of reconciliation has already become clear from the analysis of the literature. Using the South African case in order to illustrate the confusion about the concept of reconciliation in practice and theory, Govier and Verwoerd argue that there is a general failure to distinguish between, and specify, issues of quantity (in terms of the number of parties involved) and content (in terms of the quality and depth of the emotional effort necessary by these parties) when discussing reconciliation. They claim that it is generally assumed that, when the quantity of parties involved in the conflict is great, the amount of emotional entanglement would be minimal, and vice versa, so that a small quantity presupposes that the content ought to be maximal. Govier and Verwoerd however claim that both quantity and content (or emotional entanglement) can vary in degrees, as there is, in fact, a complicated ‘web’ of relations between different levels of quantity, so that they are all related in different ways. Individuals stand not only in relation to other individuals, but also to small groups (such as families), or even larger groups (such as communities and even states), and in some cases reconciliation might need to be between an individual and a family, or a specific social group.<sup>2</sup> To deny that maximal emotional investment and change might be necessary in some cases where the quantity of people involved in the reconciliation project is large, would be to deny the complicated nature of human society and interpersonal relations<sup>3</sup>.

Govier and Verwoerd explicitly situate their account of national reconciliation as intermediate on the minimalist-maximalist scale described earlier. Thus, they claim that a project of national reconciliation, such as the project in South Africa, requires sharing a goal towards which the

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<sup>1</sup> Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, ‘Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation’. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 180

<sup>2</sup> Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, ‘Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation’. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 183

<sup>3</sup> This can, once again, be related to Bar-Tal’s claims about the impact of a protracted conflict on the core identities of people involved.

different parties can work together. The different parties do not need to have each other's interests at heart, as long as there is a joint goal towards which they can both agree to work, and not overt animosity between them as they work towards that goal. This does not, however, extend to necessarily having good will towards others within the society. Good will is not necessary for working towards a shared goal provided the parties can generate trust sufficient to undertake the required actions. For example, I could work towards building a strong department with my colleagues, and yet not care whether they are doing well in their personal lives as long as it does not affect their work.

According to Govier and Verwoerd, proponents of minimalist conceptions of national reconciliation object to the application of the interpersonal features of reconciling to large groups. This tends to lead to accounts where "reconciliation between large groups can mean nothing richer or deeper than nonviolent coexistence."<sup>1</sup> Govier and Verwoerd however believe that minimalistic accounts ignore similarities and links between the different levels ranging from interpersonal to large group (as explained in the 'web' of relations above – it might be necessary to not have feelings of animosity towards others in the society, and this might require more than being able to live together peacefully), and therefore neglect the importance of attitudes and feelings on a political or large scale conflict. As seen in Bar-Tal's account of the conflictive ethos previously discussed, conflict *does* seem to affect the antagonizing parties in a deep and meaningful way, and thus requires some deep psychological and personal changes. This would seem to support Govier and Verwoerd's insights with regards to the insufficiency of minimalistic conceptions of reconciliation.

Maximal conceptions of reconciliation, according to Govier and Verwoerd, applied to the political sphere, on the other hand, may appear to make inappropriately maximal requirements—in other words, a lot of emotional involvement— for reconciliation between large groups. These conceptions therefore have the danger of "underestim[ing] the difference between the national/large-group and individual/interpersonal levels."<sup>2</sup> This underestimation results in a conception of reconciliation in which too great a role is played by emotion. This mistake, they claim, can make reconciliation an idealistic and unreachable/unattainable goal. This could be a practical obstacle for reconciliation to occur in a specific society, as it could make citizens cynical and opposed to reaching or working towards an ideal which they deem to be unrealistic. In terms of understanding reconciliation in South Africa, as there are at least some sectors of society who seem to believe what is required for reconciliation is some depth of personal and interpersonal change, it would be useful to look at what this might entail. In order to do so, I will next contrast the foregoing

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<sup>1</sup> Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, 'Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation'. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 181

<sup>2</sup> Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, 'Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation'. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 32 Number 2. June 2002 pp 181

'median' account with the account most often cited in the South African context as maximal, that of Desmond Tutu.

### ***Desmond Tutu – the importance of forgiveness and harmony***

Desmond Tutu gives a maximal account of reconciliation in his book *No future without Forgiveness*. He argues that there needs to be a change of attitudes on the part of individuals and groups in the society requiring reconciliation, and that this reconciliation cannot be complete without the attitudes of individuals (and groups) towards each other having changed quite substantially. Individuals need to start recognizing and respecting individuals in the opposing group as human beings who deserve to have their human rights protected, and need to see the 'other' as a part of one's own moral community. This understanding of reconciliation is not over and above the requirements for reconciliation on a political and socio-economic level. Rather, as we shall see in the next chapter, the socio-economic requirements for reconciliation are only really possible once this type of 'good will' towards the other has been fostered.

Throughout the course of his book, Tutu refers to reconciliation between a husband and wife as a paradigm case of reconciliation. In applying this paradigmatic understanding of reconciliation to the political situation, he argues that political reconciliation should include a deep change of attitude towards the (former) enemy group, insofar as there needs to be forgiveness of harms perpetrated and a change of attitude towards the other group to one of good will. Good will would include caring about the welfare of the former enemy, not merely living side by side, but actually fostering a healthy and caring relationship.

In terms of responsibility, Tutu claims that it is also necessary for perpetrators and beneficiaries of protracted conflict to take responsibility for the harms they were responsible for or benefitted from. His stock example to explain his point here is of the stolen bicycle. If someone stole another's bicycle, and then apologized profusely, and yet refused to give back the bicycle, there could be no reconciliation. The idea here is that reparations for harms (which is an essential element for taking responsibility for these harms) must be paid in order for reconciliation to be viable. Though more minimal theorists might agree that reparations are vital, one can imagine reparations being paid without a change of attitude. It seems, for Tutu, that reparations ideally ought to follow a change in attitude, and be a result of this change, rather than a pragmatic act in order to avoid persecution or because one is forced to pay reparations. The issue is that the apology is not sincere if it does not include reparations, so, it is ultimately not only as just compensation, but also as an indicator of attitudinal change that the bicycle has to be returned. For Tutu then, it seems that the recognition that what one did was wrong, and therefore seeing why it is just that you should return the bicycle,

is what is important. A sincere apology which includes reparations for the harm done would need to be accompanied by forgiveness on the part of the injured party. The centrality of forgiveness for reconciliation on Tutu's account makes the expectations for personal change of attitudes central. The responsibility and change of attitude needed for reconciliation to be viable is thus a very demanding and maximalist one. What is necessary according to Tutu's account is personal change, taking responsibility, forgiveness, and that this change will lead to transformation in the form of reparations and change on a socio-economic level.

### **Preliminary objection against Tutu's account of reconciliation: Too 'maximal'**

The account of reconciliation ascribed to Tutu, faces a seemingly straightforward objection throughout most academic literature, and the accounts by Darrell Moellendorf, and Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd respectively, both make the accusation that Tutu's understanding of reconciliation is too maximal to be useful in the political sphere. Moellendorf, writing about Tutu's account, says that "[s]ome prominent public proponents of reconciliation argue that it requires contrition and forgiveness on a personal level. Although personal reconciliation might have to address feelings of resentment, fear and mistrust, a state is severely constrained in what it may do in this regard."<sup>1</sup> This objection follows from Moellendorf's prohibition of affecting change on such a personal level in order to respect citizen's freedom of thought, as well as the ability of the state to effect such change.<sup>2</sup> As this is the case, Moellendorf (contra Tutu) sees no central role for personal changes of heart in the quest for political reconciliation, and thus sees Tutu's account as out of place in the political sphere. It is also Tutu's central focus on the very deep emotional and attitudinal aspects of relationships in a political situation such as South Africa which classifies, according to Govier and Verwoerd, his theory as requiring too much of individuals, groups and societies, and it is this aspect of his account which makes it problematic. Their criticism also includes the accusation that Tutu simply applies the interpersonal account of reconciliation between two individuals to the group, or political level, without adapting the content (or emotional entanglement) accordingly. These reconciliation theorists see Tutu as confusing interpersonal and political reconciliation, but in fact, I will argue later, he understands that political connections are deep connections, that they constitute a large part of who we are as individuals and communities, our identities and agency.

Though Govier and Verwoerd try to accommodate social embeddedness in their account (at least much more so than Moellendorf's account), I believe that their account fails to grasp the true meaning of what would be involved in political reconciliation if it is true that we are as deeply

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<sup>1</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 No. 2, Summer 2007, pp211-2, Blackwell.

<sup>2</sup> It could be argued that the TRC was exactly such a state supported activity, geared towards changing the hearts and minds of citizens.

socially embedded, as they concede. Thus, even though Govier and Verwoerd acknowledge how deeply personal the political can be, their account still falls short of taking this fully into account. As they do not engage with Bar-Tal's conflictive ethos in their paper, I believe it becomes apparent that they do not acknowledge precisely how deeply personal the political can be. For instance, taking into account the psychological conditions of operating under a situation of protracted conflict (which Bar-Tal argues for in his understanding of the conflictive ethos) their account of political reconciliation seems inadequate. Tutu's approach, on the other hand, includes a deep understanding of human nature and psychology, and takes into account the way in which antagonism can linger in people's hearts and minds.

Tutu starts with the metaphysical and ethical assumptions entailed in an Afro-communitarian view of the self (of which the concept of *ubuntu* is the paradigmatic example in South Africa) in his account of reconciliation, and he states this explicitly in his book. It is my contention that this has not been adequately recognized by most other theorists discussing his work, or when it is considered, the full implications of this are not taken into account. Thus, in contrast to critics of Tutu, I will suggest that a view of reconciliation such as Tutu's, premised on an Afro-communitarian metaphysics and ethics (which will be explored further in Chapter 2), is not one which ought to be restricted to the private sphere of intimate personal relationships. In fact, because of its different focus and justification, I believe that his account can encompass a central feature of transitional societies after protracted conflict which other accounts of reconciliation lack. This feature is the fact that individual and group identities in protracted conflict are largely determined by roles in the conflict, as argued by Bar-Tal, which means that the psychological features of Tutu's account are important. It should therefore become clear that his emphasis on psychology and attitudinal change is central to addressing racial reconciliation in South Africa. The psychological changes, however, are necessarily closely linked to action and behavioral changes, and cannot be seen to be in effect unless there are real changes in the socio-economic landscape as a result of these attitudinal and psychological changes.

Tutu's account, I believe, is therefore worth pursuing further, as it provides a perspective on reconciliation which could not only prove to be useful, but at the same time can be seen as growing from Africa. As I argued in my introduction, drawing lessons from African culture could, in itself, work against the inferiority complex and symbolic order through inculcating pride, which could prove useful for the reconciliation process, quite apart from the interesting and novel understanding of reconciliation which it emphasizes. The rest of this dissertation will set out an account of reconciliation inspired by Tutu's views, and based on his assumptions of personhood and morality. In

order to do so, the next chapter analyses the Afro-communitarianism Tutu has consistently proclaimed to be the foundation for his understanding of reconciliation.

## Chapter 2: Afro-communitarianism

This chapter sets out an Afro-communitarian account of personhood and ethics in order to investigate the background assumptions of Desmond Tutu's account of reconciliation introduced in the last chapter.<sup>1</sup> I critically engage with an Afro-communitarian conception of the self as well as an ethical theory which flows from that. This will provide the lens through which I will investigate and interrogate the concept of reconciliation in the rest of the dissertation. The main focus of this chapter is to analyze in detail the position of Afro-communitarianism which comprises the antecedent of the conditional claim 'if you have an Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood, then what would that mean for your understanding of the concept of reconciliation?'

Desmond Tutu has alluded to an Afro-communitarian worldview in the South African context and in his discourse on reconciliation. He emphasizes the interconnectedness between individuals in a society through the vocabulary of *ubuntu*. This *ubuntu* worldview, introduced in the first chapter, recognizes the importance of others, history, context and community in the formation of one's identity, and the inter-dependent relations between individuals and collectives. Recognising inter-dependence and the importance of interpersonal relations for the self, this worldview sees the individual as necessarily socially embedded, and affected by her context in a very deep way. Tutu's pronouncements concerning reconciliation can be seen as an attempt at articulating this version of what is necessary for reconciliation. As my dissertation progresses, it will become increasingly clear that one of the reasons why maximalist conceptions of reconciliation (such as Tutu's in *No Future Without Forgiveness*) have received much criticism, and little support, is because it is criticized from the assumptions inherent in an individualist perspective, and therefore misinterpreted and misunderstood. So what is the metaphysical understanding of 'personhood' in the Afro-communitarian tradition? This is explored in the next section through investigating accounts by Desmond Tutu, Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, Michael Onyebuchi Eze and Antjie Krog.

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<sup>1</sup> It is not my intention to give the suggestion that all African philosophers subscribe to this view of personhood, or that the issue of personhood has been solved in African philosophy. As Kaphagawani (2005) argues in his article 'African conceptions of a person: a critical survey' there are different ways of understanding personhood in African thought – he mentions the interpretations of force, shadow and communalism. I will however only focus on the communalism strand in African thought in this dissertation, as it is the contrast between the specifically Afro-communitarian understanding of being a person and the Western individualistic understanding of personhood that I wish to investigate. The theses of force and shadow are not of interest to me as they also have an individualistic, and not the communitarian understanding of personhood. It is this communitarian understanding which I find interesting, and which I believe, can be useful in terms of societies trying to overcome a conflictive ethos.



## **An Afro-communitarian metaphysical conception of the self: ‘Being human’ as a collective, communal enterprise**

I intend to utilize the term ‘Afro-communitarianism’ as an umbrella term to include core aspects of various accounts of communitarian personhood put forward by numerous African philosophers.<sup>1</sup> In utilizing the term Afro-communitarianism, the aim is to distinguish this understanding of personhood and community from the communitarian tradition in the Western philosophical tradition.<sup>2</sup> Afro-communitarianism does not *only* emphasize, as does Western communitarianism,<sup>3</sup> the importance of cultural groups in identity formation, and therefore a focus on group rights. Nor is it a focus on individual human rights as is the convention in the Western liberal tradition. Afro-communitarianism, I maintain, is not trapped in the false dichotomy posed between individualism and communitarianism.<sup>4</sup> Rather Afro-communitarianism emphasizes the importance of *relationships* between people, their interdependence, and the duty to maintain flourishing relationships of a particular kind.<sup>5</sup>

As already mentioned, an Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood recognizes the importance of history, context and community in the formation of one’s identity, and emphasizes the inter-dependent relations between individuals and collectives. Recognizing inter-dependence and the importance of interpersonal relations for the self, this worldview sees the individual as necessarily socially embedded, and affected by her context in a very deep way. However, it still acknowledges that there *are* individuals, and that these individuals need to be well developed in order for there to be the possibility of healthy relationships. I will give some examples of African philosophers who have theorized about the self in this way in order to illustrate this claim, and demonstrate how this relates to an Afro-communitarian ethic. Afro-communitarianism does not imply that sub-Saharan Africans just are, or live, this way, as this project is not essentialist in this manner. The project does not claim that there is an ‘ideal African past’ in which this was instantiated, just as there is no ‘ideal European past’ in which Kantian ethics was adhered to by all.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this chapter I focus on only a couple, however other notable examples include Emanuel Eze, Mogobe B Ramose, Kwame Nkrumah, Augustine Shutte, John & Jean Comaroff and others.

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent comparison between the Western and African conceptions of communitarianism, see Masolo, D. ‘Western and African Communitarianism: A Comparison’ in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, KWASI WIREDU (ed) 2005 and chapter 6 of his *Self and Community in a Changing World* Indiana University Press, 16 Jul 2010

<sup>3</sup> For examples, see political philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer.

<sup>4</sup> See David Morrice, ‘The liberal-communitarian debate in contemporary political philosophy and its significance for international relations’ *Review of International Studies*, Volume 26, 2000 and Charles Taylor’s seminal paper, ‘Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate’<sup>A</sup> in *Debates in contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, Derek Matravers, Jonathan E. Pike (eds.), Routledge, 2003, pp 195

<sup>5</sup> For the kind of relationship that is the focus, see Thaddeus Metz, ‘Toward an African Moral Theory’ *Journal of political philosophy*, p333 Sep 2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p321-341. The kind of relationship[s] involved is the ethic which flows from an Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood, and therefore will be analysed in detail in the second part of this chapter.

With that clarified, let us turn to a closer look at the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood.

Desmond Tutu claims that the self has *necessary* relations with others. His exposition of the concept of *ubuntu* in his writings and public speeches has been the subject of much debate, and provides an entry point into the worldview and assumptions that underpin his account of reconciliation. In explaining the concept of *ubuntu*, he writes that

A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human. I am because other people are.<sup>1</sup>

This view of the self recognizes the essentially communal nature of human beings. A member of *homo sapiens* who bears no relation to community, who is devoid of communal attachments of any kind, is not what is understood as a human 'person'. Community comes in all shapes and forms, however, and it is difficult to conceive of a member of our species who does not belong to a community of some kind.<sup>2</sup> Tutu also expresses this thought when he says that "[m]y humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in [yours]. We belong in a bundle of life."<sup>3</sup> This would seem to imply that, as humans, we cannot disregard that we are not only individuals, but that we are also part of a collective or communal self, and that we cannot accurately describe what a person is without taking this into account.

Desmond Tutu's account of personhood is a rather sketchy introduction to one possibility of what is meant by an Afro-communitarian understanding of the self. Instead of continuing with the vocabulary of *ubuntu* Tutu utilizes, I will instead develop the terminology of Afro-communitarianism in most of the rest of the dissertation. The language of *ubuntu* has become utilized in so many contexts and in so many ways, that the concept has become too contested to be useful for my current purposes.<sup>4</sup> The concept of Afro-communitarianism is meant to capture a theoretically rigorous account of the person inspired by *ubuntu*, but also similar views of the person by other African writers. The first theorist I will turn to is Kwasi Wiredu.

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Tutu, Introduction to *'The Words and Inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi - PEACE'*, PQ Blackwell, 2007 p 3

<sup>2</sup> We are social animals, and this is partly what is captured by this description. The insight however seems to go beyond this. It would seem that according to this understanding, a person is at least partially defined by her moral agency. It is arguably then the case that a person on this understanding is a moral agent, whereas members of the species who are not moral agents for whatever reason, are not persons. This is not to say that these people (and other relevant sentient creatures) are not morally relevant, but it is to say that they remain moral patients as opposed to agents. An example of human beings where this might apply according to the current understanding of the necessity of human community in the creation of personhood, the 'wild children' found across the world would not be moral agents, and thus not persons in the relevant sense.

<sup>3</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 34-5

<sup>4</sup> Antjie Krog uses a different term for similar reasons in her writing on the subject, namely 'interconnectedness-towards-wholeness'. Though I think that captures the concept very well, it is quite a mouthful to use every time I refer to this concept in the rest of the dissertation. I have therefore decided to utilise the term Afro-communitarianism instead.

Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu gives a comprehensive metaphysical account of the Afro-communitarian conception of the self and personhood when he argues for a strong interrelation and interdependence between the self and community. Wiredu has written that “[a] human person is the product of a culture.”<sup>1</sup> With this he does not mean that there is a contingent relationship between person and community. Rather, in his view, the person cannot come into existence without being situated in a community—the community creates the person. According to Wiredu, having a mind is central to personhood, and as the mind comes into being as a result of communication (and language), and communication is a feature of communities, a community *literally* is necessary for a person to exist. As Wiredu notes “we are not born with a mind, not even with one that is *tabula rasa*; we are only born with the potential of a mind (in the form of a nervous system).”<sup>2</sup> This means that the mind is created in communication with others, and that language is a central feature of its creation.<sup>3</sup> According to Wiredu, then, the person is necessarily socially embedded, so much so that her personhood itself is a consequence of her presence within a community. In another article, Wiredu utilizes an Akan proverb “*Onipa na ohia*”—which means “it is a human being that has value”—to draw out the implications of this view of personhood. He writes,

The crucial term here has a double connotation. The word (*o*)*hia* in this context means both that which is of value and that which is needed. Through the first meaning the message is imparted that all value derives from human interests, and through the second that human fellowship is the most important of human needs.<sup>4</sup>

There is therefore a great stress on sociality and the importance of social relations in Wiredu’s thought, and is as a result of his metaphysical view of the person as necessarily socially embedded. This quote by Wiredu encapsulates the understanding of personhood as normative, inherent in Afro-communitarianism. Personhood is normative as being a person is a prescription to act in particular ways towards others, specifically in moral, ways.

Another African thinker who has emphasized the social embeddedness of the self is Kwame Gyekye. He writes

[t]he metaphysical question is whether a person, even though he/she lives in a human society, is a self-sufficient atomic individual who does not depend on his/her relationships with others for the realization of his/her ends and who has ontological

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<sup>1</sup> Wiredu, *Are there cultural universals?* In the African Philosophy Reader, p 31; eds PH Coetzee, APJ Roux, Routledge NY & London, 1998

<sup>2</sup> Wiredu, *Are there cultural universals?* In the African Philosophy Reader, p 31; eds PH Coetzee, APJ Roux, Routledge NY & London, 1998, p 31

<sup>3</sup> This is an insight also argued for in the field of systems theory. See Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections*, Harper Collins publishers, 2002, Chapter 2

<sup>4</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, ‘The moral foundations of an African culture’, p 307 Coetzee, P.H. and A.P.J. Roux (eds.) *Philosophy from Africa*: 317-336. Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing. 1998

priority over the community, or whether the person is by nature a communal (or communitarian) being, having natural and *essential* relationships with others.<sup>1</sup>

As with Wiredu, the aspect of metaphysical personhood that Gyekye focuses on is the essential relation that the self has with others, the necessary relationship between self and community. He is however critical of what he calls radical communitarianism,<sup>2</sup> which is the idea that an individual person is completely, or wholly, constituted by her personal relationships, as this would diminish her “freedom and capability to choose or question or reevaluate the shared values of the community”<sup>3</sup>. The crux of this type of communitarianism is that the individual cannot flourish and achieve her full potential without relations to other individuals.<sup>4</sup> Instead, he argues for what he calls a ‘moderate communitarian’ view of the self, which takes the person to be constituted, but only in part, by the social relationships in which she of necessity finds herself. This is a not a departure from Wiredu’s claim that the mind itself is a result of social interaction, but moderate communitarianism emphasizes that once the mind is formed, the person has the ability to apply her rational faculties to community values. The individual is fully embedded in her social context, and yet, according to Gyekye, can nevertheless reevaluate communal values through, from time to time, taking a distanced view of some aspects of her culture.

This last point of Gyekye’s is important in order to highlight that an account of Afro-communitarian personhood does not mean that there can be no dissent in the community with regards to values, priorities and cultural change. Accordingly, the danger of seeing the person’s existence as so dependent on her community (so that, as a result, questioning the values of the community becomes impossible), and therefore that the community becomes static and resistant to change, is *not* what is entailed by an Afro-communitarian account of personhood according to Gyekye. The community is what allows for the creation of the individual person, and once the individual person is created, the capacity for critical reason is formed, which can in turn be utilized to question some community values.

A criticism leveled against Wiredu and Gyekye by Micheal Onyebuchi Eze is that they both understand the community to be prior to, and, it seems, to take priority over, the individual. The reason he argues that this is an implication of their views, is that they both see consensus as the regulative ideal for communities. This would mean that there would need to be consensus amongst

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<sup>1</sup> Kwame Gyekye, ‘Person and community in African thought’, p 317, in Coetzee, P.H. and A.P.J. Roux (eds.) *Philosophy from Africa*: 317-336. Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> The radical communitarianism that Gyekye is referring to here is that of Menkiti (1984) in Wright RA. *African Philosophy: An Introduction* and Mbiti (1970) *African Religions and Philosophy*.

<sup>3</sup> Kwame Gyekye, ‘Person and community in African thought’, p 318 in Coetzee, P.H. and A.P.J. Roux (eds.) *Philosophy from Africa*: 317-336. Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> Kwame Gyekye, ‘Person and community in African thought’, p 321 in Coetzee, P.H. and A.P.J. Roux (eds.) *Philosophy from Africa*. Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing.

everyone in the community in order for anything to be acceptable. However, if this is the case, he argues, it is difficult to see how this does not, in fact, become a tyranny of the community. In other words, as much as Gyekye tried to move away from the situation in which the individual has no power to reflect critically on her own community's values, he is unable to escape this conclusion if he maintains his belief in consensus as a regulative ideal for community.

Eze argues that the conception of Afro-communitarianism with consensus as a regulative ideal has the unfortunate consequence that it does not allow for moral progress and cultural fluidity and change. This he sees as an unfortunate misunderstanding of what *ubuntu* in fact entails. Eze argues against consensus as regulative ideal, and instead "re-present[s] African communitarianism as a discursive formation between the individual and community."<sup>1</sup> According to Eze, the relationship between the individual and community ought to be understood as follows:

The relationship between the individual and the community is dialogical for the identity of the individual and the community is dependent on this constitutive formation. The individual is not prior to the community and neither is the community prior to the individual. Contemporaneity explains this dialogic relationship and to argue otherwise threatens the individual's subjectivity to a vanishing point, or simply, to deny the individual a *presence*.<sup>2</sup>

This could be interpreted to be in line with a generous interpretation of Gyekye's remarks about moderate communitarianism, in that there is emphasis on the continuing relevance and importance of the individual in the context of Afro-communitarianism.<sup>3</sup> While under Gyekye's account, the individual person and her rational faculties are created by the community, this does not mean that the individual is completely constituted by the community as, through her developed critical faculties, she is able to reflect on current cultural practices and accepted norms in which she finds herself. This, however, Eze argues, would not be possible with consensus as a regulative ideal for community.

Eze explains how another Afro-communitarian account of personhood, as found in *ubuntu*, allows for and values individual subjectivity as well as community. To understand the person as subsumed and utterly constituted by community (as is the case when consensus is the regulative

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, 'What is African Communitarianism? Against Consensus as regulative ideal.' *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 386

<sup>2</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, 'What is African Communitarianism? Against Consensus as regulative ideal.' *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 386

<sup>3</sup> Eze argues against both Wiredu and Gyekye's accounts on the grounds that their use of consensus as an ideal misinterprets the spirit of Afro-communitarianism. I agree with Eze's objection as explained through the misuse of *simunye* as a metaphor for *ubuntu*, yet Wiredu and Gyekye's accounts still prove useful as a way of understanding how the metaphysics of personhood differs from other accounts of personhood. The claim that personhood is earned or formed, and not assumed, is, I believe, still compatible with Eze's account.

ideal of society) is to utilize the “false metaphor of *simunye* as descriptive of *ubuntu*.”<sup>1</sup> *Ubuntu* has mistakenly, Eze claims, been understood to have only a collective meaning—that I am a person *only* through other people. Eze argues, however, that this is a better rendition of *simunye* – which means ‘we are one’. It is important not to confuse the two concepts, as *ubuntu* does not deny the importance of individuals and their rights, but merely places a heavy emphasis on the importance of community. *Simunye* is a Zulu word with the meaning ‘we are one’, and, according to Eze, “feature[s] prominently as a politicized rendition of *ubuntu* in the socio-political discourse of post-apartheid South Africa.”<sup>2</sup> The fact that *ubuntu* is not equal to *simunye*, is an important and under-emphasized aspect of *ubuntu*, which values unity in diversity, and can be successfully related to Tutu’s metaphor of the rainbow nation. Therefore, the valuing of ‘otherness’, of diversity, is inherent in an ethics based on *ubuntu*, as there has to be different persons in order for relationships between them to be valuable and valued. I will return to this point again in the section on ethics later in the chapter.

Antjie Krog, a South African thinker who has reflected on the TRC and the subsequent journey towards reconciliation in South Africa in numerous works, claims that “*ubuntu* or interconnectedness is not an isolated exceptional phenomenon [only present in South Africa], but part of a much broader, more general context found in a variety of forms, under a variety of names, manifesting in a variety of cultures across the large African continent.”<sup>3</sup> This broader, more general understanding of the person, is what I mean to capture by the term Afro-communitarianism.<sup>4</sup>

In order to explain the difference between the notions of moral personhood prevalent in Western thought and African thought as captured in the concept of *ubuntu*, Krog attempts to “understand how this interconnected moral self is formed”.<sup>5</sup> She draws the distinction between the constitution of the self through either becoming “two-in-one”, or, “one-in-many”. Constituting the self through becoming “two-in-one” is exemplified in Hannah Arendt’s thought (during her reflections on some insights by “the father of Western philosophy”, Socrates). Arendt claims that

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, ‘What is African Communitarianism? Against Consensus as regulative ideal.’ *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 387

<sup>2</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, ‘What is African Communitarianism? Against Consensus as regulative ideal.’ *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 387 footnote 2

<sup>3</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 360 Also see her ‘...if it means he gets his humanity back...’: The Worldview Underpinning the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ in *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, Volume 3, Issue 3, 2008, Also see her book *Begging to be Black* (2009, Random House Struik), especially pp. 184 - 186

<sup>4</sup> I wish to utilise Afro-communitarianism as an ‘umbrella term’ to capture the similarities of these accounts, without claiming that there can be no differences between the variety of accounts that could be characterized as Afro-communitarian.

<sup>5</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 353

splitting the self into two, such that the self comes into conversation with itself is the “beginning of thinking and knowing which would make a moral entity possible.”<sup>1</sup> For Krog, then,

The fundamental point of departure between an African and Western worldview, could be...in the place and the way the moral compass is formed: for Arendt it is formed in the *self* through conversations with the *self*. For African awareness it would be formed in the *self*, but through conversations with *those around one*.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, in the African worldview which subscribes to *ubuntu*, “one’s self-awareness is not formed by splitting oneself in two, but by becoming one-in many—dispersed as it were among those around one.”<sup>3</sup> Moral reflections then happen in communities, and not in isolated individuals, and this would mean that the ‘moral compass’ (to be understood as what gives an individual direction in moral decision making) is formed by the community, and not within the individual. When someone adopting what I understand to be a Western individualistic view of personhood, forms a moral compass through forming a ‘conscience’ or splitting the self into two in order to have a dialogue about the morality of a certain course of action, she might think that it is her own voice with whom she is holding the conversation. Alternatively, it is possible (and, many would say, highly likely), that she simply does not recognize that it is simply the voice of society that she has integrated, internalized and incorporated into herself.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the Afro-communitarian understanding of the formation of the moral compass is more accurate, in that it recognizes the centrality of our community in what we see as ‘moral’. In order for this Afro-communitarian moral compass to work, however, it is necessary for individuals in the community to engage with views that diverge from their own; otherwise there can be no *proper* dialogue with regards to the issue in question. This requirement of dialogue requires the fostering of tolerance for and engaging with difference. As such, Krog’s take on *ubuntu* is one that certainly does not entail the unanimity and homogeneity that Eze feared some versions of Afro-communitarianism would be committed to.

By considering the above authors, we see that, from within the Afro-communitarian worldview, it is still necessary to focus on individuals in order to understand the context and the society. However, such a focus is always against the background assumption and understanding that we can speak of the individual as separate from her community only in very abstract terms, that it is only for reasons of simplification and discussion, and that it is not possible to separate these in reality. This is similar to the way in which Martin Heidegger speaks of ‘being in the world’, and emphasizes that we cannot understand ‘being’ without ‘world’ or *vice versa*, and yet it is possible to focus on one or the

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<sup>1</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 363, citing Arendt 2003: pp. 91, 95, 101, 112, 162.

<sup>2</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 363

<sup>3</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 363

<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, the insight that Freud expresses through the formation of the superego as the internalization of authority figures.

other.<sup>1</sup> When speaking of individual and community in terms of Afro-communitarianism, it is not possible to see the one as isolated from the other. Rather, the necessary relationship between the two needs to be kept in mind at all times – one cannot understand the individual without reference to the community, but one also cannot understand the community without reference to the individual.

From engaging with some theorists in African thought, it becomes clear that many have argued for a different (normative) metaphysical conception of the self from what is prevalent in most Western philosophy. From an appreciation of this metaphysical account of personhood, the concept of a person in Afro-communitarianism also expresses a moral claim.<sup>2</sup> To be human and to perceive someone else as being human encapsulates a moral response towards the other, a belief in their equal claim on respectful treatment and protection from harm. This means that this metaphysical conception of the self necessarily has implications for ethical theory. With this in mind, let us investigate the notion of *ubuntu* as an ethical theory as opposed to its metaphysical aspects so far discussed.

### **Afro-communitarian ethical theory**

Under an Afro-communitarian account, personhood comprises the creation of the person through her community, and a central aspect of personhood is understood to be being ethical and accepting the resulting moral duties and responsibilities. This means that the Afro-communitarian understanding of the person *entails* a particular kind of ethic.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the metaphysical understanding of Afro-communitarianism has specific implications for ethical theory. I will concentrate here on *ubuntu* as an instantiation of the general Afro-communitarian focus on the normativity of personhood. ‘Human being’ is therefore a normative, and not a merely descriptive concept. ‘Human,’ as normative, prescribes standards in terms of how one ought to act towards others designated as ‘human’, but also prescribes certain standards to the actor designated as human, in terms of actions and behavior befitting a human. It is then in the recognition<sup>4</sup> of the other

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<sup>1</sup> See his *Being and Time*.

<sup>2</sup> See Thaddeus Metz, ‘African and Western moral theories in a bioethical context’, *Developing World Bioethics* Volume 10 Number 1, 2009 p 51; Kwasi Wiredu, ‘The African Concept of Personhood’, *African-American Perspectives on Biomedical Ethics*, 1992; Ifeanyi Menkiti, ‘On the Normative conception of a person’ in *A Companion to African philosophy*, 2004 Kwasi Wiredu (ed)

<sup>3</sup> The development of personhood as a moral goal has some possibly disconcerting effects in terms of seeing people as ‘more’ or ‘less’ of a person, and consequent ‘grades’ of personhood which translate into more or less human rights being accorded to individuals and/or groups. I recognize this issue, and yet I do not want to engage with this at present, as my aim is not to defend this ethic and view of the person, but rather to look at its implications for the understanding of reconciliation. I will, however, briefly return to this issue in the final chapter of the dissertation.

<sup>4</sup> My current project is amenable to being referred to in terms of recognition in the ‘politics of recognition’ tradition, however for simplicity’s sake, I will not refer to this literature for the purposes of this project. This would hopefully be a future project.



as human, that I have an obligation to treat her ethically. Acting in a way which does not recognize this obligation subverts her humanity.<sup>1</sup>

This way of speaking about the 'human' is at the core of the concept of personhood in Afro-communitarianism, and it emphasizes being and becoming human *through* others (or, 'humanization'). If it is possible to 'humanize' the self and others in this way, it is, however also possible that this project (of becoming human) will fail or be thwarted. And yet, if it was thwarted, that humanity might still be restored after such a failure. As a result, in this conceptual framework de- and re-humanization (which will receive extensive treatment in Chapter 6) refers to recognizing a person's moral agency, including or excluding someone from the moral community, and a person's capacity and ability to behave as a moral agent.<sup>2</sup> I use the language of de- and rehumanization with the *caveat* that I do not believe it is possible to dehumanize people, if by that is meant that they become beings that do not deserve equal respect. Instead, dehumanization occurs through the processes of exclusion or maltreatment which result in the *perception* that the other (or oneself) is less (or more) worthy of moral consideration. This means that I am using 'human' as a normative term, not as a merely descriptive term—I do not mean 'member of the species *homo sapiens*'. Instead, when using the terms 'human' and 'humanizing' these refer to a prescribed standard of treatment which befits this type of creature.

This normative understanding of the person is central to Afro-communitarianism. For someone to be a person, in this Afro-communitarian sense, is for them to have *ubuntu*.<sup>3</sup> *Ubuntu* is often explained through the maxim "*umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu*"<sup>4</sup> which can be translated as 'I am a person because of other people', or that a person can only be a person through the help of others. This means that the values of community and solidarity are integral to *ubuntu*, and it also has connotations of the importance of human dignity. Nombeko Liwane claims that

This fundamental concept stands for personhood and morality. The important values of *Ubuntu* are group solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity and

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<sup>1</sup> See Bell, Richard. 2002. *Understanding African philosophy: A cross cultural approach to classical and contemporary issues*, NY & London: Routledge. p. 12

<sup>2</sup> In this normative sense, to perceive someone as being human encapsulates a moral response towards the other, a belief in their equal claim on respectful treatment and protection from harm.

In other words, when referring to the humanizing of the other or the opponent, I employ humanity in a similar fashion to Emmanuel Levinas, who claims that an encounter with the other's genuine alterity entails a responsibility to the other. He writes, 'The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question' (Lévinas, Emmanuel and Hand, Seán.1989. *The Levinas Reader*, Blackwell Publishing. p. 84).

<sup>3</sup> I am here using *ubuntu* as an example of the central importance of the normativity of personhood from an Afro-communitarian ethical position.

<sup>4</sup> Liwane, Nombeko, 'The significance of *ubuntu* in the development of an ANC cadre' <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/umrabulo13v.html> accessed 2009/09/07

collective unity...Respect is reciprocal irrespective of race, ethnicity, class, age, and gender. *Ubuntu* requires one to respect others if one is to respect him or herself.<sup>1</sup>

This means that a good relationship between people, which includes mutual respect for human dignity, is seen as a fundamental moral goal. Desmond Tutu, in line with this support for human dignity and respect, famously explains the value of *ubuntu* in society as the fact that

Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us ... the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines this sought after good is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness are corrosive of this good.<sup>2</sup>

The worldview of *ubuntu* has, in line with this understanding, been interpreted as giving the highest regard to relationships.<sup>3</sup> The value of *ubuntu* can, I contend, fundamentally be explained in terms of the high value it ascribes to the goal of community building. Human fellowship is ascribed the status of the highest of human needs (once basic physical needs are met), and from this it follows that building a healthy community in which such fellowship is fostered has great value. As seen in the previous section, the understanding of *ubuntu* as *simunye* is problematic, and thus *ubuntu* need not be interpreted as undermining individuality and critical engagement. Instead, as Eze writes,

The pursuit of the common good need not undermine individual subjectivity nor yield to univocal unanimity insofar as the good of the community is dependent on an intersubjective affirmation and unique subjectivities. In fact, the common good flourishes where individual subjectivities are fostered.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, individual and *different* subjectivities need to be fostered and nurtured, in order to create well-developed individual characters. Relationships mature and become richer and deeper as a result of the different parties having well developed individual characters, allowing for harmonious relationships between people. The converse is also true – the less developed an individual is, the less chance there is for a deep and meaningful relationship with her. In an unequal romantic relationship, for example, it is probable that the person, who sees themselves as *only* in a supporting role to the other, does not add as much value to the relationship. Instead, a partner with their own interests, who challenges the other, can be argued to foster growth, and allows a critical reflection on the values that are important in the relationship, as well as for the individuals.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Liwane, Nombeko, 'The significance of *ubuntu* in the development of an ANC cadre' <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/umrabulo13v.html> accessed 2009/09/07

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No future without forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 35

<sup>3</sup> Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, 'Towards an African Moral theory', Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3

<sup>4</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, 'What is African Communitarianism? Against Consensus as regulative ideal.' *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 389

<sup>5</sup> This is in line with the proposition that feminism has resulted in richer and deeper romantic heterosexual relationships within the context of a patriarchal society, as equal partnerships hold more possibility for growth, development and support for both parties.

This, I believe, can be related to and emphasize a possible way to interpret Tutu's metaphor of the rainbow nation through an affirmation of difference and celebration of diversity. It is diversity of opinion, culture, and interest which allows development and growth in the community, and this celebration of difference requires equal power relations between different parties in order for the diverse views to add to the society's development of values. Without the recognition of the other as equal, her views and contributions will not be valued as much as is necessary for the ideal of the rainbow nation to make sense. If all parties are recognized as equal in this exchange and dialogue, it is possible to have a continuous conversation about how to reconcile the different opinions, cultural beliefs and worldviews present in the multicultural society in a practical way. This is not meant to lead to a homogenous society, but rather a society in which the human rights of *all* are respected and allowed to materialize *within* the context of different cultures, perspectives and worldviews.<sup>1</sup>

Within this possibility for ethical interplay between universality and difference we see that "in advancing the good of the community, the individual's good is concomitantly advanced precisely because the community's and individual's goods are not radically opposed, but interwoven."<sup>2</sup> It is still important to note that it is relationships that are deemed to be of moral importance, and that relationships require different parties in the relationship to be distinct in some sense, even though they are related, and even though their relationship constitutes their identity in some way. Thus moral value can be seen as fundamentally residing in relationships between individuals, rather than in individuals themselves. As an example of how this can translate into an ethical theory, a central paper in the literature on *ubuntu* by Thaddeus Metz proves useful. His account of an African moral theory is therefore critically analyzed in the next section.

### ***Towards an African Moral theory***

Metz's aim in '*Towards an African moral theory*', is "the articulation and justification of a comprehensive basic norm that is intended to account for what all permissible acts have in common as distinct from impermissible ones."<sup>3</sup> Metz argues that there have been numerous ways of interpreting *ubuntu* in the literature of African philosophy,<sup>4</sup> but that there has been insufficient attention to codifying what exactly such an ethical theory might entail and what would make it uniquely and specifically African, and thus different from other ethical theories in the literature such

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<sup>1</sup> This view has striking similarities to Amartya Sen, and particularly Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach. I will however not explore this similarity and its implications in the present project.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, 'What is African Communitarianism? Against Consensus as regulative ideal.' *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, p 388

<sup>3</sup> Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, 'Towards an African Moral theory', Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p321

<sup>4</sup> Metz asserts that what he sets out is *an*, not *the* African moral theory. See his 'African and Western moral theories in a bioethical context', in *Developing World bioethics*, Vol. 10, no 1 2010, p50 In other words, he is not arguing that this is the only way in which *ubuntu* can be codified successfully.

as Kantianism and utilitarianism. Utilizing a wide source of literature from the African canon, he gives six possible interpretations of *ubuntu*. These six possible interpretations are, as cited in his article:

**U1:** an action is right just insofar as it respects a person's dignity; an act is wrong to the extent that it degrades humanity.

**U2:** An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to enhance the welfare of one's fellows.

**U3:** An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others without violating their rights; an act is wrong to the extent that it either violates rights or fails to enhance the welfare of one's fellows without violating rights.

**U4:** An action is right insofar as it positively relates to others and thereby realizes oneself; an act is wrong to the extent that it does not perfect one's valuable nature as a social being.

**U5:** An action is right just insofar as it is in solidarity with groups whose survival is threatened; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to support a vulnerable community.

**U6:** An action is right just insofar as it produces harmony and reduces discord; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to develop community.<sup>1</sup>

Of these interpretations, Metz claims that **U6**, which is based on Desmond Tutu's ideas, is the most promising, but needs clarification and specification. The interpretations he rejects (**U1** to **U5**) are rejected for the reasons that they are either too similar to current Western moral theories, or that they cannot account for widespread moral intuitions claimed to be held by Africans.

This account, based on **U6** "posits certain relationships as constitutive of the good that a moral agent ought to promote."<sup>2</sup> As noted, it is commonly assumed that the core difference between the dominant Western paradigm and the African one is that the Western conception of the self is individualistic, while the African conception is communitarian. Metz argues that this account is a "properly communitarian rendition of *ubuntu*"<sup>3</sup> since it situates moral value in relationships, and not primarily in individuals.

Metz however claims that this is too vague to serve as the core ethical justification for moral action, as it is not clear what the promotion of harmony here entails. He therefore develops this account further through giving an account of what harmony in this context means, in order to clarify what the prescription to promote harmony as an ethical theory demands. He argues for an interpretation of harmony as "the combination of shared identity and good-will."<sup>4</sup> Metz argues that

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted directly from Metz' article, Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, 'Towards an African Moral theory', Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p334

<sup>2</sup> Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, 'Towards an African Moral theory', Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p334

<sup>3</sup> Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, 'Towards an African Moral theory', Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p333

<sup>4</sup>Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, 'Towards an African Moral theory', Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p337

the best understanding of harmony which would be able to allow for a codified theory of *ubuntu*, would be the type of relationship which includes both of these aspects. In other words, when the ethical prescription is to promote harmony, what that means is to promote both shared identity and good-will.

Shared identity involves a common sense of self which includes, according to Metz, the following conditions. The first condition for shared identity is that an individual “conceives of herself as part of a group”, referring to herself “in the first person plural”<sup>1</sup>, including herself in a ‘we’. The second condition is that “the group that you consider yourself a member of also considers you to be a member of it.”<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, people with a shared identity have “common ends.” Finally, shared identity requires that people in the group coordinate “their activities in order to realize their ends.”<sup>3</sup> In combination, these conditions form the common sense of self Metz sees as necessary for shared identity.

In conjunction with shared identity, Metz argues that harmony also includes the component of good-will. He explains that good-will is that the individual wishes another person well (conation); believes that another person is worthy of help (cognition); aims to help another person (intention); acts so as to help another person (volition); acts for the other’s sake (motivation); and, finally, feels good upon the knowledge that another person has benefitted and feels bad upon learning that she has been harmed (affection).<sup>4</sup>

These two aspects, namely shared identity and good-will, are conceptually and logically distinct, and when they are combined, it translates into a “broad sense of love” such as the type found in families. This, Metz claims, can explain why “[analogies] are often drawn between the sort of society many Africans value and an extended family”<sup>5</sup> as a family which instantiates shared identity and good-will are the central positive features of this type of unit, in other words, such a family is a loving family. This understanding of *ubuntu* as harmony, and in turn of harmony as the combination of good-will and shared identity, is one which is very persuasive.

Metz’s understanding of *ubuntu*, though useful, is however still incomplete. It is my contention that though it aims to take the communitarian strands of thought within the *ubuntu* literature seriously, it does so in a way which fails to highlight the importance of **U4** above, which Metz himself recognizes as the dominant interpretation of *ubuntu* in the literature. In fact, Metz writes that “[m]any thinkers take the maxim “a person is a person through other persons” to be a call for an

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<sup>1</sup>Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p335

<sup>2</sup>Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p335

<sup>3</sup>Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p335

<sup>4</sup>Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p321, p336

<sup>5</sup>Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p321, P337

agent to develop her personhood.”<sup>1</sup> I believe that Metz misinterprets **U4**, which means that he fails to recognize that it is in fact **U4** which provides the justification and explanation of **U6**. So, let us take a closer look at **U4**.<sup>2</sup>

**U4:** “An action is right just insofar as it positively relates to others and thereby realizes oneself; an act is wrong to the extent that it does not perfect one’s valuable nature as a social being.”<sup>3</sup>

A paradigm case of an ethic of self-realization is Aristotle’s virtue ethics, in that it focuses on the moral agent’s character, developing virtuous character traits and eschewing vicious ones. Virtue ethics focuses on the realization of the self and her flourishing, and therefore the goal of having virtuous character traits are for the good of the agent.<sup>4</sup> Metz rejects this interpretation (**U4**) for being too individualistic to be a satisfactory characterization of *ubuntu*. He interprets it to mean that the relevant moral good for an agent to promote is the “realization of one’s distinctively human and valuable nature, specifically, one’s special ability to engage in communal relationships.”<sup>5</sup> Metz’s reason for saying that **U4** fails is that the explanation for ethical action, namely self-realization, seems to go against the importance of community that is so emphasized throughout literature on *ubuntu*. Metz writes,

If I ask why I should help others, for example, this theory says that the basic justificatory reason to do so (though not my proper motive for doing so) is that it will help *me* by making me more of a *mensch* or a better person. However, a better fundamental explanation of why I ought to help others appeals not to the fact that it would be good for me, or at least not merely to this fact, but to the fact that it would (likely) be good *for them*, an explanation that a self-realization ethic by definition cannot invoke. Note that one can agree that acting for the sake of others is either constitutive of, or a means to, one’s own good without holding, as per the present theory, that it is one’s own good that has fundamental moral worth.

Though Metz argues that this type of characterization of *ubuntu* is flawed in that it is too individualistic and self-centered in order to capture the spirit of the concept, I believe that it is possible to interpret this theoretical interpretation of *ubuntu* as self-realization in a more communitarian way, and that indeed this is what grounds and justifies the interpretation that Metz favors (of promoting harmony, and seeing relationships as what is of fundamental moral worth). In fact, if one sees the ‘self’ that one aims to realize as being diffused in some ways throughout her

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<sup>1</sup> Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p331

<sup>2</sup> The development of personhood as a moral goal has some possibly disconcerting effects in terms of seeing people as ‘more’ or ‘less’ of a person, and consequent ‘grades’ of personhood which translates in more or less human rights being according to individuals and/or groups. I recognize this issue, and yet I do not want to engage with this at present, as my aim is not to defend this ethic and view of the person, but rather to look at its implications for the understanding of reconciliation. I will, however, briefly return to this issue in the final chapter of the dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p331

<sup>4</sup> See Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*

<sup>5</sup> Thaddeus Metz, *Journal Political Philosophy*, ‘Towards an African Moral theory’, Sep2007, Vol. 15 Issue 3, p331

community, constituted by others and her relations with others (so that the self becomes a communal self which needs to be realized) then it would seem that this self-realization or communal self could provide the justification for the need to promote harmony, which Metz favors. This communal self need not mean that everyone will be ‘the same,’ as might be suggested or implied by a common identity – think of the different parts of the body, and that it needs different organs and limbs to function.<sup>1</sup> In the same way, we can say that a communal self needs to have diversity in order to function well, and that the focus needs to be on the health of the individual (and different) organs, as well as a harmonious relationship between the different organs, or that they function together well. The insight I am trying to convey here, is that if the self-realization in question is one of not individual, but *communal* self (the ‘we’ created through shared identity as Metz explains it), then Metz’s objection to U4 does not seem viable.<sup>2</sup> The good which has fundamental moral worth then, on this communitarian understanding of the self, is the realization of the community, and recognizes the important emphasis on developing moral personhood found throughout the literature on *ubuntu*. It is then not personal fulfillment as an individual aim that is required, but rather the recognition that personal fulfillment as a *communal self* is the ultimate aim. As the individual and the community are seen as so intricately interrelated in African thought, as explained in the section on metaphysics above, self-realization would have to include community realization or flourishing, or, in other words, an individual cannot flourish in a non-flourishing society, and therefore the ultimate goal ought to be a flourishing (and ‘self-realized’) society. The aim is however still self-realization, and thus working towards a flourishing self (thus this ethical theory can still be understood as at core a ‘virtue ethic’) – the difference is that this self is a communal self. To continue with the analogy of the body, people who work against the community for purely their own benefit, could be seen as cancerous cells that impede the overall harmonious functioning, and ultimately the survival of the organism as a whole. Though the cancerous cells might seem to be thriving, in the end this growth against the functioning of the organism as a whole undermines the survival of the organism, as well as the cancer cells themselves, as they need the organism to survive. To draw the comparison with individual and community, people who work only for themselves without taking the health of the community into account, are undermining their own health and flourishing, whether they recognize this or not. This is not something that most people with an individualistic bent would find easy to accept – that we cannot flourish unless we live in a

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Michael Eze for this example.

<sup>2</sup> David Lutz’ article seems to have a relevantly similar interpretation of *ubuntu* to the one I am arguing for here. See David W. Lutz, *Journal of Business Ethics*, “African *Ubuntu* Philosophy and Global Management” Volume 84, Supplement 3 (2009), 313-328

flourishing society.<sup>1</sup> However, without this insight, I believe it is not possible to understand some central claims that friends of *ubuntu* have made with regards to our relations with others. For example, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela's claim that the oppressor and the oppressed are both in need of liberation can best be understood if this notion of communal self-realization is taken to heart. Ultimately, self-realization cannot happen without individual and communal commitment to the type of society which allows for and is made up of flourishing human beings.

The Afro-communitarian ethical theory which I will employ when talking about reconciliation will, then, be a combination of the two theoretical interpretations as set out above, namely *communal self-realization through the promotion of harmony*. The idea being that it is the collective self (which is the proper object of virtue) which justifies and grounds the importance of harmony. It is my contention that there are substantial implications for the concept of reconciliation when taking this ethical theory as one's foundation.

Reconciliation in this Afro-communitarian view is part of promoting and maintaining harmony (the aim of *collective virtue*) which is necessary for the flourishing society, without which personal flourishing is impossible. As the individualistic worldview casts justice as the central virtue for society<sup>2</sup>, so reconciliation could possibly be seen as the central virtue from the Afro-communitarian point of view. Accordingly, there has to be real acknowledgment of the claim that the oppressors and the oppressed are both in need of liberation<sup>3</sup> (in the South African context, this would translate into the fact that reconciliation would also benefit the beneficiaries and perpetrators of the Apartheid era, though it might mean that they have to make some material sacrifices). This can be related to and explained in terms of the Afro-communitarian view of the self as partially constituted by her community, and the implication of this, namely that *all* individuals in a non-reconciled society are unable to flourish. This is not a thought that many people hailing from an individualistic society would feel comfortable with, as it makes their wellbeing so dependent on things external to their control. So, what would be at the core of the African communitarian account of reconciliation is the recognition that reconciliation is at the core of morality itself, that we *all* need a society to be reconciled, to be harmonious, in order for us to flourish. A society in which social relations are not harmonious, in other words in which there is a lack of shared identity and good will, is a society in which individuals cannot live the good life, a flourishing life. Accounts of reconciliation which start from an individualistic account of the self, do not take into account that the flourishing of the self is essentially, and necessarily related to and dependent on the flourishing of her society. How does this

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<sup>1</sup> This is something that could be argued to be present in Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics*, and why he sees politics as the most important discipline, as he understands that without the right context, individuals cannot flourish. I will return to this shortly when discussing Samantha Vice's paper in the next section of the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Plato's *Republic* being the founding text for this view.

<sup>3</sup> Remember the claim cited earlier made by both Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela.



collective virtue ethic compare to traditional virtue ethics? In order to clarify this conception of collective virtue, and how it applies to the contemporary South African context, I compare it to the view of individual virtue implicit in Samantha Vice's paper "How do I live in this strange place"<sup>1</sup>.

### **Samantha Vice on virtue in South Africa**

Samantha Vice argues in her paper 'How do I live in this strange place?' that the appropriate moral response to being white in South Africa is that of feeling shame. This claim leads her to state that in South Africa a very specific kind of active political silence on the part of whites is the appropriate way to respond to the recognition of whites' problematic moral standing. Vice argues that the self is a deeply socially constructed entity and also that there should be a focus on what she calls 'the inner life' of the self in order to *recreate* this self as part of the moral regeneration process. The result of the deeply socially constructed self, argues Vice, is that shame is the appropriate moral response to being white in South Africa, as white identity is constructed in ways which gives white people a relative advantage over others.

In this part of the chapter I will compare some of Vice's views on virtue and recreating the self with the Afro-communitarian account of the self and virtue explicated in the previous section of this chapter. This comparison highlights where her account of virtue is problematic from an Afro-communitarian perspective, and this can serve as a good example of the (conceptual and political) misunderstandings that can arise when 'personhood' is understood in different ways.

Understanding that the person is deeply socially embedded is one of Vice's assumptions in the paper under discussion. Her argument that white South Africans ought to feel shame *relies* on the understanding of the self and white identity as being the result of a historical and sociological construction of identity. Vice spends some time describing the different factors that have played central parts in the construction of white identity in South Africa, which includes white privilege in terms of material as well as psychological benefits, and from this argues that shame is the appropriate moral response to having this white, South African, identity. While Vice takes into account the deep ways in which our identities and moral selves are constructed through historical and socio-economic factors beyond our control, she argues that this does not exclude the existence (and therefore necessity to nurture and develop) the *private* moral self. She writes that,

One could of course become politically or socially active, financially supporting worthy causes, joining or working for a relevant organization to make reparations for the harm one's whiteness expresses and maintains. Perhaps in this way the self can be refashioned through work. This approach accepts the political and public aspects of one's identity and works to change the situation that brought about our whitely habits. This seems the best response to guilt, but perhaps it does not fully take on board the

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<sup>1</sup> Samantha Vice, 'How do I live in this strange place?' *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010

logic of shame, which has *metanoia* as a proper end. It is surely true that our selves can be changed through our actions, but I do not think this can be enough if the theses of moral damage and white habit are correct—direct work on the self is also required, and it is this I want to focus on. So I seek an appropriate way of living with white shame that is nonetheless private and does not assume that every person ought to respond only as a political animal, and that every response need be an outward action. For the very reason that every aspect of life in South Africa is so politicized, we should allow space for forms of expiation and self-improvement that do not demand a public gesture or political activity. As Iris Murdoch says, we do not want to make “[s]alvation by work” a “conceptual necessity” for moral progress or rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup>

Her description of being white in South Africa is appropriately nuanced, and wrestles with ethical issues which are highly relevant to ‘white Africans’. Vice writes that as “we [white people in South Africa] are the problem, we should perhaps concentrate on recovering and rehabilitating ourselves.”<sup>2</sup> Her account shows how white identity is formed and affected by the material and social context. Recognizing these forces on the formation of white identity precludes “upholding some kind of colorblindness or individualism which would only conceal white privilege and conceal implicit white perspectives.”<sup>3</sup> It follows from her argument that the attitude of and prescription of ‘colorblindness’ on behalf of whites “pretends ignorance of one’s own white identity and refuses responsibility”<sup>4</sup> for that whiteness.

Aristotle argues that both shame and guilt are not virtues, but rather semi-virtues necessary towards *becoming* virtuous.<sup>5</sup> In accordance with this, Vice argues, white South Africans are “required to feel certain emotions that indicate they are not meeting their moral requirements. If they experience these emotions they are therefore both fulfilling and failing to fulfil their moral duties. And this seems the morally best state they can be in.”<sup>6</sup> Vice explains that the difference between shame and guilt is that guilt is directed outwards, towards a harm one committed, while shame is at core self-directed. “Shame is a response to having fallen below the standards one sets for oneself, whether moral or not. One’s very self is implicated in a way that need not be the case with guilt, which is a reaction to what one has *done*, not primarily to who one *is*.”<sup>7</sup> Vice concentrates on the emotion of shame in her paper.

Vice’s understanding of virtue is one that seems to stem directly from the schools of ancient philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Afro-communitarianism, as I conceive of it, is also a virtue ethic. This means that there are certain of Vice’s insights that correlate with the Afro-communitarian

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<sup>1</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010 p334

<sup>2</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010 p324

<sup>3</sup> Linda Alcoff, ‘What should white people do?’ *Hypatia* Volume 13 Issue 3, 1998 p12

<sup>4</sup> Linda Alcoff, ‘What should white people do?’ *Hypatia* Volume 13 Issue 3, 1998, p17

<sup>5</sup> Vice here agrees with Aristotle’s understanding of shame as not a virtue, but a ‘semi-virtue’ for the young who aim towards becoming virtuous, as laid out in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II chapter 6.

<sup>6</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010 p327

<sup>7</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010 p328

understanding of the situation. There are however some central differences and it is these differences which I aim to articulate and interrogate in the remainder of this chapter.

Though Vice's description of white identity as formed by its context is socially embedded, I believe that the role that other people play in our identity formation (and reformations) is not given enough attention if her account is analyzed from an Afro-communitarian perspective. Though Vice takes the importance of human relationships into account, I believe she fails in some respects to take the importance of these relationships as seriously as an Afro-communitarian account would prescribe. The fact that Vice's argument is not living up to Afro-communitarian standards is an objection which might seem unfair, as this is not something she concerns herself with here. It is nonetheless interesting to note that her argument, though it might be sound if one takes any of the dominant 'Western' ethical theories as one's starting point, nonetheless fails from the Afro-communitarian understanding of the self. Her recommendation of active political silence has a certain appeal (especially in a context such as South Africa where there has been structural silencing of black voices at play for so long), however it cannot be supported from the perspective of Afro-communitarian virtue. Thinking that we can improve (in *all* improvements and re-formations of self) ourselves without engaging in building harmonious relationships with others, is not true according to the Afro-communitarian virtue ethic. Yes, it is possible that whites perpetuate and reproduce whitely ways of being and doing things when engaging with others (as Vice rightly points out), however the way in which one could overcome that according to Afro-communitarianism is not to withdraw, but rather to become more actively involved with others. It would be precisely through building relationships that whites can challenge their whitely habits.

The view of the virtues and the vices employed by Vice is one which sees that there is the possibility to act, to work on your own character which *does not* necessitate outward action, as is explained in the lengthy quotation above. This, however, is one which the Afro-communitarian position would challenge. It is not only 'work' as social and political involvement that Afro-communitarianism supports (though those are also praiseworthy), but rather the reaching out, the desire and active attempt to *build relationships with the 'other'*, and thus becoming a part of the wider society in a real sense, which Afro-communitarianism urges. According to Afro-communitarianism, *all* work on character has to be in terms of 'outward' action, which includes dialogue and engagement with others, with the view to *building and improving* relationships. This does not make our internal lives any less vivid and important (as Vice seems to fear), but it does see the internal life as necessarily related to the external life of the community. The Afro-communitarian view of virtue would question the idea implicit in Vice's paper that it is possible to 'work on' the self, and improve one's own individual virtue, without engaging with others. In other words, the project

of cultivating individual moral virtue is misguided when seen from an Afro-communitarian perspective. Rather, to cultivate a project of individual, internal virtue is best achieved through focusing on engagement with others and the community. The way in which we can become virtuous is to live in a virtuous society. And the point is that for the Afro-communitarian, we cannot be virtuous in a non-virtuous society. We can be as good as is possible in this society, but being virtuous is going to include *not* being quiet about certain attitudes, understandings of the world, and necessitates us to be politically aware, and *reflectively* involved<sup>1</sup>. This is not to say that the prescription of (a specific type of political) silence is necessarily wrong,<sup>2</sup> but it is rather to emphasize that the development of the self, according to the Afro-communitarian understanding, necessarily requires a continuous intellectual as well as practical, but most importantly, *relational* aspect. The self cannot improve without engaging with others in her community, and the improvement of the community has the consequence of the improvement of the self – not as a consequence of the ‘purifying’ or ‘redeeming’ features of the political ‘work’, but rather because the society in which she finds herself in is now healthier in certain respects. This has a direct impact on the person as she is a part of this society, not because she has somehow engaged in redeeming activities. In other words, according to the Afro-communitarian, we need other people, even to improve our own virtue. We cannot flourish unless we live in a flourishing society.<sup>3</sup>

The fear that Vice voices is that it may be thought there is no place for inward action with regards to virtue, or that it would not count as action. To clarify her concern, she does not think that we ought to always, and in all circumstances, prescribe ‘political work’ such as activism or community engagement. According to Vice, such public and political action might be good for addressing ‘guilt’, but ‘shame’ requires self-directed work. However, Iris Murdoch, in *The Sovereignty of Good*<sup>4</sup> (to which Vice refers when identifying the danger that we might lose the ability for self-directed or private ‘work on the self’) seems to argue that work on the self requires an outward focus. It therefore seems strange that Vice should insist on ‘private work on the self’ which has an *inward* focus.

I believe that Vice does not take into account that outward action *has to have an effect* on the inner life of a person according to the view that the person is so deeply embedded in her context,

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<sup>1</sup> See Eusebius McKaiser ‘How Whites Should Live in This Strange Place’ South African Journal of Philosophy, Vol 30, No 4, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Even from an Afro-communitarian perspective, the kind of political silence Vice argues for might still be a good prescription, as long as it is within a relational understanding of the self. This should become clear in the rest of the chapter.

<sup>3</sup> This insight is however something one could argue to be present in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, and why he sees politics as the most important discipline, as he understands that without the right context, individuals cannot flourish. Though I cannot go into any real detail on this point here, I believe that Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* argues that it is not communal virtue, but individual virtue which is strived for. Though this might end up being a matter of emphasis, this is not unimportant, and still makes the Afro-communitarian view more thoroughly communitarian.

<sup>4</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 1970, Routledge; 2 edition (2001)

and especially with other people. So, any external action has an internal effect, and that is one of the reasons 'I am a person because of other people'. In turn, any internal action also has an external or outward effect. This means that there cannot simply, or merely, be an inward working on virtue, but that this thinking about, trying to fix, the self, has to have an outward focus.

The Afro-communitarian would still allow for a distinction between shame and guilt, but would claim that both require 'non-self-directed' work (at least if the self is understood in the individualistic sense). Shame can be felt about the collective self –about the group 'whites' in this specific context. Belonging to a group means that I am bound to it in certain ways, and recurrent denials of white privilege, it seems, ought to make me feel ashamed of being white. It is *me* that is implicated in this, as it is my *collective self* that is implicated – being able to distance myself from their views will not enable me to 'leave' the collective self, and this feeling of shame is thus appropriate for as long as there are people in this collective self who hold these views. Work required for 'shame' would therefore be directed toward others who form a part of my collective self, whereas guilt would require work directed at others who are not necessarily a part of my (current) collective self. It should be clear that the individual is part of many collective selves, and that one might encompass another, such that dialogue within a white's collective self would sometimes mean dialogue amongst 'whites', and at other times amongst 'South Africans'.

Though they are similar in that they are both grounded in virtue ethics and therefore self-realization, we have seen so far that there are also a few differences between the approach used by Vice and the Afro-communitarian approach. The Afro-communitarian approach would, in particular, disagree with Vice's recommendations about a selective silence (even if active) in the political realm, but would instead argue that dialogue and debate in the political realm is to be commended, as in this way there would be the ability for both groups in South Africa to engage with each other on issues that affect the wider communal self. In addition, there would be the ability for different groups to try and overcome their respective social pathologies of the inferiority and superiority complexes. There is thus not necessarily a reason for silence, even active silence, apart from when it is in the service of *conversation*, (when it is not so much *silence*, as *listening*). In other words, as long as there is attention paid to the other group's views, and a real attempt to understand and engage with that position, whites need not be silent in the political realm. In fact, being silent would and could be interpreted as disengaging from important issues that affect the whole society and community, which would mean that there is less opportunity for the type of engagement and building of relationships which Afro-communitarianism would prescribe. That said, part of Vice's recommendation is still very important with regards to *how* that engagement in the political realm takes place. There ought to be an emphasis on listening to the other side. Whites should consider

their attitude and continually ask themselves whether they really do allow the voices of the disadvantaged to be heard and, if so, whether they respond to them. Criticism and engagement with issues raised by the current government need not come in the guise of recommendations or saying that whites have all the answers on how to fix the situation *a la* Biko's "white liberal". Instead, openness to dialogue and engagement with different positions would be required.<sup>1</sup>

For the Afro-communitarian, the success of political engagement in improving society is a necessary feature for that political engagement to make the (communal) self more virtuous. So, if virtue is a community feature of the collective self, then what you need to do is work on structural and institutional change. But you also need to work on the communal self through a form of 'therapy'. The healing of the self, the changing of the self, needs to focus on working against the features which entrench and create injustice. In other words, the focus on the re-creation of the self is the re-creation of the collective self, the change of the community within which I find myself, and opening myself up to being changed by my experiences. This would not be an individual 'therapy', but rather a form of 'group therapy' through building relationships. Reaching out to others, *also* over class and race lines is what is then expected from whites, according to this world view (but I will discuss this further in the following chapters). In order to explain this point further, let us examine an example from Vice's paper which is part of the diagnosis of the damaged white self in contemporary South Africa.

An example Vice uses in her paper as part of the diagnosis of the damaged moral self is gleaned from Lisa Tessman. Tessman writes that "[t]he white raised as a racist may later learn not to actually cross the street or clutch tightly to her/his belongings upon seeing a black person approach, but still be unable to rehabilitate her/himself to not feel fearful."<sup>2</sup> Vice argues that some of the work that needs to occur on this damaged moral self will have to be internal, and that changing such whitely habits "will be very difficult, needing more than argument and rational persuasion, and more than structural and institutional change."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, this work on the self needs to be done in silence and humility. I agree that changing such habits will be difficult, but wish to argue that the changing of such habits can never *only* be an internal matter. Afro-communitarianism would recommend change *through the formation of relationships* which in turn will lead to a reforging of identity and habits. But it seems that what Vice does not take into account is that it is the *doing* of things that forms habits, and undoing habits happen through *doing* something different. Habits cannot be broken by thinking about them, as they are not a part of our conscious mind or necessarily under its

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps one of the best ways in which this might start to be possible, is through white people learning an African language, so that the conversation could start happening on black instead of on white terms.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Tessman, 2005, *Burdened Virtues*, OUP p55 cited in Samantha Vice, 'How do I live in this strange place?' *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010 p327

<sup>3</sup> Samantha Vice, 'How do I live in this strange place?' *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010 p325

control, as Vice herself points out. So, the habit of cringing, feeling afraid when you see a black man, can possibly best be overcome by interacting with more black men of the social class you fear.<sup>1</sup> This strategy might also help you to distinguish when there are relevant reasons to fear an interaction with a specific person (e.g. body language and/or dress code) and not rely merely on their race for such cues. In other words, to overcome habits of thought and emotion, the best way is to confront them by *doing* things - and not just any things, but through reaching out, and building relationships with the people we have such a habitual reaction to. Ultimately, self-realization cannot happen without communal commitment to the type of society which allows for and partially constitutes a flourishing human being.

Afro-communitarianism would argue that it is not possible to come to a truly ethical conclusion without the input of others, as the ethical dialogue is understood to be between people – the ‘one in many’, not the ‘two in one’ view of the person as set out by Antjie Krog earlier in the chapter. This has to take the difference of the other into account, as it is the presence of this difference which means that the view of the other cannot be collapsed into mine, and means that the other will always be necessary for me to relate to in order to come to ethical conclusions. It is not possible to work on the inner self without engaging with others according to this view. Moral work on the self requires dialogue with others, and the engagement with others of one’s respective communities or collective selves. Though Vice does argue for the importance of dialogue and engaging with others in her paper, (citing Plato and the Socratic dialogues), the Afro-communitarian would not simply push for dialogue, but for the building of a meaningful relationship. In other words, caring for the self, according to Afro-communitarianism would be to engage with and care for others who form a part of my collective self, and building equal relationships with them.

### **Afro-communitarianism and reconciliation**

From the above analysis of Vice’s paper, I hope to have clarified how an Afro-communitarian perspective can start to shed new light on the issues in contemporary South Africa. My aim in the rest of the dissertation will be to set out in detail what the concepts of responsibility, justice, forgiveness, and humanization would look like within an Afro-communitarian framework, and finally to draw all of these concepts together to give an alternative account of reconciliation. Each subsequent chapter will be dedicated to one of the cognate concepts listed above, and drawing out what an Afro-communitarian worldview would entail for these concepts. In comparing Vice’s view of virtue to the Afro-communitarian virtue ethic, the question of responsibility became central. I therefore turn to the question of responsibility in the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be justified through what is known in sociology as the ‘contact thesis’.

### Chapter 3: Afro-communitarianism and responsibility for apartheid<sup>1</sup>

One of the central questions to address with regards to reconciliation in the South African situation<sup>2</sup> is the one of responsibility for atrocities committed under the apartheid regime. There is general acceptance that harms were committed under apartheid, and what they were, but whether someone or some group (and if so who exactly) should take responsibility for this is a question for which there is no agreed answer. Without an agreement with regards to who (if anyone) ought to be attributed responsibility for these harms, the project of reconciliation will fail to repair relations between the different groups involved. Attribution of responsibility (and subsequent recognition of and acting on this recognition) needs to be agreed upon in order for reparations (if any) necessary for reconciliation to take place. If one group does not see themselves as responsible, and therefore do not see themselves as having to pay any form of reparation, while another group sees this same group as having to pay reparations as a necessary condition for reconciliation, this will perpetually undermine the project of reconciliation. This chapter explores the notion of group responsibility, and submits that a structural and collective crime such as apartheid requires the attribution of collective and shared responsibility on the part of some groups in the society. Collective responsibility refers to the responsibility of a collective, while shared responsibility refers to the responsibility an individual shares in as a result of being a member of such a responsible collective. Group responsibility is the umbrella term I am using to denote both collective and shared responsibility.

In this chapter I discuss responsibility for structural and collective crimes, such as those committed during apartheid, and I argue that, according to the Afro-communitarian position, crimes of this nature involve collective or shared responsibility on the part of some groups.<sup>3</sup> The idea of collective and shared responsibility is contentious when other (individualized) foundational moral theories are used. As a result of these individualistic background assumptions, there is a substantial amount of literature devoted to the issue of collective agency, as without these explanations of collective agency, the application of collective and/or shared responsibility within an individualistic background theory cannot escape accusations of injustice. However, according to the Afro-communitarian conception of the person, the 'collective self' (explained in the previous chapter), and the African moral theory this view of the person entails, collective and shared responsibility is conceptually not problematic. In fact, once the relationship between personhood, the collective self,

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<sup>1</sup> Large sections of this chapter have been adapted from 'Group Responsibility in the Aftermath of Apartheid', South African Journal of Philosophy. 2008, 27(4)

<sup>2</sup> This is not only true in the South African situation, but is also something which haunts other post-conflictive societies. The question of responsibility is one which is central to reconciliation *per se*. I will however focus on South Africa and apartheid exclusively.

<sup>3</sup> It is of course possible that Afro-communitarian group responsibility might extend to any crimes whatsoever, and not only 'collective crimes' as I set it out here. Whether this is the case or not is however not central for the current discussion on reconciliation, as it is specifically such 'collective crimes' that are central to situations in need of political reconciliation.



and collective virtue is understood, it becomes difficult to see how one can have reconciliation without such collective responsibility. For an Afro-communitarian, responsibility necessarily entails some shared and collective aspects, for the reason that it is the *collective self* whom is held responsible. What will *follow* from being held collectively responsible, and what differences there might be in terms of required responses from differently responsible actors, will be the task of the next chapter. So, this chapter considers the *attribution* of collective responsibility only, and not what follows from that attribution.

I argue that an Afro-communitarian conception of the self, which sees the individual as necessarily and ultimately bound up with her community and society, would lead to a very different conception of responsibilities than that entailed by a more individualistic conception. The issue of whether 'whites' can and should be held responsible for apartheid related harms is a question which repeatedly surfaces in the South African context. Two opposing views of reconciliation and whether responsibility on the part of 'race' is necessary in post-apartheid South Africa will be addressed here. One is the view that you cannot and ought never to ascribe responsibility for an act to all of a race as a single group. The other extreme view is that, in fact, race groups are the *only* relevant groups to discuss with regards to responsibility for the consequences and injustices of apartheid. In this chapter I will show that neither of these extreme views would hold under an Afro-communitarian worldview. Yes, race groups can and should be held responsible according to the Afro-communitarian view (making the first view inadequate), however race groups are not the *only* groups that bear collective responsibility, and therefore the second position is also inadequate.

### **Responsibility and reconciliation – the lack of white responsibility for apartheid.**

The necessity for accepting and taking responsibility for benefits and harms, as well as supporting, nurturing and reaching out to each other as a part of the reconciliation process is a topic which deserves in depth analysis. The 'laager' mentality<sup>1</sup> as set out by Sally Matthews in her paper referenced in a previous chapter, encapsulates the denial and rejection of responsibility for reconciliation (understood in a maximal way) by most white South Africans. I therefore briefly describe a campaign which disagrees with this denial and rejection of responsibility, and consider the negative response it provoked from much of the white population. This campaign highlights that South Africa is still in need of reconciliation and, in particular, shows how this lack of reconciliation is intimately tied to a *lack of assuming responsibility* on the part of the group 'white South Africans'.

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<sup>1</sup> A 'laager' refers to the way in which the Afrikaner Voortrekkers pulled their ox-wagons into a circle at night, as a way of keeping out possible hostile people and animals in the land they were traversing. This concept has been utilised in the modern context to refer to a group protectively enclosing themselves within their group and refusing to engage with anyone outside the group. It also has undertones of victim mentality, or perceiving everyone outside the group as bearing animosity against the group.

The 'Home for All Campaign', launched on 16 December 2000, referred in its name to a comment by Albert Luthuli that "South Africa was not yet a home for all her sons and daughters".<sup>1</sup> A "Declaration of Commitment by white South Africans" was placed on the campaign website, and this declaration a) states that apartheid was a grievous harm, b) includes the recognition that most white South Africans supported this harmful regime and c) includes the recognition of the continued legacy of apartheid, in terms of attitudes of racism, as well as in economic terms. This recognition of the harm caused by apartheid, as well as its continued effects, was accompanied by a commitment to redress the wrongs of the apartheid era. The projects created—which were meant to assist and enable white South Africans to contribute to development and community building—came in the form of a Development and Reconciliation fund, to which donations could be made, as well as a skills and needs matching initiative. Later in the thesis I will show that this can be interpreted as an acceptance of responsibility, and the payment of reparations in accordance with justice as a result of the recognition of this responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

The Campaign clearly subscribed to a conception of reconciliation which is not in tension with transformation, but rather supports transformation. It stressed a maximalist conception of reconciliation, namely "the more pro-active building of trust and friendship between previously estranged groups."<sup>3</sup> This conception of reconciliation engaged with the past insofar as it recognised the effects of apartheid still in operation, as well as how the beneficiaries of apartheid needed to make an effort to redress these harms. This was ground-breaking (for white citizens at least) in its assumption that it was up to white South Africans to extend a hand of friendship, to make an effort towards repairing and rebuilding relationships between them and other racial groups. This is a maximal understanding of reconciliation, as (per definition of maximalism) there is the presupposition of changing attitudes, and also, following from this, acts of contrition and reparation on the part of beneficiaries. Political parties representing mostly the formerly oppressed, all reacted positively to the Campaign, and the then-president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, mentioned this campaign with approval in his state of the nation address in 2001.<sup>4</sup>

As was the case with the TRC (discussed earlier, in Chapter 1), however, responses to the Home for All Campaign from the general white population were overwhelmingly negative, supporting the hypothesis that a maximal conception of reconciliation was rejected by most white citizens (as

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Luthuli, *Let my people go*, Fount Publishers, 1963

<sup>2</sup> Though this campaign therefore also addresses what would follow from the acceptance of responsibility for some apartheid crimes and affects, this chapter focuses only on the recognition and attribution of this responsibility. In terms of what rectification ought to follow once blame has been ascribed, this will be dealt with in the following chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Sally Matthews, "Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign" *TRANSFORMATION* 74, 2010

<sup>4</sup> Sally Matthews, "Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign" *TRANSFORMATION* 74, 2010.

argued in chapter 1). I will argue in the remainder of this section that it is the rejection of group responsibility which underpins this rejection of any maximal interpretation of reconciliation, and an Afro-communitarian account of reconciliation in particular. Matthews gives an overview of responses to the Campaign to support this conclusion, which includes the negative attention the Campaign drew in the media, the small number of people who signed the petition, as well as comments made by some white people in leadership positions. “What was striking about the reaction of white South Africans was that the Campaign was not simply ignored or treated with apathy, but that it was met with great hostility.”<sup>1</sup> This antagonistic reaction deserves closer attention.

To explain this overwhelmingly hostile response to the Campaign, Matthews claims that it is possible to either cite the conservatism of many white South Africans or to explain it in terms of a political situation in which political parties gain more from sweeping up negative emotions than having a reconciliatory spirit. As we saw with regards to the ‘conflictive ethos’ discussed in Chapter 1, opposition parties and minority groups (representing mostly white South Africans, such as the Democratic Alliance, Freedom Front Plus, and Solidarity) gain more from a ‘laager’ mentality than an inclusive attitude towards other groups in the country.<sup>2</sup>

Steven Friedman<sup>3</sup> suggests that the media and many political parties use this technique of a ‘laager’ or ‘in-group’ mentality because South Africans in general are more comfortable with racial polarization which keeps boundaries clear, as opposed to a move towards a more inclusive society. The stark division between racial groups allows individuals to engage with each other in ways which do not challenge the preconceived ideas and prejudices that they inherited from the apartheid era. With its long history of legislated racial antagonism, South African society seems geared towards this type of racial polarization. The status quo of racial polarization is easier for citizens, as this means that there are ready answers available to different problems which arise in society. One reason that many South Africans are more comfortable with living in a racially polarized society, might be that this type of racially polarized society allows for and always has a readily available ‘other’ on whom to blame issues and problems within the society, in line with the conflictive ethos.

Though this is a reasonable explanation, I would like to propose that there is a further (not necessarily exclusive, and not incompatible with reasons cited so far) reason why there is so much

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<sup>1</sup> Sally Matthews, *“Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign”* TRANSFORMATION 74, 2010

<sup>2</sup> The Democratic Alliance’s “Stop Zuma” Campaign in the 2009 national election campaign seems to fit the bill for this type of sweeping up of negative emotions. It is not only the opposition parties who utilize sweeping up negative emotions, as previous ANCYL leader Julius Malema has shown.

<sup>3</sup> A political analyst and director of the University of Johannesburg’s Center for the Study of Democracy, cited by Sally Matthews in *“Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign”* TRANSFORMATION 74, 2010.

animosity from white South Africans to movements such as the Home for All Campaign. I postulate that one of the reasons why the Home for All Campaign movement was unsuccessful, and that movements of its sort continue to face animosity, is that the cultural influence of individualism is so strong in the group of beneficiaries, that this affects their willingness to take the appropriate responsibility for benefits, and offer the appropriate reparations, as the Afro-communitarian understanding of reconciliation would require. As Achille Mbembe writes,

Perhaps more than South African black citizens, they [white citizens] now believe in the liberal conservative ideology of the self-reliant and self-made subject and pretend that thirteen years after liberation, white racism can no longer be considered the most important cause of black poverty. Nor can it be held responsible any longer, they argue, for the troubling gaps in life chances between black South Africans and their white compatriots.<sup>1</sup>

According to more minimal accounts of reconciliation (see Chapter 1 for the minimal accounts described by Matthews, Moellendorf, and Govier & Verwoerd), Tutu's expectations, which are in line with the expectations and requirements of the Home for All Campaign, are expecting too much from white South Africans in terms of taking responsibility. However, once the individualistic bias is identified, it is possible to ask whether taking collective responsibility ought to be dismissed so hastily, without first properly engaging with the Afro-communitarian understanding of responsibility and the role it would play in reconciliation.

### **Apartheid as collective crime**

On Tutu's account of the person and ethics, it is expected (I will argue) that white South Africans be the first to try to cross the bridge which divides the country, to extend a hand, and to bear the most responsibility for repairing race relations. Tutu has, over the past ten years, repeatedly appealed to the white population to take some responsibility and make some effort to reach out to the rest of South Africa in a way that shows not only in their words but more importantly in their actions. What is meant by the notion of "responsibility" in this scenario?

Let us first discuss the nature of the crime of apartheid, incorporating some of the insights reached in previous chapters. Apartheid is best understood as a collective crime, in that it could not have been perpetrated *by* an individual agent, nor *to* an individual agent. This is because it was a crime structured around group identities, drawn along racial and ethnic lines, in order to oppress the groups whose identities were pronounced to be 'lower' according to the apartheid racial hierarchy. Both the victims/survivors and perpetrators/beneficiaries of apartheid cannot simply be understood as isolated individuals who are the victims/survivors or perpetrators/beneficiaries of harm. If the

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<sup>1</sup> Achille Mbembe, 'Passages to freedom: the politics of racial reconciliation in South Africa', *Public Culture* 20:1, 2008 p 5

harms of apartheid are merely understood on this individual level, a central part of the harm is ignored, namely its structural features. These structural features would include, for example, the different tiers of education implemented under apartheid according to 'race groups', forced removals, the migrant workers system which separated families, discrimination with regards to the jobs one could apply for or where one could live, and the psychological impact of structuring society along racial lines.

Remember that the history of apartheid (set out in chapter 1) explained how apartheid is a crime which could not have occurred on a purely individual level, but rather that it was a collective crime, perpetrated by groups against groups, and that most individual atrocities occurred as derivations and instantiations of the collective crime. It should also be noted that an alleged shortcoming of the TRC was precisely that its scope and focus on gross human rights violations and individual amnesty was poorly equipped to deal with the structural harms which were the result of apartheid.<sup>1</sup> As apartheid was a collective crime, it might seem *prima facie* plausible that collective responsibility is appropriate. The concept of collective responsibility is one which attributes responsibility to groups, as opposed to attributing responsibility to individuals taken in isolation from one another, as "collective responsibility associates both causation and blameworthiness with groups and construes groups as moral agents in their own right."<sup>2</sup> From an examination of the structural nature of the crime of apartheid, and the fact that it is a collective crime, it can be argued that collective and shared responsibility are vital components of dealing with its aftermath. This is in line with Samantha Vice's views on white shame as set discussed in the previous chapter. Her argument is that the social constitution of white identity affects and benefits all whites, and the implication of this, I argue, is that there is the need for collective and shared responsibility on the part of whites as a group, and white individuals as a part of that group. Vice's account on its own, however, neglects to emphasise the *group* element of this responsibility. Vice focuses on what the individual who is a part of this group ought to do and feel as a member of the group, but she does not focus on whether the group as a whole ought to perform some collective action.

### **Afro-communitarianism and group responsibility**

Exactly how the attribution<sup>3</sup> of group responsibility is a conceptual necessity from an Afro-communitarian perspective will be clarified in the next part of the chapter, and related to three

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<sup>1</sup> Both Sampie Terreblanche ('Dealing with Systematic Economic Injustice' in *Looking Back, Reaching Forward* edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio, and Wilhelm Verwoerd. 2000. London: Zed Books) and Mamhood Mamdani (*When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?* Imprint Pretoria, HSRC, 1998) make this critique of the TRC.

<sup>2</sup> Smiley, Marion, "Collective Responsibility", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/collective-responsibility/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Here I'm going to look at considerations regarding the *attribution* of collective responsibility only, and not what follows from that attribution (which will be the task of Chapter 4)

central ways of understanding group responsibility in Western philosophical literature; namely the conspiracy, cost-benefit, and solidarity models of collective responsibility. Whereas these models are usually applied separately, as mutually exclusive possibilities, to conceptually understand collective responsibility, I will argue that the Afro-communitarian understanding of the person *requires* all three of these models to be applied simultaneously. By applying the models simultaneously, it is shown that while it is true that race groups have to take collective responsibility and that therefore individuals share in this collective responsibility as a result of their race, this is not the only aspect of collective responsibility which is prescribed by Afro-communitarianism. In addition, collective responsibility will apply to other groups as well, such as for example ‘economic beneficiaries’, the membership of which cannot be reduced to ‘race’. Through showing how these different aspects of collective responsibility apply to the post-apartheid context, this should clarify how, while ‘race’ group responsibility is still operative, there are other types of group responsibility which also need to be emphasised.

According to the Afro-communitarian approach to responsibility, the agent and her moral responsibilities are necessarily related to the community which the individual finds herself in. As the community creates the person in the sense explained in the previous chapter, the person is dependent on her community and her agency is formed by the community in central ways. According to this understanding of the person and of morality, moral responsibility cannot be merely individualistic. In some ways there has to be responsibility for the group, the collective – and this then needs to be shared amongst the members of the group. In order to understand this, it needs to be clarified that the collectively responsible agent is not ‘trans-individual’, but rather ‘relational’<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the agent is a collective agent, as explained in the previous chapter, not in a strange metaphysical sense, but rather in the sense that all the individuals in the community are related and their *relationships* constitute this collective agent, and thus their relationships also constitute its collective virtues or vices. Whether these relationships are ‘virtuous’ or ‘vicious’ determines whether the society is virtuous or vicious, and what makes them virtuous or vicious is whether the relationships realize, or develop, the collective agent. Afro-communitarian virtue ethics focuses on the realization of the collective self and its flourishing, and therefore the goal of having virtuous character traits is for the good of the collective agent. So, as an Afro-communitarian conception of morality situates moral value in relationships, and the consequent communal flourishing of these relationships, and not primarily in individuals, it would necessarily follow that the collective (the community) as well as the constituting individuals of that community need to take responsibility for building harmonious relationships. As re-building harmonious relationships after a crime which

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of a relational understanding of the collective moral agent, see Larry May’s *Sharing Responsibility*, 1992, University of Chicago Press

affected the community (and thus also individuals within that community) requires that there be accountability for these harms, it is necessary to evaluate what such responsibility conceptually entails.

According to an Afro-communitarian understanding of the person, *more* is expected from the individual in terms of recognizing complicity in and taking responsibility for collectively (but also individually) perpetrated harms.<sup>1</sup> According to the Afro-communitarian conception of the person, and its subsequent moral theory, collective and shared responsibility are therefore *required* for reconciliation.

Why would a collective virtue theory such as Afro-communitarianism expect more from individual and communal agents in terms of responsibility? The answer is that the diffused communal self would be responsible for actions of her community to a greater extent than if she was an atomistic individual. From the community's perspective, it would, as a collective, be responsible for the actions of each of the individuals within that community. In other words, the person understood in an Afro-communitarian way has more duties towards her community than would be claimed from an individualistic perspective. That a person has such strong duties to the community, and might be held responsible for the community, might seem a foreign concept to someone with an individualistic understanding of the person, and might even seem grossly unfair according to the individualistic worldview. I will return to this perception of unfairness towards the end of the chapter. For the moment, I will discuss Afro-communitarian collective responsibility and how it relates to apartheid.

### **Group responsibility for apartheid**

Now that a brief outline of an Afro-communitarian view of collective responsibility has been provided, the chapter continues by interrogating the concept of collective responsibility with respect to apartheid. How could and should responsibility be attributed in the aftermath of apartheid, and how this would affect different groups. How, and to whom, ought it to be ascribed?

In order to frame the analysis I look at three central Western models of collective responsibility. These models capture the main ideas covered in the literature on collective responsibility to date (there has not yet been a focus on collective responsibility in African philosophy), and thus provides a good platform to start grappling with what 'collective responsibility' entails.

The literature presents three central models of collective responsibility, focusing on three different types of relationships, each embodying a set of criteria to separate a given collective from

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<sup>1</sup> This seems appropriate for a structural and collective crime such as apartheid, and the deeply contextually embedded understanding of the person in Afro-communitarianism would require that crimes of this nature require a collective and shared responsibility on the part of some groups in the society. This point will receive more attention in the next part of the chapter.

innumerable potential alternatives, in order to determine which collectives are responsible. These three models are, A) the solidarity model, B) the conspiracy model and, C) the cost-benefit models.<sup>1</sup> Those engaged in the collective responsibility debate generally adopt one of the three models, the model that best informs the specific concerns of their line of inquiry. However, these models are not incompatible with one another, despite the common practice of applying only one model in a specific case. That they are not necessarily incompatible becomes clear when it is emphasized that these models could be interpreted as highlighting three different *types* of relationships between people and groups. The fact that these models focus on different types of relationships is my own interpretation, and is not found in the literature as such.

### ***The solidarity model***

The relationship of solidarity denotes cooperation within a community, and individuals within the community looking after each other and each others' interests. Proclaiming to be in solidarity with a group means you are not only sympathetic to the group's goals and purposes, but that the group's goals and purposes are also your own. According to the solidarity model of group responsibility, the common interests, needs or attitudes of group members provide a basis for action. A group's solidarity can form actions and intentions of the group.<sup>2</sup> A proponent of the solidarity model, Joel Feinberg, explains that

[A] group has solidarity to the degree that its members have mutual interests, bonds of affection, and a "common lot." The mutual interest may be a specific overlap of shared interest, or it may be a community of interest of the sort that exists when each member's integrated set of interests contains the integrated interest set of each of the others. Such "community" is often associated with bonds of sentiment directed toward common objects or with reciprocal affection between the parties. Finally, the parties share a common lot insofar as their goods and harms are necessarily collective and indivisible. Where there is solidarity there is no hurting one member without hurting them all; and because of the way their interests are related, the successes and satisfactions of one radiate their benefits to the others.<sup>3</sup>

From an individualistic understanding of personhood, relationships of 'solidarity' are contingent, whereas for the Afro-communitarian, such bonds of sentiment and solidarity are inevitable. This model places emphasis on the importance of community in people's identity. Where a group sees themselves as having a 'common lot' and having 'shared interests', perceived threats to these interests would be interpreted and experienced as attacks on the collective self, and thus responses

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey Hoffman & Larry May, 1991, (eds.): *Collective Responsibility*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Lanham. Introduction pp 2-3

<sup>2</sup> Stacey Hoffman & Larry May, 1991, (eds.): *Collective Responsibility*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Lanham. Introduction pp 3

<sup>3</sup> Feinberg, Joel. 1968. 'Collective Responsibility,' *The Journal of Philosophy*, 65(21), Sixty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division. p 677



are interpreted as 'self-defense' or 'pre-emptive attacks', even when the particular individuals are not directly affected when understood from an individualistic view of personhood. Thus, whereas collective responsibility according to the solidarity model is a possibility, even from an individualistic understanding of personhood, such responsibility is a necessity from an Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood.

The solidarity model of collective responsibility has obvious links with the Afro-communitarian understanding of the person and moral theory, as Metz's account of *ubuntu* in terms of solidarity and identity shows.<sup>1</sup> If an individual is in solidarity with a specific group, and this group's 'interests', 'lot' and 'sentiments' result in harm, then the group is collectively responsible for that harm, and the relevant individual would share in responsibility for the harm in question. Having 'overlapping interests', a 'common lot' and 'bonds of sentiment', and I want to add, shared attitudes, creates a context which makes certain harms possible, and perhaps even acceptable (at least from the group's perspective). A context in which, for example, racist attitudes are shared by a group in solidarity creates fertile ground for criminal acts against other races which would not be acceptable in a group which did not share attitudes of racism. This is a point about group psychology, and how individuals respond to prevalent attitudes in their group.

Bonds of sentiment between group members would allow members to get away with criminal activities which otherwise might not be tolerated. If a certain attitude is shared by a group, then the context is created in which specific harms can occur, either to persons perceived as within the group (who do not conform to the groups' norms), or to outsiders (who might be the target of racist or sectarian hatred). Group members in solidarity feel pride or shame for the group's conduct, and this pride/shame ought to motivate members to rally their group to avoid harmful actions such as racist harms and/or to make amends for harms already inflicted. This reminds one of the shame that Vice argues is the proper moral response to living in South Africa as a white person, but could also explain why so many whites in South Africa resist this conclusion. Whites, as a general rule, do not identify themselves consciously with the group of whites. They are either not conscious of or do not concede that the 'overlapping interests', a 'common lot' and 'bonds of sentiment', and shared attitudes between white South Africans makes them a part of this group 'whites'. As explained above, such a feeling of solidarity is optional for people who hold an individualistic worldview, and therefore they do not recognize this bond with others that includes them in a particular group. The relevant relationship which is at stake here is the one of community affiliation, and so it is possible that individualists would not recognize the importance of this relationship, at least not beyond, perhaps, the family unit or neighborhood community.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2

The main point to understand with regards to this model and its relationship to Afro-communitarianism is that it is not always possible to deny a relationship of solidarity when you are a member of a certain community, as the individual is *constituted* by that community. In other words, the fact that being a member of a certain group is not something you consciously identify with, might not change the fact that you are, *in fact*, a member of that group through solidarity (with ‘overlapping interests’, a ‘common lot’, ‘bonds of sentiment’, and shared attitudes). In order to reject the group identity, you would have to explicitly work against these factors that implicitly include you in a group. Even this will not guarantee that you would succeed in escaping membership of the group, because while you are consciously working against some of these interests and attitudes, the reality is that many of your interests and attitudes are not ones you consciously choose or have full control over. In fact, you may remain blind to some of your shared interests and attitudes with others, (perhaps as a result of false consciousness) and therefore be unable to override these factors and therefore be unable to distance yourself from the group.

The solidarity model, and the relationships it embodies, is easily mis-judged to be the only important type of relationship between an individual and her group that needs attention according to the Afro-communitarian worldview. This judgment is as a result of the easy identification of the importance of “solidarity” in the Afro-communitarian worldview with the “solidarity” focused on in this model. However, as will become clear, the other two models of collective responsibility are just as important, and also necessary to take into account according to the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood.

### ***The conspiracy model***

According to the conspiracy model of collective responsibility, members of groups that participate in certain decision making procedures can be held responsible for the actions of the group (or actions of other members of the group) by virtue of that participation. The decision-making procedures in corporations and democratic nation states, for example, result in the members of these groups being accountable for the actions committed by the collective of which they are a member, as each member has some power to influence the actions of the said collective. The rationale involved in this model of collective responsibility is that these types of groups have intentions and actions attributed to the group as agent, and not merely to individuals within the group.<sup>1</sup> It is the individual’s responsibility to be informed about what actions are being perpetrated in her name, and she must take responsibility for those actions. To be ignorant of actions taken in her name, when knowledge of these actions is easily accessible, means that she is nonetheless part of the responsible collective.

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey Hoffman & Larry May, 1991, (eds.): *Collective Responsibility*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Lanham. Introduction pp 2-3

Lobbying for certain courses of action within the corporation or nation state can affect the actions of the collective. Alternatively, distancing herself from the group's actions in some way, would remove the individual from the relevant collective, as she is no longer a part of the decision making procedure under these circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

The relevant relationship which is at stake here is therefore one where either you nominate someone to act on behalf of your group, or where the individuals in the collective recognize that a decision making structure represents certain interests of the group. The role of specific individuals within the decision making procedure would be crucial to assess in order to ascertain whether the individual shares in collective responsibility for decisions that cause harm. For example, a worker within a corporation who is not privy to the pertinent information and has no power to make or influence decisions, cannot be held responsible for decisions and actions made by the corporation. She is not a part of the relevant collective, even though she works for the corporation, as she is not a part of the decision making structure. It is also difficult to see how we can hold an opposition party and its supporters accountable for policies and actions of the nation state which they explicitly disagree with. The opposition is not a part of the collective which is making the decisions (namely the *majority* or ruling party in the parliamentary legislative decision-making body) on issues where they disagree with policy, and yet it does not have enough support in order to influence the relevant policy. The key here is to see that to the extent that the opposition to the state's actions is articulated publicly, and the member of the opposition party either goes through a course of action to attempt to stop the action she disagrees with, or distances herself from the action, will all affect whether she can be deemed as a member of the relevant group, and therefore whether she bears responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

How is this relevant for the Afro-communitarian view of the person and morality? According to Afro-communitarianism, the community constitutes you in certain central ways. Certain situations may require that specific individuals or smaller groups represent the interests of the larger group as a whole, in order to further the group's interests. A harmonious and flourishing community requires that representatives do, in fact, correctly interpret and further the interests of the represented collective. There needs to be harmony and agreement between the decision making structures (and thus decision makers or leaders) and the people they are meant to represent. Unless the people they are meant to represent support and condone the decision making structure, there will be obvious discord in this specific community. As a community, the relationship between leaders and

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey Hoffman & Larry May, 1991, (eds.): *Collective Responsibility*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Lanham. Introduction pp 2-3

<sup>2</sup> Stacey Hoffman & Larry May, 1991, (eds.): *Collective Responsibility*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Lanham. Introduction pp 2-3

supporters are central, and as soon as this relationship breaks down from either side, the society cannot be said to flourish in any meaningful way.

The main point to understand with regards to this model and its relationship to Afro-communitarianism is that as much as the group is important under the Afro-communitarian view, it is also important to understand that there are leaders and decision making structures within collectives which cannot and should not be ignored. In other words, just because there is a collective, this does not mean that the relevant collective contains individuals with equal amounts of power. That said, it is also important to recognize that it is the support of the community, in many respects, which grants individuals their power as representatives. In other words, some individuals or structures within the collective could have the power to steer the collective in certain directions, and even though it is still the other individuals comprising the group's choices to follow this lead, it needs to be recognized that dissent will be much more difficult than simply assenting. For this reason, people in powerful positions and decision making structures within the collective would bear more responsibility than others in the collective for specific group actions.

### ***The cost-benefit model***

The cost-benefit model of group responsibility claims that the benefits of belonging to a specific collective come with a certain cost. In particular, the "benefit received from being a group member creates responsibility for the actions of one's fellow group members."<sup>1</sup> In terms of benefits accrued by a group through unjust social arrangements, there is created a special duty among those group members to rectify the harms to others which resulted from this injustice. This special duty to rectify harms would be the cost of being a recipient of unjust benefits. In the case of apartheid, the argument here would be that members of certain groups who acquired benefits, (as a result, for example, of having been classified 'white'), must take responsibility for deficiencies (such as large scale poverty and difference in educational standards) which was a result of the unjust system. White South Africans drew benefits from the apartheid state in numerous ways such as job protection, higher paid salaries, higher standards of education, to name only a few. The cost benefit model captures the intuition that people who were the beneficiaries of an exploitative system such as this have a special duty to rectify the harms created by that system. This is different from the intuition that *all* affluent people have a duty to alleviate poverty, even of distant others,<sup>2</sup> as the duty is a result of the benefits gained through one's membership of a group implicated in the suffering of another group. In other words, whereas there might be an ethical duty to alleviate poverty even

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey Hoffman & Larry May, 1991, (eds.): *Collective Responsibility*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Lanham. Introduction p 4

<sup>2</sup> See Singer, Peter. 1972. 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*

when you or your group is not in any way responsible for or benefited from, their poverty, the duty at stake in this instance is not of this disinterested type. Rather, there is a special duty of rectification and reparation as a result of benefitting from harm to another group.<sup>1</sup>

The main point to understand with regards to this model and its relationship to Afro-communitarianism is to recognize that the benefits from community include the formation of personhood. In other words, we owe our very subjectivity and personhood, according to Afro-communitarianism, to the community in which we live and survive, and the social groups into which we were born. The individual is constituted by the community. If that is the case, then even the benefits of subjectivity itself need to be recognized – for example, the subtle advantages of whiteness as explained in the previous chapter. As Vice writes concerning white South Africans, “[o]ne is—even if unavoidably—a continuing product of white privilege and benefiting from it, implicated in and enacting injustice in many subtle ways”.<sup>2</sup> These benefits of subjectivity (such as self-confidence, knowing how to carry oneself in particular situations, etc.) are often at the core of what people with an individualistic understanding of personhood deny. Their denial would include not even recognizing that they possess these benefits, or that others do not possess them. These individualists would simply not even consider that self-confidence and knowing how to carry oneself in particular situations are things which not everyone possesses.

According to the Afro-communitarian interpretation of the cost benefit model, the beneficiaries of injustice need to understand that they have benefitted as part of a collective self, and that this may be so even though they have not or might not have had individual choice in the matter. We recognize that the relevant relationship with regards to this model is that between beneficiaries and benefactors, and that these roles are not always consciously chosen ones, but are often inherited and decided by accident of birth. The Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood therefore entails that individuals recognize the collective ‘self’ they are enmeshed in, and how this collective self might be indebted to other collectives as a result of having exploited these groups in the past.<sup>3</sup>

Note that whether one is ignorant of the fact that these benefits are accrued through the exploitation of others, is irrelevant on the cost-benefit model. In other words, ignorance will not remove one from the relevant responsible collective, as it does in the conspiracy model. Whether or

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<sup>1</sup> This will be the case even if the benefit accrued was not intended by the beneficiary group. This point will become important later in the thesis, to highlight that someone does not need to intend to commit harm for her to be held responsible under this model.

<sup>2</sup> Samantha Vice, ‘How do I live in this strange place?’ *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Volume 41 No. 43 Fall 2010 p 6

<sup>3</sup> There are two ways in which the share of responsibility for benefits accrued by a collective might be determined. One might see whether or not one is responsible under the cost benefit model in a binary fashion – so, either you are a beneficiary, or you are not, and how much you benefitted does not relate to the strength of the special duty you have to rectify harms caused by the unjust system. Alternatively there might be a direct relation between the quantity of benefit and the strength of the duty to “pay costs”. The latter seems more intuitively plausible, but I will not focus on this question here. Rather, my focus is on whether an individual is a member of the collective ‘beneficiaries’ at all.

not one is aware of the fact that one benefits from an unjust situation, is irrelevant to whether or not one actually does benefit, whereas one has to be aware of injustices and one's role in perpetuating those injustices under the conspiracy model. Also, in contrast with the solidarity model, as a member of the collective 'beneficiaries', the individual cannot distance herself, or remove herself from responsibility, as she might be able to do under the solidarity model, by rejecting the group identity with which she is affiliated. In accordance with Afro-communitarianism, the individual and who she is, is understood to have been *formed* by her community, relationships, and material circumstances which may be beyond her control. Using the cost-benefit model, no matter how the individual attempts to distance herself, she is not able to escape sharing responsibility of the collective.<sup>1</sup> Some benefits, such as a better education, for example, are simply impossible<sup>2</sup> to give up. Nonetheless, having been a beneficiary, the individual who received a better education as a result of an unjust system, acquires the special duty to rectify harms caused by the unjust system. Other benefits, such as a better financial position, could be given up, in this case through redistributing wealth. That could count as giving up on that benefit one accrued, yet will only allow the person to escape collective responsibility for that financial benefit if the person redistributed the wealth with the explicit intention to make reparations to the group that was harmed. Giving all your money to your children, for example, would certainly not allow you to escape the responsibility you bear as an individual.

An apparent objection to the cost benefit model can be made by adapting Robert Nozick's arguments against the principle of fairness.<sup>3</sup> Nozick argues that a person would not be required to contribute to a joint venture from which she benefits, even if she would choose not to claim these benefits, instead of paying the corresponding cost, and even if she *cannot* renounce the benefits.<sup>4</sup> The example he uses is of a community radio station, in which every member of the community is allocated a day on which to be in charge of playing music, telling stories and so forth. This would be the 'cost' involved with having the benefit of the existence of the community radio station. Nozick argues that a member of the community cannot be forced to give up her day in order to fulfill this responsibility, as she might have preferred not to have the radio station at all, instead of having to give up a day of her own, even if she has benefitted from listening to the station so far. The 'cost' of a day spent at the radio station would, according to Nozick, not be fairly expected from the

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<sup>1</sup> See Raikka for an argument that in some cases distancing yourself would still not relieve you of your share of collective responsibility. My reasoning here is similar – the fact that one can disassociate oneself from attitudes etc. of the collective, would not mean that one can do anything about the benefits one has accrued. Raikka, Juha. 1997. 'On Disassociating Oneself from Collective Responsibility,' *Social Theory and Practice*, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Nor would it be beneficial, even if it were possible.

<sup>3</sup> Thank you to an anonymous referee of the *South African Journal of Philosophy* for pointing this objection out to me. Note that Nozick was not discussing the problem of collective responsibility as such, but his work can fruitfully be related to the current discussion on the cost-benefit model of collective responsibility.

<sup>4</sup> Nozick, Robert. 1974. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd. p 93

individual, even though she has received the ‘benefit’ of listening to the station all year. This ‘payment’ of a day spent at the station, can only be fairly expected from the individual if she would have preferred to have the station over spending her day as a presenter on it. In terms of collective responsibility, Nozick’s example would show that the individual, who would have chosen not to accumulate the benefits she did accrue, and even though she cannot now renounce these benefits), cannot, in fairness, be held accountable for these unjustly gained benefits.

As a response to this objection, it is necessary to highlight that even though this might, to an individualist, seem unfair,<sup>1</sup> this understanding of responsibility is exactly what is meant when the Afro-communitarian claims that the person has certain duties as a result of being a member of a community, and that these duties are integral to societal flourishing. I will return to this objection later in the chapter, where I will expand and explain this response.

### **Analysis of some aspects of the three models of collective responsibility**

Now that we are better acquainted with the three models of collective responsibility, allow me to highlight how the presentation of them above differs from the way Afro-communitarianism would interpret them. These models, in the Western tradition, can be separated according to whether someone is in a specific group or not. They are also *descriptive* when it comes to the nature of the collective agent. They hold that a collective agent does in fact exist, describes what the agent looks like, and analyzes what follows from that description. Each of these models of collective responsibility can also be said to focus on a specific kind of relationship, and highlight different dimensions of injustice applicable to each of these kinds of relationship. What the Afro-communitarian position would prescribe is, however, that *all* of these different types of interpersonal relationships need to be harmonious for a flourishing society, and that each of these types of relationships goes together with specific roles and duties for the individuals involved.

So, according to the Afro-communitarian position, the collective moral agent is not only descriptive, but also normative – in other words, the aim would be to include everyone in a society in all of these groups, and including everyone in these groups strengthens the collective agent’s virtuousness, as there are more harmonious relationships. Different types of relationships at work in the different models of collective responsibility are therefore meant to create and foster new and stronger relationships between community members and, in this way, can work against the in-group out-group mentality definitive of the conflictive ethos. Remember that Afro-communitarian collective ethical personhood prescribes the creation and nourishing of harmonious relationships. Therefore the different types of relationships that are expressed through the Western models of

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<sup>1</sup> The outcome would however also be acceptable to non-Afro-communitarian adherents to the cost-benefit model.

collective responsibility *all* need to be addressed, as they are clearly not harmonious.<sup>1</sup> If they were, then there would not be any question of collective responsibility for harm.

For the Afro-communitarian the best outcome is that a relationship between the different agents involved is maintained or created. Indeed, in most of these cases, the contingent facts of history ensure that the relationship between the groups responsible and the groups or individuals harmed is one that neither group can escape. (In some cases, if possible, it may be better to sever the relationship, rather fostering other relationships which can be harmonious.) As a result, the Afro-communitarian position requires that all three models (in other words all three types of relationships) are addressed simultaneously, whereas it is *possible* to only apply one model to a situation in the Western tradition.<sup>2</sup> In the Afro-communitarian case, if these relationships are present in a particular situation, then they ought to be dealt with in order to try and move them to a more harmonious state. In contrast, in the Western case, it is not *required* that all the relationships are attended to in a particular situation (although someone coming from this perspective could still choose to do so).

As it is harmonious relationships *per se*, and not only one type of relationship, which is the goal of the Afro-communitarian virtue ethic, all of these relationship types need attention, whereas collective responsibility in the Western context and literature is often directed at one aspect of the situation, or only one type of relationship. In the Afro-communitarian framework, these three models apply to the South African context, as each of them allows us to focus on a specific set of responsibilities resulting from a specific type of relationship, that are relevant to the collection of injustices that constitute the apartheid legacy. Together, they give us a picture of the complex range of injustices plaguing the South African post-apartheid landscape, and demand that the Afro-communitarian focus on responsibilities for all of these injustices, structural as well as individual, in order to aim for harmonious relationships in all these categories.

According to my analysis, individuals in the South African context could belong to more than one collective with each responsible for a specific injustice. This is possible as individuals in a community stand in different relationships to each other, and being in one type of relationship does not preclude that person also being in another type of relationship. One person can share in the collective responsibility of different groups, i.e. according to both A and/or B and/or C.

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<sup>1</sup> This would, therefore, exclude any types of relationship that could by their very nature not be flourishing as they rely on harm to one or both parties. Consider, as examples master-slave relationships or, sexual predator-sexual prey relationships.

<sup>2</sup> Marion Smiley notes that different models of collective responsibility are not incompatible (she isolates three similar ones, though not exactly the same as the ones dealt with here), but as they take you in different directions, in the Western context, usually only one model is applied. Smiley, M, 2011 "Collective Responsibility", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/collective-responsibility/>>.



In the next part of the chapter, I apply the Afro-communitarian understanding of collective responsibility to the post-apartheid context, through showing how all three Western models of collective responsibility pick out important aspects of injustice for which there needs to be accountability if the process and project of reconciliation is to succeed.

### **Afro-communitarian responsibility for apartheid**

As I have argued, understood from an Afro-communitarian perspective, all three models of collective responsibility are applicable in the South African context. The Afro-communitarian view of morality requires that all three types of collective responsibility are attended to in order to ensure that all the important relations are addressed in moving towards the goal of harmony, and therefore reconciliation. It will emerge that race groups *per se*, do not map onto the kinds of collectives that are pertinent to considerations of collective responsibility.<sup>1</sup> So, then, if not races, which collectives are to be held responsible? In order to address this question, the three models of collective responsibility (the conspiracy, solidarity and cost-benefit models) as understood from the perspective of Afro-communitarianism are now applied to the post-apartheid South African case.

#### ***Solidarity model applied***

The attitudes of people who support an ideology, even if they might not hold a particularly powerful role in the group, create a context in which the ideology and its effects become entrenched. As such, the solidarity model might capture our intuition that people who held racist beliefs under apartheid, and who humiliated other race groups or treated them as unequal in any way, are part of a collective which is responsible for physical and psychological harms to the targets of their biased harmful beliefs and actions. The solidarity model of collective responsibility is particularly useful for picking out responsibility for psychological harms to victims of apartheid policies.

Under the solidarity model there would still be distinctions made between individuals in the group when the sharing of collective responsibility is at stake. In a context where, for example, racist attitudes prevail, holding these attitudes makes an individual part of a collective which is responsible for racist harms, as her attitude contributes towards a situation in which those harms can occur. Individual members, who do not perpetrate the racist harms themselves, but share the group attitudes which made the harm possible, share in responsibility. This model, I believe, also takes cognizance of how thoroughly our moral compass is formed in and influenced by our community, and yet holds us responsible for our moral compass nonetheless.

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<sup>1</sup> Racial responsibility (but only on the part of 'whites'), I will demonstrate, is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the flourishing of South African society after its protracted racial conflict.

The paradigmatic way of attributing collective responsibility for harms of apartheid to the racial group 'whites' is the solidarity model. White, especially Afrikaner, solidarity meant there were group intentions and attitudes, and that actions were performed (such as the program to employ poor members of the group<sup>1</sup>) towards reaching a goal (in this case helping the impoverished Afrikaner). The solidarity model is therefore appropriate in order to hold South Africa's Afrikaner (and perhaps also English) population who did not distance themselves from the practices of the apartheid state responsible. This would accord with the intuition mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, namely that race groups in solidarity would be responsible for some harms under apartheid. Upon closer inspection, however, the belief that collective responsibility for racial hierarchy under apartheid can be explained purely in terms of race group membership does not hold under this model. A person who distances herself from the attitudes of racial hierarchy necessary for apartheid, would still remain a member of her racial group, as membership to the racial group is involuntary. Her solidarity, however, is not involuntary, and so she would not share in the collective responsibility of her racial group in terms of the solidarity model. As seen with some white struggle heroes (for example Joe Slovo), some whites need not be a part of the collective in solidarity, though this will require a drastic transformation of identity and distancing from their racial group. Once this is understood, it becomes clear that under this model, it would not be a racial group *per se* that would bear collective responsibility; it would be individuals who are members of that group and are in solidarity with certain of that group's shared attitudes and goals. So, under this model, collective responsibility on the grounds of white racial membership alone is over-simplistic.

Furthermore, solidarity between apartheid-classified 'race' groups, ethnic groups, economic and social classes, who shared in the evaluation and perpetuation of racial hierarchies, can also be argued to have perpetuated apartheid. An individual of a race group other than 'white' could have been in solidarity with the goals and aims of the apartheid government in supporting the evaluation of whites as superior to other race groups. She could also be in solidarity with the aims of apartheid through actions and beliefs that end up condoning or supporting apartheid. The apartheid government applied a divide and conquer strategy in its attempts to control the populace, and not only created tensions (or amplified tensions, where these were already present) between different ethnic groups, but also between people of different classes within the same ethnic groups. During apartheid (and even post-apartheid), some people classified as 'colored'<sup>2</sup> and 'Indian' denied the

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Furedi, *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race*, Rutgers University Press, 1998 pp66 - 67

<sup>2</sup> The 'colored' community is people of mixed race descent. As in the case of the Afrikaners, this group was formed in South Africa after the colonization by Europeans. The overall classification under apartheid captured many different cultural and ethnic affiliations, and not a single group. Recent controversy around comments about the "Cape colored" community by ANC spokesperson Jimmy Mnyani has centred around allegations of anti-colored sentiment. See for example <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-03-06-ngobeni-wades-into-manuel-manyi-spat>

equality, autonomy and personhood of those classified 'black', and *vice versa*. In this way the perpetuation of tribalism and ethnic solidarity and class stratification were designed to undermine a unification of the victims of apartheid policy. The encouragement of tribalism, and the hierarchy of different racial groups in the apartheid system encouraged and in many cases created attitudes of racism between (as classified under apartheid) 'subordinate' racial groups. As a result of this, it would not only be the white population who would be collectively responsible for the perpetuation and endorsement of hierarchical racial beliefs, but other racial sectors of the population as well. Controversially, one might argue that even 'black' people who accepted their inferior status held attitudes which were conducive to the functioning of apartheid, and could be held responsible for these attitudes under the solidarity model. The philosophy of black consciousness recognized this possibility of (at least partial) responsibility for one's own negative self-image and self-enslaving attitudes, and the combating of these is its (black consciousness') central concern.<sup>1</sup>

Note that the acceptance of racial hierarchy and the evaluation of different races according to this hierarchy is all that is necessary for a person to be in solidarity with the apartheid government. However, holding people responsible for false consciousness created through their oppression also does not seem fair, especially if the person is created and constituted by her community as the Afro-communitarian view claims. Whites could also be seen to be in false consciousness as a result of the apartheid social structure, and as a result it is possible to argue that it is not fair to attribute responsibility to them. This conclusion is in line with what I have been arguing so far, as it is people in solidarity with certain (unjust) goals that are being held responsible. Whether people support these goals as a result of their upbringing and/or false consciousness is irrelevant. In order to recognize and undermine this false consciousness at work, it would be necessary to accept racial classifications as a lived reality, while rejecting the evaluations of some groups as subordinate. This is the project the black consciousness movement engaged itself in, and is in essence a project of rejecting any kind of (even unconscious) solidarity with apartheid ideology.

On the solidarity model, then, many of the South African population would be held collectively responsible for the maintenance of the conditions and attitudes under which apartheid could flourish. It is not only the solidarity of whites with whites, but also other racial and ethnic solidarity which accepted the apartheid classifications and the evaluation of racial hierarchies, which maintained and perpetuated the system.<sup>2</sup> Holding racist attitudes and stereotypes would mean that the ideology of apartheid was accepted, even if inadvertently, and that persons with such attitudes

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<sup>1</sup> Biko, Steve. 1998. 'A definition of Black consciousness,' in Coetzee, PH & Roux, APJ (eds). *The African Philosophy Reader*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Race classification as utilized for affirmative action will necessarily be excluded from this description, as the premise of theoretical equality is exactly what drives the program, and therefore it does not accept the evaluation of races according to hierarchies.

in South Africa during apartheid contributed to a society and societal attitudes which perpetuated the system. In this way, they can be said to have rallied around a common goal, even if they did so unwittingly.

This understanding of responsibility might be objected to as a type of victim blaming, however saying that people are responsible even when they were acting as a result of false consciousness is in fact a deliberate move away from victim mentality towards 'survivor' mentality. Different types of solidarity would require different types of responses in terms of responsibility, and seeing as some people were instrumental in perpetuating their own oppression, the response would require a re-evaluation of values and what is valuable for those classified as inferior (and who accepted this classification). The black consciousness movement is exactly the kind of response required from people who were unwittingly a part of perpetuating their own oppression in this way. Black people who internalized negative stereotypes ought to take responsibility for this in some way, even though they are obviously not to blame for having internalized these stereotypes. Being aware of having internalized these stereotypes, and consciously attempting to overcome them, as well as instilling a sense of confidence in the next generation would be part of what is necessary in response to having internalized negative stereotypes. This however becomes more complex when it is, in fact, the case that most black people are living in inferior economic and educational conditions, which perpetuates the inferiority complex.

Responses from whites should include working against their superiority complex, attempting to overcome their whitely habits, listening and engaging with other groups in a reflective manner. Their day to day relations with others should be influenced by the understanding that some (to them invisible) advantages such as a good self-esteem are a result of factors that they in fact had no control over. While some whites and some blacks therefore might share in the collective responsibility for apartheid according to the solidarity model, this does not make them equal parties to it. Importantly, here it becomes apparent that applying only the solidarity model of collective responsibility in the aftermath of apartheid is inadequate, as it is important to take other factors (such as benefitting from the system) into account. This issue will be dealt with in more detail in the cost-benefit section to follow. First, however, I turn to an application of the conspiracy model to the South African situation.

### ***Conspiracy model applied***

I will analyze the responsibility for two different harms which occurred under apartheid through the conspiracy model, namely gross human rights violations (tortures, murders etc. which occurred for

political motives, as defined by the TRC) and economic exploitation which resulted in severe deprivation for many South Africans.

When the conspiracy model of collective responsibility is applied to the crime of gross human rights violations, the members of parliament, other decision-making bodies, and persons who carried out their orders at the time<sup>1</sup> would be deemed collectively responsible for the harms to victims. The select group of whites who were part of the decision making procedure and who had the relevant knowledge when making decisions would thus bear collective responsibility for gross human rights violations. Direct perpetrators, people who ordered human rights abuses and people responsible for policy decisions and legislation, which lead to gross human rights abuses, would all be members of this collective. As the conspiracy model is about decision making, having the greatest share of the responsibility would be the people making decisions that will affect a large number of people in an adverse way, such as policy makers and legislators. People who then ordered the implementation of these crimes would also carry a portion of responsibility, while the actual perpetrators of the crimes would carry responsibility, but less than the people who ordered them. Under the conspiracy model the ordinary citizen would not be included as part of the collective responsible for the harm of gross human rights violations, as the ordinary citizen did not participate in the decision making procedures for gross human rights violations, especially since the worst atrocities occurred in secret, and were denied publicly by government.<sup>2</sup> The ordinary voting white citizen was not part of any secret decision making procedure of the actions committed and so, under this model, would not be deemed responsible for this aspect of apartheid.

*Prima facie*, the intuition would be that people, who had power within the apartheid decision making procedure, would be responsible for harms which lead to gross human rights violations. The collective responsibility for gross violations of human rights, the chain of command and political actors responsible for the policies of oppression, is best captured by the conspiracy model, and supports the intuition that powerful players in the political scene would bear more responsibility than people with less power. According to the conspiracy model, the ordinary citizen is not included as part of the responsible collective in cases of secretly conducted human rights violations, even though white citizens did in fact keep the National Party in power. The conspiracy model does not include these ordinary citizens as part of the relevantly responsible collective, for the reason that most people were not given sufficient information in order to be part of the decision making structure relating to human rights violations, as propaganda and censorship withheld important

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<sup>1</sup> The people who carried out orders did have decision making powers to some extent, as they could have decided not to follow orders. The exception to this would be if and when they were coerced to follow such orders.

<sup>2</sup> This is one way of interpreting the situation, which casts the ordinary citizen in the best light possible. It is off course possible that (some) ordinary citizens knew exactly what was happening, but simply did not care, and ignored the atrocities. This is related to the skewed moral sensibility that was cultivated in white citizens under apartheid.

information from ordinary citizens. The overwhelming ‘yes’ vote in the referendum (restricted to whites) on continuing the process of democratization<sup>1</sup> held before the first democratic elections, can be cited as possible evidence that (at least some) ordinary white citizens realized that the system and ideology they had been supporting was wrong, once more information about gross human rights violations became available following the unbanning of political parties and easing of media censorship.<sup>2</sup>

When it comes to the aspect of systemic economic exploitation, the conspiracy model would capture a much larger group as being collectively responsible than the group responsible for gross human rights violations. White citizens knew about the economic exploitation of most of the country’s inhabitants. Expanding this position, the ordinary *white* citizens a) knew about apartheid legislation b) were voters c) *should* have realized that there were injustices being perpetrated – at a minimum poverty and exploitation. Unlike, for example, tortures, which were kept secret by the agents involved, poverty and economic exploitation of the black population was apparent to any white citizen who cared to take notice.

The conspiracy model can identify a collective, namely ‘all citizens who supported the National Party’, which would, as a group, be responsible for economic exploitation under apartheid. The estimated 20% of the white population who opposed apartheid (for example members of the Black Sash) would not form part of the group responsible here. Under the conspiracy model, it is also possible to see some of the black leaders in homelands who worked closely with the apartheid government as part of the responsible group, (even though they would not have had voting rights), as they made decisions in line with, and in consultation with, the apartheid government. Some black police officers and informers might also be included in this group, because some decisions they made were in line with and in support of the apartheid government.<sup>3</sup> The conspiracy model of collective responsibility would pick out a *multiracial* group as the relevant collective. The sharing of collective responsibility amongst individuals in this collective would be determined by individuals’ roles and influence in decisions taken which (consciously or not) supported the apartheid government.

The ordinary citizen did keep the apartheid government in place, but this would not qualify the ordinary voter from being collectively responsible under the conspiracy model for some harms (like gross human rights violations), while qualifying supporters of the National Party for collective responsibility for other harms, such as economic exploitation. This is true even if non-NP-voters

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<sup>1</sup> There was a 68% majority for continuing the political changes which culminated in the 1994 multi-racial elections.

<sup>2</sup> This is not the only explanation, only a possible one, and a very generous interpretation with regards to ordinary white citizens.

<sup>3</sup> Once again, if people were coerced to make some decisions, they would escape being a part of this responsible collective on the conspiracy model. However, not all police and informers could be interpreted to have been coerced.

participated in apartheid-based economic exploitation, for the reason that the conspiracy model focuses on representation and decision-making.

The conspiracy model, then, is a model of collective responsibility which states that responsibility can be applied to a group with an organized decision making procedure. Determining collective responsibility using this model requires identifying which harm the collective could have made decisions about through its collective decision making process. Looking at the harms of gross human rights violations, and economic exploitation respectively, I have shown that different groups can be held responsible for different harms, according to how much information they have with regards the specific harm, and how much influence they have over the decision making procedure.

This model of collective responsibility, despite its emphasis on individual choice and distancing the self from the relevant group in order to not be part of the responsible collective on the conspiracy model, is still relevant and important from the Afro-communitarian perspective. It is true that leaders and representatives have more power than others in the collective, and this is reflected in the larger proportion of responsibility they would have to bear. Unfortunately, this understanding of collective responsibility with regards to gross human rights violation was not brought about in practice during the course of the TRC, as the most powerful and influential people who were called to testify did not do so, and yet did not suffer any retribution, and did not have to apply for amnesty. This has had the result that a few scapegoats were assigned the bulk of the responsibility for human rights violations, even though these scapegoats (Eugene de Kock is an example) were much lower on the hierarchy of power and decision making capacities than people who refused to appear (such as former president PW Botha). This had the result that in practice the 'foot soldiers', as opposed to the 'generals', shouldered most of the blame for these atrocities. This is not in accordance with the understanding of responsibility according to the conspiracy model.

### ***Cost benefit model applied***

Economic beneficiaries of apartheid are overwhelmingly white. With the description of apartheid as "racial capitalism," under the cost-benefit model of collective responsibility the beneficiaries of the system are called upon to acknowledge and take responsibility for the benefits accrued through an unjust regime. In this I include the next generation - post-apartheid beneficiaries of apartheid - as the South African economic landscape is still largely still determined by apartheid injustice. Being a beneficiary of apartheid does not end with the dismantling of the apartheid government. The majority of those people disadvantaged through the apartheid system remain in poverty today, while the country's economic power still remains largely in the hands of whites. However, it is of course true that members of the black population who worked with the apartheid

government and obtained benefits can also be taken to share in collective responsibility under the cost-benefit model. Some officials and politicians in the homelands of the time, who acted as puppets for the apartheid government, received considerable financial benefits in comparison with the rest of the black population. From these examples it starts to become clear that some economic beneficiaries would have been classified as 'non-white' and yet they also share in the collective responsibility for the economic harm and exploitation that occurred under the apartheid government. In this case the social group - 'beneficiaries' - as they were the beneficiaries of apartheid policy on economic matters, education, housing, social security (to name but a few), can be held collectively responsible. Benefits accrued during apartheid continue to be held in most cases, even after the formal end to apartheid. The economic beneficiaries would include mostly white, but also some black people.

The cost-benefit model of collective responsibility can also be applied to the new black bourgeoisie, and the benefits they have accrued in the *post*-apartheid situation. These benefits might seem to be 'fairly' earned, and yet they come at the expense of many other, equally deserving, disadvantaged people. This might be true in any market structure; however as this group's financial wealth has depended on much of the infrastructure from the apartheid era, and inequalities have not been eradicated, the system in place, even if it might be based on fair principles, is still unjust to the extent that people start from such vastly different places. As the new democratic South Africa has decided to continue with a capitalist economy, it is to be expected that only a few of the formerly disadvantaged would immediately see financial gains and benefits. These benefits, however, come at the expense of an alternative arrangement, in which the country's resources are distributed in a more equitable fashion. Even if the disadvantages of a socialist system in the current global capitalist scheme warrant the continuing of the capitalist system, it has to be recognized that this comes with a corresponding cost, namely a duty to take care of the casualties of capitalism, and collective responsibility for these costs have to be accepted. This is distinct from the more general moral duty to help the poor, as it is based on the stronger duty to take responsibility for the costs involved in gaining benefits from an unjust system, as discussed above.

The economic benefit gained by foreign businesses during apartheid is also a factor which ought to be taken into account when collective responsibility under the cost-benefit models is discussed. The New York Circuit court of appeal decision, reversing the findings of the district court, in the *Khulumani et al. v. Barclays et al.* case<sup>1</sup> is a sign that the cost of benefits accrued by the international business community's exploitation of workers for financial gain during apartheid is being recognized. Under the cost-benefit model, foreigners who benefitted from apartheid would be

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.business-humanrights.org>



included in the collective 'beneficiaries', and would share in collective responsibility for economic exploitation.<sup>1</sup>

Applying the cost-benefit model to South Africa leaves most of the white, as well as some of the black population collectively responsible to rectify the economic as well as psychological harms perpetrated under the apartheid system, because the collective who gained benefits from apartheid was a multiracial collective. It might be true that the beneficiaries might have suffered some harms under apartheid (as discussed earlier), but at the same time they enjoyed countless benefits, for which they must realize there is the corresponding cost of a special duty to rectify harms that were caused by apartheid.

The cost-benefit model, then, requires members of collectives who gain benefits because of their group membership, to be responsive to corresponding costs. When applying this model to the case of South Africa, not only white South Africans, but also foreigners who benefitted from apartheid exploitative practices, as well as South African beneficiaries from races other than white, are members of the collective 'beneficiaries' and all share in the collective responsibility of the group.

One subset of beneficiaries, let us call it *structural psychological beneficiaries*, can however be seen to be largely limited to white South Africans. In order to show why, a further application of the cost-benefit model according to Afro-communitarianism requires that the discussion return to two previously touched on subjects, namely the objection adapted from Nozick's principle of fairness explained earlier in the chapter, and whiteness, referred to in the discussion of Samantha Vice's paper in the previous chapter.

If the Nozick objection discussed earlier in the chapter, (that, based on the principle of fairness, it cannot be required of a person that she contribute to a joint venture from which she benefits if she would choose not to claim these benefits, instead of paying the corresponding cost, even if she *cannot* renounce the benefits<sup>2</sup>) is applied to the South African beneficiaries' case, then it would seem that beneficiaries of apartheid cannot legitimately be expected to pay a cost for the benefits they accrued, unless they would have chosen the state of affairs under apartheid above alternative possible social situations. Why then, if this objection is adapted to the South African context, would a person who would have chosen non-racialism over apartheid, yet cannot avoid the benefits she has accrued from apartheid, share in collective responsibility under the cost-benefit model according to Afro-communitarianism? As the person who would have preferred not to have a radio station over having to spend a day as a presenter for the station, the beneficiary of apartheid who would

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<sup>1</sup> Foreigners could also be held responsible according to the other models of collective responsibility, should they show the requisite solidarity, or have been able to influence the decision making structures of the apartheid government.

<sup>2</sup> Nozick, Robert. 1974. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd. p 93

have preferred not to gain benefits from apartheid, rather than having a special duty to rectify some harms which occurred as a result of apartheid, cannot be held responsible if we are to believe that the analogy holds. In order to see her as responsible for benefits accrued, according to Nozick, she would have to consent to the benefits and associated costs, and would have to choose having these benefits over living in a non-racially segregated society which afforded her these benefits.

So, if Nozick's objection holds in the South African case, then it would seem that the cost-benefit model might not legitimately apply to all beneficiaries. However, as a response, I remind the reader that, even though this might seem unfair to the individualist, this could be exactly what is meant when the Afro-communitarian claims that the person has certain duties as a result of being a member of a community, and that these duties are integral to societal flourishing. In response to the Nozick inspired objection, the types of benefits and costs involved in Nozick's radio station example can in fact not be applied to the South African context, as the situations are different in key aspects. If Nozick's account is applied to the South African situation, it does not take account of people as properly contextually situated, and does not take into consideration the fact that we are deeply socially embedded according to the Afro-communitarian worldview. The objector makes the mistake of thinking that a person can easily isolate and distance herself from her community. To say that a white citizen under apartheid did not have the opportunity to reject some of the benefits she accrued does not relieve her from the corresponding costs, in the same way as, according to the Afro-communitarian, you are responsible for your personhood, even though it is formed by the community. The benefits (of personhood) accrued are so central to who the person is, to her identity and subjectivity, that it starts to not make sense to say that she 'could have made the choice' or 'would have preferred' not to receive these benefits (in a way in which Nozick's example of the community radio cannot capture). This relates directly back to the insights on whiteness and how deeply race in fact affects white people, as discussed in the previous chapter. As the benefit accrued is a central part of what constitutes white identity, the white person cannot, or could not claim to make, such a decision. Instead, it rather becomes a question of how to utilize unjustly gained advantages in order to change the situation.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Afro-communitarian, Nozick's example does not take into account people as properly situated and contextualized. In a racially stratified, unequal society, his conclusion does not follow, as his example presupposes that people within the community discussed are relative equals. As this assumption does not hold in the apartheid situation, one can reasonably assume that a special duty would exist in this case, and that this duty would apply to white South Africans, qua whites, for the benefits that their whiteness still affords them. This would include economic

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<sup>1</sup>See Sally Matthews 'Renouncing Privilege, using privilege'  
[http://rhodesza.academia.edu/SallyMatthews/Papers/567737/Renouncing\\_Privilege\\_Using\\_Privilege](http://rhodesza.academia.edu/SallyMatthews/Papers/567737/Renouncing_Privilege_Using_Privilege)

situation, but would also go further to include psychological aspects of whiteness. Yes, some whites did not benefit as much as others economically, and yes, some blacks benefitted economically, but there is one type of psychological benefit which is ingrained in contemporary South Africa. The type of benefit I am referring to here is the whitely way of doing and being,<sup>1</sup> and the symbolic order and racialised use of language that neither whites nor blacks can escape in the contemporary context. Whiteness can be seen as a 'benefit', for the reason that it allows the person to see her own perspective as the only viable or respectable one, with assumptions of her position being 'normal' and her views 'right', and that the way she does and views things as just being 'the way things really are'. It puts the white person squarely at the centre of the world. She therefore does not have to engage with marginal positions, and can simply get on with doing things the way she sees fit. Being white, her perspective is assumed to be right by those around her within the current symbolic order and racialised use of language. Being 'whitely' will provide knowledge and benefits in a white dominated world such as not being regarded with suspicion, and having confidence in one's own views. This kind of benefit is often not recognized by white people, and yet, once it is clear that there is such a benefit, the cost-benefit model would prescribe that there is a corresponding cost which white people ought to bear as a result of enjoying such a benefit.

## Conclusion

After applying the conspiracy, solidarity, and cost-benefit models of collective responsibility to the South African case, it becomes clear that the attribution of collective responsibility merely along racial lines is unsatisfactory. The relevant features which pick out responsible collectives can only in *one* case (the case of collective responsibility for whiteness) be purely reduced to race. An important conclusion of this investigation is that responsible groups for apartheid cannot clearly be divided *only* along racial lines. This is not to say that racial considerations should be discarded, but it does complicate the issue of collective responsibility in the aftermath of apartheid, as well as how the process of reconciliation can be continued.

The application of the three models to the aftermath of apartheid should also have given the reader some insight into how the three models are related and support each other under the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood. For example, motivations to take part in the conspiracy discussed in the second model might be based on reasons of solidarity with a group, or because of the benefits one may gain. Solidarity could also be created as a result of being a part of

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<sup>1</sup> This whitely way of doing and being will be atomizing and isolate the individual from others, and as a result will be a handicap from the Afro-communitarian perspective. However, this does not preclude the possibility that being and doing things in a whitely manner also has its advantages for that particular individual, especially with regards to living up to whitely goals and standards. This will not, however, translate into a benefit for society as whole, as is required in the Afro-communitarian worldview.

the same decision-making structure, in a type of ‘team-building’ exercise. While this can be consistent with collective responsibility from a Western perspective, the Afro-communitarian understanding of collective responsibility gives an explanation for why the models can be related in this way, namely that, as interconnected with our community, the chances are that these types of relationships are interconnected in our community. Each of the models captures a specific kind of relationship, however Afro-communitarianism prescribes that all types of relationships (that have the possibility of being harmonious) need to be flourishing ones.<sup>1</sup> The point is that these issues are all related to the relationships we have, and in order to aim for a flourishing society according to Afro-communitarianism, they all need attention.<sup>2</sup>

It might be objected that the way in which I have set things up, *everyone* would share in collective responsibility for apartheid in some way. This objection can be linked to Hannah Arendt’s claim, when discussing the Holocaust, that if everyone is responsible, then no one is.<sup>3</sup> Note that this would not follow from my position. People who did not have enough information to be part of the decision making structure, or who chose not to become part of the conspiracy through distancing themselves would not share collective responsibility using the conspiracy model. Using the solidarity model, it is also possible not to be part of the collective which is responsible, either through distancing yourself from the group, or denying evaluative racial hierarchies. On the cost-benefit model it is clear that there are many individuals who would not fall under the collective ‘beneficiaries’, as I have argued. According to my analysis, individuals who are still living in extreme poverty as a result of apartheid, and who struggled against the system (or were too young to struggle against the system), and who also do not draw structural psychological benefits, cannot be held accountable as being members of any of the responsible collectives. This would comprise a large group of South Africans today. This would however not include any white South Africans, as all white South Africans are part of *some* collective which is responsible for some harm that occurred due to apartheid, for the reason that they are all beneficiaries, and so fall under the cost-benefit model. It would, however, also not let all other race groups off the hook, as there are definitely some who are members of groups who are collectively responsible. Of course, what might follow from being found collectively responsible will vary according to how each individual is a member of

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<sup>1</sup> This would, therefore, exclude any types of relationship that could by their very nature not be flourishing as they rely on harm to one or both parties.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, having shown that collective responsibility for harms under apartheid would not coincide with racial groups (except in one case), this might produce practical benefits in terms of the project of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. If collective responsibility turned out to be (justifiably) cast *only* along racial lines, there is the danger that this (contingently just) racial polarization might be misrecognized as merely another version of (unjust) apartheid era racial polarization. Note that this would not, itself, render questionable the outcome – given a model of collective responsibility, if it turns out that only one race group is deemed responsible, then that is just the way it is. Yet it might have some unwelcome side-effects and it is fortunate that, as it happens, we need not worry about them in this case.

<sup>3</sup> Arendt, Hannah. 1991. ‘Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility’ in May, Larry and Hoffman, Stacey (eds). *Collective Responsibility: Five decades of debate in theoretical and applied ethics*. Rowman & Littlefield publishers.

the respective responsible groups. What the required reaction to this responsibility will be depends on how individuals and groups are differently responsible.<sup>1</sup>

As Afro-communitarianism sees the social group 'whites' as sharing some responsibility for apartheid, the question of what actions this attribution of responsibility would prescribe leads directly to question of justice. Instead of active silence, what is needed on the part of white South Africans, is recognizing shared responsibility, and supporting justice through relinquishing some privileges unjustly accrued, while at the same time building relationships with others. The next chapter focuses on the concept of justice.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the required responses of Eugene de Kock vs. the black person who internalized negative stereotypes will differ.

## Chapter 4: Afro-communitarianism, justice and reconciliation

Reconciliation, it is generally accepted, “cannot be achieved without justice to the aggrieved party”,<sup>1</sup> and cannot occur if there is still a general feeling of injustice and non-accountability for violations. In this chapter I will defend a version of restorative justice which, I will argue, is necessary for the Afro-communitarian conception of reconciliation. The understanding of restorative justice I will defend includes aspects of both distributive justice and procedural justice.

So, what does justice entail from an Afro-communitarian perspective? Is justice necessary for racial reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa? In order to start addressing the relationship between justice and reconciliation, and their respective meanings from an Afro-communitarian perspective, I will first look at Desmond Tutu’s position on justice. Next I discuss an objection, articulated by Mamhood Mamdani, that reconciliation as understood in the TRC (and thus, arguably an Afro-communitarian perspective) is in fact a denial of justice. Mamdani’s alternative account of reconciliation is provided in order to elucidate his objection. In order to respond to Mamdani’s objection, it is necessary to expand on and clarify what could be meant by restorative justice, in general, and from an Afro-communitarian perspective in particular, and why reconciliation does not need to result in a denial of justice as Mamdani fears.

The relationship between reconciliation, punishment and justice according to the Afro-communitarian moral theory will be clarified, as some central concerns (such as the one by Mamdani) about the restorative position revolves around these issues. While Afro-communitarian justice does not *necessarily* entail retributivism (at least not as retributivism is *usually* understood) Afro-communitarian justice does have the necessary requirement that responsibility ought to be recognized and, as a result of this recognition, that some reparations for the injustice be made, and this payment of reparations can be related to retributivism, as well as to distributive and procedural justice. While this emphasis on reparations would, I believe, satisfy Mamdani’s objection that reconciliation turns into a denial of justice, it highlights another objection, namely that some programs that are meant to be part of the reconciliation process amount to ‘reverse discrimination’, and therefore cannot be justified. The problem is that, while there might be the need for recognition of responsibility for harms and subsequent paying reparations for these harms, it is unjust to *force* people to pay reparation when they do not recognize complicity. In order to explore this objection in more detail, I analyse David Benatar’s position on affirmative action, specifically his position that affirmative action with race as proxy is not an adequate mechanism for compensatory justice. In

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<sup>1</sup> Cunneen, Chris ‘Reparations and Restorative Justice: Responding to the Gross Violations of Human Rights’ in Strang, Heather and Braithwaite John (eds), 2001, *Restorative Justice and Civil Society* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp 97-8

response to Benatar, I will show how it is possible that affirmative action with race as proxy can, in fact, be justified from an Afro-communitarian position.

### **Tutu on transitional justice**

Justice is central to any account of reconciliation when considering large groups, hence, if there is no justice or there is no perception of justice, there will be an inevitable impact on the reconciliation process. So what is the relationship between justice and reconciliation in transitional societies after protracted conflict? Many have argued that justice and reconciliation are in tension with each other, and justice in a transitional society would be antithetical to reconciliation, on the grounds that reconciliation requires compromises that are incompatible with justice.<sup>1</sup> This view, I will argue, presupposes a retributivist account of justice, which focuses on the crime and blame for past behaviour, with the aim of punishing the offence proportionally to the crime committed. Retributive justice might however be perceived by perpetrators and beneficiaries as state sanctioned violence, and therefore alienate different social groups instead of creating a climate conducive to reconciliation. The tension between retributive justice and reconciliation can therefore be said to be a practical one of how perpetrators view retributive justice. If it is true that reconciliation and retributive justice are in tension with each other, there are two possible options open to the transitional society that subscribes to the processes and the values of retributive justice. Either it is decided that (a) justice ought to be sacrificed for a pragmatic social good, namely a reconciled society, or (b) that justice must be done regardless of its possible effects on the process of reconciliation. However, neither of these options seems ideal for a transitional society trying to overcome a situation of protracted conflict, and this (amongst other considerations) has led some to reject retributive justice in transitional contexts.<sup>2</sup>

Desmond Tutu, for example, articulates the type of justice embedded in the TRC as restorative, rather than retributive. He claims that "[t]here are different kinds of justice. Retributive justice is largely Western. The African understanding is far more restorative - not so much to punish as to redress or restore a balance that has been knocked askew."<sup>3</sup> As opposed to retributive<sup>4</sup> (and, indeed, rehabilitative<sup>5</sup>) accounts of criminal justice, Tutu puts forward the view that a version of restorative

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Eds.), 2000, *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, for an overview on this issue.

<sup>2</sup> There are also arguments for rejecting the retributive understanding of justice under all circumstances, but I will focus on the concept as related to racial reconciliation in South Africa, therefore only in this transitional context.

<sup>3</sup> From "Recovering from Apartheid", in *The New Yorker*, 18 November 1996.

<sup>4</sup> This could be argued to be the implied theory of justice according to Kantian ethics, as retribution is a way of respecting the autonomy of persons.

<sup>5</sup> This could be argued to be the implied version of justice from a utilitarian ethical perspective as rehabilitation could be justified in terms of prevention of repetition of criminal offences, while incarceration would be justified during the process, or indefinitely if the perpetrator is deemed to be beyond rehabilitation, in order to protect others in society.

justice is required by the African perspective. He has made numerous references to the relationship between restorative justice and reconciliation, and their respective meanings from an Afro-communitarian worldview. So, what exactly does Tutu refer to when he claims that there is an ‘African understanding of justice’? In his book *No future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu writes,

I contend that there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution and punishment but, in the spirit of *ubuntu*, the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence. This is a far more personal approach, which sees the offence as something that has happened to people and whose consequence is a rupture of relationships. Thus we would claim that justice, restorative justice, is being served when efforts are being made to work for healing, for forgiveness and for reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

This conception of justice, Tutu claims, is the only way in which “the cycle of reprisal and counter-reprisal”<sup>2</sup> that characterises situations of intractable conflict can be broken. As Tutu starts from an explicitly articulated Afro-communitarian perspective, and he unequivocally links his view of restorative justice to the worldview of *ubuntu*, it is reasonable to consider his position as an example of Afro-communitarian justice.<sup>3</sup> What seems to have been mostly lacking in discussions about restorative justice in a transitional context though, is any explanation of how this restorative conception is still *justice*, as opposed to something else.<sup>4</sup> In fact, when we look at the quote by Tutu above, it might seem that reconciliation and justice simply become the same thing, in which case it would be hardly surprising to find that there is no tension between them. I will return to the difference between restorative justice and reconciliation later in the chapter.

But one might ask the question, “is this *justice*?”<sup>5</sup> in another way; namely, is Tutu’s brand of “justice” in fact just? The TRC has widely been held to have employed restorative justice, as amnesty

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 51-2

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 209

<sup>3</sup> As with his account of personhood, and in line with his project, Tutu’s account of justice is however rather sketchy, and we would do well for this current project to expand on exactly what he could have meant in the above quote. I will do so later in the chapter. For the moment I will therefore utilize Tutu’s understanding of justice as an example of Afro-communitarian thinking on justice, and then give a more comprehensive account of Afro-communitarian justice based on Tutu’s writings, but taking into account some central philosophical concerns as well which his account does not address.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Bell’s discussion of restorative justice seems to give insufficient attention to this issue in his chapter on justice in his *Understanding African Philosophy*, 2002, Routledge. Also see his *Rethinking Justice: Restoring our Humanity*, 2007, Lexington Books. See especially Chapter 3, ‘Justice: Mercy and the cultivation of humanity’, which sets out an argument utilizing insights from the works of Seneca, Andrew Brien, and Martha Nussbaum, concluding that mercy is part of the meaning of justice. The reason for this is the belief that justice ought to aim at moral outcomes, and that this is only achieved if justice “is compassion based, embracing human self-esteem, benevolence and mercy” This chapter reviews arguments for the restorative justice tradition, mainly focusing on the South African experience after apartheid, which has generated a lot of debate with regards to the relationship between justice and reconciliation.

<sup>5</sup> The person asking this question (or the skeptic) is a retributivist, and it might seem that she is simply begging the question. However, as retributivism and desert has become so central in the Western understanding of justice, it is important to address the question of whether there can be justice without the perpetrator ‘getting what she deserves’ in



played a central role in the process.<sup>1</sup> Amnesty means that the perpetrators are not punished in proportion to the crimes committed, and it can be interpreted to be restorative as the emphasis is not on retribution. Thus, amnesty is linked to restorative justice, as it is not 'giving the perpetrator his just deserts' as would be the case under retributive justice. Yet, some might claim that, in the South African case, this framework of restorative justice resulted in the perpetrators being "let off the hook". Amnesty, even when it is amnesty in exchange for truth, still allows perpetrators to deny responsibility for the harms they caused and leaves them inadequately reproached. So, where is the justice in restorative justice if the perpetrators and beneficiaries do not get 'their due'? Have we not merely taken option (a) as explained above, and sacrificed justice for reconciliation in the South African post-apartheid situation? Has this option not, as Wole Soyinka laments, meant that in this case, as in many others, the African victims of oppression have forgotten their harms too quickly, and that justice has been thwarted?<sup>2</sup> Is this South African case an example of general hypocrisy and double standards, so that in the West, if there are atrocities committed against a population, the world demands justice, but in Africa, if there are atrocities, let everyone forget, let the Africans forgive, and call it 'restorative justice'? Is restorative justice, as articulated by Tutu, not a way of denying Africans the respect they deserve as persons, and the justice that is their due? Along these lines, another scholar, Mamhood Mamdani, who has considered the issue of justice and reconciliation, asks the question 'when does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?'<sup>3</sup>

### **Mamhood Mamdani**

Mamhood Mamdani's discussion of reconciliation and justice attends to the perception (more prevalent amongst victims of apartheid as the TRC recedes into history) that reconciliation as conceived of by the TRC has not addressed the issue of justice adequately. This is important in the post-TRC context, as there is a demand for justice from some sectors in society, because, it is claimed, the issue of justice has not yet been addressed.<sup>4</sup> I will first give a more detailed explanation of what Mamdani's account of reconciliation entails, before interrogating whether his objection

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order to balance the scales. In order to convince the retributivist that justice has still been served even if there has not been proportional punishment, I take the position that this is a necessary condition for justice seriously, and address it as a central issue.

<sup>1</sup> See, in addition to citations already mentioned in this chapter, for example, Waldman, Ellen A., *Healing Hearts or Righting Wrongs? A Meditation on the Goals of Restorative Justice*. TJSJL Public Law Research Paper No. 04-16 and 'Restorative justice as a framework for juvenile justice reform: A South African perspective' by A Skelton in the *British Journal of Criminology*, 2002 Vol 42 No 3

<sup>2</sup> Wole Soyinka, 1999, *Muse of forgiveness, burden of memory*, Oxford University Press

<sup>3</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>4</sup> One of the recent political campaigns by the ANCYL, for 'economic justice in our time', which focuses on land redistribution issues, is a good example of this. This focuses on distributive justice issues, which I will touch on later in the chapter.

(that reconciliation in South Africa as led by the TRC has turned into a denial of justice) could apply to the Afro-communitarian account of restorative justice encapsulated by the Tutu quotation above.

Mamdani discusses reconciliation in a post-colonial setting, with a specific focus on South Africa.<sup>1</sup> Reconciliation between groups in such a society, according to Mamdani, requires an examination of collective and individual identities, and how they were constructed through colonialism, hopefully resulting in the forging of new identities.<sup>2</sup> This is in order to prevent the parties from merely changing places in the hierarchical and oppressive scheme of the society in question. He further argues that there are different types of reconciliation applicable to social groups (as opposed to individuals), namely political and social reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

Mamdani's aim in his paper, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' is to "acknowledge the importance of political reconciliation as a prerequisite to social reconciliation and to argue that the political reconciliation may not prove durable without a social reconciliation."<sup>4</sup> Mamdani claims that political reconciliation is a pragmatic political concession between the parties or groups in conflict, while social reconciliation is a broader notion of reconciliation, which has political reconciliation as a necessary condition. Social reconciliation, on the other hand, if I am interpreting his view correctly, is in line with a maximalist conception of reconciliation that I have discussed earlier. Political reconciliation as political agreement and concession needs to be in place before justice can occur, after which a measure of broad social reconciliation would be possible.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the minimalist and maximalist distinction explained in chapter 1, political reconciliation can be categorized as minimalist, as it does not require changes in attitude from any of the groups or individuals involved. It is rather a political and practical agreement to cease the conflict.

Social reconciliation, (a maximalist notion), Mamdani claims, can only be durable if it includes a measure of justice. He argues that this is the case since truth telling and exposing crimes and harms (as in the South African TRC) do not necessarily lead to reconciliation *unless it includes assuming responsibility*, as well as a change in attitude. Mamdani links the assumption of responsibility, to justice, as justice requires that responsibility for harms perpetrated be taken by the perpetrators. He argues that unless there is justice, as well as the perception of justice, the exposition of the harms

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<sup>1</sup> In his lecture Mamdani discusses the situation in Rwanda first, arguing that it instantiates the extreme of denying reconciliation in order to pursue 'justice'. His focus on the South African situation is of the situation as instantiating the opposite extreme, where reconciliation will turn into a denial of justice, unless there are some steps taken towards whites taking some responsibility for benefits gained through apartheid.

<sup>2</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>3</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>4</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>5</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

might in fact worsen the feelings of ill will between groups, and will therefore undermine the possibility of (social) reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of simply exposing the truth through commissions such as the TRC, Mamdani continues, reconciliation between groups in a society needs to involve the *forging of new identities* which are substantially different from the identities they had before. This means that significant sacrifices from one or more of the groups could be necessary for reconciliation. The sacrifices necessary would be impossible from the point of view of the 'old' group identities, and so (social) reconciliation requires a transformation of group identities. It is part of the process of re-forging of identities that the groups accept individuals in the other group as fully human, and a part of a newly created moral community,<sup>2</sup> as old identities were premised on *not*-being the same as the other group.

Mamdani argues that there are two types of victims who have a right to justice within a situation of structural oppression and human rights violations; namely, victims of perpetrators and victims of beneficiaries. In order for reconciliation to be viable, any program set up to deal with the aftermath of atrocities cannot be blind to the structural features of the context, which, in the case of South Africa, would be the recognition of victims of beneficiaries (as the TRC provided a forum for recognition of victims of perpetrators). Focus needs to shift from a recognition of rights which "individualizes and historicizes"<sup>3</sup> human rights to a recognition of rights that "underlines the need to right historical wrongs."<sup>4</sup> This ought to be done through a measure of redress, what Mamdani calls social justice, which he claims would have a limited time frame and also ought to be meaningful to the largest number of victims. This, he claims, ought to include reparations for not only victims of perpetrators, but also victims of beneficiaries. In other words, both individual as well as structural harms that occurred under apartheid need to be addressed in order for social reconciliation to be successful.<sup>5</sup>

Mamdani further claims that there has to be two steps in order to reach social (in other words maximal) reconciliation. The first step is a guarantee of security for the perpetrators/beneficiaries, which temporarily infringes the rights of victims to criminal justice. This is the step the TRC was able to bring about. The second step, one which will bring social reconciliation, is a temporary infringement or sacrifice of the perpetrators/beneficiaries rights through reparation, enforced through legislative means. This ought to have been a post-TRC government step which never fully

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<sup>1</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>2</sup> This aspect will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>4</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>5</sup> Mamhood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

materialized. Reparations need to be drawn from perpetrators and beneficiaries, in order to level the societal inequalities caused by the unjust, racially segregated and hierarchical apartheid regime. This means that substantial sacrifices from both of the groups could be necessary for reconciliation, for which a change of identity is necessary. Mamdani concludes his argument about South Africa,<sup>1</sup> as follows:

Identities have to be transcended, not just displaced. To forge a common future for past perpetrators and beneficiaries, and their victims, it is necessary also to address them all as survivors.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, without a change of identity on the part of both groups, sacrifices expected from them will merely reinforce past social divides. There needs to be a transformation from identities that stood in conflict with each other to a shared identity. For example, not demanding retribution for gross human rights violations, without an accompanying transformation of identity on the part of the victims, would result in victims not respecting their own dignity and right to justice.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, without a change in identity, the call for enforced reparation through legal means in actuality would simply lead to the belief that the tables have turned, and that the sacrifices expected from the perpetrator and beneficiary groups are unjust, and (according to their perception) turns them into the victims in the situation. This would simply cement old group identities and the social beliefs which go with these identities. This is exactly what seems to be happening in South Africa at present with regards to, for example, affirmative action. I will deal with this issue in depth in the final part of the chapter.

So, would Mamdani's critique of the TRC apply to the Afro-communitarian understanding of restorative justice that Tutu supports? As the government did not enforce the reparations recommended by the TRC, in many ways there has not been sufficient reparation for harms, especially structural harms. This state of affairs therefore supports Mamdani's claim

that in highlighting the identity of perpetrators while obscuring that of beneficiaries, the TRC has given us a version of truth which obscures the link between perpetrators and beneficiaries, and thus between racialised power and racialised privilege.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This argument is made in detail in Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton University Press, 1996

<sup>2</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

<sup>3</sup> This can be fruitfully related to the inferiority and superiority complexes. Victims who withhold retribution against their attackers ought to do so not out of the belief that they do not deserve the justice that is their due, as this would result in disrespect for their own dignity and self-worth. If, however, the victim is able to overcome the inferiority complex and see herself as equally deserving of justice, but foregoes retribution for reasons of reconciliation, this would be acceptable. Mamdani's problem, according to my interpretation of the problem according to the inferiority complex, is that without the overcoming of the complex, which is at core a reforging of one's whole identity and appraisal of self-worth, foregoing retribution simply reinforces the previous status quo of the victim not having as much worth as the perpetrators and beneficiaries.

<sup>4</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'When does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice?' Sam Nolutshungu Memorial lecture, HSRC publishers, 1998

It can therefore be argued, claims Mamdani, that the ‘restorative justice’ that was recommended during the TRC resulted in a ‘denial of justice’ through government inactivity, as the reparative aspects of restorative justice did not materialize. Mamdani’s account therefore does not undermine Tutu’s understanding of restorative justice, as long as that restorative justice includes proper reparative measures. The question then is whether an Afro-communitarian understanding of restorative justice such as Tutu’s (and the subsequent interpretation of the TRC) account *require* reparations (as well as distributive and procedural justice) as a necessary condition? As Tutu does not give a complete explanation of what exactly restorative justice entails, one can be forgiven if one assumes that there is not necessarily a focus on reparation according to his understanding of restorative justice. After all, Tutu’s explanation merely states that there needs to be “the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships”, and “that justice, restorative justice, is being served when efforts are being made to work for healing, for forgiveness and for reconciliation.”<sup>1</sup> In order to address the question of whether Afro-communitarian restorative justice as put forward by Tutu does result in the denial of justice as Mamdani argues, I now turn to a more robust philosophical account of restorative justice. In particular, in order to address Mamdani’s concern that the TRC and the type of Afro-communitarian justice it claims to have utilized in actual fact denies ‘true’ justice, how reparations and punishment relate to restorative justice is grappled with in the next section of the chapter.

### **Response to Mamdani: retribution and restorative justice**

In this part of the chapter, a more in depth philosophical account of restorative justice is put forward, in order to answer the questions raised in the previous two sections, namely ‘where is the *justice* in restorative justice’ and ‘when does reconciliation turn into a denial of justice’? Once this account has been analysed, I will show why and how restorative justice, along with distributive and procedural justice, fits in with the Afro-communitarian worldview.

So, let us start looking at what restorative justice entails according to some restorative justice theorists, writing from a Western perspective. Jonathan Braithwaite claims that restorative justice

... encompasses a growing social movement to institutionalize peaceful approaches to harm, problem-solving and violations of legal and human rights. These range from international peacemaking tribunals such as the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission to innovations within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, schools, social services and communities. Rather than privileging the law, professionals and the state, restorative resolutions engage those who are harmed, wrongdoers and their affected communities in search of solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships. Restorative justice seeks to build partnerships to reestablish

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 51-2

mutual responsibility for constructive responses to wrongdoing within our communities. Restorative approaches seek a balanced approach to the needs of the victim, wrongdoer and community through processes that preserve the safety and dignity of all.<sup>1</sup>

These definitions might still not convince Mamdani that restorative justice is *justice*. So why is it claimed that restorative justice is *justice*? Is there a common core to both retributive and restorative justice, such that restorative justice does not just reduce to reconciliation, and thus a denial of justice, as explained by Mamdani in the previous section?

In order to investigate this, I turn to one of the first, and most famous conceptions of justice, that of Aristotle. Aristotle argued that justice is “concerned ... with restoring a balance which has been disturbed”.<sup>2</sup> Following from this interpretation of Aristotle, the long tradition in Western society representing Lady Justice balancing her scales has symbolized the restoring of this balance which has been disturbed. His idea is that justice is achieved once the perpetrator and the victim are once again reinstated to their rightful positions, the balance (between them and therefore of society) has been restored.<sup>3</sup> This balance has subsequently come to be ‘measured’ in terms of how much harm the crime has caused, and in order to balance the scales, an equal measure of harm is done to the perpetrator. Eventually this understanding of justice came to be understood, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, as ‘an eye for an eye’, a ‘tooth for a tooth’, or a way of repaying the victim with what she has lost, even if it was only in the sense that you now both were left with only one eye. This equal measure is understood to be punishment proportional to the crime according to retributive justice, which is one of the possible interpretations of what is required by Aristotle’s claim that justice is about “balancing”. A proponent of retributive justice, William Miller, claims that “justice is a matter of restoring balance, achieving equity, determining equivalence, making reparations, paying debts, taking revenge – all matters of getting back to zero, to even.”<sup>4</sup> So if this is the primary concern of justice, getting even, achieving equity, then the paying of a proportional cost for the harm inflicted is just, and the punitive measures we have in place try to do exactly that—set a price for certain harms committed, which transgressors have to pay. Though this is about retribution, there is an underlying theme of restoration which can be gleaned from these understandings of justice. In order to explain how the concept of restorative justice relates to retributivism, Robert Llewellyn and Jennifer Howse admit that the social aim of achieving equity has tended to be equated with punishment of specific types, as in the ‘eye for an eye’ tradition. However, they argue that this is a matter of contingent, genealogical fact rather than necessity. It is

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<sup>1</sup> Suffolk University, College of Arts & Sciences, Center for Restorative Justice <http://www.suffolk.edu/research/6953.html>

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ‘Of justice and injustice’

<sup>3</sup> This has subsequently come to be interpreted as equality under the law, but Aristotle’s position preceded this belief in equality.

<sup>4</sup> William Miller, 2006, *Eye for an Eye*, Cambridge University Press, p4

true that retributive justice responds to a powerful moral intuition, namely that something must be done to restore equality or equilibrium after harm in society. However, if the focus is *only* on punishment, they argue,

retributivism [becomes] a distortion of the underlying intuition about justice at stake in addressing these offences – the notion that a social equilibrium has been disrupted (or further disrupted) by the offence and that it must be restored through some social action.<sup>1</sup>

What has been lost sight of by the retributive tradition, they argue, is that restoration of societal balance can be achieved through means other than punishment. Retributivism restricts the pursuit of the goal or purpose of the restoration of social equality to a particular set of historical practices, known to us as ‘punishment.’<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Llewellyn and Howse argue that restorative justice

problematizes the issue of which set of practices can or should in a given context achieve the goal of restoration of equality in society. The identification of these practices requires social dialogue that includes victims and perpetrators and involves concrete consideration of the needs of each for restoration.<sup>3</sup>

For that reason, the practices of restorative justice may vary (across time and place) in content and form according to context. To be fixated on punishment as the be all and end all of justice (as retributive justice seems to do) is then, for Llewellyn and Howse, a mistake. Some alternative practices which have been identified and used within a restorative justice setting in order to restore social balance, include “therapy for victims, apology or acceptance of responsibility, community service... ‘reintegrative shaming’ or financial compensation for victims.”<sup>4</sup> From this, it seems plausible that restorative justice and retributive justice actually have the same core goal—that of the restoring of a balance—and that restorative justice has some claim to be called justice, even if you take retributivism as your starting point. Furthermore, retributive measures might be seen as a subset of the broader range of measures encompassed by restorative justice.

Restorative justice can be flexible, and what needs to be done to restore balance is dependent on the situation. Restorative justice is flexible in a way that retributive justice is not, as retributive justice is dependent on specific, proportional punishment to restore balance, and does not recognize alternative ways of restoring balance. It seems that the true motivation for punishment might have been forgotten by retributivists, such that punishment itself became seen as restoring some kind of

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Llewellyn & Jennifer Howse, 1999, *Restorative Justice - A conceptual framework*, paper for the Law Commission of Canada, p 357

<sup>2</sup> Robert Llewellyn & Jennifer Howse, 1999, *Restorative Justice - A conceptual framework*, paper for the Law Commission of Canada, p 375

<sup>3</sup> Robert Llewellyn & Jennifer Howse, 1999, *Restorative Justice - A conceptual framework*, paper for the Law Commission of Canada, p 375

<sup>4</sup> Robert Llewellyn & Jennifer Howse, 1999, *Restorative Justice - A conceptual framework*, paper for the Law Commission of Canada, p 375

'cosmic balance'. Restorative justice, however, returns to the restoring of *actual* communities and societies to a balance. Thus, in some cases, as long as the punishment restores the actual existing community to a balance, what might look like retributive justice might be restorative as well, it is just that in this particular instance, restorative justice requires punishment proportional to the crime. Retributive justice has become fixated on the backwards looking aspect of justice, losing sight of the original goal of justice, which is to balance the scale so that perpetrators and victims are restored to being equals, not in terms of some kind of transcendental cosmic order, but rather here and now. The core feature of seeing a balance which needs to be restored is, however, a common thread through both the retributive and restorative traditions. As a result of its flexibility, restorative justice might seem especially appropriate in complex cases of transition after protracted conflict.

Earlier in the chapter I raised the possibility that restorative justice, as conceived by Tutu, might be identical to, or reducible to, reconciliation, and this is part of the problem for critics of the position. If reconciliation is *only* about the restoration of a balance, then it would be true that restorative justice could be reducible to reconciliation. However, as we have seen so far in the dissertation (and will continue to see), reconciliation might require other core aspects as well – such as collective responsibility. Restorative justice and reconciliation therefore cannot be equated, and there is still a necessary place for justice in the aftermath of political conflicts *especially* when reconciliation is the aim of society. So, in response to Mamdani's question with regards to reconciliation and the denial of justice, it would seem that reconciliation *need not* result in a denial of justice, even if the type of justice in play is not retributive justice, as is the case in post-apartheid South Africa. There is the possibility that reconciliation and justice *can* mutually reinforce each other, yet they are still distinct concepts. There does, however, need to be particular attention paid to *what* is done to restore a balance in terms of structural harms that occurred under apartheid, as Mamdani rightly points out. The conception of restorative justice as set out so far, has not yet been sufficiently related to the Afro-communitarian worldview, and doing so will address Mamdani's concern in more detail, as well as clarify why reconciliation and restorative justice remain distinct according to this worldview.

### **Afro-communitarianism and restorative justice**

In order to relate the conception of restorative justice to the Afro-communitarian position, I link the conception of restorative justice as set out above to the concept of collective virtue. I argue that Afro-communitarian restorative justice requires that individuals assume their share of the relevant collective responsibility, and attempt to rectify the harms caused by their unjust actions, or the benefits accrued through unjust social structures of oppression and exploitation. This, in turn, will



highlight that according to the implications of Afro-communitarian restorative justice, reconciliation has, in practice (as Mamdani highlights), turned into a denial of justice in some central respects in post-apartheid South Africa, as there has not been the assumption of responsibility on the part of collectives of beneficiaries and perpetrators, nor sufficient reparations for harms.<sup>1</sup> Afro-communitarian justice has to be *real* restorative justice, not simply lip service or a pretence of justice and restoration. This entails that, without reparation proper, no restoration has really occurred, as the society has not economically been “restored” to a just society. In addition, part of the ‘restoring’ in restorative justice is the restoring of human dignity, which needs to be addressed through material, as well as symbolic, reparations.

So, if we were to adopt an Afro-communitarian virtue ethic of collective self-realization (as explained in chapter 2), what effect (if any) would this have on the conception of restorative justice discussed in the previous section? As restorative justice is, essentially, about restoring relationships in community, this allows a neat fit with the aims of Afro-communitarian collective self-realization. Restorative justice would be a necessary condition for, or even constitutive of, promoting and maintaining the harmony which is necessary for the flourishing society, the aim of collective virtue, and thus constitutive of personal and societal flourishing. However, it is important to focus on what is necessary for such restorative justice to be possible, in terms of responsibility and reparations. As Afro-communitarianism aims to promote the self-realization of the collective self it seems that retributive justice, *per se*, would not be ideal. Retributive justice might not be flexible enough to restore relationships while at the same time restoring a balance in society through reparations for harms committed.

That the Afro-communitarian understanding of the collective self and virtue would necessitate collective responsibility to be taken for collective and structural harms, and individuals taking up their share of collective responsibility (as seen in chapter 3), and that the aim of reaching a flourishing society means that society needs to be ‘healed’, means there are specific implications for justice for Afro-communitarianism. As the aim of restorative justice is healing relationships, there cannot simply be a glossing over of the harms that occurred, if that still has a direct and sustained impact on people’s lives in the present. A relationship which is based on one party not being treated fairly will never be an equal relationship, and thus cannot be the type of harmony which is aimed for according to collective self-realization. The community, then, has to be restored in a real sense. In South Africa, this has definite implications in terms of reparations linked to restorative justice. As Tutu writes,

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<sup>1</sup> Nkiru Ngwezu’s discussion of *Omu* ethics is an excellent way of balancing the two aspects necessary for justice, namely the punitive as well as the nurturing aspects, as embodied in the mother or matriarch. From her presentation ‘Omu ethics: Towards a new political model of reconciliation and nation building’ at the *International Society for African Philosophy and Studies* conference (ISAPS), Pietermaritzburg, 2012

most frequently, the wrong has affected the victim in tangible, material ways. Apartheid provided whites with enormous benefits and privileges, leaving its victims deprived and exploited. If someone steals my pen and then asks me to forgive him, unless he returns the pen the sincerity of his contrition and confession will be considered to be nil. Confession, forgiveness and reparation, wherever feasible, form a part of a continuum.<sup>1</sup>

In South Africa, reaching out to others over class and race lines in order to aim for a flourishing society requires justice to be done (this, I will argue later in the chapter, will include notions of distributive and procedural justice). And, if Tutu is right, there cannot be justice unless there has been some kind of compensation – recognition that one has done harm must be followed by some kind of repayment that is not trivial to the beneficiary or perpetrator. There should be recognition of the harm by the perpetrator and/or beneficiary, and subsequent reparation paid to the victim. In essence, if perpetrators and beneficiaries do not have to pay reparations, or continue to believe that they did not benefit from the unjust social system, continue to believe they have no need to apologize, or even grant some recognition of harms perpetrated – there justice has not been done.

Restorative justice according to Afro-communitarian moral theory starts to crystallize when the core element of justice as restoration of community is emphasized. As restoration of community after harm requires reconciliation, retribution and reparations need to be focused on how they can restore and reconcile the different parties in society. As restorative justice focuses on the importance of restoring community, here and now, it becomes clear that Mamdani's fear that reconciliation might turn into a denial of justice would be unfounded if restorative justice were applied consistently, which means that reparations and punishment might both have a substantial role to play. (As mentioned previously in the thesis, the post-apartheid government did not follow through with the recommendations that were made for reparations and thus, in this case, Mamdani's fear is warranted, and indeed the attempt at reconciliation *did* turn into a denial of justice.) Without reparations, no restoration or balancing of society can be said to have occurred, and, in fact there really has been a denial of justice. Part of restorative justice according to Afro-communitarianism would also be the restoration of human dignity of victims. Simply continuing as if the harm which occurred does not still impact on contemporary structural realities of society would be to deny them that dignity. In order for dignity to be restored, reparation not only has to occur, but reparations also have to be done *as a result* of the perpetrator and beneficiaries taking responsibility for the harms. Without such recognition of responsibility, there is no healing of community and relationships, as the perpetrator/beneficiaries are not showing that they are capable of being in an equal relationship which recognizes the victim group's humanity. Punishment may

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<sup>1</sup>Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 221 The role that forgiveness plays here will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

also need to play a role if that is what is necessary to attempt to get the perpetrators or beneficiaries to recognize their responsibility.

This would explain why Tutu, whom I have argued has an Afro-communitarian worldview as his foundation, keeps imploring South Africans to take responsibility for the past.<sup>1</sup> It is also possible to argue that, as it has not been the case that apartheid beneficiaries have taken responsibility, that amnesty from civil claims has indeed meant that there has been a denial of justice. Individual cases brought against perpetrators might also have opened the way for class action lawsuits (by victims of beneficiaries) which might start addressing the structural features of apartheid.

Even when a restorative conception of justice is followed, I believe that restorative justice without enough of an 'axe', a seemingly retributive component when perpetrators or beneficiaries are unwilling to recognize and take responsibility for their part in harm, cannot be called justice proper. The 'axe' is therefore necessary to attempt to get the perpetrators or beneficiaries who do not recognize their responsibility, to do so.

Llewellyn and Howse acknowledge the need for such an 'axe', and see this as a means to get people to participate in the restorative process. They claim that even though non-integrative, or purely punitive, measures are consistent with the restorative notion of justice, it is only so since these measures actually fall outside of the scope of justice. Llewellyn and Howse argue that

the 'axe' is outside the realm of justice. The purpose of the 'axe' (which might involve types of measures we would class as non-integrative) is not justice but social protection. In order to protect relationships from further disruption and protect the restorative process itself, it is necessary to remove those who, owing to their unwillingness to participate in the restorative process, pose a threat.<sup>2</sup>

The utilization of this kind of punitive 'axe', as outside the realms of justice, should however hold open the possibility that the perpetrator might want to start taking part in the restorative process at a later stage, and that this should be the main goal of the punishment in such cases (the 'axe'). Llewellyn and Howse see the 'axe' (or punitive measures) as something that might be required to start the restorative justice process, or as social protection, but not as a part of justice itself. According to Afro-communitarian restorative justice, however, punishment (or 'the axe') is one (but, importantly, not the only) tool of restorative justice itself, such that punishment could be constitutive of restoration. This could be the case if that punishment restores the community, as it could be important for the rest of the community to come to a 'balance'.

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<sup>1</sup> One of his most recent pleas brought forward (once again), a storm of criticism from many white South Africans. See <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-08-12-wake-up-sa-its-time-for-your-reality-check-says-tutu> and <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Desmond-Tutu-criticises-SA-whites-20110812>

<sup>2</sup> Robert Llewellyn & Jennifer Howse, 1999, *Restorative Justice - A conceptual framework*, paper for the Law Commission of Canada, p 378 footnote 77

An example of how punitive measures could have been applied in South Africa as *part* of the restorative justice process could be the punishment (for example imprisonment, or the payment of a fine) of people high in the apartheid political hierarchy (e.g. former president PW Botha) for their refusal to appear before the TRC. As unwilling to even take part in the TRC process, and as someone who was one of main implementers of apartheid policy, punitive measures against Botha might have been in order. With the TRC process, it might have been easy to hold on to the perception, the hearings on different institutions notwithstanding, that the harms of apartheid were perpetrated by a bunch of bad apples in the security forces, low down the hierarchy, and that the ordinary citizen therefore was not implicated. Focusing on gross human rights abuses, as the TRC did, also had this effect, as it excluded concentrating on the economic and structural psychological aspects and harms caused by apartheid. Punishing the leader of the former government might have enabled some people to take note of a different aspect of the situation, the structural features for which all beneficiaries ought to take some responsibility. This might have helped with the requirement of Afro-communitarian restorative justice, namely that responsibility be taken by people for their part in, or their inherited gains from, injustice and harms, and that the groups that were involved in the conflict act on this sense of responsibility. This is imperative, as justice in the retributive sense can possibly happen without someone or groups taking responsibility, but Afro-communitarian restorative justice cannot happen without responsibility being taken by perpetrators and beneficiary groups (though, as in this example, it can take place without specific *individuals* taking responsibility), as their assumption of responsibility is necessary for the restoring of relationships, the aim of restorative justice. This means that in a situation where victims do not demand restitution, and forgive unconditionally,<sup>1</sup> it would not follow that there has been justice. Justice in this case would have been sacrificed for reconciliation.

Mamdani's objection to the TRC (that justice was denied) is supported if we take the Afro-communitarian view that reparations are a necessary part of restorative justice and agree that there has not been a restoration of equality and equity in South African society. This has practical and theoretical implications for economic reform and structural changes in post-apartheid South Africa, and therefore for the need of distributive and procedural justice in the present.

As the apartheid government systematically benefitted whites economically this structural aspect of apartheid needs to be taken into account when considering distributive justice. Distributive justice is understood in a myriad of different ways, but a general definition is that "[a]rguments about which frameworks and/or resulting distributions are morally preferable constitute the topic of distributive justice. Principles of distributive justice are therefore best thought of as providing moral

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<sup>1</sup> This will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter on forgiveness.

guidance for the political processes and structures that affect the distribution of economic benefits and burdens in societies.”<sup>1</sup> In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, this approach to justice could be seen as a form of reparation. As distributive justice can be viewed as the just distribution of goods, the systemic injustice in the distribution of goods needs to be rectified for justice to be done.<sup>2</sup>

This is encapsulated in the principle of rectification:

This principle uses historical information about previous situations and injustices done in them... and information about the actual course of events that flowed from these injustices, until the present, and it yields a description (or descriptions) of holdings in the society. The principle of rectification presumably will make use of its best estimate of subjunctive information about what would have occurred... if the injustice had not taken place. If the actual description of holdings turns out not to be one of the descriptions yielded by the principle, then one of the descriptions yielded must be realized.<sup>3</sup>

This principle of rectification needs to be seen as part of the restorative justice process according to Afro-communitarianism, as without this rectification, the society cannot be said to have been restored to a balance.

Distributive justice (fairness in the distribution of goods or the “fairness of outcomes in what people receive”<sup>4</sup>) is often contrasted with procedural justice, understood as the fairness of processes involved in reaching decisions or outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

Under apartheid, procedural justice was systematically undermined through the immoral legal system in place which denied blacks due process and legal protection of human rights. This means that restorative justice also needs to take into account that procedural justice has been violated, and try and restore this aspect of society to a balance. This has been attempted through the new constitution and legal systems put in place which is meant to allow procedural justice for all citizens. Problems however arise when citizens do not recognize that both the rectification principle, as well as procedural justice has to be in place for restorative justice, and thus make accusations that they are being treated unfairly under the new regime due to projects of compensatory justice such as affirmative action.

So, if restorative justice is a live option as a means to make justice work for reconciliation, as opposed to against it, what would this look like in practice? It is possible to look for alternatives to

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<sup>1</sup> Lamont, Julian and Favor, Christi, "Distributive Justice", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/justice-distributive/>>

<sup>2</sup> This is in line with one of the strands of understanding distributive justice, namely the historical view of distributive justice argued for by Nozick.

<sup>3</sup> Nozick 1974, pp. 152–153

<sup>4</sup> Van den Bos, K. Vemunt, R. & Wilke, H. 1997. 'Procedural and distributive justice: what is fair depend more on what comes first than what comes next', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Volume 72, No 1. Pp 95 - 104

<sup>5</sup> Van den Bos, K. Vemunt, R. & Wilke, H. 1997. 'Procedural and distributive justice: what is fair depend more on what comes first than what comes next', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Volume 72, No 1. Pp 95 - 104

retribution as a method of restoring the societal balance, and I will argue in the next part of this chapter, that this is what the Afro-communitarian worldview can take into account (with regards to justice) and be fruitfully applied to the South African situation. I will use as a test case the contentious issue of affirmative action being used as a compensatory justice measure.

### **Afro-communitarian restorative justice in South Africa: affirmative action**

According to Afro-communitarianism, in the South African context, restorative justice cannot take place without (amongst other things) the implicated group(s) recognizing responsibility, and offering reparations for the harms they draw benefit from. This is specifically in relation to the collective responsibility of the group 'whites' which was discussed in the previous chapter. As my dissertation is aimed at the group 'whites', I direct my attention here to an issue of justice which focuses on the collective responsibility 'whites' bear as a result of the cost-benefit model, as explained in the previous chapter. This is not to disregard and/or deny the necessity for justice of harms groups are collectively responsible for under the solidarity and conspiracy models. Rather, I only focus on this one issue here in line with my stated aims that this thesis is aimed at white people, attempting to explain to 'whites' how I understand the expectations that other groups in South Africa have of them with regards to the project of reconciliation, and why other groups have these expectations.<sup>1</sup>

So, within this framework of the cost-benefit model of collective responsibility, and the resulting collective responsibility of white people in South Africa, what would the recognition and resulting reparation for the harm for which whites are collectively responsible entail? One possible implication in terms of the rectification principle of distributive justice, which deals with economic reform and structural change, is that the current policy of affirmative action be seen as a type of compensatory justice which is apt in the South African context. It is, however, exactly this policy which engenders cries of injustice, reverse racism and discrimination on the part of many white South Africans. I am selecting the policy of affirmative action for considerable attention, as it is a contentious form of what can be argued to be restorative justice at play in the contemporary South African context.

Affirmative action was introduced in democratic South Africa by the government as a means of trying to ensure better life chances in future for people who had been unfairly discriminated against under apartheid, such as black people, women, and people with disabilities. Affirmative action, in essence, is defined as "taking special measures...to enable [people] to overcome the obstacles that had been put in their [the previously disadvantaged and discriminated against] way, to develop their

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<sup>1</sup> See the introduction for my explanation of why I have this focus.

capacities to the full and receive appropriate reward for their efforts.”<sup>1</sup> The ‘special measures’ in the South African context relates to laws which encourage proportional representation, and rewarding companies that are proportional in their representation of all race groups, sexes and disability.

A common white person’s reaction to affirmative action in South Africa today is that affirmative action ought to come to an end. A number of reasons are put forward to justify this claim; including accusations that affirmative action is a form of “reverse discrimination,” for the reason that that it unfairly precludes the use of merit in deciding who is employed in a specific position. Furthermore, some whites argue that the system of affirmative action denies their equal rights, and that it is therefore unjust. The claim is that to discriminate against people because they are white, returns to apartheid logic, and has been called ‘reverse apartheid’. This perception of injustice on the part of many whites in present day South Africa with regards to affirmative action is, I believe, at least partly a result of the concept of personhood they ascribe to.

Meritocracy, or the view that advancement ought to be based on individual ability of achievement,<sup>2</sup> is assumed to be the only fair way of deciding who deserves a specific position.<sup>3</sup> Arguments for meritocracy assume an individualized, dehistoricised view of the person, as it takes the individual out of her context, and argues that she is where she is not because of anything else but her own hard work, talent, or other positive features. Any structural and historical reasons why individual education, ability and accomplishments might have been easier for her to achieve are ignored, or their very existence denied. However, it seems either a bad case of collective amnesia and false consciousness, or a case of self-interested self-deception, for whites in South Africa to keep arguing that they are where they are today because of hard work.<sup>4</sup> What they thereby imply is that blacks in South Africa did not (and/or do not) work as hard, and that is why they have little to show for their efforts. This is patently untrue. The point that people who hold this view ignore, is that whites benefit (still, as a result of superior education in former white-only schools, better economic situation, not being required to financially look after parents and siblings for the most part as adults) from an unjust system. It is perhaps not fair to discuss a generic position of whites in South Africa regarding affirmative action, gleaned from anecdotal evidence, and then argue that theirs is a weak position. Instead, let me turn to one philosophical treatment of the affirmative action issue in South Africa, and show how it embodies a decontextualized and individualized perspective of the person, contrary to the Afro-communitarian worldview.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=283>

<sup>2</sup> [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meritocracy](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meritocracy)

<sup>3</sup> Note that this is another strand of how to understand distributive justice, but one which, as I attempt to show in the rest of the chapter, is incompatible with restorative justice in post-apartheid South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2012-11-07-affirmative-action-a-decidedly-middle-class-problem-for-a-similar-analysis>.

David Benatar, in his paper 'Justice, Diversity and Racial preference: a critique of affirmative action,'<sup>1</sup> considers several arguments in favour of affirmative action in higher education, and comes to the conclusion that such affirmative action in South Africa cannot be justified. Benatar claims that proponents of affirmative action put forward either rectification or consequentialist arguments as justifications for the policy.

Rectification arguments come in two varieties, the past injustice, and the present injustice arguments. The argument for affirmative action from past injustice, Benatar maintains, "claims that affirmative action should be understood as compensation for past injustice."<sup>2</sup> Benatar then goes on to argue that affirmative action is not a good "mechanism to compensate *individuals* for past wrongs."<sup>3</sup> This is because, Benatar argues, the people who benefit most from affirmative action are the ones who were least affected, or even not affected at all, by the relevant injustice. As he says "young 'blacks' whom affirmative action will benefit are those who have had opportunities for education and who can now compete equally."<sup>4</sup> Benatar's main argument against affirmative action as compensation for past injustice is that the *least* disadvantaged are the ones who benefit from the policy, and that they are not the only ones who were disadvantaged to "that more moderate degree."<sup>5</sup> Basically, Benatar aims to highlight that there are whites who were (and are) also economically and/or socially disadvantaged to the same degree as the group of black people that affirmative action benefits most. Benatar specifically addresses the issue of collective compensation, saying that it

lacks the moral force that attaches to individual compensation. It is far less clear why a group that has been wronged deserves compensation, given that compensating groups can regularly have the effect of compensating individual members of the group who were not themselves disadvantaged.<sup>6</sup>

Benatar therefore argues that the past injustice argument commits the fallacy of division, as it assumes that since the group 'black people' was disadvantaged, that all individual black people were

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<sup>1</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 274-306 Benatar addresses affirmative action specifically in the context of higher education, but his argument against affirmative action as compensatory justice could be expanded to other fields. I will focus on higher education as well for the rest of this section, simply to address his arguments specifically, and then show how this can be generalized.

<sup>2</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 281

<sup>3</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 281 Italics added.

<sup>4</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 282

<sup>5</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 282

<sup>6</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 284 Note that the disadvantages Benatar is referring to seem to be economic injustices. I will return to this point when I analyze Benatar's argument from an Afro-communitarian perspective below.



equally disadvantaged, and that since the group 'white people' benefitted from apartheid policy, that all white individuals benefitted to the same degree. So, Benatar concludes that the 'past injustice' argument fails, and therefore he turns his attention to the 'present injustice' argument.

The 'present injustice' argument appeals to ongoing racism, citing that as the reason necessary for compensation. In other words "given the pervasiveness of racism, all blacks have been the victims of racism even if they have not been educationally deprived."<sup>1</sup> The 'present injustice' argument for affirmative action with race as proxy however also fails according to Benatar. Benatar argues that the problem with this reasoning is that it does not follow that affirmative action is warranted simply from the fact that someone has been the victim of prejudice. Not all forms of prejudice have been deemed relevant for affirmative action in South Africa (and elsewhere), and Benatar cites anti-Semitism as an example – the fact that all Jewish people have been subjected to anti-Semitic prejudice does not automatically qualify them for affirmative action. He writes

not simply any prejudice or discrimination that is relevant to the case for affirmative action. The discrimination relevant to affirmative action is the sort that deprived 'blacks' of the primary and secondary educational opportunities that enable fair competition.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, he argues, affirmative action is not justified simply from the fact that someone has been the victim of prejudice. Instead, it is a particular kind of prejudice that warrants affirmative action, the kind of prejudice which resulted in lack of opportunities in the field of education.

Another version of the present injustice (continuing racism) argument refers to continuing (subconscious) racism in committees who hire job applicants, and that there is therefore the need to counter balance this with a policy of affirmative action. Benatar responds that it is not racism in selection committees that explains the low number of blacks employed in higher education, but rather the fact that there are not many black people who are adequately qualified for the relevant jobs, for the reason that they have not had the same educational opportunities. For this reason, Benatar argues that affirmative action as it is applied in South Africa today actually has the counterproductive result of underestimating the severity of apartheid and its legacy. The fact is that affirmative action creates a society in which it *appears* that the society is more just, as it creates a working society which is more representative of the populace. In other words, fast tracking the appearance of equal opportunity does not mean that there *is* equal opportunity – and what really ought to be fostered is equal opportunity through quality education.

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<sup>1</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 284

<sup>2</sup> David Benatar, 'Justice, diversity and racial preference: a critique of affirmative action' in South African law Journal (Jutu & co), Volume 125, Issue 2 p 285

Two consequentialist arguments in favour of affirmative action, the 'destruction of stereotypes' and 'role model' arguments, that Benatar considers, are also important for my purposes. The destruction of stereotypes argument puts forward that stereotypes are destroyed through having more contact with people of the relevant stereotyped group who do not conform to the stereotype. The argument thus concludes that "being in a racially diverse environment gives people a better understanding of one another."<sup>1</sup> However, Benatar points out that affirmative action might also reinforce stereotypes if unqualified people are hired as a result of representative quotas companies are asked to meet. In other words, affirmative action could actually reinforce the stereotypes it is meant to undermine, if candidates are not sufficiently well qualified.

The 'role model' argument relies on the premise that it is good for previously disadvantaged young people to have role models from their respective 'race', ethnicity or gender, who have been successful in their chosen professional career path, and that affirmative action provides such role models. The main issue with the 'role models' argument, according to Benatar, is that the possible positive effects of having a role model is outweighed by the negative consequences of a race-based policy such as affirmative action. He claims the central issue is whether "the benefit of role models is great enough to warrant a departure from a more 'race'-blind policy of equality of opportunity."<sup>2</sup> He argues that it is not enough to warrant this kind of departure, as

Those 'black' students who are not educationally deprived will be able to succeed without the role models. And the presence of role models (probably largely drawn from the ranks of relatively advantaged 'blacks') will be insufficient to compensate for the deprivation suffered by those 'blacks' who are ill-prepared. If this is true, then social attention would best be turned to preventing educational deficit at the primary and then secondary levels.

In other words, though Benatar starts off his section on the role model argument claiming that we cannot underestimate the importance of role models, he ends up undermining that they are *vital* important, and claims that we should focus on education instead. He also argues that the role model argument ascribes to young people the belief that people who look like them have overcome similar difficulties than they themselves face, and that this is problematic.

Now we have looked at some arguments Benatar gives against affirmative action policies in South Africa, let us turn to how Benatar's arguments encapsulates an individualistic bias. In other words, how does Benatar's position display an individualistic, decontextualised and dehistoricised concept of the person, and how would this differ from an Afro-communitarian understanding of the

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<sup>1</sup> David Benatar, 2008, Justice, Diversity and Racial preference, South African Law journal (Juta & Co), Volume 125, Issue2, p 292

<sup>2</sup> David Benatar, 2008, Justice, Diversity and Racial preference, South African Law journal (Juta & Co), Volume 125, Issue2, p 293

situation? In order to address this question, I will show how the Afro-communitarian recommendations will differ from Benatar's, and how these differences are motivated by a concern with collective virtue.

In formulating an Afro-communitarian response to Benatar, I will argue that he does not take into account the importance of symbolic and psychological hierarchies still at play in post-apartheid South Africa. These symbolic and psychological hierarchies are relevant to groups, and can give a justification for the group compensation Benatar argues "lacks moral force". Apartheid-inspired and -created internalized inferiority and superiority complexes are still at work in South Africa, and it is important to recognize the central role such psychological features can play in the life chances of an individual (and a group).<sup>1</sup> Blacks being visible across all professional fields could possibly counter the inferiority complex. This is a justification for the role model argument Benatar does not take into account. As explained in the role model argument above, and (at least initially) accepted by Benatar, having role models of their own race could be very helpful for young people in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> Seeing that people of their own race can succeed works to undermine the (deeply entrenched, perhaps subconscious) belief, caused by the inferiority complex, that black people are inferior and unable to be successful in certain fields. For the people who are given these jobs themselves, their self-esteem is lifted through the trust put in them and the belief that they can succeed at the job.<sup>3</sup> So, black people being employed in large numbers in all sectors can undermine the inferiority complex in at least two different ways.

As argued in the previous chapter, whites, as a group, are collectively responsible from the perspective of the 'cost-benefit model' for their 'whitely habits'. If whites are responsible for their 'whiteness' according to the cost-benefit model of collective responsibility, then, according to the rectification principle of distributive justice, they ought to pay some reparation for that benefit (by bearing the 'cost' of that benefit). Whitely habits are an instantiation of the superiority complex, and the entitlement which is at the core of that complex. This superiority complex depends, in my understanding of Fanon and Biko, for its existence on the material and economic benefits resulting

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<sup>1</sup> See literature on the Maime-Clark doll experiment. Also see 'Color-Blind Racial Ideology and Psychological False Consciousness Among African Americans' by Helen A. Neville, M. Nikki Coleman, Jameca Woody Falconer, and Deadre Holmes *Journal of Black Psychology*, February 2005; vol. 31, 1: pp. 27-45. For examples on how these complexes still affect African-Americans.

<sup>2</sup> For the central importance of role models to previously disadvantaged individuals in South Africa, see *Improving the lifestyles of previously disadvantaged individuals through a personal life planning programme*, unpublished doctoral thesis, UNISA, Marshal Buti Mokoena, 2006

<sup>3</sup> For empirical evidence of this claim, see Jane Elliott's Blue eyes/brown eyes exercise at <http://www.janeelliott.com/index.htm> "This, now famous, exercise labels participants as inferior or superior based solely upon the color of their eyes and exposes them to the experience of being a minority." and Feldman, Robert S.; Prohaska, Thomas (1979). "The student as Pygmalion: Effect of student expectation on the teacher". *Journal of Educational Psychology* 71 (4): 485-493.

from the oppression of black people.<sup>1</sup> These material benefits result in seeing black people as inferior in order to rationalize and justify their oppression and structural exploitation. This belief in black people's inferiority is partly responsible (along with their material and economic deprivation) for causing the inferiority complex, as treating people as inferior has been shown to be easily internalized by those so treated.<sup>2</sup> If this is the case, then blacks ought to get some compensation for their inherited social pathology, the inferiority complex Fanon and Biko recognized to be at work.<sup>3</sup> And this compensation ought to be to blacks as a group, as most black people would be affected in one way or another, even if it is less so than some other blacks or previous generations. Proportional representational affirmative action with race as proxy for disadvantage might provide benefits to race groups as a whole, even if it does not directly target only the most disadvantaged members of those groups. The reason why race is a good proxy for disadvantage in this case (as opposed to directly targeting disadvantage on economic or material grounds only) is that it would be very difficult, but also insensitive and intrusive, to measure which individuals are most affected by the inferiority complex. The benefit would be that the more people within a group there are who have overcome the material disadvantage and negative stereotypes imposed by the social relations that results in the black inferiority complex, the stronger the chances are that the group as a whole will be able to escape this inherited pathology. The value of affirmative action (with race as proxy for disadvantage) in South Africa can therefore still be seen to be central in South Africa today as a form of this kind of compensation.

The counterpart to the black inferiority complex, the superiority complex diagnosed by Biko<sup>4</sup> is still apparent among whites, and goes hand in hand with the sense of entitlement<sup>5</sup> and belief that everything they achieved they did of their own accord. Afro-communitarian restorative justice requires that whites extend a hand of reconciliation through some 'social act' endorsed by most whites as a form of symbolic *and* economic reparation. To deny that we need such a 'group racial act' and instead argue that we can, or should, be colorblind as individuals, groups, or a society in South Africa at this stage is (I suspect) only to reinforce the *status quo* of privilege whites undeservedly received. Without such a group action, it is difficult to see how race relations in South

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<sup>1</sup> The statistical difference in life expectancy is a good way to highlight the racial disparity in income which still exists. Also see Statistics South Africa, 2007, 'Income and expenditure of households 2005/2006: Analysis of results', Statistical Release P0100, Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

<sup>2</sup> For empirical evidence of this claim, see Jane Elliott's Blue eyes/brown eyes exercise at <http://www.janeelliott.com/index.htm> "This, now famous, exercise labels participants as inferior or superior based solely upon the color of their eyes and exposes them to the experience of being a minority." and Feldman, Robert S.; Prohaska, Thomas (1979). "The student as Pygmalion: Effect of student expectation on the teacher". *Journal of Educational Psychology* 71 (4): 485–493.

<sup>3</sup> I would like to reiterate at this point that my argument does not suggest that all individuals of the respective races display these pathologies. However, as argued earlier (in the introduction), the fact that some individuals do not have these complexes, is certainly against all odds with reference to the internationally present black and white symbolic order.

<sup>4</sup> See introduction.

<sup>5</sup> I will explore this in more detail in chapters 6 and 7.

Africa can be restored, as there has not been an assumption of responsibility on the part of whites for their benefit which disadvantaged and harmed blacks. Whites need to do something to show that they are sorry that other citizens of this country had to suffer for the privileges they received. Unless there is such a 'social act', affirmative action with race as proxy might be the best way to implement Afro-communitarian restorative justice in an imperfect society, as, until such time as there is a conscious decision made by whites to perform such an act, it could stand in for such a 'social act'. It is therefore not up to white people in South Africa to decide when the race issue is 'not relevant' anymore, and when race-based affirmative action ought to be abolished, unless they have, as a group, performed some other group action which is aimed at restoring justice.

Afro-communitarian restorative justice would, ideally, not utilize affirmative action with race as proxy, as it has some possible disadvantages in terms of reconciling different races, and thus for collective social virtue which, after all, is the Afro-communitarian goal. However, as we saw in the previous chapter with regards to white people and the cost-benefit model, collective responsibility can sometimes be seen to apply to racial groups in the aftermath of apartheid, and this therefore requires some race-based responsibility and reparation. As a result, these two competing claims need to be carefully considered in the current South African context to decide which actions would best support the Afro-communitarian goal of collective social virtue.

Afro-communitarianism would not support applying decontextualised meritocracy to present day South Africa, as its understanding of the person highlights that the individual's achievements are not her own, as she is so dependent on her community for the environment and support to have reached them. The legacy of colonialism and apartheid requires that we continue to recognize inequalities caused by injustice in order for there to be justice. It is also vital to recognize that race itself is not a good proxy for inequalities, *except* in terms of the inferiority complex and symbolic order.

As there has not been *any* recognition of and/or acceptance of responsibility on the part of whites as a group for benefits of apartheid,<sup>1</sup> at least affirmative action with race as proxy allows for *some kind* of race based reparation. This should not be construed by whites as a form of punishment, but rather as a way to restore race relations. A call for an end to affirmative action which, taken out of context, might look like a call for ending racial polarization, is in fact racially polarizing when seen within its proper context in which there has not been any 'social act' on the part of whites to restore relations with blacks in South Africa. A call for the end of race-based affirmative action might *seem* like a call for the end of racial polarization, however, a premature end

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<sup>1</sup> There has, off course, been recognition of responsibility on the part of some white individuals and groups. However, the point that I am making here is that there has been no recognition of responsibility on the part of the group, 'whites', at least not that was accepted by that group as a whole. See the discussion of the 'Home for All Campaign' and the negative response it drew from the white public, earlier in the dissertation for more on this issue.

to affirmative action without such a social act on the part of white South Africans, would simply reinforce racial economic and psychological divides, and therefore cement racial polarization.

Affirmative action with race as proxy is crude and simplistic, and as a result does not capture all the complexities of the post-apartheid situation, and has the possible problematic side effect of solidifying racial prejudice. If injustice is recognized and dealt with in a different but adequate way by whites, in line with the requirements of group reparations as per Afro-communitarian restorative justice requirements, the need for a simplistic public solution such as affirmative action will be less pronounced.

## **Conclusion**

Once the concept of restorative justice is understood, it is apparent that this type of justice requires responsibility to be taken by groups for the harms which transpired in a particular social context. Whereas both retributive and rehabilitative justice can transpire without responsibility being assumed on the part of the perpetrators (and/or beneficiaries) of harm, restorative justice requires that responsibility be taken by people for their part in, benefits from, or their inherited gains from injustice and harms, and that the groups involved act on this sense of responsibility.

Having engaged with the necessity for collective responsibility and justice for reconciliation according to Afro-communitarianism, this leads straightforwardly to an understanding of why anger and resentment towards the white population is felt by many of the formerly oppressed population in the present socio-economic context within which such collective responsibility is largely absent. This is *especially* the case as forgiveness was conditionally extended towards some perpetrators of apartheid crimes, (and possibly symbolically extended to all beneficiaries) and, as will be seen in the next chapter, forgiveness is expected to 'draw out' taking responsibility from the perpetrator according to the Afro-communitarian worldview, in a 'circle of forgiveness'. In the next chapter the concept of forgiveness according to the Afro-communitarian account is therefore interrogated in more detail.

## Chapter 5: Afro-communitarian forgiveness

This chapter focuses on an Afro-communitarianism view of the role of ‘victim’ or ‘survivor’ groups in the process of reconciliation, through exploring the concept of forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> To address the topic of forgiveness in the post-apartheid South African context, I first define the dominant Western conception of forgiveness as the overcoming of resentment or other retributive reactive attitudes. The reader is introduced to some central questions with regards to understanding what forgiveness entails, such as whether it is unilateral or bilateral, conditional or unconditional, and elective or obligatory. Lucy Allais’ analysis of two cases from the TRC is then used as an example of forgiveness understood from the perspective of Western philosophy. The next part of the chapter sets out Antjie Krog’s Afro-communitarian account of forgiveness. At its core, Afro-communitarian forgiveness is the opening of a possibility for a relationship between victims/survivors and perpetrators/beneficiaries of harm, through an attempt at ‘drawing out’ responsibility from the perpetrators/beneficiaries. Krog’s account is expanded in order to address the questions introduced above, namely whether Afro-communitarian forgiveness is unilateral or bilateral, elective or obligatory, and conditional or unconditional. Desmond Tutu’s “No future without forgiveness” is utilized to address these questions. At this point the argument returns to the two cases analyzed by Allais, and shows how they are better explained in terms of the Afro-communitarian understanding of forgiveness. Finally, collective responsibility is argued to be necessary in order to complete the ‘circle of forgiveness’ and it will be argued that forgiveness and responsibility are both necessary conditions for Afro-communitarian restorative justice.

### Forgiveness: some dominant views

In this section of the chapter I briefly explain the dominant Western conception of forgiveness as the overcoming of resentment or other retributive reactive attitudes. Paul Hughes writes,

Generally regarded as a positive response to human wrongdoing, forgiveness is a conceptually, psychologically, and morally complex phenomenon. There is disagreement over the meaning of forgiveness, its relation to apparent cognates, the psychological, behavioral, and normative dimensions of forgiveness, and when and under what conditions forgiveness is morally permissible, required, or wrong. Moreover, the many legal and political analogues to forgiveness raise questions about what human behaviors may be properly described as forgiveness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In terms of the overall project of this thesis, the analysis of forgiveness is still done mainly for whites, seeing as they need to understand that is how forgiveness works from this perspective (i.e. that forgiveness is meant to draw out something, as we will see).

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, Paul M., "Forgiveness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/forgiveness/>>.

With this *caveat* in mind, it can still be said that there has emerged some limited agreement over the last decade as to what forgiveness conceptually entails. Forgiveness, according to its standard definition, has as its function the “re-establishment or resumption of a relationship ruptured by wrongdoing.”<sup>1</sup> Hughes continues;

the core notion [of] forgiveness is a complex affective and cognitive reaction to having been wronged by others. This response typically involves a process of overcoming angry or otherwise unhappy moral reactive attitudes directed toward a perceived wrongdoer. Refinements to this view add that overcoming moral anger or other relevant reactive attitudes must be tendered for moral reasons, and that forgiveness perhaps includes rejecting or modifying associated judgments of the wrongdoer such that the victim no longer holds the wrong against the wrongdoer, as would be the case were the victim to bear a grudge.<sup>2</sup>

So the concept of forgiveness is at core about overcoming negative ‘reactive attitudes’. These attitudes ought to be overcome for ‘moral reasons’ and should change the judgment the forgiver has about the wrongdoer.

A further, widely agreed upon feature of forgiveness, is that it is linked in some way to reconciliation. The accepted meanings of forgiveness and reconciliation in everyday discourse cast them as cognate concepts, and some have even seen the two concepts as equivalent. “Understanding forgiveness as roughly synonymous with reconciliation supports the notion that these collective endeavors are institutional forms of forgiveness.”<sup>3</sup> In general, however, the concepts are seen as distinct, and forgiveness is argued to be some form of overcoming resentment or other negative feelings towards the wrongdoer by the victim, while reconciliation requires the actual re-establishment of an amicable relationship between the two parties. In other words, forgiveness, according to this understanding, is about the wronged person overcoming certain *feelings* toward the wrongdoer. As such, though its *aim* might be the resumption of a relationship, the actual resumption of a relationship is not in itself forgiveness. In contrast, reconciliation refers to the resumption or creation of a relationship, and thus has definite behavioral implications, such as comfortable and harmonious relations, which would not have to be in place in order for us to say that forgiveness has occurred.

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, Paul M., "Forgiveness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/forgiveness/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, Paul M., "Forgiveness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/forgiveness/>>.

<sup>3</sup> See (Etzioni, 1999; Radzik, 2009), as cited in Hughes, Paul M., "Forgiveness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/forgiveness/>>.



Exactly what the negative reactive attitudes to be overcome by forgiveness are has been explained in different ways in the literature.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there have been different accounts of what it is that would count as overcoming them in a way which makes it forgiveness, and not merely forgetting, (or some other way) of overcoming negative reactive attitudes. Though the main and most important aim of forgiveness is the overcoming of resentment (or similar feelings) in order to repair a rupture in a relationship, other aims have also been put forward. These include possible psychological benefits for the victim, as well as for the wrongdoer.<sup>2</sup> I will return to these additional proposed aims of forgiveness later in the chapter.

Some questions about forgiveness and its morality include whether it is disrespectful and/or immoral (towards oneself or others) to forgive unless there has been some form of remorse shown by the wrongdoer, as this might have the consequence of condoning the harm which has transpired. While some philosophers have argued that forgiveness indeed has to be bilateral (in other words, requires some input or change on behalf of both parties involved, namely the victim and perpetrator of the harm), others have argued that it is not necessary for the perpetrator to be a party in the process or act of forgiveness (and that forgiveness can therefore be unilateral). Bilateral understandings of forgiveness would argue that forgiving an unrepentant wrongdoer is immoral for the reason that it does not condemn the harm and the wrongdoer sufficiently. Proponents of the morality of unilateral forgiveness argue that to make the act of forgiveness dependant on the perpetrator to change in any way is to (once again) put the victim at the mercy of, and thus under the power of, the perpetrator, and that this is unfair and immoral. Another way to explain this point is to see that forgiveness can be understood to be either conditional on some change on the part of the perpetrator, or unconditional, when there is no expectation or necessity for the perpetrator to have changed her ways or regret her actions. In much of the philosophical literature on forgiveness, the view is that forgiveness is conditional, as not only is it necessary for the perpetrator to be remorseful, but it is also conditional on being granted by the primary victim of the harm, such that acts such as murder are conceptually unforgivable.<sup>3</sup>

Another important question is whether forgiveness is morally obligatory or elective (such that it is supererogatory) should the perpetrator of the harm show sufficient remorse. This question amounts to asking whether forgiveness is always at the discretion of the victim, or if there are times

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of such negative reactive attitudes include resentment, indignation and anger.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Bennett, Christopher. 2003. "Personal and Redemptive Forgiveness." *European Journal of Philosophy*, 11(2): pp.127-144; Govier, Trudy. 2002. *Forgiveness and Revenge*. London, New York: Routledge. pp. 64-65; Murphy, Jeffrie G. 1988. "Forgiveness and resentment." *Forgiveness and Mercy*. Ed. Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp. 30-31.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example Jeffrie Murphy, *Getting even: Forgiveness and its limits*, Oxford University Press, 2003; Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Mercy and Forgiveness*, Cambridge University Press, 1988 and Charles Griswold, *Forgiveness*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

when forgiveness is required by morality. From everyday discourse it would seem that forgiveness is often regarded as a gift, and therefore a supererogatory act, and that, as such, cannot be required by morality. As the negative attitudes against the harm or wrongdoing are justified, it could be argued that the victim is not morally required to overcome these negative attitudes. Forgiveness is then elective if the victim has the choice to forgive or not forgive, no matter whether the perpetrator of the harm has asked for forgiveness or shown any remorse for her actions. I will return to these issues, and address these questions from the perspective of the Afro-communitarian understanding of forgiveness later in the chapter.

Lucy Allais gives an excellent account of forgiveness from a Kantian perspective. The exposition of her account and comparisons between it and an Afro-communitarian account, will highlight some central differences between Western and Afro-communitarian views of forgiveness. Her paper 'Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness'<sup>1</sup> is briefly analyzed in order to contrast her understanding of forgiveness with the Afro-communitarian account as set out by Antjie Krog in the next part of the chapter. In this paper, Allais concerns herself with "a core notion of forgiveness that operates in a context in which people do unexcused, unjustified wrong that warrants retributive censure, including retributive reactive attitudes."<sup>2</sup> So, what does Allais' account entail?

### **Allais: Wiping the Slate Clean**

Lucy Allais argues for an account of forgiveness which is at core about the overcoming of negative reactive attitudes in a specific way. She argues that forgiveness is unilateral, and therefore aims to show in her article that "we should not situate forgiveness in a context in which the harm done by the wrong must be somehow undone before forgiveness is in order."<sup>3</sup> Forgiveness is therefore not part of the sphere of justice, as accounts which give analogies with the justice system to explain the meaning of forgiveness implicitly assume.<sup>4</sup> While punishment, mercy and empathy may all have a role to play in the context of wrongdoing, Allais argues that none of these strategies of dealing with wrongdoing captures what is meant by forgiveness, as they "all involve kinds of cases in which, by reevaluating our judgment about the wrongdoing, we come to think that there is nothing to forgive."<sup>5</sup> This is because none of these cases "involve ceasing to hold the wrongdoing against the perpetrator at the same time as maintaining belief in the culpability and wrongness of the offense"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008, pp35 - 36

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 p34

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Eve Garrard and David McNaughton, 'In defence of Unconditional Forgiveness', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Volume 103, Issue 1, June 2003; Jeremy Watkins. 2005. 'Forgiveness and its Place in Ethics,' *Theoria*, Vol. 71(11).

<sup>5</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 35

<sup>6</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 35

as they provide reasons for excusing, justifying, or accepting the harmful action. Allais' account therefore attempts to show that it is possible to make sense of 'wiping the slate clean', while still seeing the harm as a case of "unexcused, unjustified, unacceptable wrongdoing."<sup>1</sup> It is this understanding of forgiveness that Allais argues is central. Forgiveness, for Allais, is the deliberate overcoming of negative reactive attitudes towards the *wrongdoer*. However,

not just any giving up of or overcoming retributive emotions counts: we should exclude the elimination of negative emotions through forgetting the wrong, or through therapeutic dispelling of the emotions that is done for the sake of the victim, regardless of any thought of the wrongdoer.<sup>2</sup>

Kantian dignity and respect for persons require that we see the person as a responsible moral agent capable of culpable wrongdoing. Forgiveness in this framework should allow for continuing to judge the action as wrong, while at the same time not holding it against the wrongdoer. Forgiveness, then, is an overcoming of retributive reactive attitudes against the *wrongdoer*, while possibly continuing to have them about the *action*. She argues that this is a "central part of what the person who wants to be forgiven wants: when you want the wrongdoing to be 'put behind us', you want it no longer to play a role in the way the victim feels about you as a person."<sup>3</sup> Overcoming reactive attitudes against the wrongdoer, while still judging that what she did was wrong, is the core of Allais' account of forgiveness.

Apart from centrally focusing on the wrongdoer in this way, Allais' account also aims to accommodate six other, generally accepted, beliefs about forgiveness; namely, that it is usually seen as praiseworthy; that it is granted to the wrongdoer by victims or those closely associated with the victim; that continuous resentment towards the perpetrator of the harm is incompatible with forgiveness; that "repentance, reparations, and atonement, as ways in which the wrongdoer distances herself from and condemns the offense, constitute standard grounds for forgiving"<sup>4</sup>; that forgiveness is elective; and that unconditional or unilateral forgiveness is possible. In the comparison with the Afro-communitarian account later in the chapter, I will return to these features of forgiveness. With a basic understanding of forgiveness according to Allais in place, let us turn to two examples of forgiveness from the TRC that she discusses, and how Allais understands them within the framework of her account.

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 36

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 44

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 57

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 37

The first example of forgiveness that Allais discusses is that of Babalwa Mhlauli, daughter of one of “the Cradock Four”,<sup>1</sup> Sicelo Mhlauli. Her father was abducted, tortured and murdered, and yet Babalwa Mhlauli was willing to forgive the perpetrators, and made this clear at the relevant TRC hearing. Tutu writes about the incident that “[y]ou could have heard a pin drop in the hushed city hall when she said, ‘We do want to forgive, but we don’t know whom to forgive.’”<sup>2</sup> Allais writes about the incident,

This might seem a prime example of being faced with unforgivable evil; further, not even knowing who the perpetrator was, she had no reason to think of him as repentant. Some philosophers think we cannot even *make sense* of what forgiving could involve in this kind of case; others say that although it is not logically incoherent, it is morally mistaken, because it involves a failure to condemn wrongdoing adequately.<sup>3</sup>

However, this is not the case according to Allais’s account of forgiveness, and her account aims to make sense of what Mhlauli is doing here, without seeing her choice as a moral mistake. Allais claims that Mhauili’s utterance could be understood as a “choice to affectively see the perpetrator as better than her action indicates her to be, whether or not she has done anything to deserve this.”<sup>4</sup> Mhauili is expressing her feelings towards the perpetrators as persons deserving of dignity and respect, despite their wrongdoing. Mhauili does, however, express a desire to know who the perpetrators are as a condition for her being able to forgive, as she made clear in her testimony. Allais explains that this desire can be understood according to her understanding of forgiveness in the following way:

Mhauili can be seen as expressing a willingness, compatible with the spirit of the TRC, to put the past behind her, on the condition of finding out the truth about who was responsible. Being prepared to forgive such an atrocity conditional on so minimal a demand may be something that most of us cannot imagine doing, but on my account we can explain how her expressed desire is coherent: we can see her as saying that she wants to come to have an attitude towards the perpetrators of evil actions that is not the negative attitude their deeds warrant.<sup>5</sup>

The second example Allais uses is drawn from Pumla Goboda-Madikizela’s description of the meeting between Eugene de Kock (also known as ‘Prime evil’<sup>6</sup>) and Pearl Faku and Doreen Mgoduka, widows of two of his many victims. The scenario is described in the following way

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Cradock four’ refers to four ANC activists (Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Fort Calata and Sicelo Mhlauli) from a town in the Eastern Cape Province, who were kidnapped and subsequently tortured and murdered by the South African Security Police Force in 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No future without forgiveness*, 1999, p114

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 40

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 65

<sup>5</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 65-66

<sup>6</sup> Eugene de Kock is a former member of the apartheid security police, who was in charge of the notorious ‘death farm’ Vlakplaas during the 1980’s and 1990’s, where numerous anti-apartheid activists were tortured after the death squad De Kock was in charge of had hunted them down. De Kock testified at the TRC, showing remorse for his actions. He was however imprisoned for life as his application for amnesty was rejected on the grounds that his crimes were not all politically motivated.

After the meeting Faku said: "I couldn't control my tears. I could hear him, but I was overwhelmed by emotion, and I was just nodding, as a way of saying yes, I forgive you. I hope that when he sees our tears, he knows that they are not only tears for our husbands, but tears for him as well . . . I would like to hold him by the hand, and show him that there is a future, and that he can still change."<sup>1</sup>

Allais explains that Faku's forgiveness does not rely on, nor does it amount to, her believing that De Kock has changed his ways, appreciating his point of view, or knowing or understanding what his reasons for acting the way he did were. Her forgiveness is also not a matter which is related in any way to his punishment or extracting reparations for his actions. Instead, Allais argues that Faku's forgiveness can, at its core, be understood as her willingness to "affectively see him as having a value that his actions do not indicate him to have."<sup>2</sup> Forgiveness is, therefore, Allais argues, not dependent on a specific *reason* for feeling different about the perpetrator, but rather *is* the change in feeling that you have towards the perpetrator as a person.

On this account, forgiveness and reconciliation are therefore not necessarily related, as it is possible to see the wrongdoer differently, not take into account the harm when making a judgment of her character, while still not necessarily wishing to be in any kind of relationship with her.<sup>3</sup> So, let us now turn to an Afro-communitarian conception of forgiveness in the next part of the chapter, to see how it differs from the above account.

### **Afro-communitarian forgiveness: 'interconnectedness-towards-wholeness'**

Rather than understanding forgiveness as an overcoming of resentment towards the perpetrator, the Afro-communitarian view of forgiveness is therapeutic, with the aim not only to heal the victim, but also the perpetrator, and in the process heal the 'collective self', or society. The concept of Afro-communitarian forgiveness is one spelt out in Antjie Krog's paper 'This thing called reconciliation: Forgiveness as part of an interconnectedness-towards-wholeness'.<sup>4</sup> Afro-communitarian forgiveness has the aim of opening the possibility of a relationship between victims/survivors and perpetrators/beneficiaries of harm. As noted at the start of the chapter, this is also the aim of forgiveness in general. However, as will be clarified, Afro-communitarian forgiveness requires that such a goal is actually instantiated, whereas forgiveness under an account such as Allais' can still be said to have taken place even in the absence of the aim to repair a relationship between the different parties. The *result* of this goal to create amicable relationships is the creation of a healthy

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<sup>1</sup> Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A human being died that night*, 2003, pp14-15

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 66

<sup>3</sup> Some Western accounts of forgiveness do however hold that the aim of forgiveness is a restored relationship, as explained above. As we will see, the difference between these accounts and an Afro-communitarian account of forgiveness is that these Western accounts do not require the fulfilment of the aim in order for it to count as forgiveness, whereas the Afro-communitarian account does require the fulfilment of this aim.

<sup>4</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008

collective self, in other words, healthy relationships within society. Note how this is different from the requirements for forgiveness as set out so far in the chapter, which may have the resumption of relationships as a goal, but can still occur without this goal being reached. Hence, what begins as an attempt at forgiveness from one party may not continue to become full forgiveness depending on the reaction of the other party. I will explain this point in more detail later in the chapter.

In her paper Krog sets out to clarify the difference between forgiveness from an Afro-communitarian perspective as opposed to from a Western Christian perspective. In order to explain the difference, Krog draws on accounts of forgiveness given by people who testified at the TRC (such as the examples of Babalwa Mhlauli, Pearl Faku and Doreen Mgoduka already dealt with) and shows how they ought to be interpreted in accordance with what she calls '*interconnectedness-towards-wholeness*,' which encapsulates these people's cultural worldview and background perspective. Instead of speaking of *ubuntu*, claiming that this term is too tentatively theorized and ubiquitously used with completely different meanings to be useful, Krog chooses to use the term '*interconnectedness-towards-wholeness*' to capture the core meaning of *ubuntu*. The term is meant to capture an Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood and ethics, which

is more than just a theoretical knowledge that all things in the world are linked, it means both a mental and physical awareness that one can only 'become' who one is, or could be, through the fullness of which is around one – both physical and metaphysical. Wholeness is thus not a passive state of nirvana, but a process of becoming in which everybody and everything is moving towards its fullest self, building itself; one can only reach that fullest self though, through and with others which include ancestors and universe.<sup>1</sup>

Within this worldview, Krog argues, notions of forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be separated as they can in the context of other worldviews (such as, for example, the Western Christian perspective), which allow there to be reconciliation without forgiveness, and forgiveness without reconciliation. Within the Afro-communitarian worldview, these two notions are mutually interdependent elements in the process of becoming more fully human. Forgiveness starts the process with opening the possibility for a relationship, while reconciliation is the necessary subsequent move in becoming more fully human. Forgiveness is dependent on the closure of the process through reconciliation, in the form of the goal of forgiveness, namely reconciliation, being accomplished. Krog draws on the following quotation from a participant in the TRC, Cynthia Ngewu, mother of one of the Gugulethu seven,<sup>2</sup> which she argues encapsulates this (what I have classified as an Afro-

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<sup>1</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008, p335

<sup>2</sup> The 'Gugulethu seven' were young unarmed anti-apartheid activists who were killed in an ambush set by apartheid security police in the township of Gugulethu, Cape Town, in 1986.

communitarian) understanding of personhood, and the resulting conceptions of forgiveness and reconciliation.

This thing called reconciliation ...if I am understanding it correctly ... if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back ... then I agree, then I support it all.<sup>1</sup>

Krog explains that this quotation shows that Ngewu understands that the perpetrator could only murder because he lost his humanity, he was not a full person in the understanding of the Afro-communitarian, as he did not embody the Afro-communitarian ethic. Ngewu also shows her understanding of forgiveness as the means by which it becomes possible for the perpetrator to recover his humanity, through transforming himself. The fact that her son was murdered also affected Ngewu's own personhood, as her son was in a very real way a part of that personhood. Her personhood is also affected by the knowledge that the society in which her son's murder occurred is one that allows for and creates people who are not fully human, as only people who are not fully human can commit such atrocities. The murder has shown her that she cannot trust others in the society to be 'fully human', and that necessarily affects her own humanity. She also understands that in order for her to become fully human again, in order for her to embody the ethic of Afro-communitarianism, the perpetrator has to transform himself. This last insight by Krog can, I believe, be elucidated through looking at the understanding of Afro-communitarian personhood and ethics which refers to the collective self and collective virtue, as discussed in Chapter 2. According to this view, it is impossible for an individual to flourish in an unflourishing society, and the society cannot flourish unless the wrongdoers admit to, take responsibility for, and makes amends for their wrongdoings. If the wrongdoer is driven by forgiveness to regain his humanity, that would 'close' the circle of forgiveness. As Krog writes, "the circle of forgiveness can only be concluded when the perpetrator tries to restore his own wholeness (want to change) and through that restores the wholeness of society (actively contributing to produce a better society)."<sup>2</sup> Krog also gives examples of interconnectedness-towards-wholeness from Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's *A human being died that night*, and Gobodo-Madikizela's resulting understanding of forgiveness, which confirms this mutually dependent relationship of self on others (and vice versa) in order to reach full humanity. Gobodo-Madikizela writes;

The victim needs forgiveness as part of the process of becoming rehumanized. The victim needs it in order to complete himself and wrest away from the perpetrator the

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<sup>1</sup> Antjie Krog, *Country of my skull*, Broadway publishers, 2000 p.109

<sup>2</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008, p337-8

fiat power to destroy. Far from being an unnerving proposition and a burdensome moral sacrifice, compassion, for many, is deeply therapeutic and restorative.<sup>1</sup>

Here the focus is on the victim, and how forgiveness can benefit the victim in her quest for personhood, her quest to become more fully human. Also important for Gobodo-Madikizela though, is the perpetrator, and how this process of forgiveness affects him. She writes that “we are a society of people and not of ideas, *a fragile web of interdependent humans, not of stances.*”<sup>2</sup> Forgiveness is meant to be therapeutic, in the way trust has been shown to be therapeutic, as it affects the way people are. Believing in someone, and believing that they have the potential to move beyond their current situation shows an optimism about people, such that badness in the past is not inscribed into the future.<sup>3</sup>

In order to further expand on Krog’s account, I will also argue that Afro-communitarian forgiveness is therapeutic, but not in the individualistic sense where it is for the good and emotional health of the survivor to overcome resentment. Where forgiveness is utilized therapeutically for the forgiver or victim, it is utilized as a strategy to overcome bitterness and resentful attitudes which affect the victim/survivor’s mental and emotional wellbeing. It is good for the individual survivor’s wellbeing, and that is the overall aim in the case of therapeutic forgiveness in this sense. The perpetrator’s well-being is not taken into account in this individualistic understanding of therapeutic forgiveness, where the therapy is only meant for the survivor.

In contrast, Afro-communitarian forgiveness aims not only for the individual’s well-being, but also for the perpetrator’s, and thus for the good and ‘emotional health’ of the collective self. So, therapeutic forgiveness, according to Afro-communitarianism, is about being willing to start a relationship, to give the person another chance to have a relationship, and through that relationship to become part of the collective communal self. If the perpetrator chooses not to respond to the forgiveness offered with remorse and a willingness to create a healthy relationship between herself and the victim, this will undermine the process or ‘circle’ of forgiveness. In order to take up building a relationship, the perpetrator will have to commit to treat the victim as an equal in the future, and this requires that she take responsibility for the harms done through trying to compensate the victim for those harms as a way of showing remorse. If the perpetrator is moved to this course of action, this will result in restorative justice, as her remorse and equal treatment of the victim ought to move her to try and restore a balance between her and the victim, as well as others in the society. This, in turn, ought to lead to collective humanization, which is what is necessary for the communal health of collective self. (I will deal with this final cognate concept of reconciliation in the next chapter.)

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<sup>1</sup> Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A human being died that night*, 2003, p. 127 - 132

<sup>2</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela cited in Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008, p337-8 Krog’s italics P359

<sup>3</sup> This relates back to the understanding of African philosophy as healing, as discussed in the introduction.



Working on the health of the collective self will centrally include addressing the inferiority and superiority complexes, the pathologies diagnosed by Fanon as present in post-colonial societies, as these complexes can be seen as societal mental issues which will affect the society's health in a similar way as such complexes would affect an individual's emotional and mental health if she instantiates these complexes. (I will discuss this issue of societal health in more detail in the final two chapters.) Once this is understood, Tutu's claim that forgiveness is self-interested makes sense without forgiveness simply becoming a 'letting go' on the part of the victim for the good of her own mental health alone. Instead, Tutu writes,

To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest. What dehumanizes you, inexorably dehumanizes me. Forgiveness gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge as human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.<sup>1</sup>

From this understanding of forgiveness, it emerges exactly how personal the political is, as it affects our very identities in ways we cannot control. The political trauma experienced by the country was, and is, deeply personal, deeply affected, and still affects, many people.

So Afro-communitarian forgiveness does contain an overcoming of reactive attitudes as do other accounts of forgiveness. However in contrast to these other accounts, it is, at first, only a 'bracketing' of these attitudes - a 'putting on ice,' or a momentary suspension. This 'bracketing' of these attitudes is meant to see whether the proper reactions (the reactions of remorse, compensation and building a healthy relationship with the victim) can be drawn from the other person. As Tutu writes,

In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused us the wrong. We are saying here there is the chance to make a new beginning. It is an act of faith that the wrongdoer can change.<sup>2</sup>

Forgiveness is an invitation to the wrongdoer to come back into the moral fold, an invitation which is meant to 'draw out' change from the perpetrator, in order for him or her to live up to this expectation of change. Once the other has transformed herself, "the circle of forgiveness" can be closed, bringing with it the final overcoming of reactive attitudes. This means that forgiveness releases both victim and perpetrator from their inability to be human beings in the normative sense. Forgiveness is meant to be therapeutic for both the victim and the perpetrator, as it is meant to make both more fully human, to be able to instantiate the ideal of personhood as collective self. Forgiveness, therefore, when the circle of forgiveness is completed, is meant to instantiate both an

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 35

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 220

overcoming of resentful reactive attitudes, to repair a rupture in a relationship, and to allow societal and psychological healing for both the victims/survivors and perpetrator/beneficiaries. Forgiveness for the Afro-communitarian, thus, must have the *outcome* of societal healing and therapy for the collective self. Forgiveness is not achieved until the 'circle' is closed. Simply aiming for a healed relationship (as some accounts of forgiveness would allow) will not be sufficient to say that forgiveness has taken place.

Another way to explain what forgiveness from an Afro-communitarian perspective entails is to understand forgiveness as the offer, by the victim (group), to enlarge their collective self to include the perpetrator (group). This offer is, however, conditional on the perpetrator group acting and responding as a part of that collective self – in other words, to transform her identity so that she sees herself as a part of the collective self, as including the former enemy group in her self-identified 'we'. This means that she has to act as a part of the collective self, through restoring relationships, paying reparations, and taking responsibility.

Forgiveness is, at its core, about community health, about the health of the collective self. As with our families, we do not choose who is in our community, and yet they shape and determine to some extent who it is that we become. We cannot choose which community we are born into, but we can attempt to make it a more flourishing, healthy community. The collective self is not static. Communities can and do change over time, allowing entry to and assimilating some people and groups, or excluding other people and groups, over time. As the collective self can and does grow, change, and mature, forgiveness allows for the healing of communities through the formation of new collective selves as people and groups are accepted within the moral community which comprises the collective self. Therefore, forgiveness is the *beginning* of an interaction, the start of a dialogue, and not the *end* of a process of overcoming resentment as it is understood in the individualistic worldview. In other words, forgiveness is not meant to, nor can it, provide closure for the victim(s). It is, instead, the beginning of the journey of humanization.

Responsibility, justice and forgiveness are closely related on this view, in that restorative justice can come about only with the engagement of both the perpetrator/beneficiary groups (in accepting responsibility), and the victim/survivor groups (in granting forgiveness). As Tutu wrote,

most frequently, the wrong has affected the victim in tangible, material ways. Apartheid provided whites with enormous benefits and privileges, leaving its victims deprived and exploited. If someone steals my pen and then asks me to forgive him, unless he returns the pen the sincerity of his contrition and confession will be considered to be nil. Confession, forgiveness and reparation, wherever feasible, form a part of a continuum.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 221

This quotation, also referred to in chapters 3 and 4, highlights the importance of how the concepts of responsibility, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation are related from the Afro-communitarian perspective. Responsibility, justice, and forgiveness are all notions which are directly related to reconciliation, and without them, there can be no reconciliation.

It is for this reason, namely that these concepts are *necessarily* related, that I believe Krog argues against Jacques Derrida's accusation that Tutu is confused when he utilizes both "a non-penal and non-reparative logic of 'forgiveness' (he calls it 'restorative') and a judicial logic of amnesty".<sup>1</sup> The 'contradiction' that Derrida points to disappears once the situation is analyzed not from a Western individualistic perspective, but rather from a communitarian one. The objection is therefore unwarranted when Tutu's foundation in interconnectedness-towards-wholeness is highlighted. Krog writes:

The fact that only a few perpetrators became scapegoats and that land reparations were not properly addressed during the TRC process, only becomes deeply problematic within a human rights and Western post second world war milieu, but within a communitarian world view, one could have assumed that everybody would feel themselves interconnected with the scapegoats and that amnesty would therefore be the start of a process of change into reparation involving everybody. That it did not happen is more an indication of a dominating non-interconnecting culture clashing with an indigenous one, than a moral failure or confusion of those involved in the TRC process from a grassroots level.<sup>2</sup>

This quotation is an articulation of the Afro-communitarian understanding of one's place within the collective self, and that one can only flourish within a flourishing society. This interconnectedness with others would require that, once responsibility has been recognized, there would be reparations from the perpetrators. The realization of interconnectedness would therefore result in 'sharing' (or rather, returning) resources which were obtained through exploitation. Most importantly, this view makes sense of the anger and demands for reparations which are becoming more obvious on the part of the very people who participated in the TRC process. Instead of using this as evidence for the fact that these people were forced to forgive through a manipulation for political purposes,<sup>3</sup> it is possible within the Afro-communitarian worldview to see how forgiveness was expected to transform the perpetrators, to allow them to regain their humanity. As this rehumanizing transformation did not take place, and perpetrators and beneficiaries simply took their forgiveness to mean that they had been let off the hook, victims and survivors who extended forgiveness

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 2001, p. 32 cited in Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008, p361

<sup>2</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008, p361

<sup>3</sup> See for example Verdoolaege who argues that *ubuntu* rhetoric was utilized as a wrapping for a political agenda by the ANC, and that ordinary people were manipulated to forgive in order to attain the political end of a relatively peaceful political transition.

became angry, as the steps they took towards wholeness were thwarted by individualistic and unattached perpetrators and beneficiaries, who did not understand that their flourishing is also affected in such a society.<sup>1</sup>

Forgiveness and responsibility are tied together in a circle of forgiveness, and the completion of this circle generates restorative justice, and through the relationships between these, we get to Afro-communitarian reconciliation. Humanization of self and other, and therefore of the collective self, is the motivation *and* justification for this process. To explain this notion of reconciliation, it could be helpful to utilize an image of two people 'meeting each other half way', where reconciliation is possible when all parties take a step towards the other. Each person has to do something for them to be able to meet halfway. I will return to this image again in the final section of the chapter. First, let us look in more detail at what the Afro-communitarian concept of forgiveness entails with regards to some issues raised earlier, whether it is bilateral or unilateral, conditional or unconditional, and elective or obligatory.

### **Afro-communitarian forgiveness: bilateral, conditional, and obligatory**

According to the Afro-communitarian account of forgiveness, it is not disrespectful and/or immoral (towards oneself or others) to forgive before remorse is forthcoming from the wrongdoer. Even though forgiveness is offered without the victim first having witnessed remorse from the perpetrator, it is still bilateral, as it does require that forgiveness result in change on the part of the perpetrator of the harm. Offering forgiveness before the wrongdoer apologizes and takes responsibility for the harm done does not indicate that the forgiver condones the harm, as the perpetrator will still be expected to pay reparations, and transform himself after forgiveness is offered. This is the case even though it allows the victim to extend forgiveness without an apology having already been offered, as long as the perpetrator subsequently changes and thus closes the circle of forgiveness. Forgiveness on this model is not only bilateral, having to involve both parties, but can and should also be multilateral. As, according to Afro-communitarianism, the embeddedness and interconnected being of persons are recognized, it is important that people who are indirectly involved in both the suffering and perpetration of the harm also play their roles in the forgiveness process. This means that family, friends and community of both the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) ought to play a role in counseling the different parties in what would be necessary for there to be a restoration of balance in order for the society to heal. These related 'third parties' also have a responsibility to ensure that they themselves do what is necessary for this to take place, whether this means letting go of their own resentment, or going the extra mile to support the people who

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<sup>1</sup> Antjie Krog, 'This thing called reconciliation...' Forgiveness as part of an interconnectedness-towards-wholeness' *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008, p366

were directly involved in the harm. Afro-communitarian forgiveness is *necessarily* bilateral (or rather, multilateral), as its aim is for there to be the restoration of relationships which results in societal healing and thus a healthy 'collective self'.

From the fact that it is bilateral it also follows that Afro-communitarian forgiveness is a *conditional* form of forgiveness, with the condition being that the other, now that s/he has been (conditionally) accepted in the moral community, acts accordingly and respects the humanity and conditions for a flourishing life of the other. My argument is that the initial offer of forgiveness is unconditional, but closing the circle of forgiveness is conditional on the transformation of the perpetrator towards fuller personhood. In order to explain further, forgiveness on this model can be compared to marriage, where 'marriage' is conditional on both people accepting the state of affairs. In other words, I can offer marriage, but it is only once you accept my offer, and act accordingly, that we can be said to be married. Analogously, I can offer forgiveness, but it is only once you accept my offer, and act accordingly, that there is forgiveness. If you do not accept my offer of forgiveness by responding in the appropriate way, I have not forgiven, I have simply offered forgiveness. By not closing the circle of forgiveness, you have thwarted my attempt at forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not conditional on all relevant parties being alive, but rather on all relevant parties who are still alive responding in the appropriate ways. On the Afro-communitarian model, when either the victim or perpetrator is dead, that does not mean that there can be no forgiveness, (as might be the case according to some<sup>1</sup>) as the dead are still seen as a part of the community that mourns her, that she belongs to, that claims her. As 'you' are interconnected with others, you live on in your community after your death, in ways that are not recognized in the individualistic worldview. Therefore, even when the victim or the perpetrator has passed away, there still has to be forgiveness from the greater whole, the collective whole that was harmed when harming a specific individual. Therefore, as neither the victim nor the perpetrator has to be alive for forgiveness to take place, there are no conceptually unforgivable acts as would be the case if forgiveness necessarily depended on either the victim or the perpetrator doing or feeling certain things.

With regards to the question of whether forgiveness is morally obligatory or elective once the perpetrator has shown remorse and offered reparations, my proposal is that Afro-communitarianism would prescribe that forgiveness is obligatory. Forgiveness is required by morality in order for the perpetrator and community to sufficiently transform, and thus to allow the healing of the collective self. Forgiveness is not elective on the Afro-communitarian worldview, as Afro-communitarian ethics requires building, fostering, and deepening relationships, in order to create and nourish an inclusive

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<sup>1</sup>For example see Everett L. Worthington, *Forgiving and reconciling: Bridges to wholeness and hope*, Intervarsity Press, 2003. "My child was harmed. She is the only one who could forgive. But she's dead and can't forgive." p24 This is a sentiment that is widely shared and is thus an issue that is dealt with throughout the literature on forgiveness.

collective self. A refusal to forgive would prevent the perpetrator from being able to regain his humanity, and would also prevent the collective self to flourish.

### **Afro-communitarian interpretation of two examples of forgiveness**

For the Afro-communitarian then, forgiveness, justice and responsibility are necessarily related, and all constituents of the project of reconciliation. Forgiveness is meant to be therapeutic for all parties involved and, as such, is concerned with healing the 'collective self'. Afro-communitarian forgiveness is bilateral, conditional, and obligatory, and, because these features require all parties concerned to change, act and be involved in healing the collective self, it is a rehumanizing strategy. With this in mind, let us now turn back to the examples Allais analyzes in her paper, and see how the Afro-communitarian account of forgiveness would fit with her treatment of these examples.

Recall that Allais argues that forgiveness is the deliberate overcoming of negative reactive attitudes towards a wrongdoer, and that she specifically excludes overcoming these emotions for purely therapeutic reasons. That is, if the reactive attitudes are overcome purely for the sake of the mental health of the victim, then that is not forgiveness, as forgiveness has to have the perpetrator in mind. However, Allais does not take into account that the aim of forgiveness could be therapeutic for both forgiver and forgiven, and thus that its aim can be the mental health not only of the victim, but of the 'collective self' (as, indeed, Afro-communitarian forgiveness would prescribe).

So, let us again examine the first example Allais deals with in her paper, namely the case of Babalwa Mhlauli. To remind the reader, Mhlauli said that she and her family *wanted* to forgive, but did not know *who* to forgive. Allais argued, as we saw earlier in the chapter, that Mhlauli's desire to know the identity of the perpetrators was in line with the project of the TRC of being willing to forgive in exchange for the truth about the matter. She argues that Mhlauli can be seen to have a willingness "compatible with the spirit of the TRC, to put the past behind her, on the condition of finding out the truth about who was responsible."<sup>1</sup> Allais thus understands the desire to know who the perpetrators are as a minimal condition for Mhlauli's ability to forgive. Allais further argues that "we can see her as saying that she wants to come to have an attitude towards the perpetrators of evil actions that is not the negative attitude their deeds warrant"<sup>2</sup> and it is *this*, not knowing who the perpetrators are, that takes on central significance for Allais.

The Afro-communitarian would say that the deficiency in Allais' account of forgiveness is that it is not about collective relationships, and therefore, that eventual achievement of reconciliation is not a necessary requirement for successful forgiveness. The Afro-communitarian would see knowledge of the perpetrator's identity as crucial, as it is a requirement for rehumanizing and

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Allais, *Wiping the slate clean*" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 p65

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Allais, *Wiping the slate clean*" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 p65

establishing a relationship with the perpetrator. When taking the Afro-communitarian worldview as one's point of departure, it is possible to see that the need to know who the perpetrators are, which Mhlauli made as a minimal condition for her forgiveness, is not simply a practical side effect of a political project such as the TRC.<sup>1</sup>

Instead, on the Afro-communitarian account, Mhlauli's desire to know who the perpetrators were is important for the very core of what forgiveness entails. Knowing who the perpetrator is, becomes a necessary condition to start healing the rift created by the harm, which is the aim of forgiveness. As forgiveness is extended in order to draw out a change in the perpetrator, if the perpetrator is unknown, this means the attempt to start this transformation in the perpetrator through extending forgiveness is impossible. Mhlauli's desire to know who the perpetrators are, is therefore part of the core of forgiveness on an Afro-communitarian account.<sup>2</sup> Whereas on Allais account the forgiver can change her attitudes towards the wrongdoer even if she does not know who she is,<sup>3</sup> it is centrally important for forgiveness on the Afro-communitarian account that the identity of the perpetrator be known.

The second example Allais analyses, to remind the reader, is of the meeting between Eugene de Kock and the wives of two of his victims, Pearl Faku and Doreen Mgoduka. Allais' explanation of Faku's forgiveness was that she was willing to "affectively see him as having a value that his actions [did] not indicate him to have."<sup>4</sup> Once again, however, Allais misses something central in the expression of Faku's act of forgiveness; namely, her desire (as Pumla Goboda-Madikizela articulates it) to "show him that there is a future, and that he can still change."<sup>5</sup> Faku emphasizes that what is important to her is that the perpetrator should know that it is possible for him to transform himself, to again become fully human, to be rehumanized and, in the process, allow *her* to be rehumanized. Faku's focus is, therefore, not *only* on the fact that she is overcoming her resentment toward De Kock, but rather her focus is on him knowing that he can change. The focus of the forgiver, from an Afro-communitarian perspective, is on the possibility of the perpetrator becoming a better person, and forgiveness is expressly extended as this will give the perpetrators as well as victims the chance to 'regain their humanity'.

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<sup>1</sup> This seems to be the case in Allais' interpretation. Allais writes that "Mhlauli can be seen as expressing a willingness, compatible with the spirit of the TRC, to put the past behind her, on the condition of finding out the truth about who was responsible." Lucy Allais, *The Heart of Forgiveness: Wiping the slate clean' Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 65 - 66

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, this gives an overall justification for the TRC as well.

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Allais, *The Heart of Forgiveness: Wiping the slate clean' Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 p65 "There does not seem to be anything problematic about feeling, for example, that 'whoever did this is hateful' or 'whoever he is, I will kill him when I find out' which suggests that one can have negative reactive attitudes towards an unknown offender. If this is right, she could also cease to have these attitudes without knowing who the perpetrators is."

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Allais, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Volume 36 No 1, 2008 pp 66

<sup>5</sup> Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A human being died that night*, 2003, pp14-15

In this section I have tried to show how the Afro-communitarian would interpret and justify the acts of forgiveness Allais utilizes as examples in her paper, and in this way I hope to have clarified the Afro-communitarian position on forgiveness further. What is central for the Afro-communitarian is a focus on collective healing, and this requires the appropriate response from perpetrators to offerings of forgiveness. But what, exactly, is expected from perpetrators when they are offered forgiveness?

### **The appropriate response to forgiveness in post-apartheid South Africa**

According to the Afro-communitarian, the appropriate response to the offer of forgiveness is the acceptance of responsibility and acting on this recognition through reparations, necessary in order to complete the 'circle of forgiveness'. In the analogy of two people stepping up to meet each other, offering forgiveness can be seen as stepping up to meet the other party halfway, while what is then necessary from the other side is for them to take a step of their own. If the TRC can be interpreted as an extension of forgiveness by the victims of apartheid to perpetrators and beneficiaries of this political system, then the step to meet halfway has already been taken by some parts of the population. However, as a general rule, this does not seem to have 'drawn out' the appropriate response from perpetrators and beneficiaries. As Tutu writes,

In South Africa, the whole process of reconciliation has been placed in very serious jeopardy by the enormous disparities between the rich, mainly the whites, and the poor, mainly the blacks. The huge gap between the haves and the have-nots, which was largely created and maintained by racism and apartheid, poses the greatest threat to reconciliation and stability in our country. The rich provided the class from which the perpetrators and the beneficiaries of apartheid came, and the poor provided the bulk of the victims. That is why I have exhorted whites to be keen to see transformation taking place in the lot of blacks. For unless houses replace the hovels and shacks in which blacks live; unless blacks gain access to clean water, electricity, affordable health care, decent education, good jobs and a safe environment – all things which the vast majority of whites have taken for granted for so long – we can kiss goodbye to reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that black South Africans (for the most part) recognize how much apartheid has affected, and continues to shape them as a collective self as well as individuals. Whites, for the most part, have not yet recognized this, as there has not been a white collective realization of the ways in which the past and present, and its injustices, continue to create and shape individuals and groups. If whites continue to ignore and deny that the structural features of apartheid have had an influence on their life chances, this will impede whites as a group accepting responsibility, resulting in failure to offer reparations, in turn straining race relations, and this will then continue to put the relationship between black and white in jeopardy. Black South Africans, as a collective gesture, have

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 221



said 'we forgive', but whites have not responded with 'we are sorry'. Whites have not responded to the offer of forgiveness appropriately, and today there are more and more whites who claim that the time for blaming apartheid for anything in South Africa is over, despite the fact that there has not yet been a group apology from whites. Instead, current government incompetence and corruption is completely blamed, by whites, for any negative features in present day South Africa. Though current incompetence and corruption has obviously played a role in present day South Africa, my point here is that even if this is the case, there has never been proper reparation on the part of whites for the harms of apartheid, and that this plays an important role in the current South African context as well. As there has not been reconciliation between the races, it is very difficult for people to overcome apartheid political alliances – the ANC is still seen as the liberators by most black South Africans, and as opposition political parties, perceived to be the domain of whites, have not shown that they have the interests of most poor blacks at heart, there is no reason to trust them, as far as impoverished blacks are concerned. As disillusion with the situation grows, it remains true that there can be no relationship, no meaningful and useful political engagement, without forgiveness and subsequent accompanying reparation. Extending a hand, doing something to make up for the benefits accrued on the part of the beneficiaries, is a necessary step for perpetrators and beneficiaries. And the more time goes by, the more difficult this appropriate response will become.

Why then, has there been an inadequate response by whites to the offer of forgiveness from blacks in South Africa? It is not as if the ability for forgiveness to 'draw out' a change in the perpetrator is completely novel to the Western world. In fact, as Murphy writes, it is a Christian view that we "should forgive in order to transform the wrongdoer; i.e., we should forgive not because the wrongdoer has repented, but as a step toward bringing his repentance about, making it at least easier for him."<sup>1</sup> Murphy sees this point as an empirical prediction about what is likely to generate regret and transformation on the part of the perpetrator, and so sees this therapeutic strategy as compatible with the forgiver's own self-respect. This is so since it is not that the forgiver does not respect herself enough to have righteous and justified reactive attitudes about a harm to which she was the victim. Murphy however emphasizes that this strategy is not necessarily compatible with respect for the perpetrator, and argues that this attitude to the perpetrator is condescending and patronizing, as it is, in effect, an arrogant belief that the perpetrator "could not come to repentance on [his] own but required the aid of your ministry of forgiveness"<sup>2</sup> The response to this, Murphy claims, might very well be resentment on the part of the perpetrator towards the victim extending forgiveness. In other words, and turning back to the South African situation, it is possible that not only do whites not want to repent, but they could also resent the fact that they are being asked to

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy&Hampton (Murphy) Forgiveness and mercy, P 30

<sup>2</sup> Murphy&Hampton (Murphy) Forgiveness and mercy, P 31

repent, as this looks to them as if they are not being given equal respect.<sup>1</sup> This could very well be part of the response of perpetrators and beneficiaries of apartheid to the forgiveness extended to them by victims. Interpreting the act of forgiveness in this way, can be understood, I submit, as a symptom and manifestation of the entitlement which forms a part of the white superiority complex. As Tutu notes, many “white people in South Africa have come to see themselves as entitled to reconciliation and forgiveness without their having to lift so much as a little finger to aid this very crucial and demanding process.”<sup>2</sup> Tutu also observes that

a very large section of the white community have forgotten, far too easily and far too soon, that our country was indeed on the verge of catastrophe ... I have longed so eagerly and so desperately for a like generosity of spirit to have been evoked in the white community by the magnanimity of those in the black community who, despite the untold suffering inflicted so unnecessarily on them, have been ready to forgive their tormentors.<sup>3</sup>

On the Afro-communitarian understanding of forgiveness, forgiveness is meant to make it easier for the perpetrator to repent, without connotations of paternalism and condescension. If forgiveness is understood as simply an overcoming of resentful reactive attitudes, as it is on the Western understanding (including Murphy’s account), then it is possible for white people to make the assumption that they have been ‘let off the hook’. However, as explained earlier, making this assumption only makes sense from a Western individualistic framework, and does not fit within an Afro-communitarian understanding of the person and ethics.<sup>4</sup> The resolution to this problem might be to try to explain to Western individualistic orientated South Africans, what an understanding of the African worldview and ethics entails, and explain how exactly responsibility does not have to entail *individual* guilt or shame, but that taking collective responsibility is rather an expression of full personhood. Indeed, as Tutu writes, something has to be done to make sure that the project of reconciliation becomes one in which every South African takes part.

Reconciliation is going to have to be the concern of every South African. It has to be a national project to which all earnestly strive to make their particular contribution – by learning the language and culture of others; by being ready and willing to make amends; by refusing to deal in stereotypes in making racial or other jokes that ridicule a particular group; by contributing to a culture of respect for human rights, and seeking to enhance tolerance ... by working for a more inclusive society where most, if not all, can feel that they belong – that they are insiders and not aliens and strangers on the outside, relegated to the edges of society.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This could possibly, in turn, feed into a feeling of ‘reverse apartheid’.

<sup>2</sup> Tutu qualifies this by mentioning that this is a generalization, and giving thanks to the white people who were in fact part of the struggle, and who have done a lot for reconciliation. Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 125

<sup>3</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 126

<sup>4</sup> Antjie Krog, *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 No 4, 2008, p361

<sup>5</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 222

This description captures the overall process of humanization which needs to take place in order for Afro-communitarian reconciliation to be realized. The collective self needs to be healed through a concerted effort by all in the society, as they come to understand that no individual can flourish in an unflourishing society

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the concept of forgiveness, and attempted to ascertain what forgiveness from an Afro-communitarian perspective would entail. Afro-communitarian forgiveness, it was argued, is meant as the start of a dialogue, and is offered in order to 'draw out' a transformation from the party who committed harm. This transformation requires taking responsibility for that harm on the part of the perpetrator, as this is what completes the 'circle of forgiveness'. The concept of forgiveness, when understood from an Afro-communitarian framework, denotes a central mechanism of therapeutic humanization through allowing both victim/survivor and perpetrator/beneficiary to 'become wholly human' after harm caused during protracted conflict undermined their humanity. As, within the Afro-communitarian view, this conceptual understanding of forgiveness has been postulated as a central *mechanism* of 'humanization', it becomes necessary to investigate what 'humanization' entails within the worldview of Afro-communitarianism. This will be the task of the next chapter.

## Chapter 6: Afro-communitarianism, humanization and racial reconciliation<sup>1</sup>

*'All oppressive regimes become stronger through the degradation of the oppressed.'*<sup>2</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir

This chapter places the focus on the concept of humanization,<sup>3</sup> a concept that has already surfaced repeatedly in my discussions of Afro-communitarianism. Humanization lies at the core of the Afro-communitarian worldview. It is the common thread, and justification behind, the understandings of responsibility, justice, and forgiveness presented and explained so far in this thesis. Specifically, it was argued in the previous chapter that within an Afro-communitarian framework the concept of forgiveness denotes a central mechanism of humanization in the process of 'becoming wholly human'. This worldview focuses on becoming more human and more humane in one's relations with others, focusing on creating a humane and flourishing collective self and society.

It is the Afro-communitarian understanding of the centrality of humanization which is the justification, as well as the goal, for the cognate concepts of reconciliation discussed so far. Humanization lies at the core of reconciliation on the Afro-communitarian worldview, and also highlights why reconciliation is such an important virtue to strive for according to that view. I argue in this chapter that the humanization of self and others has a crucial role to play in addressing the 'inferiority' and concurrent 'superiority' racial complexes as diagnosed by Franz Fanon and Steven Bantu Biko.<sup>4</sup> These complexes reach deeply within individual and collective psyches and identities, and political solutions which do not address these deep seated issues will be inadequate according to Afro-communitarianism. The eventual healing of these complexes are a necessary requirement for reconciliation to occur.

The concept of 'human' as understood by Afro-communitarianism (explained in detail in Chapter 2) will be harnessed in order to investigate what exactly is meant by the insight, common in African thought, that "in an unjust society the oppressors and the oppressed are both denied their humanity".<sup>5</sup> What exactly is meant by the term humanization? In Chapter 2 we looked at what is

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<sup>1</sup> Large sections of this chapter have been taken and adapted from my 'De- and rehumanization in the wake of atrocities' *South African Journal of Philosophy*. 2009, 28(2)

<sup>2</sup> De Beauvoir, Simone. 1962 c1948. *The ethics of ambiguity*, translated from the French by Bernard Frechtman, New York: Citadel Press. P 101

<sup>3</sup> I use the term humanization, as opposed to focusing on humanism in this chapter, in order to avoid the conceptual baggage it is associated with in Western philosophy. The terms are however related. As Kwame Gyekye writes, "Humanism—the doctrine that takes human welfare, interests, and needs as fundamental—constitutes the foundation of African ethics." ("African Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/african-ethics/>>.) I will flag some possible issues that arise because of this relationship to humanism and the belief in human nature later in the chapter.

<sup>4</sup> As seen in the Introduction and chapter 1

<sup>5</sup> Nelson Mandela cited in Richard Bell, *Understanding African Philosophy*, Routledge, 2002, p86. This thought runs through writings on *ubuntu* specifically Desmond Tutu's claims about humanization, as will be seen in this chapter. This is also a

meant by the term ‘human’ according to Afro-communitarianism, and saw how, under that view, ‘being human’ was the result of a continual process. I use the term ‘humanization’ to refer to that process of becoming human. But how and why is it even possible that people can be made ‘less than human’, or dehumanized? In order to investigate the term ‘humanization’ and its importance for reconciliation, it is helpful to first look at the meaning of its opposite, dehumanization, as this is the process that needs to be reversed (or overcome) in the rehumanization process. Accordingly, in order to understand how rehumanization can occur, the phenomenon of dehumanization is first analyzed, and different types of dehumanization discussed.<sup>1</sup> Some commonly used mechanisms of dehumanization are also briefly discussed as they allow insight into the dehumanization process. In order to reverse the dehumanization process, I will argue that the imagination can be utilized in order to attempt to understand the depth of emotions involved in personal relationships. What makes us human, according to Afro-communitarianism, is our capacity for meaningful, interpersonal relationships, and it is shown how each of the types of dehumanization discussed affects the possibility for healthy relationship between different parties.

## Dehumanization

A core aspect of being human is the capacity for change. Dehumanization generally features a focus on difference and subsequent differential treatment based on this difference, perceptions and treatment deny that the ‘other’ is autonomous,<sup>2</sup> free, or capable of change.

A common manifestation of this is the application of certain stereotypes to groups of people. The individuals belonging to this group are characterised as having these immutable stereotypical features. This one dimensional view of the other casts her as an object to which one can ascribe certain absolute features and traits. The difference of the other is used as a ‘marker’ to pick out such a perceived ‘static’ character. The difference focused on is then used as the justification for differential moral treatment, and the differential moral treatment serves to reinforce the perception of this other as ‘static’ and different—not human.<sup>3</sup>

One example of this is gender stereotyping. Stereotyping a person in terms of her gender, such that her gender is taken to necessarily mean that she instantiates specific character traits (such as being

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thought present in some non-African writings (such as in the De Beauvoir quote mentioned above), but I will focus on how this fits into the Afro-communitarian worldview.

<sup>1</sup> To remind the reader of the caveat explained in Chapter 2 with regards to utilizing the language of de- and rehumanization, I use the language of de- and rehumanization with the *caveat* that I do not believe it is possible, in fact, to dehumanize people, if by that is meant that they do in fact become beings that do not deserve equal respect. Instead, dehumanization occurs through the processes of exclusion or maltreatment which result in the *perception* that the other (or oneself) is less (or more) worthy of moral consideration.

<sup>2</sup> The use of autonomy here refers to the right and ability to make one’s own decisions. This does not undermine or disallow the type of inter-dependence present within Afro-communitarianism, as will become clear in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> As will be seen, each of these dehumanizations of the other, also has a corresponding dehumanizing effect on the self according to the Afro-communitarian worldview. I will explain this further during the course of the analysis.

caring, nurturing and more emotional than men), dehumanizes the person in question by perceiving the character traits to definitely exist and to be 'fixed'. Claiming that women are more emotional dehumanizes individual women if it is presumed that all women have the character trait of responding to situations in an emotional manner. Therefore, the stereotype denies that women have the capacity (as do most people) to also approach a situation in a rational fashion. This stereotype could then lead to paternalistic treatment of women if it is assumed that women cannot make rational decisions, and therefore need to have these decisions made for them. The differential treatment that women receive, gives them little opportunity to exercise their rational autonomy, and plenty of opportunity to express emotion. As such, women are seen to give more emphasis to the emotional than the rational, thereby providing reinforcement of the stereotype.

Both perceiving and treating the other as less than human are necessary conditions for dehumanization. Though unlikely, it might be possible for someone to perceive someone as less than human, and yet treat them as human. Imagine a racist who keeps his thoughts to himself, and behaves with decorum for pragmatic reasons. If it is truly possible for the racist's perception not to influence his treatment of the 'other', then this perception would not count as dehumanizing. However, I doubt that this could ever be the case in reality, as our beliefs influence our actions, and it would be almost impossible to not have one's perception of the other as less than human affect one's actions in any way. It is also possible to perceive the other as human, and yet not treat her as such. The Stanford Prison experiment<sup>1</sup> is a good example of a case where the 'guards' treated the 'prisoners' as less than human, while they might not have perceived them as less than human, at least when the experiment commenced.

Both these examples of perception and treatment of the other as less than human highlight that, even though it might be logically possible to separate these two conditions of dehumanization, it is highly unlikely that they will not reinforce each other in practice. The Stanford prison experiment shows that the one condition (in this case treatment) would very likely lead to the other (perception) in order for the people involved to be able to cope psychologically.

Dehumanization does not necessarily need to be a part of a conflictive ethos (it is possible to dehumanize individuals within a society which does not meet the other criteria of a conflictive ethos – there can be some people within a peace ethos that hold the above mentioned views about women); however, one cannot have a conflictive ethos without dehumanization.

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<sup>1</sup> In this experiment, university students who volunteered for the experiment were randomly assigned the role of either 'guard' or 'prisoner'. It became clear after only a few days that the assigned roles became integral to the student's identities when they were in the mock prison environment. All parties acted in accordance with their assigned roles, so much so that the experiment had to be prematurely terminated, as the guards were getting extremely abusive towards prisoners. See Phil Zimbardo, *The Lucifer effect: Understanding how good people turn evil*, 2008, Random House Inc.

## **Dehumanization in the context of a conflictive ethos.**

This part of the chapter analyses dehumanization and the role it plays in large scale systemic violence, in order to ascertain what would be necessary for a subsequent rehumanization to occur in such contexts. As is apparent from the previous section, there is the possibility of dehumanization being present in an ethos of peace. However, my focus here is on the specific role that dehumanization plays in protracted conflicts, specifically how it perpetuates the conflictive ethos. Particularly, dehumanization of the 'other' or the 'out-group' in situations of protracted conflict allows the 'in-group' to make sense of and create meaning in these types of situations.<sup>1</sup> I therefore turn now to a more in depth treatment of the role of dehumanization of others in a conflictive ethos, and how, in such contexts, dehumanization is carried out. Daniel Bar-Tal, whose account of the conflictive ethos was considered in Chapter 1, makes a case for the claim that dehumanization is a central feature of protracted conflict.<sup>2</sup> By his account, it is easier to maintain support for the conflict when the enemy group is dehumanized, and a review of past and present protracted conflict reveals that victims of systemic violence are dehumanized as a matter of course.

In order to illuminate the concept of dehumanization, the next part of the chapter presents the different types of dehumanization of the other used in protracted conflict.

### ***Dehumanization of the other***

From a careful study of the literature on protracted conflict, I have identified a typology of mechanisms and types of dehumanization employed as part of a conflictive ethos.<sup>3</sup>

A) Demonization is probably the most common form of dehumanization encountered in protracted conflict. The individual other is seen/presented as evil, harboring malicious intentions and ill will. All other features and characteristics of this individual are tainted by this 'evil', including traits that would otherwise be seen as positive. An example of this comes from Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of French anti-Semitism. Through the anti-Semite's equation of "Jewish" with "evil", the anti-Semite is able to cast intelligence, a trait of which he would otherwise approve, as being of negative value when it is the intelligence of a Jew. "Jewish intelligence", is thus seamlessly equated to "malicious cleverness".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the anti-Semite believes that no matter what the Jew does,

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<sup>1</sup> The dehumanization of the 'other' is the paradigmatic form of dehumanization at work in a conflictive ethos. Later in the chapter I will explain how this dehumanization of the other *necessarily* results in the dehumanization of the self according to my analyses, using the Afro-communitarian worldview as interpretative framework.

<sup>2</sup> Bar-Tal, Daniel. 2000. *From Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis* Also see, e.g., the analysis of Israelis' and Palestinians' beliefs in Bar-Tal (1990).

<sup>3</sup> Some of the following classifications I have gleaned from the literature, while others I have identified myself. I will clarify which fall into which category as I explain the different categories, through referencing sources of the classifications from the literature where relevant.

<sup>4</sup> See Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1948. *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Schocken Books, Paris

he cannot escape his 'evil' core. The fact that the demonized Jew cannot escape his 'evil' core in the eyes of the person who is dehumanizing Jews, becomes one of the central beliefs which feeds and perpetuates the conflictive ethos characteristic of European anti-Semitism. It helps to maintain her belief that any actions against Jews are, as a result of the fact that Jews are 'evil', justified.

B) The exact opposite to demonization, idolization, is also a type of dehumanization, though not as easily recognized as such. The idolized individual other becomes a demi-god, and is not criticized or questioned about her methods, morals, or whether she adheres to the ideological cause people believe her to stand for. This belief 'fixes' the character of the person being idolized, a feature that idolization shares with demonization. This concept could, I believe, be fruitfully applied to some aspects of African post-liberation politics. Unquestioning faith in liberation leaders, and continued struggle and revolutionary rhetoric can lead to a situation in which leaders are not held accountable by some citizens. Once a leader is idolized to this extent, this can fuel the ethos of conflict since any criticism of the leader by others is seen as treason or even sacrilege.

C) Dehumanization is also found in the form of paternalism. To see another person as not able to make their own decisions, since they lack the capacity to do so (when in fact they have this capacity), denies that person her humanity. To treat adults as if they were children in need of care insults their dignity, and denies them the recognition of their rationality and autonomy. Their characters are seen as static in the sense that they are not able to become fully fledged agents. During apartheid, the paternalistic view that many white people had of blacks, in many ways, stoked the fires of the conflict because it allowed white people to rationalize why black people ought to be governed by white people. So, this understanding of the 'other' as not being able to govern themselves provided them with the justification for their own political projects.

D) There is also dehumanization through indifference. As Elie Wiesel noted 'The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference'.<sup>1</sup> This type of dehumanization is at its core not being interested in grasping a human being as genuinely human, to grasp him or her as a human being with moral worth. Bernard Schlink's *The Reader* gives a description of this type of indifference. One of the characters comments on how someone could have been involved in Holocaust atrocities—'They're a matter of such indifference to him that he can kill them as easily as not'.<sup>2</sup> The suffering of Jews was ignored, and the Jew was seen as of little or no moral worth. The ability to be indifferent to the suffering of the 'other' is required in order for the conflictive ethos to be maintained, as it allows the person to only focus on her own suffering.

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<sup>1</sup> Wiesel, Elie. 1986, in *U.S. News & World Report* October 27

<sup>2</sup> Schlink, Bernhard. 1995. *The Reader*, Translated by Carol Brown Janeway, Vintage International



E) The final type of dehumanization I will mention here is idealization.<sup>1</sup> This is the type of dehumanization of others which is evident in ideals of the ‘noble savage’. It is recognized that the other has certain qualities which are proclaimed to be noble and valuable. However, at the same time, the ‘noble savage’ is not seen as on a par with the ‘civilized self’ in this case. Negritude can be seen as the taking up of and affirming such ‘ideals’ as they were imposed by Europeans. The problem with this is that these ideals necessarily exclude certain other ways of being, and thus denies that the agent has the ability to ‘be’ in other ways. In terms of the conflictive ethos, this may manifest as seeing her as the instantiation of the group’s ideals. In the context of a protracted conflict, a person who is part of a group, and who is perceived and expected to live up to the ideals of the group becomes ‘fixed’ within that character.

The same person can be dehumanized in different ways by different people—she might be demonized (A) as terrorist by one group, while another group idolizes (B) her as freedom fighter, and sees her as the instantiation of their group’s ideals (E). Others might react to her in a paternalistic fashion (C), claiming that she does not understand what she is doing. Still others might respond to her plight with complete indifference (D). One can also be dehumanized in different ways, at different times by the same person, though this means that there is logical inconsistency in the dehumanizing person’s worldview. For example, during Apartheid, dehumanization of blacks could take the form of paternalism (C) at times, which would deny them full agency, and yet blacks would also at times be demonized (A) and seen as fully fledged agents, but with necessarily malicious intentions.

Dehumanization of others within an ethos of conflict can be a strategy employed in order to make it easier for the agents of the atrocities to carry out their immoral deeds. This is so since dehumanized ‘others’ are perceived not to warrant a moral response (treatment) similar to persons or ‘others’ who *are* perceived as human. Franz Stangl’s admission that he could see Treblinka camp inmates as ‘cargo’ once they were naked (after all, *people* wear clothes!) illustrates how the dehumanization process of others can make it easier for people to perpetrate atrocities against others.<sup>2</sup> This is an example of a mechanism of dehumanization, humiliation. Particular mechanisms for dehumanization of others include stereotyping, selective processing of information, propaganda and the use of language, humiliation, and tactics of fear. They all feed into and structure the agents’ experiences in different ways through a dialectic of dehumanization. Depending on the type of dehumanization, one or more of these mechanisms could be in play. I will not dwell on these specific and particular strategies, but rather focus on how the general dialectic of dehumanization operates.

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Paul C. Taylor for alerting me to this specific category.

<sup>2</sup> Sereny, Gitta. 1974. *Into That Darkness: from Mercy Killing to Mass Murder, a study of Franz Stangl, the commandant of Treblinka*, McGraw-Hill. p. 201

Dehumanization occurs in a spiraling dialectic, where perception leads to differential treatment, and differential treatment in turn leads to different perceptions. So, treatment as *not*-human reinforces the perception of the other as *not*-human, which in turn leads to treatment which is even more removed from what the agent would see as befitting a human. Specific ways in which people are treated reinforce the perceptions of the other as *not*-human, as differential treatment of the other is normalized.<sup>1</sup> The more the treatment is normalized, the less people are inclined to question the justification for their perceptions, and vice versa. This dehumanization process can span across generations, as perceptions and ways of treating another group are passed on to the next generation in moral and other education. For example, stereotypes are easily passed on, as most information available would be biased, and social contact is already informed by, and therefore 'skewed' by the learned stereotypes.

### ***Afro-communitarianism and dehumanization***

So far in this chapter I have not focused on dehumanization *specifically* according to Afro-communitarianism. In order to address how the Afro-communitarian worldview would affect our understanding of dehumanization, two issues will be addressed, namely dehumanization of others according to Afro-communitarianism, and secondly, the related issue of the dehumanization of self.

As seen in the previous section, victims are dehumanized, and therefore not treated with the appropriate responses befitting a human being. In this section, I will show how *perpetrators* are dehumanized as they are not acting humanely, in other words, they are not instantiating what it is to be human when the term is understood normatively according to the Afro-communitarian understanding. Bystanders and witnesses to atrocities are dehumanized to the extent that their moral agency is affected, since societal pressure is against them acting ethically towards those perceived as the enemy. Thus, in addition to the dehumanization of opponents, to some extent *all* agents involved in a protracted conflict are dehumanized according to the Afro-communitarian, as humanization is, at core, about having a healthy collective self, and that involves having good relationships with others in the society.

This means all agents situated in a protracted conflict have their moral agency stifled or repressed given the circumstances, since the agent cannot act in ways she might otherwise do for fear of the reaction from her peers, and being branded a traitor. Witnessing and not living up to the higher standards of what is required for moral action in these circumstances means that moral agency, and therefore the individual's humanity, is affected. In order to enable a society to heal from

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<sup>1</sup> I use this term in the Foucauldian sense, in other words, the creation of a judgment about what is normal and what is abnormal. See Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish* (1975)

the rifts of dehumanization, there needs to be a rehumanization of others — not only victims, but also perpetrators, bystanders, and beneficiaries.

Dehumanization for the Afro-communitarian would centrally have to do with being removed, isolated and excluded from the collective self. Think, in the apartheid context, of forced removals, the migrant labour system, and different tribal ‘home’ lands. These projects all had a dehumanizing effect on those oppressed under apartheid, as it divided the oppressed group and subsequently harmed the social relations within that group. Practices such as the solitary confinement of political prisoners is another example of what the Afro-communitarian would centrally regard as dehumanizing.

Most importantly from an Afro-communitarian perspective, self and other humanization is intertwined, as becoming fully human is dependent on treating others humanely. For the Afro-communitarian, when referring to ‘dehumanization’, this includes an erosion of one’s humane responses (dehumanization of the self), as well as a perception of others as not being worthy of similar respect and value as myself (dehumanization of others). Self and other humanization are *necessarily* intertwined according to the Afro-communitarian, and the same holds for self and other dehumanization. As Desmond Tutu writes,

*Ubuntu* means that in a real sense even the supporters of apartheid were victims of the vicious system they implemented and which they supported so enthusiastically. Our humanity was intertwined. The humanity of the perpetrator of apartheid’s atrocities was caught up and bound up in that of his victim whether he liked it or not. In the process of dehumanising another, in inflicting untold harm and suffering, the perpetrator was inexorably being dehumanised as well. I used to say that the oppressor was dehumanised as much as, if not more than, the oppressed...<sup>1</sup>

According to the Afro-communitarian understanding of human being, dehumanizing others is *necessarily* (not just contingently) the dehumanization of the self. When the self is dehumanized, that has the result that the self is not perceived (by herself) to deserve the same moral treatment as others. She might, for instance, exclude herself from moral rules and regulations that she applies to others. The ability to universalize action is at the very core of the definition of morality, and so it becomes clear that the self-dehumanized person has a defective moral agency.

To clarify how exactly other and self are related in the process of dehumanization, allow me to return to the forms of dehumanizing the other explained earlier, and show how the dehumanization of the other would result in the simultaneous dehumanization of the self. The first type of dehumanization of the other, demonization, has the effect of dehumanizing the self through inculcating a Manichean worldview, which denies that the line of good and evil also runs through your own heart. Not being able to distinguish the ability of another to be either good or evil, or both,

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p35

means that the self becomes callous through not treating the other humanely. This affects the self's moral capabilities. Idolization of another, on the other hand, dehumanizes the self through affecting her reasoning and rationality. She is unable to admit to mistakes in the idol, or unwilling to accept them, and therefore needs to resort to self-deception in order to keep up the illusion. The self is not seen as equal, or on a par with the other, which affects her moral judgment of any situation which relates to the idolized other. Dehumanizing the other through paternalism results in not respecting and recognizing the other's ability for autonomous decisions, and this dehumanizes the self through not allowing equal relations to foster, which would develop the self's humanity. Dehumanizing the other through indifference also dehumanizes the self, according to the Afro-communitarian. Indifference and callousness in the face of another human being's suffering makes the self less human, in that it makes her less humane. Idealization of others also dehumanizes the self, as the self who dehumanizes the other in this way also excludes for herself certain ways of 'being'. Relating to the other as an 'ideal' makes it impossible for healthy interpersonal relations to flourish between the agents, and it is this impossibility which is at the core of the self-dehumanization that accompanies all of the above ways of dehumanization. Now that we have an understanding of dehumanization, let us turn to the importance this has for reconciliation; namely, how we can rehumanize self and others in the aftermath of protracted conflict.

## **Rehumanization**

The reversal of dehumanization, namely rehumanization, is necessary in order to change a society from an ethos of conflict, to one with an ethos of peace.<sup>1</sup> This part of the chapter proposes a dialectical process of rehumanization utilizing imaginative understanding, with a focus on the interplay between treatment and perception. As explained above, self and other humanization are necessarily intertwined according to the Afro-communitarian worldview, and throughout the analysis I will flag how the humanization of other also humanizes the self, and how this in turn heals the 'collective self'.

According to Afro-communitarianism, in order to enable a society to heal from the rifts of dehumanization, in addition to a rehumanization of the self<sup>2</sup> (any self—whether victim, perpetrator, bystander or beneficiary), there needs to be a rehumanization of relevant 'others'—victims, perpetrators, bystanders and beneficiaries. The rehumanization process enables the self to realize that all these categories—victims, perpetrators, bystanders and beneficiaries—are flawed human

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal "From Intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis" *Political psychology*, Vol. 21 No 2 (2000) uses the term of a peace ethos to describe a society which does not operate under a 'conflictive ethos'. See chapter 1 for a complete explanation of these terms.

<sup>2</sup> In actual fact, it would be *in conjunction with*, as the rehumanization of the other simultaneously rehumanizes the self in certain respects. I will return to this later in the chapter.

beings, and that any one social group does not map exactly onto any of these categories. For example, the self's own group, which she might have seen thus far as 'the victim group,' could also include perpetrators.

Pumla Goboda-Madikizela's *A Human Being Died that Night*<sup>1</sup> humanizes a specific evil-doer for the reader, through a closer look at the individual perpetrator of atrocities. Although she does not specifically focus on the terminology of de- or rehumanization in her work (though she does mention it), I see her as engaging centrally with this notion. Goboda-Madikizela utilizes individuation of the particular perpetrator and understanding his context and background in order to rehumanize him in the eyes of her readers. She individuates Eugene de Kock (mentioned in earlier chapters) through getting to know him as a person, and trying to understand what motivated his actions. The book recounts her interviews with De Kock, and her reflections on their conversations. Throughout her interviews, she scrutinizes his crimes; dwelling on the particular atrocities he committed in order to understand how he could have performed these deeds. She is surprised to find that she can relate to someone who committed such evil, and in this way exposes De Kock's humanity throughout the book.

Note that individuation does not equal *individualization*, in any atomistic fashion, and so there is no inherent contradiction in using individuation to rehumanize in the context of a communitarian worldview such as Afro-communitarianism. The reason for this is because this worldview demands and values difference, as explained in chapter 2. Part of individuation in the Afro-communitarian worldview, therefore, would include situating the individual within his community, and recognizing his socially embedded nature. Individuation involves understanding his motivations and justifications for action, and according to the Afro-communitarian this will, as a matter of fact, be at core about the individual's interpersonal relationships and community. Goboda-Madikizela recognizes De Kock's socially embedded nature, and how he was situated within his community when he committed the atrocities he is in prison for. During the time of her interviews with De Kock (in prison) she highlights his need to be accepted back into the human community. Individuation, which has to occur to rehumanize, requires taking certain features of self and other into account, otherwise even individuation can fail to humanize. This is explained in more detail below. In the rest of this section I will focus on specific ways of performing the processes of individuation which lead to humanization.

Rehumanizing the other (and in the process the self) is a practice which has the imagination at its core. The imagination plays a central role in education within most cultures, with metaphors, proverbs and storytelling being a pivotal part of forming the moral compass of younger members of the community. The young listener is encouraged to imagine different perspectives and put herself

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<sup>1</sup> Goboda-Madikizela, Pumla. 2003. *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin.

in the different character's shoes. This ability of imaginative understanding becomes central to humanizing the other under the Afro-communitarian model. An example of the centrality of imagination within the Afro-communitarian moral framework can be gleaned from Antjie Krog's book *Country of My Skull*, where she describes one of the victims of apartheid delivering testimony at the TRC, lamenting that he could not *show* the panel what he was talking about when he was describing what the security police did in his house. Krog relates the story of Lekotse, a shepherd, who, in his testimony to the TRC relates how he attempted to try to understand the police, what they were doing and what their motivations were, and emphasizes that he was denied the possibility to understand. ("I asked them, 'What do you want?' but they never provided an answer."<sup>1</sup>) Throughout his testimony, he keeps asking questions, and relates how he was denied any answers.<sup>2</sup> Lekotse's story, Krog claims, is "all the more poignant [as he] can imagine himself in the other characters' positions, but no one seems to be able to empathize with his own. His empathy, his ability to think himself into other positions, goes beyond the night he is describing..."<sup>3</sup> This is apparent in his testimony, Krog argues, when he says it is a pity that he cannot show them his house so they can fully understand the situation and what happened. This ability to imagine yourself in the positions of others, as Lekotse does in his testimony, is, I believe, central to the African moral sensibility, and part of understanding that self and other is formed by their community.

The role of the imagination within ethics and politics, as I conceive of it here, focuses on its selective and discriminatory capacities, rather than its ability for free fantasy. 'Its job is more to focus on reality than to create unreality...'<sup>4</sup> I agree with Azar Nafisi when she writes that imagination is a form of empathy, and that 'carelessness, a lack of empathy... [is] the biggest sin... [since this is] to be blind to others' problems and pains. Not seeing them means denying their existence'.<sup>5</sup> To deny the other's existence in this way, denies that they affect who you are, as they are a part of your context and community, and thus part of the collective self, according to the Afro-communitarian understanding. The self's personhood is affected by others, whether she wants it to be or not. The callous ignoring of the other and concurrent lack of imagination can be explicitly linked to dehumanization as indifference (D), as it is a lack of imagination which allows indifference in the face of atrocities. Imagination can play a role in rehumanizing the other through enabling and overcoming indifference to the other's pains and plights. The imagination could also be used in order to combat different forms of dehumanization such as idolization (B) and demonization (A). Through

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<sup>1</sup> Krog, A. 2002. *Country of my skull*, second edition, Random House Publishers. p212

<sup>2</sup> Lekotse's testimony can be found in Krog, A. 2002. *Country of my skull*, second edition, Random House Publishers. p210 - 216

<sup>3</sup> Krog, A. 2002. *Country of my skull*, second edition, Random House Publishers. p218

<sup>4</sup> Nussbaum, Martha. 1992. *Love's knowledge: essays on philosophy and literature*, New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press. p77

<sup>5</sup> Nafisi, Azar, 2003. *Reading Lolita in Teheran – a memoir in books*, New York: Random House Publishers, New York. p 132

imaginatively understanding the context and influences on the other, one is able to see her as an agent working within a situation, rather than an essence driven, static character.<sup>1</sup> The imagination also plays a further role in the rehumanizing process, through engaging with the other not in the simplistic terms necessary for paternalism (C) and idealization (E),<sup>2</sup> but rather engaging the other in equal and genuine dialogue, which would undermine the perception of her as an ‘ideal’ of any kind, or as not able to make her own decisions. Through imaginatively engaging with the context which shapes the person who is subject to paternalism or ‘idealized’, it becomes clear that they are more than simply the one-dimensional representations which the dehumanizing person has previously regarded her to be.<sup>3</sup> The method of rehumanization which I propose is tailored to focus one’s imagination in the right way, so as to understand and rehumanize. In cases where dehumanization has been rife, to be able to see the other as ‘just like me in many respects’ allows for new avenues of dialogue, and the imagination is essential in order to start seeing the other in this way.

Imaginative engagement with others’ perspectives allows for trying to ‘grasp the reality of the other as a possibility for myself’<sup>4</sup>. Trying to apprehend the other’s reality will mean that if we engage with the other, we will see her humanity, and that she demonstrates *different ways* of being human. This can make people realize that the other is ‘just like me in many respects’, even if there are many differences. Though the people involved may be from different cultural, ethnic, social and economic backgrounds, or from opposite sides of a conflict, at base, humanity’s core values and needs are recognizable to others, and this opens the door for dialogue and authentic interaction.

A lack of imagination renders the lives and subjectivities of others invisible to us. The imagination is necessary in order to render these people’s lives, and their suffering, joys and sorrows, tangible and visible to us as the joys and sufferings *of a human being*. The imagination allows for engaging with the world of the other in ways which allows the self to recognize the other’s (as well as the self’s) ability to change. And recognition of this ability to change within context is, as I have argued, incompatible with dehumanization. This point relates to Afro-communitarian

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<sup>1</sup> The anthology *Judging and Understanding*, (Tabensky, Pedro. (ed) 2006. *Judging and Understanding: Essays on Free Will, Narrative, Meaning and the Ethical Limits of Condemnation*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.) concerns exactly how judgment might be affected by proper understanding. I do not take a stand on whether understanding means that one cannot judge here, but rather my point is that a proper engagement of the imagination through attention to particulars can make the actions of dehumanized others more understandable, and that from this it follows that I see them as more human, as their actions seem less foreign and alien to me. I could understand how I, had I been in a similar situation, might have acted in the same way.

<sup>2</sup> These are grouped together here since they both operate through the belief in the other’s limited capacities— the idealized person is perceived to have only a limited set of capacities, even though she sees these as positive capacities. The point is that the idealized person is not perceived as someone who can apply her agency outside of these ideal features.

<sup>3</sup> A good example of how to engage with others in this way is to realize that there are always many stories to be told about a particular place or person. See Chimamanda Adichie’s TED talk, available at [http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html)

<sup>4</sup> Noddings, Nel. 1984. *Caring – A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, USA, London, UK: University of California Press. p. 15

forgiveness in the previous chapter, which is a kind of invitation to another to change and, thereby, presupposes recognition of that other's ability to change. Being able to grant forgiveness in order to draw out change in the other, for her to be able to regain her humanity, requires the imagination to see that it is possible for the person to change.

The method of rehumanization I propose can be further illuminated through considering the notion of 'world-travelling,' found in the work of Maria Lugones and Isabelle Gummings. This will be brought into relation with Afro-communitarianism through showing how this notion of world-travelling allows rehumanization of the collective self, as well as *expanding* the collective self. While their accounts, as will become apparent, focus only on the *perception* of others, I will supplement these in order to provide space for the *treatment* of others. In this way, I will make clear the dialogic and dialectical ways in which rehumanization occurs.

"World-travelling", on Logunes's account, is an activity in which one attempts to enter the world of the other and learn the discourse of that world. It is seeing both yourself and the other agent (whose world you are travelling to) as you both are constructed in *her* world, and witnessing 'her own sense of herself from within her world'.<sup>1</sup> Experiencing world-travelling is to have 'the distinct experience of being in different worlds and of having the capacity to remember other worlds and ourselves in them'.<sup>2</sup> Logunes sees this world-travelling as a skill we all have and can develop to a greater or lesser extent, but which members of minority groups in a culture are especially adept at out of necessity. Minority groups *cannot* stay in their own 'worlds' in their day to day lives – when they venture out into their work, education and other environments, the 'worlds' they are embedded in are not their own. I submit that because of the history in South Africa, it is possible that black people have been forced to become adept at moving between their 'own worlds' and the 'white world' out of necessity. White South Africans have not gained this skill to the same extent and degree, as they have not been (and are still not) forced to travel between different worlds for their livelihood, as many black South Africans have for work, business and education.

Logunes argues that the method of world-travelling is necessary in order to treat others ethically, especially in multi- or cross-cultural contexts, making this method ideal for a racially 'charged' society such as South Africa. The ethical treatment of others results from the recognition of the other as human, and the method of world travelling is an especially effective way to enable one person to see the humanity of the other. The 'worlds' Logunes refers to can be different ethnic groups, religious groups, cultures, worldviews, or value sets. These, I submit, could be interpreted from within the Afro-communitarian framework as different and/or overlapping collective selves. One might have to travel to a different 'world' in order to be able to engage with one's neighbor, if

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<sup>1</sup> Logunes, Maria. 1987. 'Playfulness, 'world'-traveling, and loving perception' in *Hypatia* 2, Volume 2 No 2. p. 8

<sup>2</sup> Logunes, Maria. 1987. 'Playfulness, 'world'-traveling, and loving perception' in *Hypatia* 2, Volume 2 No 2. p. 11



that person has different values and has had a dissimilar upbringing to one's own. For my purposes, in a context where an enemy group has been dehumanized, world-travelling can rehumanize the enemy other through rendering the humanity of the enemy group visible, and in the process rehumanizes the collective self through overcoming the arbitrary exclusion of the other group from its moral community.

Isabelle Gunnings utilizes Logunes' concept of world-travelling, applying it to a political context. Gunnings' version of world-travelling is designed as a way of engaging with, what the agent sees as, completely foreign and alien to herself. Both Logunes and Gunnings focus on describing a method which can enhance understanding and would lessen the chances of imposing one's own worldview onto others, or mistaking your personal perspective as the universal one. I will consider Gunnings' methodology, and show how it can be productively utilized as a method of humanization according to the Afro-communitarian worldview.

As Gunnings interprets the methodology of world-travelling, it has three steps: 1) understanding your own historical context; 2) attempting to see yourself as the 'other' might see you; 3) attempting to recognize the complexities of the 'other's' context through trying to understand her world from her own point of view.<sup>1</sup> These steps are all for the purposes of recognizing the other's autonomy, and therefore not imposing one's own values upon her. Not recognizing the other's autonomy, and imposing one's values upon the other is, as Gunnings puts it, 'arrogant perception'.<sup>2</sup> For my purposes, as the dehumanized other is cast as foreign and alien to the person who has dehumanized her, this process of world-traveling is a way of dealing with, or overcoming, this perception of extreme distance which has been created between the self and the other.

Within a rehumanization process, the first of Gunnings' steps is intended to help the traveler recognize her own autonomy<sup>3</sup> within her context, and how it is possible for her to make decisions not limited by the assumptions and pre-conceptions of her society. The second and third steps are aimed at recognizing similarities across groups, which assist in the realization that the dehumanized other has projects, emotions, aspirations, and relationships in the same way the self does. Step 2 requires an investigation of both the historical and personal details of the traveler's association to the other; this allows the self to investigate how her moral and other education, her context and situation, might skew perceptions of the other. Step 3 requires an examination of the other's

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<sup>1</sup> Gunnings, Isabelle. 1991-2. 'Arrogant perception, world-travelling and multicultural feminism: The case of female genital surgeries,' in *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 23. pp. 194

<sup>2</sup> This is a term coined by feminist scholar Marilyn Frye. See "In and Out of Harm's Way," in Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, Freedom: Crossing Press, 1983

<sup>3</sup> Gunnings claims this step is to recognize the autonomy of the other, but why and how this is supposed to happen is unclear. This step is in my view rather an attempt at recognizing and reclaiming ones' own autonomy.

context, and searching for similar practices and values in one's own life in order to overcome the perception of the other as completely alien or foreign, through finding similarities between the traveler and the other.

Applying this method to rehumanization in a post-conflict situation will highlight the fact that world-traveling is not a unidirectional, step by step process, as it may appear to be in the work of Logunes and Gunnings.<sup>1</sup> When modified and applied in order to rehumanize in a post-conflict situation, the process is better described as a dialectic of humanization. I will not focus specifically on an Afro-communitarian understanding of world-travelling, except to point out that, as Afro-communitarianism is about the importance of *relationships*, the method requires a certain extent of *interaction* with the other when applied in a rehumanization process. This leads to changes in the way the other is perceived and treated. In Gunnings' hands, the method gives attention to how perception influences and affects treatment (and is, in this sense, unidirectional); what I add is how, in turn, treatment influences and affects perceptions, such that the method is dialectical. The interaction with the other, and how it changes the self, highlights and emphasizes the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood, which sees the self as deeply embedded and constituted by her relationships. So, what does world-travelling entail?

The first step (seeing oneself in historical context) requires the person intending to rehumanize to investigate her own historical situation, and more or less how and why it is that she holds the position in the society she finds herself in. This step illuminates the recognition of how we are all personally affected by the socio-political situation we find ourselves in, and how we are treated by others affects our worldview, self-esteem and perceptions of others.<sup>2</sup> This step requires an in depth interrogation of the agent's own identity, and how it was influenced and shaped by her context. An investigation such as this could lead to the realization of the complexities of the self, and how during conflict individuals' identities become dependent on their roles in the conflict.

As Bar-Tal has argued, the cause for which the individual is/was fighting often becomes an integral or core part of her identity.<sup>3</sup> To hold on to the conflict would be a way of trying not to face the void with which the agent might be left if peace has been negotiated. An investigation and reflection on one's own identity and context would make clear that in order to rehumanize the other, it might be necessary to re-forge one's own identity, as beliefs about the other as not-human is so central to her worldview. An investigation into one's own identity would also mean a reflection

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<sup>1</sup> Logunes and Gunnings might not be committed to world-travelling being unidirectional, however that it is uni-directional is the impression I got from their work.

<sup>2</sup> Samantha Vice's paper '*How do I live in this strange place?*' is an excellent example of this step of analyzing one's identity, and how it has been affected and formed, in practice.

<sup>3</sup> Bar-Tal, D. 2000 "From Intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis" *Political psychology*, Vol. 21 No 2

on possible inconsistencies in one's own attitudes and positions. On the treatment side of the dialectic, treating the enemy with respect, even if you do not perceive her as worthy of respect could change your perceptions of her, as her response to differential treatment might undermine stereotypical perceptions of her. It might then become clear that the reason why the other had lived up to certain expectations in terms of the self's view of her, as for example having ill will and malicious intent, (as the agent has been demonized – (A)), is because the other has been *reacting* to treatment which assumes she will behave in this way. Acting towards the other as if she has malicious intentions could then easily draw out a reaction from the other which confirms this bias—through the other internalizing perceptions of her, predictions of malicious intent turns out to be a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'.

The second step (seeing yourself as the other sees you) involves an investigation of your relations to the other, and how you might be perceived by the other. If this conflicts with your perception of yourself, it is necessary to investigate why the other might have these perceptions.<sup>1</sup> To realize why the enemy might see you as oppressive, for example, might lead to an effort to act in ways which would not reinforce these perceptions. Treating the enemy differently might undermine their perceptions of you, and interactions could become less strained. As part of this step, it is also advisable to see yourself not only as this particular other group sees you, but in even more ways, from even more perspectives. So, to rehumanize would then mean trying to imagine how others, not only the dehumanized other, but also, for example, people in the future, or from different cultural contexts or different situations, might see your own actions and beliefs. What is it that has become normalized in this context, but is in fact not necessarily as 'natural' as people have believed? Is it possible to imagine a time, place, or reason why this should not be seen as normal? Then compare this, to the situation you are trying to understand. For example, future generations might look back at our meat industry in disgust, not understanding how we could have been so cruel. Or, future generations might look back at how we are letting people in some parts of the world die of starvation, while we spend money on the newest items, in disgust, and not understand how we might do this. This is a call to try to see how what you are doing might make you look like a 'moral monster' to others. Through imagining how others might demonize (A) the self, it is possible to begin looking at people or groups demonized in the present context from a different perspective—understanding that reasons for their actions might not stem from malicious intent, but could possibly seem 'normal' from their perspective, and/or could be a reaction or a survival mechanism to deal with a specific context. This could have the effect of seeing how the person you want to humanize might also be in a situation in which it is hard for her to realize that there is anything

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<sup>1</sup> Again, Samantha Vice's paper 'How do I live in this strange place?' is an excellent example of this step in practice.

wrong with her actions, as her actions are so 'normal' from her perspective. Realizing that others might dehumanize the self as an idol (B) or ideal (E) (while the self knows that she does not live up to the image others might have of her) may prompt the self to start looking at others in alternate ways, in ways that do not 'simplify' them according to preconceived stereotypes. With regards to others whom are dehumanized in a paternalistic fashion (C), the self might come to realize that the other acting in ways which live up to the self's conceptions of her as 'childlike' could in fact be a strategy through which more benefit can be accrued than if she insists on her autonomy. Understanding that under the circumstances, the 'cost' of insisting on making her own decisions, might not be worth the 'cost' in this particular case, highlights that this could be an agent's response to oppression, and not an inability to take care of herself if she found herself in different circumstances. Realizing that childlike behavior might be a (unconscious) strategy employed for own gain might allow the self to overcome her perceptions of the other as not able to make her own decisions, and might lead the self to treating her as an equal.

The third step mirrors step one, as the agent now attempts to see the other from her own perspective, embedded in a social and historical context, as she did for herself in step 1. Seeing the other in her context involves understanding that the conflict is part of a complex and organic social situation. In order to understand the complexity of the social situation, one needs to examine the situation which gave rise to the dehumanization of the other and, importantly, the self. In this step then, the individuation of the enemy leads to an overcoming of stereotypes along with the recognition of agency. As soon as individuals within the enemy group are treated *as* individuals, their responses may alter, and it becomes easier to perceive them as individuals as well. Individuation<sup>1</sup> would work against the stereotypes employed in idolization (B), paternalism (C) and idealization (E), through attempting to understand the other's intentions and motivations (without assuming that they are malicious). This opens up the possibility for the self to have a different perspective on the other—for example, it might be easier to understand how a person could perpetrate atrocities once it becomes clear how she felt pressured into committing them, very often out of fear for the consequences. Bernard Schlink's *The Reader*<sup>2</sup> employs this strategy in its depiction of Hannah, the concentration camp guard, whose embarrassment at being illiterate drives her to accept work in which reading and writing are not prerequisites. As a result of Hannah's drive to conceal her illiteracy, she accepts work she might not otherwise have considered. In the end, she even falsely confesses to writing a report; a confession that results in her life imprisonment. As vile as accepting employment as a concentration camp guard might seem, Hannah's position becomes easier to

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<sup>1</sup> It is clear in a work such as Goboda-Madikizela's, mentioned before, how investigating the particularities of specific individuals highlights their humanity. It is not easily possible to see someone who has complex emotions, feelings and 'justifications' for their own actions, as merely instantiating a particular stereotype.

<sup>2</sup> Schlink, Bernhard. 1995. *The Reader*, Translated by Carol Brown Janeway, Vintage International

understand once her fear and embarrassment at being illiterate come to light. Individuation, and attempting to understand the other and her actions from her own perspective allows the self to engage with the other as having motivations, emotions, relationships and needs similar to the self, which helps overcome the indifference in (D).

From engaging in these steps, which mutually reinforce each other, and engaging with a post-conflict situation in this way, it is possible to overcome dehumanization. For cross-conflict understanding to be possible, we must be prepared to see the world in novel ways, and attempt to create new categories for understanding. To do this we should not only appreciate and acknowledge our own cultural and historical context, but also the cultural and historical context of the other.

World travelling, as I have applied it here, is meant to show that the boundaries of culture, ethnicity, religion, race, etc., on opposite sides of a conflict, need not continue to be obstacles for seeing the other as human. By understanding the other as a subject like myself, I am able to overcome stereotypes and see her as human, since I will, through this method, truly respect her autonomy. Despite it being difficult to react in this way to the dehumanized other, since it requires much more active engagement on the part of the self, it involves skills all agents have to a greater or lesser extent, and which can be developed. This method also allows for a slow change of attitudes over time, starting with small changes in attitude and behavior which eventually could culminate in drastic change.

The dialectic of improving treatment and perception of the enemy should eventually allow enemies to see each other as having a depth of emotion and complexity which would foster respect and a grasping of the true alterity of the other, in which being 'human' and being 'different' are no longer incompatible.<sup>1</sup>

### **Collective rehumanization and healing societal pathologies**

In this final part of the chapter I argue that as humanization, according to the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood, is centrally about collective and political identities, this means that humanization is the perfect tool to deal with the pathologies inherent in these identities. To say that there is nothing left of the pathologies created by colonialism is to underestimate the psychological

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<sup>1</sup> In this context the goal of humanization is to reveal the underlying aspects we share as humans, and this is the relationship between humanization and humanism I referred to at the start of the chapter. Re-humanization requires the belief in a shared human nature, in the case of Afro-communitarianism the fact that we are all social beings to our very core. I am of course aware of the issues one might have with the philosophy of humanism, of which Foucault's critique is perhaps the most striking. I however remind the reader that my aim is not to defend Afro-communitarianism as a metaphysical or moral theory, but merely to see what would follow from this worldview with regards to reconciliation and its cognate concepts. Defending humanism as a doctrine against anti-humanists like Foucault therefore falls outside the scope of this project. That said, I do not think anti-humanism provides an insurmountable obstacle for the Afro-communitarian view, as it could be acceptable to construct a dominant narrative of communitarian personhood, as long as the dominant narrative is aimed at providing conditions in which human beings could live flourishing lives.

impact that apartheid had, and I believe there is ample evidence that the scars of colonialism and apartheid have not yet healed in the collective psyches of the groups involved. I explain here how it might be possible, through the humanization process, to deal with, and perhaps even eventually heal, the 'inferiority' and 'superiority' complexes.

In order to address these pathologies, I propose that *Afro-communitarian* humanization can provide a possible avenue for the societal therapy essential to overcoming them and start the healing process. What makes us human, according to Afro-communitarianism, is our capacity for the meaningful interpersonal relationships we are necessarily entangled in. The imagination can, and should, be utilised in order to attempt to understand the depth of emotions involved in the other person's relationships, which is a direct result of the complexity and depth of the inner lives of humanity. The imagination ought to be harnessed, and it should be done in conjunction with a continual critical assessment of our relations and relationships to each other as members of different races in South Africa.

Only humanization will start to deal with these complexes, and until both the inferiority and superiority complexes have been faced, they will continue to haunt our public and private psyches and relationships. Focusing on the depth of others' ability and capacity for meaningful relationships might allow us to remember that we are all members of the same community, and that my flourishing depends on yours. The superiority complex can be related to the type of 'arrogant perception' Gunnings argues can be overcome by the process of world-travelling, while the inferiority complex could be the result of a type of 'self-effacing perception'. This second type of perception could be overcome through world-travelling as well, but only in conjunction with starting to see the self and her own 'world' as equal to others. Both of these complexes dehumanize, as the person(s) and group(s) who suffer from them cannot relate to one another on an equal basis. The fact that there is not the possibility for equal relations until these pathologies have been dealt with means that relationships will remain superficial, and *ubuntu* relationships (that embody shared identity and good will) would remain impossible. As healthy interpersonal relationships are the core of a society with collective virtue, this means that society cannot flourish, which results in none of the individuals in the society being able to flourish. In essence, that means there has to be a collective humanization project for racial reconciliation in South Africa. That is, at its core, what Afro-communitarianism would prescribe, and thus an Afro-communitarian conception of humanization would be very well suited to deal with these societal pathologies. As Desmond Tutu wrote,

We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'a person is a person through other people'. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong.' I participate, I share. A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes

from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that social structures in South Africa at the moment overwhelmingly still materially benefit white people (and a few black people), is not the same as saying that it is good for them. It is *not* good for the people involved, and this is what the humanization from an Afro-communitarian perspective draws attention to. Whites need to recognise that their ill gained benefits have been bad for them, morally, it has made them “less of a *mensch*,” and affects society as a whole. What makes us human is our capacity for love, and the interpersonal relationships we are entangled in.

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p35

## Chapter 7: Afro-communitarian racial reconciliation

This chapter will draw on all of the concepts discussed so far, and sketch an alternative account of reconciliation to the ones prominent in the literature, based on an Afro-communitarian worldview. This account of reconciliation is able to focus on and deal with the issue of identity transformation integral for reconciliation, and brings us back to an account of philosophy as therapy in the post-colonial African context.

First I summarize the effects on our understanding of the concept of reconciliation when taking an Afro-communitarian starting point, and suggest some tentative reasons why we might want to accept this view of ethics and the person over a Western conception. These reasons include the claim that this view captures some core empirical evidence about being human, and that it could shed light on some current misunderstandings present in the contemporary South African context.

### Afro-communitarianism and the nature of Reconciliation

Reconciliation in this Afro-communitarian view is part of promoting and maintaining what is necessary for a flourishing society, the aim of *collective virtue*, and thus constitutive of personal and societal flourishing. Understanding 'being human' as a collective, communal enterprise has, as this dissertation has shown, implications for how responsibility, justice, forgiveness and humanization are conceptualized. Here is a summary of the implications.

An Afro-communitarian conception of the self would lead to a very different conception of responsibilities and what would be needed, in terms of responsibility, for the reconciliation process. Responsibility for structural and collective crimes would be expected from individuals as well as society, and would require recognition of collective or shared responsibility. According to the Afro-communitarian approach to responsibility, the agent and her moral responsibilities are necessarily related to the community in which the individual finds herself. As the community creates the person, the person is dependent on her community and her agency is formed by the community in central ways. According to this understanding of the person, and of morality, moral responsibility can therefore not be merely individualistic. In some ways there has to be responsibility for the group, the collective – and this then needs to be shared amongst the members of the group. The collectively responsible agent is not 'trans-individual', but rather 'relational'<sup>1</sup>. The agent is a collective agent, not in a strange metaphysical sense, but rather in the sense that all the individuals in the community are related and their relationships constitute this collective agent, and thus their relationships also constitute its collective virtues or vices. As an Afro-communitarian conception of

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<sup>1</sup> For another account of a relational understanding of the collective moral agent, see Larry May's *Sharing Responsibility*, 1992, University of Chicago Press



morality situates moral value in relationships, and the consequent communal flourishing of these relationships, and not primarily in individuals, it would necessarily follow that the collective (the community), as well as the individuals who constituting it, need to take responsibility for building harmonious relationships. As re-building harmonious relationships after a crime which affected the community (and thus also individuals within that community) requires accountability for these harms, it is necessary to evaluate what such responsibility conceptually entails. As the person is understood from an Afro-communitarian perspective, this view expects *more* from the individual in terms of taking responsibility for and recognizing complicity in collectively (as well as individually) perpetrated harms, than would be expected under an individualistic understanding of personhood. Once it is established that collective responsibility is necessary for reconciliation in the South African context, (when the Afro-communitarian worldview is one's starting point), this leads one to ask what that means in terms of justice.

Reconciliation "cannot be achieved without justice to the aggrieved party"<sup>1</sup>, and cannot occur if there is still a general feeling of injustice and non-accountability for violations. Discussions on justice and reconciliation often result in an appeal to 'restorative justice', and it is generally accepted that the TRC process instantiated this type of justice. Though this dissertation supports the notion of restorative justice, and affirms its links with African personhood as set forth by Desmond Tutu,<sup>2</sup> it must be noted that, contra what people have assumed with regards to Tutu's understanding of justice, his account presupposes that restorative justice is never complete without reparation. This implies that the TRC process did not, in fact, instantiate restorative justice, as there were not proper reparations for crimes. Without reparations proper, no restoration has really occurred, as the society has not been "restored" to a just society, either economically, or otherwise. Part of the failures of restoration is centrally about the lack of responsibility taken by beneficiaries. Without taking responsibility, the people harmed have not yet received the respect they deserve as equals. In other words, part of the 'restoring' in restorative justice is the restoring of human dignity, which needs to be addressed through reparations. Such reparations should include not only economic aspects, but also other social programs which would allow for all citizens to regain their human dignity and self-esteem (which would exclude the perpetuation of both the inferiority and superiority complexes.)

Restorative justice requires responsibility to be taken by the perpetrator and beneficiary groups, for the harms which transpired, and so we can see how considerations of justice support my earlier arguments regarding responsibility. Whereas both retributive and rehabilitative justice can transpire without responsibility being assumed on the part of the perpetrators (and/or beneficiaries)

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<sup>1</sup> Cunneen, Chris 'Reparations and Restorative Justice: Responding to the Gross Violations of Human Rights' in Strang, Heather and Braithwaite John (eds), 2001, *Restorative Justice and Civil Society* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp 97-8

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000. p 51-2

of harm, restorative justice *requires* that responsibility be taken by people for their part in, benefits from, or their inherited gains from injustice and harms, and that the groups involved act on this sense of responsibility.

As collective responsibility is required for justice and reconciliation according to Afro-communitarianism, this explains why anger and resentment towards the white population is felt by many black people in the present socio-economic context within which such collective responsibility is largely absent. This is *especially* the case as forgiveness was conditionally extended towards some perpetrators of apartheid crimes.

Afro-communitarianism requires forgiveness from victims in order to open up the possibility for a relationship with perpetrators and beneficiaries of harm. This relates back to the necessity for responsibility, as recognition of responsibility on the part of perpetrators/beneficiaries is what completes the 'circle of forgiveness'. The concept of forgiveness, when understood from an Afro-communitarian framework, denotes a central mechanism of humanization through opening the possibility to 'become wholly human' after harm has undermined the humanity of both victim and perpetrator. Humanization, it was argued, lies at the core of the Afro-communitarian worldview, and is the common thread and justification behind the understandings of justice, responsibility, and forgiveness implied by this view. The imagination can be utilized in order to attempt to understand the depth of emotions involved in another person's relationships. After all, what makes us human, according to Afro-communitarianism, is our capacity for the meaningful interpersonal relationships we are necessarily entangled in. As such, seeing the other as human requires seeing them in terms of their complex relationships with other humans and with their world.

The humanization of self and other (in the context of the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood) is required for addressing, the 'inferiority' and concurrent 'superiority' complexes as diagnosed by Franz Fanon and Steven Bantu Biko. These complexes reach deeply within individual and collective psyches and identities, and political solutions which do not address these deep seated issues will be inadequate.

The nature of reconciliation from an Afro-communitarian perspective therefore provides a model of reconciliation which centrally requires humanization of all the groups involved, and a transformation of their particular identities to a new group identity which includes the former enemy group. Note that this does not imply the loss of particular ethnic and cultural identities, as long as these ethnic and cultural identities do not have a particular dehumanized understanding of others as a central or ineradicable feature. In fact, as explained in chapter 2, difference between individuals and groups needs to be fostered and celebrated, as long as they are compatible with the

'becoming human' of all others in society. The 'collective self' needs to expand to include everyone in society in order for reconciliation to be complete.

### **Closing remarks**

My aim in this dissertation has not been to argue that we ought to be Afro-communitarians in our moral lives as opposed to, say, Kantians or utilitarians. However, I would like to conclude the dissertation by highlighting some possible advantages of pursuing the Afro-communitarian view of 'human being' in future research. First, a few reasons why this understanding of reconciliation might be superior to those with a different moral framework is suggested from some empirical evidence in social psychology. Second, I reiterate how projects such as this one might support and work towards the decolonization of the mind and intellectual landscape as prescribed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o.<sup>1</sup> Finally, I review the ways in which this project can allow for a productive analysis of some contemporary misunderstandings and complications that still afflict the reconciliation project in South Africa.

### ***African ethical theory in post-conflict situations***

One of the reasons why an Afro-communitarian framework might prove useful in our projects of trying to reconcile societies in the aftermath of protracted conflict is that it can take into account some of the empirical evidence about the importance of *situation* in identity formation.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly important in contexts of protracted conflict and warrants further attention. It follows that the Afro-communitarian understanding of reconciliation might be superior to ones with a different moral framework in taking into account some empirical evidence in social psychology.

Taking into account empirical evidence which postulates a strong connection between conflict and both individual and group identity, I propose that an Afro-communitarian conception of personhood can not only take the implications of this into account, but also offer a coherent explanation for why identities are affected in this way by protracted conflict. Research about identity formation in social psychology supports the claim that identity is formed in response to one's social context, not only in cases of protracted conflict, but in general.<sup>3</sup> As this is accepted as a truism in much social psychology, I will not spend much time defending the plausibility of this claim. One example of how identity is formed in relation to context is the acceptance of, and identification with, specific social roles within a situation of conflict and how the identification with specific social roles creates and sustains (or breaks down) individual and group identities. As should be clear from the

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<sup>1</sup> See Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Heinemann, 1986

<sup>2</sup> I do not claim that Afro-communitarianism is unique in this regard, merely that it does have this feature in its favour.

<sup>3</sup> See for example the *Journal of Adolescence*, Volume 19, Issue 5, Pages 401-500 (October 1996) for theoretical as well as empirical research on the importance of context for identity formation.

elements of the conflictive ethos as set out by Bar-Tal encountered in chapter 1, these conflicts affect individuals and their sense of self, their group as well as collective identities. In conjunction with the empirical research which supports Bar-Tal's conclusions,<sup>1</sup> the landmark Stanford Prison Experiment is a good example of how individuals take on identities in accordance with assigned social roles.<sup>2</sup> In this experiment, university students who volunteered for the experiment were randomly assigned the role of either 'guard' or 'prisoner'. It became clear after only a few days that the assigned roles became integral to the student's identities when they were in the mock prison environment. All parties acted in accordance with their assigned roles, so much so that the experiment had to be prematurely terminated, as the guards were getting extremely abusive towards prisoners. This is relevant in terms of what seems to be the acceptance of, and total adherence to, the particular ascribed social roles. Setting up social roles in terms of conflict with each other, means that the agents in those roles take the socially prescribed conflict and contrast between self and other as central to their identity in that situation.

From research such as this, it is interesting to note that people who have an overly individualistic understanding of themselves and others ('idiocentrics' as Harry Triandis<sup>3</sup> calls them) could be mistaken when citing individualistic reasons for their actions and behavior. They could be mistaken in what is actually the motivation behind their actions, as they fail to take into account how their social embeddedness affects their choices. In other words, it seems that individualistic cultures and idiocentric people are mistaken about the types of creatures humans actually are. As Triandis claims, idiocentrics tend to use character traits and robust internal dispositions in describing others and themselves, while allocentrics (people who have a communitarian understanding of personhood) tend to refer to "context, situation, and group disposition"<sup>4</sup> According to social psychology research, the allocentric's perception of reality is closer to how things actually are—we are the types of creatures that respond to context, and for most of us, our behavioral traits are not robust across situations.

This research, which claims to have proven that we do not have a robust character across situations, but rather that the situation is extremely relevant in determining our behavior, seems an incredibly important point to take into account when discussing reconciliation. It seems that when people are given a certain role that they take on this identity as it is ascribed to them, and so in conflict, their roles as 'enemies' affects (or even determines) behavior of the groups towards each

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal has done empirical research which supports this claim. See for example Bar-Tal et al. 'Intergroup biases in conflict: Reexamination with Arab pre-adolescents and adolescents' in *International Journal of behavioural development*, 2007, 31 (5), pp423-432

<sup>2</sup> See *Phil Zimbardo The Lucifer effect: Understanding how good people turn evil*, 2008, Random House Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Harry C. Triandis, 'Individualism-Collectivism and Personality', *Journal of personality*, 2001, Volume 69 Issue 6

<sup>4</sup> Harry C. Triandis, 'Individualism-Collectivism and Personality', *Journal of personality*, 2001, Volume 69 Issue 6, pp 914

other. Specifically, for my purposes, many individuals' identities become dependent on their roles in protracted conflict.<sup>1</sup> The cause fought for might have become so central in the person's identity that holding on to the conflict stands as a way of not facing the void with which the agent might be left if peace and political reconciliation has been negotiated, unless her identity is reforged. In other words, for many people in a protracted conflict, the conflict itself becomes so important that they define themselves through the conflict. One might object that, from looking at the implications of The Stanford Prison Experiment and other social psychology experiments, identity formed in conflict can be easily shrugged off, as it seems the 'guards' in the experiment did as soon as they left the mock prison environment and were not interacting with the 'prisoners'. To relate this to the real world of conflict, it would be a mistake to conclude that once a peace treaty has been negotiated between the two sides of a conflict, that the identities of the groups and their constituent members, will become separated from the conflict and the roles they see themselves and others as having played in this conflict. Unlike the experimental environment of the Stanford prison, the people involved in protracted conflict have formed most, if not all their social roles and constituent identities in relation to the conflict, and have a long and entrenched background of having done so. The formation of identity and the important role that cultural and group history and collective memories plays in the formation of group identity, and the fact that individuals become so absorbed within their groups during protracted conflict, means that the negotiating of a peace treaty will not change the underlying situation significantly, as a peace treaty leaves the situation mostly intact. This is so since the 'situation' in a protracted conflict includes the historical existence of the conflictive ethos, and this can, as history, not change significantly apart from *seeing* it as something else. In the case of the Stanford prison experiment, it was easy to end the experiment, pack away the props, and change the situation completely. In real life situations of protracted conflict, it is not so easy to 'pack away' the things which have propped up conflict—things such as stereotypes of the other group and structural and economic disadvantage—as these are structurally embedded within the present situation. People are enmeshed in bias-generating circumstances which partially fueled the conflict, and a situation would need to change substantially in order for bias to disappear. The fact that there is a certain context and structural features at play means that a certain identity is created and this identity cannot change until structural features change significantly. The identities of the next generation of people within a protracted conflict (or in its aftermath) do not escape these prejudice producing circumstances. They are either similarly entangled in the same (prejudice producing) social situations, or in a 'new' (new in its instantiations, still the same in its causes) set of prejudice producing circumstances. Some of the structural features would include the response

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<sup>1</sup> Refer back to Daniel Bar-Tal.

others have towards people who are perceived to be of a certain group, as well as ways in which the person views and understand her situation in this context, which would include beliefs and collective memories of victimhood.

In accordance with the understanding of how identity is created through our situation, it seems that the very broad categories of context, self- and other-evaluation according to preconceived stereotypes, and structural features of the social situation, would all need to be addressed when reconciliation is desired. This can be linked to the view of an Afro-communitarian ethic which perceives society as a communal moral agent. According to this view, there needs to be a change in society as a whole, as individuals can only be moral in a basically moral society. Examples of the atrocities which individuals commit under criminal and immoral social orders support this insight.<sup>1</sup> To claim that all that needs to be done in order to have reconciliation after an oppressive and conflictive social order is the collapse of this particular social order and its replacement with another, better one, is to assume that the *discontinuing* of moral atrocities equals a restoring of the moral balance. This, however, goes against all our common sense intuitions in our day to day lives which seem to require, at the very least, apologies, forgiveness, and/or punishment in order for a moral balance to be restored. It is naïve to think that once the atrocities have ceased, and the immoral social order has collapsed, that the situation has returned to, or has turned into, a context in which people are reconciled, or that their current identities would not be informed by the events which have transpired. In other words, to expect that abstract changes to situation such as the recognition of equality under the law is enough to rectify all the aspects of an unjust racial order, is enough to reconcile groups, while there continues to be inequalities with regards to life expectancy, education and so forth, is not realistic.

The Afro-communitarian understanding of the person, as it postulates a collective personhood and virtue, is able to explain why the context is so important to take into account for virtue, and therefore flourishing. If the context is not changed sufficiently, the lingering identities of victim and oppressor could simply keep changing dominant roles, unless there is a true forging of a new collective identity which supersedes the old group identities.

A second good reason for pursuing the Afro-communitarian understanding of personhood is that such projects might support and work towards the decolonization of the mind and intellectual landscape.<sup>2</sup> The Afro-communitarian account of reconciliation is able to focus on and deal with the issue of identity transformation integral to reconciliation, and instantiates philosophy as therapy in the post-colonial African context.

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<sup>1</sup> I have in mind such atrocities committed by individuals and groups under the command of a criminal state, such as in for example Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> See Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Heinemann, 1986

Pedro Tabensky argues that African philosophy has a distinctive aim, namely the “restitution of health, social and personal.”<sup>1</sup> I believe that this can be related to empowerment through articulating philosophical positions which take the context and cultural particularities of African places into account, and thereby reclaim the intellectual space denied to Africa during the racist project of colonialism. This can also be articulated as a decolonization of the mind.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, this makes the project of African philosophy, as a whole, reconciliatory.

According to Tabensky, what is usually referred to as Western philosophy has as its primary aim the search for truth. African philosophy also aims at truth, but puts the search for truth to work in its main project of the restoration of health. This dissertation was a project of African philosophy which had as its aim restoration of health lost by the colonial heritage of violent oppression and exploitation, through exploring the truths articulated within the context of Africa with regards to reconciliation. It was meant to deal with the postcolonial context, and be an instantiation of how philosophy can cast new light on old issues rife on this continent, problems which arise and are the effects of the continent having had a rupture with its past when the colonial project so violently, yet indifferently, carved the continent up into pieces of the pie meant for European consumption.

An Afro-communitarian view of the person seems reasonable (as seen from the empirical evidence of social psychology experiments in this chapter), and *desirable*, as it fosters community and harmony which is good for societal and individual mental and social welfare.

Political analysts and philosophers might object that this project is too idealistic, and that such a maximal understanding of reconciliation as I have supported will only serve to make people more cynical about the possibility for practical reconciliation. However, I believe that the account emphasizes exactly how difficult it is for a society to be reconciled after protracted conflict, and yet gives an account of how it might still be possible. Though many of us do not currently adhere to the Afro-communitarian worldview that underpins this account, it might be possible for us to critically and reflectively to learn to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> Tabensky, Pedro. ‘Post-colonial heart of African philosophy’, *South African Journal of Philosophy* Vol 27, no 4, 2008

<sup>2</sup> This term was coined by Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiongo and forms a central part of his argument in his book ‘Decolonising the Mind: the politics of Language in African literature’.

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