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## Analysing adolescents' reasoning about historical responsibility in dialogue between history education and social psychology

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**ABSTRACT:** Historical and moral consciousness have been studied by specialists in history education and social psychology, respectively, yet the two fields of study have remained separate also when they share an interest in the dynamics of how people respond to moral dilemmas, process them and create morally meaningful narratives of human conduct. This article seeks to identify concepts and interpretative frames that could be mobilised in analyses of shared material for the purpose of developing deeper understanding of the intersections of historical and moral consciousness in exchange between history education and social psychology. One of the authors has researched moral reasoning and moral sensitivity, the other has researched adolescents' historical consciousness. The empirical material was collected in 2008–2009, in a study of how Finnish upper secondary school students reason about transgenerational responsibility and reparation. How the students process and negotiate these issues was initially analysed as a manifestation of their historical consciousness. This article explores what approaches and concepts could be relevant when analysing the material in the framework of a social-psychological study of morality. The article is also an exercise in co-authoring where the authors have produced the text in dialogic exchange, writing one chapter each in turn and responding to each other's ideas.

**KEYWORDS:** historical consciousness, moral consciousness, moral psychology, history education, moral education, focus groups.

### Introduction

Historical consciousness and moral consciousness (the latter concept pertaining here to the complex of elements relating to moral sensitivity; see also Introduction to the special issue) have been extensively theorised and empirically studied by specialists of history education and social psychology, respectively. Yet the two fields of study remain largely alien to each other, despite a coinciding interest in questions of how people process moral dilemmas and create morally meaningful narratives of human conduct. This article seeks to identify concepts and interpretative frames in the study of historical and moral consciousness that can be mobilised and fruitfully married in future analyses of shared empirical material for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of the intersections between historical and moral consciousness. It can be read as an exercise in multidisciplinary study, however one can argue that constructing bridges between historical and moral consciousness should preferably go deeper into the crossdisciplinary or interdisciplinary level so as to better grasp the complexity of the topic. However, we hope this article will serve as a step along the path, showing openings and hesitations that come up in exchanges between two disciplines.

Jan Löfström has researched adolescents' historical consciousness and Liisa Myyry has done social-psychological research on moral judgment, moral sensitivity and moral motivation. The material discussed in the article was collected by Jan Löfström in 2008–2009,

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in a focus group study of how Finnish upper secondary school students reason about issues of transgenerational responsibility and historical reparations. How the students processed and negotiated these issues was seen as manifestations of their historical consciousness. This article explores what approaches and concepts could be relevant and rewarding when analysing the focus group material in the framework of a social-psychological study of morality, bringing a fresh view on the project that was initially hinged upon other conceptual premises.

The article is a co-authoring exercise where the contributions from the authors are in dialogic exchange. At first Jan Löffström describes the aims and the outcomes of his study. Liisa Myyry then discusses, from the perspective of social psychology, what conceptual approaches could be relevant and fruitful in analysing these focus groups. In the following chapter Löffström ponders upon these suggestions and the questions they raise, and in chapter four Myyry responds to those reflections. The final words present some concluding remarks on how the focus group might have been modified in the direction of integrating the study of historical and moral consciousness more closely.

### **Starting point: studying adolescents' moral consciousness via their reasoning on historical responsibility**

The research project on Finnish adolescents' reflections on historical responsibility and historical reparation, launched, in 2008, was propelled by the observation that issues of transgenerational responsibility and reparation were prominent in the global scale but there was next to no research on how people reason about transgenerational responsibility and see the meanings of historical reparation. Reconciling historical conflicts through history education has now become a topic of numerous educational initiatives (e.g. Han et al. (eds), 2012; Korostelina & Lässig (eds), 2013), the political, philosophical and judicial dimensions of historical reparations have been extensively studied (e.g. Barkan 2001; Elster 2004; Freeman et al. 2006; Nobles 2008; Thompson 2002; Torpey 2006; Wiebelhaus-Brahm 2009; Gibney et al. (eds) 2008), yet people's reflections on the rationale and justification of historical reparations still remain very much unexplored as they did also ten years ago.

Questions relating to the treatment of historical injustices are, for example, who if any was accountable for the unjust actions in the past, who has a moral right to speak on behalf of the perpetrators and the victims of past injustices now, and can people of a distant past be judged by today's moral standards, and on what premises? As people discuss these questions they express what kind of narratives of historical change and continuity they are predisposed to construct. For example, do people readily think of the past, the present and the future as connected by continuities or rather that they are separated by discontinuities? In the first alternative they may more willingly say that there is transgenerational moral responsibility, for example.

Perceptions of continuity and discontinuity lie at the heart of historical consciousness, a basic human disposition that one's interpretations of the past, expectations about the future and perceptions of the present inform and feed into each other (see, for example, Seixas (ed.), 2004.) It has also been suggested, notably by Jörn Rüsen (2004), that historical consciousness is a kind of narrative competence, ability to generate interpretations of the world where there are meaningful interrelations between the past, the present and the future. Rüsen's theory of various types of narratives implies some differentiation between more and less developed narratives but it does not give an explicit hierarchy of the types. Historical consciousness has been theorised by a number of scholars but Jörn Rüsen can be pointed out as a theorist with explicit interest in the moral element of historical consciousness. He has argued that in the

narratives of historical change and continuity that people generate there is a moral dimension involved in that these narratives are stories about right and wrong. In other words people are predisposed to give history moral meanings. (See Rösen, 2005; Ammert 2015.) In that respect moral consciousness is inextricably intertwined with historical consciousness.

In moral psychology moral consciousness, or moral sensitivity, could be defined as an awareness of how our actions affect other people immediately and in long-term (Rest, 1986). Moral sensitivity requires the ability to take the other's viewpoint, and cognition and affect are interconnected in moral sensitivity in role-taking and feeling the so called moral emotions, such as empathy, guilt and shame. Although through decades cognition was the main focus of moral research, in recent years the focus has shifted more and more to the role of emotions in moral consciousness and behavior (Hoffman, 2000; Lickel et al., 2005; Silfver-Kuhlampi, 2009). It seems that the emotional part of morality also help us to interpret the moral meanings people give to historical narratives.

Research on adolescent historical consciousness can contribute to the development of history teaching if it helps teachers and teacher educators to understand how students connect the 'layers' of time and situate themselves in the fabric of temporal relations. A deeper knowledge of this may help teachers to better design history classes so that students experience the study of history as relevant and rewarding to their lives. This was also the rationale of the study of Finnish adolescents' historical consciousness as it started.

The Finnish research project was based on focus group interviews of fifty-three 17–18-year old upper secondary school students (28 boys, 25 girls). In every group there were three to four interviewees, recruited on a voluntary basis. The focus groups took place in eight different schools in Southern and Central Finland. The justification for using focus groups was to get a view of how adolescents collectively ponder on the issues of transgenerational responsibility. For example, what arguments would they spontaneously find more intelligible or unintelligible, more justified or unjustified, and how would they negotiate between the potentially dissenting voices within the group? The important thing for the researcher here is not the frequency of particular interpretations but rather how readily interpretations are given, how articulated they are, and how diversely they are negotiated during the discussion (for more details about the methodology, see Löfström, 2014.)

The focus group interviews focused on four large themes which were: Can injustices of the past be repaired trans-generationally? Who can make historical reparations, and to whom? What could be the best way of repairing an historical injustice? Why have apologies for historical injustices become so frequent? Within the main themes other related issues were also addressed, like for example the possibility of official acts of forgiving. Some of the questions were posed at a general level and some at the level of concrete historical cases, like for example violence in the Finnish Civil War 1918 or the deportation of Jewish exiles from Finland during WW II. The interview frame included following items; note that the questions were not always posed in the same order or in the same format.

– *When speaking of the Finnish Winter War 1939–1940, or the Civil War 1918, how much do you speak of 'us' or think in terms of what 'we' did? How do you find the idea of being part of a chain that binds together many generations?*

– *What episodes of Finnish history do you perhaps feel proud or ashamed of, and why?*

– *Who were the guilty ones in 1918 and of what?*

– *What were the morally bad things that happened in 1918 and how might they be repaired now, if at all?*

- *What do you think of the Finnish state apologizing to the former Red orphans?*
- *What do you think of the idea that developing countries should get reparation from the Western countries for the time of colonialism?*
- *What do you think of the apology of the then Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen, in 2000, at the monument for eight Jewish exiles who were handed over to Germans in 1942, and what other ways could there have been for dealing with the 1942 deportation?*
- *What do you think of the Prime Minister apologizing on behalf of all the (Finnish) people, and how much do you think his words obligate you morally?*
- *How should one define the group “all the Finnish people” that the Prime Minister referred to?*
- *Why do you think apologies for past injustices have become more numerous?*
- *How do you find the idea of repairing historical injustices with money rather than apologies, and in what circumstances might one or the other alternative be more compelling?*
- *What do you think of historical wrongs being forgiven officially?*
- *What do you think of the claim that there is moral progress in the history or that historical research can adjudicate who did right and wrong in the past?*

In the transcribed interviews passages were coded and categorized with the key words like historical continuity/discontinuity, individual/collective responsibility, and ethical relativism/universalism, so as to identify what issue(s) the students were discussing at that point and what arguments they were making. A more detailed grid was then used for sorting out the diversity of motivations and justifications for or against particular notions and interpretations.

An example of the material is the following excerpt from the transcription of one of the groups. Four students (F22, F23, F24, M26) and the interviewer Q are discussing the possibility of transgenerational reparations:

F23: *I think what happened then [in Finland 1918] has happened, one can't repair it because the people are different now.*

F22: *Yes, one can't repair it anymore.*

F23: *Yes.*

F22: *It won't make things better to anyone anymore.*

F23: *For example, I couldn't apologize to someone for what my grandfather has done because it is not my concern. It is really difficult to apologize when those people are no longer alive.*

F22: *Yes, and those who made the decisions then have been dead for a long time now, in that sense it really is impossible to repair it to anyone anymore.*

[Q: *Could the Government today apologize to those who became orphans when their Red parents were killed in 1918, for example?*]

F22: *It doesn't sound sensible because surely there were orphans also on the White side. I don't somehow...*

F24: *It is such a remote thing anyway. If you think of those orphans, surely some of them are also already dead.*

F22: *True.*

F23: *Sure it is sad there are these orphans, and they would like to think that someone is accountable for their being orphans, but I can't see how they can expect someone will come and apologize now.*

M26: *I think the state is now the same as in 1918 also when those in power, of course, have changed dozens of times. And when you think there were obvious war crimes [in 1918] afterwards, like executions of thousands of prisoners, and especially you know your relatives carried out executions, you would like someone to apologize. You feel a little ashamed of what the relatives did on the White side.*

F24: *Yes, perhaps it would also clear the air if it was openly talked about. Maybe not blame anyone because who is there to blame anymore, but one would openly speak of it. It could perhaps make it easier for the nation to get over it and [it] would not be a taboo anymore.*

F22: *True.*

F24: *It might be good that at least somebody would say something about it.*

The students in all the focus groups would readily generate arguments in support of the view that since the perpetrators and victims of past unjust acts are no more alive, transgenerational responsibility to reparation does not exist. The idea of there being a rupture between the past and the present seemed intelligible and compelling to them. However in the excerpt above M26 challenged this view and told about his feeling of 'vicarious shame' and this led to the fellow students F22 and F24 acknowledging that feelings of transgenerational shame and guilt may exist and that symbolic reparations like apologies may be genuinely important to those concerned.

The students in the groups would spontaneously subscribe to an individualist notion of moral responsibility: you are only accountable for what you personally do, thus it does not make sense to speak of a moral obligation to amend for the deeds of earlier generations. This view, however, would be modified and the plausibility of historical responsibility would be judged more favourably if the students came to discuss some cases where the transgenerational legacy of the past was more directly visible, like in the material consequences of colonialism. The proliferation of institutional apologies for historical injustices was mostly explained by the students so that apologies serve strategic interests of the apologizing states by bringing to them good-will and political and other advantages. Victims' needs and victims' role in demanding for reparations mostly did not come up in the groups. The students would readily say that historical apologies can remind us all of the tragedies of the past and they can serve as signals of good-will on the part of those who apologize, yet the benefits of apologies to the victims were apparently difficult for the students to imagine.

The students' responses can be seen as manifestations of what Jörn Rüsen (2005) has called exemplary and critical types of historical consciousness: the students agreed among themselves that history can give moral recommendations but they also questioned historical continuity and transgenerational identification. As we noted, in Rüsen's theory there is an implicit hierarchy of types of historical consciousness. The Finnish project, however, was not geared towards differentiating between the various 'levels' of historical consciousness but identifying what difficulties the students have when considering potential interconnections and interdependencies between the past, the present and the future.

The key concepts in the research project were drawn from the theory of history and history education. What can this focus group material offer to a social-psychological study of moral judgment and moral motivation? What concepts or perspectives could be fruitful to consider in that context, and what could be interesting to analyse in the 'moral consciousness' of the students, from the point of view of social psychology?

### **Useful social-psychological concepts for studying adolescents' moral consciousness: group identification and intergroup relations**

As mentioned above, moral consciousness, or moral sensitivity, refers to an awareness of how our actions affect other people immediately and in long-term (Rest, 1986). It includes being aware of who are the concerned parties in the situation, what lines of action are possible, and what may be the consequences of different behaviours to different parties. Who the protagonist perceives as being 'others' in a specific situation also depends on who is included in her/his moral universe. Inclusiveness of the moral universe refers to the breadth of the community to which people apply moral values and rules of fairness (Schwartz, 2007). Moral sensitivity requires both cognition and affect, such as empathy, which is prone to motivate us to behave morally (Hoffman, 2000; Silfver-Kuhlampi, 2009). Empathy is also seen to be the base for guilt. According to Hoffman (2000), guilt is characterized by tension and regret that arise when the person feels empathy for the victim and understands that she/he is responsible for the victim's distress. Empathy may not have been a key concept in cognitive developmental moral theories of justice reasoning, but it has long been studied as a motivator of moral behavior (for example, Stotland 1969; Hoffman 1981).

In recent years the concept of collective guilt has become an increasingly popular research topic in social psychology. Collective guilt is an emotion that arises mainly when group members perceive that they have some responsibility for, or control over, their in-group's wrongdoings or the possible consequences of those wrongdoings (see, for example, Lickel et al., 2005). Feeling collective guilt is thus related to group membership and to the constellation between in-group *versus* outgroup. In the case of historical injustices that were encountered in Finland in the Civil War 1918 or in WW II, for instance, group identity in particular may be activated. There are two cognitive processes going on in transforming group membership into group identity. Categorization takes place when individuals classify people on the basis of their membership in various groupings. The most critical classifications are in-group (the group one belongs to) and outgroup (the group one does not belong to). Identification occurs when individuals take on the qualities and characteristics of the group to which they belong (see, for example, Turner et al., 1987). Typically, strong in-group identification is related to a low tolerance towards outgroup.

A concept related to collective guilt and group identification is intergroup forgiveness or reconciliation. Forgiveness is typically defined as a response that forgoes negative emotions, thoughts and actions (like revenge) in the face of a transgression. Three common conceptualizations of forgiveness are presented on the basis of philosophical and psychological literature: (1) forgiveness supposes the replacement of negative emotions toward the offender by positive emotions; (2) forgiveness is a strictly dyadic process, involving only an offended and an offender who is known to the offender; and (3) forgiveness is not a process that devalues the forgiven person but a process that encourages him/her to behave better in the future (Mullet, Girard, & Bakhshi, 2004).

Mullet, Girard and Bakhshi (2004) investigated in their study of French families how people conceptualize forgiveness and do they share the same theoretical conceptions. The researchers also examined to what extent people differ in these respects. They called the first

conceptualization of forgiveness (replacement of negative emotions by positive ones) a “change of heart” process. Their study showed that approximately only one fifth of the respondents agreed on the notion that forgiving someone is a “change of heart” process. About one third were neutral and over 40 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the conceptualization. Concerning the conceptualization “forgiveness is a strictly dyadic process” the results indicated that most respondents conceptualized forgiveness as something more than a dyadic process. They gave high scores to items like “You can forgive the person responsible for an institution – the state, the church, an association – which have done you wrong”, and “You can forgive a person who has done you wrong even after the death of that person”. Only 25 per cent of the respondents thought that forgiving is only possible between a known offender and a known offended. Mullet et al (2004) concluded that based on this result, forgiveness is conceptualized as a process that involves a forgiver but not necessarily an offender, and that identities of the possible forgiver and the possible forgiven person are much broader than usually considered in the literature. The third conceptualization (forgiveness helps offenders to behave better in the future) was moderately supported by the respondents: 33 per cent of them agreed with the notion.

Thus, based on (social) psychological research there seems to be divergent ideas of forgiveness among people and in some cases big individual differences. These might explain the different attitudes towards forgiving historical injustices, together with the group identification and moral emotions.

### **Questions to a social psychologist from a history educator**

In the preceding chapter there are some concepts and perspectives the researchers in history education can find inspiring to relate to. For example, sensitivity and empathy are relevant concepts also in history teaching where ability to put oneself in an other person’s shoes in order to better understand his/her intentions as an historical actor is considered important. It is called ‘historical empathy’, and it has a cognitive and an affective dimension. (Endacott & Brooks, 2013.) One of the aims in history teaching is to develop students’ historical empathy, thus there is a notion of a hierarchy of levels of historical empathy, albeit it may often remain untheorised. In the previous chapter it is argued that moral sensitivity requires ability to take the other’s viewpoint and this includes also being aware of “what might be the consequences of different behaviours to different parties”. These are in fact aims that also history educators consider central in developing students’ historical thinking and historical empathy (see, for example, Portal, 1987; Harris & Foreman-Peck, 2004; Davis, Yeager, & Foster (eds), 2001). The intriguing question is how the social-psychological theories of moral sensitivity could support conceptually more refined interpretations of historical empathy and its development.

The previous chapter notes: “Collective guilt is an emotion that arises mainly when group members perceive that they have some responsibility for, or control over, their in-group’s wrongdoings or the possible consequences of those wrongdoings”. If some person, contrary to what could be reasonably expected, does not feel collective guilt, it might then be related to how the person perceives his/her in-group or how he/she perceives that the morally bad thing in the past was not caused by volitional acts, for example. Both perceptions were visible in the Finnish focus groups. The perception where the crucial point is the mental demarcation of the in-group is probably usually more interesting to a researcher of historical consciousness. In the framework of the social-psychological studies of moral sensitivity and moral consciousness, does it make a difference which one of these two perceptions weighs more in the person’s mind?

Two further questions come to an history educator's mind when reading the previous chapter: Does it make a difference from a social psychological point of view whether the moral emotion in question is (collective) guilt or shame, and whether this emotion is 'vicarious' or due to the feeling of not having done enough to repair some historical injustice? What can be said about the case M26 in the excerpt above in this view?

The previous chapter also discusses the results of a study on how people conceive the notion of forgiveness. How do the results of that (quantitative) study match with the (qualitative) observations on Finnish upper secondary school students' reasoning on historical responsibility? For example, let us consider the following points.

1) "Forgiveness supposes the replacement of negative emotions toward the offender by positive emotions." In the study only one fifth of the respondents agreed with the notion that the process of forgiving entails some kind of "change of heart". Also the students in the focus groups were sceptical about there being any deeper sentiments involved in forgiveness. In their reasoning the act of forgiving (and apologizing for) historical wrongs may rather have social benefits because the meaning of the act of forgiving is that it is a constructive perlocutionary speech act more than an outcome of some moral conviction. Does this suggest a lacking moral sensitivity or historical empathy, and can this be 'assessed' with some reference point?

2) Only 25 per cent of the respondents in the research on French families thought that forgiving can only be possible between a known offender and a known offended. The students in the focus groups were sceptical about the meaning of symbolic reparation between persons who are not part of the 'original' victim-perpetrator dyad. What bothered them was the idea that perpetrators' or victims' descendants would speak on behalf of their forefathers. Is it an indication of well developed role-taking capability that one can also think of other actors than original victims and perpetrators as moral stake-holders in an historical reparation processes?

3) In the study of French families (only) one third of the respondents considered that forgiveness may encourage people to behave morally better in the future. Do social-psychological studies of moral sensitivity and moral motivation suggest that such an effect exists? There is a long tradition where history, understood as knowledge about the past, is assumed to provide people with moral guidance (*historia magistra vitae*), however in Jörn Rüsen's typology of historical narratives exemplary narratives are, implicitly, not typical of the most sophisticated mode of historical consciousness. If one is predisposed to think that forgiveness can move people towards morally better conduct, does it then also witness of ability to reconsider and reinterpret the past in the light of present and future expectations?

### **A social-psychological response to a history educator**

Above, Löfström is intrigued to know if, and how, the social-psychological theories of moral sensitivity could support conceptually more elaborated interpretations of historical empathy and its various 'levels'. Conceptually, moral sensitivity requires role-taking and empathy which form its cognitive and affective aspects (Rest, 1986). Feelings of empathy are presumed to alert an individual to the moral relevance of the situation (Pizarro, 2000). According to Eisenberg (2000), pure empathy – that is, an affective response to an other's emotional state or condition that is similar to what the other person is feeling or is expected to feel (see, for example, Eisenberg et al., 1994) – is not other-oriented, but by cognitive processing it can turn into sympathy, personal distress or a combination of the two. Thus, empathy, sympathy and personal distress are regarded as divergent emotional experiences although all three require some level of cognitive processing. Hoffman (2000) has proposed that empathy develops through five levels from the newborn reactive cry to empathic distress



beyond the situation. In the latter, a person recognizes that others have feelings beyond the immediate situation and this mental representation of the other's plight leads him/her to feel empathic distress for others. Extensive body of research has supported the developmental path of empathy at the early years of life, although also stable individual differences in children's concern for others over time have been found (Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, & McShane, 2006). To feel mature empathy – or sympathy in Eisenberg's terms – requires then a certain level of cognitive development. Cognitive role-taking (putting oneself in the other's place and imagining how she or he feels), however, is distinct from empathy-related reactions because it lacks emotionality (see, for example, Eisenberg & Morris, 2001), yet it can enable individuals to bypass empathic arousal and bias (Hoffman, 2000; Pizarro, 2000).

In terms of collective guilt, Löfström asks if feeling collective guilt is more related to in-group-outgroup categorization or the transgression being volitional or not, and does it make a difference in the context of a social-psychological study? Both factors play a role in moral sensitivity. Recent research shows that we are prone to a greater moral sensitivity for in-group than outgroup victims, in particular if the perpetrator is from an out-group. (Molenberghs et al., 2014). In-group members' wrongdoings are perhaps not so easy to perceive as immoral. Forgiveness seems also to be negatively related to an in-group identity but positively to a common in-group identity – by finding some superordinate category, which includes both the conflicting groups (Noor et al., 2008). In addition, intensity of the moral issue affects how sensitive people are to transgressions, i.e. how salient and vivid the action is (Sparks, 2015). It might be that human beings perceive in-group's behavior as less immoral because they do not think their transgressions are so salient.

Löfström continues to question if it makes a difference from the social psychological point of view whether the moral emotion in question is (collective, transgenerational) guilt or shame and whether this emotion is 'vicarious' or due to feelings of not having done enough to repair the historical injustice? What can we say about case M26 in the focus group? Guilt and shame are both labelled as self-conscious emotions, that is, they involve self-evaluation of the self. Guilt arises from feeling responsible of unwanted consequences. It focuses on specific behaviors, something that the person her/himself has done or – as in collective guilt – members of his/her in-group have done, or on the possible consequences of the transgression. In shame the focus is on others' reactions: the ashamed person is concerned with others' evaluation of his/her self rather than the acts' effect on others, as in guilt. Guilt typically motivates desire to confess, apologize or repair whereas shame gives rise to desire to hide, escape or strike back, i.e. behave aggressively. (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Silfver-Kuhlampi et al., 2013.) Yet shame and guilt can co-occur so it is possible at the same time to feel ashamed and guilty. In a study of university students' guilt and shame narratives, Silfver-Kuhlampi (2007) found that reparative behavior was as likely in the situations where both guilt and shame were reported as in the "guilt alone" situations. Pure shame, on the other hand, was less likely to motivate reparative behavior. Thus it could be argued that in the focus group above M26 felt both shame and guilt, and his talking about apology refers to a desire to repair the wrongdoings somehow.

Concerning forgiveness, it seems that the students in the focus groups were doubtful of the "change of heart" forgiveness and they rather spoke of the social benefits of forgiving (and apologizing for) historical wrongs. Does this show a lack of moral sensitivity or historical empathy, and can this be assessed somehow? If we think of Rest's (1986) definition, moral sensitivity involves constructing different possible scenarios for the situation and imagining how different actions might influence the participants in the situation. Moral judgment then could be based on the pros and cons of different actions. Whether focusing on the "change of heart" forgiveness or rather on constructive consequences of forgiveness may then only indicate that the person is emphasizing different aspects of the situation. However, act of

forgiving could be an adaptive coping strategy to manage the painful emotions (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) and to reduce hostility (Silton, Flannelly, & Lutjen, 2013).

Further it was asked if it is a sign of developed role-taking capability that one can go beyond the dyad victim–perpetrator and apologize or forgive for other 'moral share-holders', not only those immediately present in the dyad? As mentioned above, both mature empathy and mature guilt requires cognitive development, the ability to form mental representations. We can take the perspective of the other and feel sympathy for others even beyond the immediate situation and for fictional characters; research shows that reading narrative fiction can enhance sympathy among adolescents (Sklar, 2013). Hence, due to mature guilt and empathy we are able to apologize or forgive on behalf of actors not being among us anymore.

Lastly it was asked if the social-psychological studies of moral sensitivity and moral motivation show that forgiveness encourages people to behave better in the future. In general, factors of moral motivation, like sympathy and guilt, have shown positive relationship to prosocial behavior (see, for example, Davis et al., 1999), and they can be enhanced (e.g. Sklar 2013). Research has also shown that for example in the context of Northern Irish conflict forgiveness predicts reconciliation intentions (Noor et al., 2008). Hence, we can assume that forgiveness has positive influence on future behavior.

### **Concluding remarks: what elements to add in future focus groups?**

Considering the perspectives opened here by Liisa Myyry it is worthwhile to ponder what elements would be important to add in the discussion topics in the focus groups where people are asked to ponder on issues of historical responsibility and reparation? Firstly, Myyry draws attention to the importance of the in-group–outgroup distinction in how people make moral judgments on acts and their outcomes partly depending on how they see the involved actors as part of one's in-group or outgroup. In the Finnish focus groups in 2008–2009 the students were posed questions that were intended to spark discussion that would shed light on this theme. For example, they were asked how they find the idea of being part in a chain of generations that binds 'the Finnish people' in the present and in the past together? The students were also asked to how much they feel that the Finnish Prime Minister's public apology in the name of "all Finnish people" for the deportation of exiles during WW II obliged them personally. In the future it could be worthwhile to pose more questions – and more provocative questions – that would make interviewees reflect if they see the boundaries between their in-group and outgroups as stable or changeable in morally particularly sensitive historical cases.

Secondly, regarding relations between feelings of shame and guilt, Myyry refers to a study of university students' guilt and shame narratives and how the two modes of narratives are likely to coincide or not with reparative behaviours. In the focus groups feelings of guilt and shame were addressed directly in the question to which episodes in Finnish history the students felt proud or ashamed. They were also asked how they find the idea that the developing countries should get reparation for the colonial period from the colonizing Western countries. This is a question related to the in-group/out-group dilemma too, but it was more geared towards generating discussion that might show whether there were feelings of transgenerational guilt or shame among the students. Also here it could be useful in future focus groups to pose more direct questions to the specific issues for students, or possibly, of which, they could be collectively ashamed of or feel guilty of, and, in case such feelings appear familiar and conceivable to them, "what do they think might be the driving forces or the 'causes' behind them?".

Lastly, Liisa Myyry discussed the variety of ideas on forgiveness and how the variety may explain differential attitudes toward the notion of forgiving past injustices. In the focus groups the topic of historical forgiveness was addressed when asking what the students think of historical injustices being officially forgiven and whether someone might have 'absolved' the Finnish people after the Finnish Prime Minister's apology. In future focus groups it could be valuable to discuss more how the interviewees see that forgiveness may entail changes at an emotional level on the part of the forgiver and what effects forgiveness may have in encouraging the forgiven part to morally better conduct in the future, for example.

Understandably the variety of relevant topics for one focus group discussion is too wide if the discussion is to be kept within reasonable limits. The crucial question is which theoretical and conceptual foci to choose that could fruitfully connect issues that are relevant for the study of historical as well as moral consciousness. This also intertwines closely with the question of what could be the most promising tools that enable a crossdisciplinary or interdisciplinary analysis of empirical material like the focus groups above. At this point we are in the beginning of our way in looking for answers.

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