DAN BAR-ON

Israel

David Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva

Lecturer in IUC, Dubrovnik, 2005

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Dan Bar-On

RECONCILIATION REVISITED
FOR MORE CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL CLARITY

Introduction

This paper is aimed to introduce to readers of the legal discipline concepts in social sciences that focus on conflict trasformation[1]. The paper is based on the assumption, that in addition to a top-down legal and political agreement between the parties (defined here as "formal justice"), a complemetary educational and social-psychological process is necessary, bottom up, that will help work through and let go the hatred, the wish for revenge, mistrust and pain, that were imprinted in the hearts and minds of the people involved in the intractable conflict (defined here as "interpersonal or transitional justice"). A successful synchronization of these two processes could diminish the danger of a renewed outburst of violence in the conflict. The paper will be based on my experience with the TRT (To Reflect and Trust) group[2], which brough together Jewish descendants of Holocaust survivors and German descendants of Nazi perpetrators over the period of the last thirteen years, and how that experience was translated into the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the course of this discussion, the concept of reconciliation will be critically examined and several empirical criteria will be suggested to study the performed existence of a reconciliatory process.

While trying to transform intractable conflicts between or within societies, the limitations of the traditional legal approach became more and more apparent. In the past, it was assumed that a legal settlement that will bring the perpetrators of criminal acts to jus-tice, combined with reparations for the victims will resolve intractable conflicts. But today, many experts even in criminal law admit that these assumptions had to be re-examined. Paradoxically, after the International Tribunal in The Hague was established, its limitations were more widely recgnized (Haveman, 2004). For example, the aftermath of the Genocide in Rwanda brought 125,000 people into jail for their participation in one of the more vicious Genocides of our time. It would have taken 100 years to bring all these people to trial, and there is no money to compensate the survivors (Villa-Vicencio & Savage, 2001). These facts caused the political system in Rwanda to look for another way, in the form of the Gacaca courts, based on local tradition of village wisdom[3]. Even if this solution has its own deficiencies, it may help the Rwanda's society heal some of its unresolved pain. Similarly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) in South Africa, that granted amnesty on a specific legal ground and enabled 22,000 survivors of violence during the apartheid to come forward with their testimonies, had a partial healing effect of the post-apartheid South African society. Such processes of transitional justice are in their nature less then perfect. However, they take the need for social healing into account more than did the traditional legal approaches (Tutu, 1999; Minow, 1998).

The concept of transitional justice is relatively new, and combines knowledge of various disciplines, specifically law, political sciences and psychology. It was developed as a reaction to the limitations of traditional legal solutions, and as part of the TRC processes in South America and South Africa (Minow, 1998) and the professional field of mediation as an alternative to regular court procedures, mainly in the USA (Fischer & Uri, 1983). Part of the difficulty to combine these disciplines, is related to the lack of acquaintance (perhaps also motivation) of experts in the legal domain with concepts and practices in the social sciences. One

aim of this paper, is therefore to enable such an acquaintance, assuming that only positive collaboration between experts of different disciplines will help move forward in learning how to transform intractable conflicts. Another problem is that there are also different approaches within the psychological discipline itself. This paper will be based on a historically and socially contextualized psycho-dynamic approach. This approach is based on the assumption that only part of the human behavior is rational and conscious, and therefore sub - or unconscious processes have to be considered, while accounting for human behavior. Some of these less conscious processes are socially and historically contextualized (Bar-On, 1999b).

One of the obstacles to the successful dialogue between legal and social scientists is related to a different understanding of what "truth" is and what it stands for. In the legal profession truth can be reasonably established as a fact through a systematic legal process that will be able to prove it and account for it beyond reasonable doubt. There were such approaches also in psychology (Freud, 1930): The historical truth can be reestablished through psycho-analysis and that awareness will free the person from his or her neurosis. But today, it is more common to assume that such healing effects are based more on subjective "narrative truth" and its transformation as a result of the interaction between the therapist and the patient (Spence, 1982), or between parties in conflict (Bar-On et. al., 2000).

For example, there were formal legal procedures that brought criminals to justice and provided reparations to the victims in the case of the Holocaust, but these acts had little impact on the social mutual estrangement between Jews and Germans. On the other hand we have the example of the TRC in South Africa, where criminals were not tried, but confessed in order to get amnesty. This enabled a new "narrative truth" to be established which helped

white and black people in South Africa move into a different common future (Tutu, 1999; Minow, 1998). As the concept of reconciliation is central to the understanding of transitional justice, I will now discuss this term critically in the following pages.

The Concept of Reconciliation Revisited, Along with the TRT Experinece

The concept of reconciliation is quite widespread today and is used extensively when conflict transformation is discussed (Kriesberg, 1998; Lederach, 1998; Bar-Tal, 2000). Its introduction is usually based on the assumption that after a political settlement has been reached top-down, another bottom-up process should take place, in which unresolved issues of the conflict will be handled as well. It is assumed that without such a bottom-up complementary process, there is a real danger that the top-down conflict settlement will not last and a new violent outbreak might follow. Within the reconciliatory process, several issues have to be addressed simultaneously: specifically, the unresolved issues regarding the perpetrators and victims of the conflict. One could deliberate if the perpetrators should be brought to trial and punished (like in the Nuremberg trials or the current tribunal in The Hague) or if they should confess and be provided amnesty like in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process. One has to relate to the aspect of the victims as well: How should the victims be compensated? Who will address their on-going plight, stemming from the conflict or from before its violent outbreak?

These aspects have been dealt with mostly as legal issues of the aftermath of the conflict. But reconciliation has a psychosocial component as well as a legal one. The concept of reconciliation suggests that the enemies of yesterday will give up and let go of their hatred, animosity or wish for revenge, as well as their identity

that had been constructed around the conflict. One expects that a new identity construction will develop together with a new relationship between former enemies that will address the roots of the conflict, not only its unfortunate outcomes. But how can we create such a deep process of change in people who have been committed to the conflict, in some places for generations, in others for a substantial part of their lives? Are these expectations realistic or is it wishful thinking and talking that has little substance in intractable conflicts?

We must recognize, that reconciliation is basically a religious emotive concept that has been introduced into the social sciences discourse, in order to address key issues that earlier cognitive conceptualizations such as formal conflict resolution did not resolve properly. In this discussion, I would like to bring the religious, somewhat idealized, discourse down to earth, by discussing some of its limitations and by suggesting some empirical criteria to test its feasibility. In this analysis I will rely heavily on my experiences with the TRT (To Reflect and Trust) group process, as a longitudinal case study of the micro level, taking into account both the advantages of such thick observation of a single case study (Greetz, 1973) and the limits of its generalizability to other on going conflicts (Bar-On, et. al., 2000) .

I would like to start with religious and cultural differences relating to the theoretical concept of reconciliation. Reconciliation is basically a Christian concept, very much integrated into the religious discourse from very early on (Rittner & Roth, 2000). Judaism and Islam have very different religious approach to reconciliation. According to Judaism, only the perpetrators themselves can approach the victims they have hurt, take official responsibility for the deed and ask for apology or forgiveness. After the victim accepts this plea, then reconciliation can take place. No one can do it for the perpetrator. Dorff (1992) discusses the possibility of

secondary reconciliation. But he does not represent the more orthodox view of Judaism that is not yet prepared to accept such flexibility in the implementation of reconciliation. The Islamic tradition and practices (like Sulha, Hudna or Musalaha) are closer to the Jewish tradition than they are to the Christian tradition (Irani & Funk, 2000).

It is, therefore, not a coincidence that the South African TRC process took place between two parties that belonged to the same Church and that the African concept of Ubuntu4 did not divert basically from the Christian notion (Villa Vicencio & Savage, 2001; Tutu, 1999). Symbolically, Archi-Bishof Tutu was assigned as the Chairman of the Commission and some of its sessions were held in Churches (Boraine & Levy, 1995). When relating to the micro context of the TRT group, the group did not accept the concept of reconciliation as representing its work, as was suggested by one of its members, Martin Bormann, a former Catholic priest, in the BBC film made about the group (Time Watch, 1993). The Jewish members of the group said, after watching the film, that they had no right to forgive in the name of their relatives who had been murdered during the Holocaust (Dorff, 1992). The terms **to reflect and trust** (TRT) were then chosen as alternative concepts, on which both the Jewish and Christian members of the group could agree.

I wish to emphasize that the term reconciliation needs empirical verification and precision in order to fulfil an important role in the future discourse of conflict transformation and social healing. In order to move from the somewhat theoretical and quasi-religious discourse into a more pragmatic and testable discourse (How does reconciliation differ from lack of reconciliation? Can one differentiate between different levels of reconciliation?), empirical categories should be developed and tested, both in the laboratory and in real life situations. Until then, I would rather use somewhat related

terms, such as the concepts of dialogue and working through, that have already been developed conceptually and tested empirically in the communication and psychological literature: We know more about how dialogue or working through differ from lack of these processes (Bar-On, 1990). We already identified different stages that empirically differentiate between these contrasting situations. We still have to find out how can one identify such stages or aspects of reconciliation in an empirical way.

For example, when relating to the concept of dialogue, Steinberg identified six categories of discourse in Israeli Jewish-Palestinian workshops that discussed the conflict (Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002). These categories represent the gradual changes that take place from an ethnocentric (non-dialogical) discourse, through attacks, opening a window[5], intellectual exchange to addressing the different frames of reference and dialogical moments. Steinberg showed how the discourse changed over the weekly encounters, but not in a linear way. She also showed how the problem of the students' re-entry into their separate societies, still engaged in the conflict, caused the students to give up dialogical moments they reached and to revert to less dialogical categories of discourse as a preparation for what awaited them outside the workshop room.

I developed an empirical way of describing five stages of **working through**, when interviews with the descendants of Nazis and descendants of Holocaust survivors were analyzed (Bar-On, 1990). First, one has to know what had happened and how one's own family members were affected by what had happened during the violent acts. Second, this knowledge has to be framed as part of a wider understanding or meaning making. This could be either a religious, historical ethical or psychosocial meaning making frames, or even a combination of them. Then, after the knowledge has been framed, usually a strong emotional reaction will follow, which could be either positive or negative, specifically toward the

parent toward whom this process is related. Fourth, a phase of splitting will follow, in which the strong initial emotional reaction will be contrasted to the opposite emotion one feels toward that person. Finally, if one has succeeded in working through all these phases, s/he may be able to integrate the knowledge, understanding, the strong initial emotional reaction and the splitting and become independent (neither dependent nor counter-dependent) from the person in question. These studies have helped to clarify conceptually what are dialogue and working through and test these terms empirically, so that one can identify where an individual or a group actually are at a certain moment while relating to these concepts. A similar effort has been devoted to the conceptual definition and empirical testing of inter group interaction (Maoz, 2001; 2004).

I want to suggest that a similar empirical conceptualization should be developed in regard to reconciliation. One major problem, when trying to bring together experiences from different conflicts, is the huge variety of historical, economic, cultural, religious and psychosocial conditions that play a major role in all these conflicts. Actually, one could claim that each of these conflicts has its own biography, and therefore, it is very difficult to translate a post- conflict experience from one context to the other. For example, if the TRC did succeed in South Africa (Villa-Vicencio & Savage, 2001; Minow, 1998), an issue that is still disputed even there, can it be applied to other conflicts, for example, in the Middle East or in Bosnia? Most probably not, as at least some kind of modification has to take place. Basic assumptions that were relevant to one context have to be re-examined for their relevance in another context. For example, the differences between religions in their relation to the concept of reconciliation have to be addressed, when one moves from a uni-religious setting (South Africa) to an inter-religious one, like the Middle East or Bosnia. Often one would not

know which are the relevant assumptions or modification needed, without trying to implement a method that succeeded somewhere else. It may be even more difficult to implement a method that was relevant in a society before the outbreak of the violence, as a reconciliatory method for the post-conflict society (for example, the proposal to implement the Gacaca courts in Rwanda).

I would like to suggest several parameters for empirically testing if a process of reconciliation is taking place in a specific conflict[6]. I do not claim that these criteria are arranged in a linear order, but rather that their combination provides a kind of a profile to diagnose where the reconciliatory process is currently heading and where one has to try and go in order to move on. The proposed parameters are confidence, reflectivity, identity construction, time dimension, subjective language, women and children as specific target populations, unilateral versus bi-lateral initiatives and the careful management of hope. I will now discuss each one of them separately.

1.   Confidence and trust building:

Violent conflicts usually destroy the confidence in a social contract that a society achieved earlier on, and this takes its toll on both interpersonal and inter-community relationships. In Bosnia this meant that even within the same families (the interethnic marriage rate was 46% prior to the outbreak of violence - family bonds were destroyed due to the conflict (Ignatieff, 1998). Therefore, the process of reconciliation has to address and try to rebuild trust and confidence where it was severely damaged. One cannot expect that this will happen immediately. Trust can be broken in an instant but may take years to be re-established (Gibson, 2000). It is not a coincidence that the TRT group, a process that took place more than fifty years after the Holocaust, chose trust as its first self-description parameter. The role of storytelling that the

group initiated helped to re-establish some level of interpersonal trust that could later be translated into inter-communities trust (Albeck, Adwan & Bar-On, 2002). Trust can not be established just through storytelling or the mere usage of words, but has to be accompanied by deeds: punishment of perpetrators, taking care of the plight and needs of the victims, formal agreements between the parties, economic and educational initiatives to change the status quo in asymmetric contexts (Maoz, 2004). Without some work, however, on the emotional development of confidence and trust, the effect of these deeds will be erased after some time, as the reconciliatory processe is based on their combination, rather than having the one or the other.

2.   Reflectivity and dialogue:

Reflectivity suggests an ability for an inner dialogue, while the term dialogue is usually used to describe its interpersonal form. The two are complementary aspects to overcome silence and silencing (Bar-On, 1999b). Violent conflicts create zones of silencing in a society; silencing the acts and responsibility of the perpetrators, silencing the suffering and shame of the victims, silencing the role of the bystanders, even sometimes silencing the good Samaritans who rescued the victims from the hands of the perpetrators (Bar-On, 1989). Silencing can easily be transmitted to the following generations. Post-conflict psychosocial reconciliatory processes can take place only if some level of reflectivity and dialogue are established that can penetrate through the domains of collective silencing. Again, it is not a coincidence that the TRT group chose reflectivity and dialogue as the second major parameter to describe its work: penetrating the veil of silences that their parents had shrouded them in, together with the rest of the German and Jewish societies of which they were a part (Bar-On et. al., 2000). It may be that some of reflectivity will first happen separately within each of the segments of the society that were split apart as a result

of the conflict, but this eventually will lead to some new understanding and capacity for dialogue between the parties in conflict. For example, in the Israeli Jewish-Palestinian encounters, some reflectivity occurred first during the uni-national meetings, when the Jews and the Palestinians met separately. This helped establish new understandings and mutual reflectivity and dialogue in the following bi-national encounters (Maoz, et. al, 2002; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004).

3.   Identity reconstruction:

The reconstruction of collective identity in post-conflict situations is closely linked to the ability to reflect and enter into dialogue with oneself and others, especially the previously perceived "enemies" (Bar-On, 1999). Intractable conflicts lead parties to develop a monolithic identity construction, in which each side constructs its collective identity in opposition to the hostile "other". Such a monolithic construction is very powerful, as every threat or violent act of the other instigates it anew, even if in many other aspects the monolithic constructions of both parties are no longer relevant to account for the complexity of the reality. For example, in the Palestinian-Israeli case, the Jewish-Israeli monolithic construction started to disintegrate in the nineties, as a social reaction to the peace process and due to a variety of other needs and voices within Jewish-Israeli society that the initial monolithic construction did not address properly. But since the outbreak of the recent Intifada in October, 2000, a kind of a neo-monolithic construction reappeared. The lethal effect of the Palestinian suicide bombings that has caused the death of many Israelis in a relatively short time instigated such a neo-monolithic reconstruction ("they want to kill us") which seemed already to have faded away during the Oslo process. This, neo-monolitichic process, however, does not stop some of the earlier processes to continue in parallel (Galili, 2002). The social sections that gained a new "voice" during the disintegration

of the hegemonic "voice" do not tend to resubdue themselves to the original hegemony, not even in light of the new outbreak of violence, as they had done earlier during the fifties and the sixties. A similar process can be observed in the US after 9/11. The "War on Terror" has similar neo-monolithic aspects (top-down manipulation of public fear), but it cannot stop the disintegration of the previous monolithic construction of collective identity, which was part and parcel of the Cold War years (Bar-On, 2004). The deconstruction and reconstruction of collective identities in post-conflict societies require the establishment of an internal process of reflection and forgiveness, that will reinforce the external dialogue between the parties in conflict. If people can address the bits and pieces within themselves that no longer fit, they may be able to address also those within others and vice versa. In some post-conflict realities, one of the major obstacles to reconciliation has been the lack of an internal reflectivity to which people became accustomed. They externalized and projected all the evil onto the "Other" and stifled internal communication channels that suggested an internal variability or disharmony. In post-conflict realities it may be very difficult to let go of the monolithic construction, as many people feel that there is nothing that may hold them together as a collective (even as individuals) anymore. This may explain, for example, why some East European countries moved from Communism directly to some form of neo-nationalism or religious collective constructions. It represented the fear of total loss of collective identity, as a result of the fall of the powerful previous monolithic construction. Though the previous monolithic construction had not been relevant any more for many years, in many ways, as it could not account for the changes in social and economic reality, its disintegration still may be frightening and painful for many. The role of psychosocial reconciliatory processes between parties means also to acknowledge and support the need to go through a gradual process of internal change. A 'hard' and simplistic iden-

tity construction that has been developed to support the conflict has to be replaced by a 'softer', more complex and less monolithic construction. This change process may lead then to a new and richer dialogue also with the 'Other', helping to change its perspective from an 'enemy' to a 'partner'.

4.   The long-range temporal dimension:

Top-down peace making processes may happen in a relatively short time sequence. Internal and external reconciliatory processes need usually a much longer time perspective. This gap can become a major obstacle to peaceful resolution of conflicts, as the peace agreement may create an *illusion of settlement*, when not accompanied by a deeper, bottom up process that can support and widen its effect. This gap could have been one of the reasons for the failure of the Oslo peace process between the Israeli and the Palestinians. The Oslo process created a hectic timetable for the implementation of top-down agreements, without recognizing the need for long-term bottom-up reconciliatory processes between the people on the grassroots level in which trust and reflectivity would enable both societies to address the more difficult issues (like the resettlement of the Palestinian refugees or the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza), issues that were originally not settled in Oslo and left for a later phase. In Guatemala, a different process took place, in which a combination of bottom up process, dealing with the more difficult issues (of resettling their refugees) was initiated even before the top-down peace making process. Refugees repatriation and resettlement were followed by peace talks with the government (Boggio, 2002). Grassroots reconciliatory processes are time consuming, and their outcomes are difficult to measure. This could become a major source of misunderstandings between peace-makers (politicians who usually work top-down) and peace-builders (social activists and scientists who facilitate processes bottom-up). This

should become one of the foci of future peace building initiatives - to develop a common language and time perspective between these two groups.

5.   Subjective language, asymmetry and the status quo:

Subjective languages are related to asymmetric power relationships and to changes in the status quo. This combination of issues is based on an assumption that the parties in the history of the conflict have developed their own separate narratives to account for what has happened between them (as part of their monolithic identity constructions). The second assumption is that the more powerful party will try to impose its own narrative, or version of the conflict, thereby using the post-conflict situation to maintain its superiority, especially when it has come to a conclusion that there is no military way to win over the other side. Therefore, one should question if, when both parties talk about peace and reconciliation, they do not mean different things in terms of their subjective languages. It often happens in such situations that the more powerful party wants to maintain the status quo while the oppressed party wants to change it. Habermas (1971) suggested that a change in asymmetric relationships happens only when it is publicly identified in the subjective language of the weaker side. For example, in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations after the Oslo Accord, Israel stressed the issue of its security (or "negative peace"), while the Palestinians wanted a change on the ground - e.g. removal of Jewish settlements, the release of prisoners and the establishment of a Palestinian State ("just peace"). The lack of the perception of change from the Palestinian perspective, while reflecting on the implementation of the Oslo agreement, could actually predict the eruption of the peace process at some point and the renewal of violent acts, even when some "security" was achieved, from the Israeli perspective.

In addition, the weaker and poorer parts of both societies may fear that they may not profit from the outcomes of the peace process (Bar-On, 1998). This is especially true when the peace agreement that was achieved by the economic elites of both sides may directly benefit from it and then might care even less for their long-time neglected backyards. Without addressing these aspects of subjective language, asymmetry and the status quo, reconciliation in the deeper sense may not be possible. At PRIME[7] we developed, together with a group of Israeli and Palestinian teachers, a new school textbook which has two parallel narratives, relating to the same historical event: For example, the Balfour declaration, as it is constructed in the Israeli-Jewish and in the Palestinian collective memories and narratives (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004; in press). This form of representation can break through the asymmetric power relations, as it gives equal weight and 'voice' to both narratives.

6.   Target populations:

Usually, a conflict reinforces the male domination of societies, as the men are the ones using the weapons, carrying out the violent struggle and becoming the celebrated heroes of the conflict. Post-conflict situations may bring to the foreground the importance of **women** in the psychosocial reconciliatory processes. As relatively oppressed segments of their societies, they have developed more complex representations of themselves in relation to the dominant male hegemony that can help them formulate the changes of perspectives of themselves and others. They may be better equipped, in terms of emotional intelligence, to express their feelings in words, to recognize those of the "Other" (Hunt, 2004). The question is if their voice can be heard, within the post-conflict social network. They may be underprivileged in ways that may hamper their relative advantages. In some societies, due to restrictions and discriminatory mechanisms the women are less educated, absent from the working force and/or repressed by religious rigid struc-

tures (like what the Taliban practiced in Afghanistan). It is, therefore, extremely important that part of the changes that have to take place should relate to specific target populations within societies, like women and children. In the same vein, children may have been some of the most victimized populations within the conflict: In some societies (like Rwanda or Siera Leone) they have been recruited to excercise violent armed activities. They may have been mistreated or misused to practice atrocities against others. In other cases, their studies have been hampered and they have been drawn into the working force. In many of these cases parents in conflict areas, or during periods of conflict, could not provide neither physical nor psychological safety for their children to grow up properly. A third target population that has to be addressed in the post-conflict society is the population of traumatized soldiers of the conflict, both victims and victimizers, who may be left alone in the new reality without proper attention to take care of their post-traumatic reactions (Bar-On, 2004). Reconciliation means that these target populations have been properly taken care of and have become part of the social healing process.

7.   Unilateral versus bi-lateral and external initiatives:

We usually think of reconciliation as a bi-lateral process: Bring the two sides of the conflict into mutual recognition and dialogue. However, that is not always the case how such initiatives start. In some cases the International community intervened, to initiate the end of the violent conflict. This is how the post-conflict period started in Northern Ireland (The Good Friday agreement) and the Balkans (The Dayton agreement). In the Balkans there is since then a permanent presence of Nato and UN peace-keeping forces, that are stationed there to prevent a renewed outbreak of violence. But how does this presence of international peace-keeping forces effect the possibility of a reconciliatory process? To the best of my knwoledge, this question has not been studied systematically.

Especially, to what extent such external presence does not repress local initiatives of peace building. At the other end of the sprectrum we find uni-lateral initiatives, both on the political and grassroots level. President Anwar Al Sadat's visit to Jerusalem was such a uni-lateral act, which enabled the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel in the Seventies. Even though it was well prepared by some semi-official talks between the sides, one could not envision the change of mind that took place in the Israeli public without such a brave and uni-lateral act of Sadat. On the grassroots level we have two examples from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Zochrot, an Israeli-Jewish organization started, after October, 2000, to organize public gatherings at Palestinian villages and neighborhoods that had been destroyed in the 1948 war and to listen to testimonies of refugees and displaced persons who used to live in these locations; thereby breakthrough the silencing of these events and voices, as it is usually "forgotten" in the Israeli-Jewish hegemonic discourse. On the other hand there is a group of Israeli-Palestinians, led by Emil Shufani and Nazir Megally, who organized a journey to Auschwitz in May, 2003, to "learn personally the humanity and Jewish pain that still stem from there." Even if such uni-lateral acts have little immediate impact on the conflictual social macro level, they may slowly penetrate into the diversified consciousness, and develop a process of mutual recongnition and reconciliation.

8.   Maintaining hope, not illusions:

 Hope is a tricky process in intractable conflicts. One can easily create illusions of change and improvement, but when these are not solid, grounded in social change processes, it may lead to renewed desperation and pessimism. Yet it is difficult to maintain hope when only cold analytical observations are made. Hope is a social and personal construction that cannot develop linearly and therefore must be tested continuously - while moving through

whirlwinds inside and out; while taking into account the different chaotic turns (Bar-On, 2004). This is extremely difficult. I can testify that amidst our current whirlwinds in the Middle East I have become disillusioned many times, but each time I found ways to go on looking for hopeful possibilities. Despite all the hardships one encountered over long periods of time, one also can receive a great deal of support for continuing in one's path, from colleagues, students and participants of grassroots activities. Even if one can not see a chance that the fruit of one's work will materialize in one's lifetime, one can still develop a way and a vision for a future relief. It is interesting to follow through how Remarque referred to his feelings about the pre-W.W.I as *"the desires that belong to a world that is gone from us forever."* One may look at this sentence also in a critical spirit: How to give up the romantic, monolithic desires of the idealized past (that perhaps never even existed) in favor of a less perfect but more complex understanding of the world and ourselves, an understanding that can create new possibilities for dialogue within ourselves, among ourselves within a sigle collective, and with each other across the divide.

Summary

In this paper I have tried to bring the discussion on reconciliation down from the theoretical, quasi-religious discourse to a more pragmatic and empirically oriented discourse, like the one developed around dialogue, working through and the quality of intergroup interaction. I gathered some criteria from the experience of colleagues and my own, criteria that have to be considered when addressing the process of psychosocial reconciliation. This list of criteria is not final, neither is it exhaustive. It should serve as an opening of a discussion rather than summarizing one. The list designed here is also heavily biased by the experiences of the author in a micro-set-

ting. As more conflicts will be reviewed and analyzed, other dimensions will probably follow, and the relative importance of the ones cited here may change.

The criteria suggested in this paper can be summarized along three axes: More emotional acknowledged complexity, less power asymmetry and the orchestration of top-down and bottom-up processes. The next step in this process could be to define or identify concrete parameters that will help us determine if in a specific post-conflict context the reconciliatory process is moving forward or retreating along these axes, or if there are additional axes that have to be considered. For example, it will be our task, in the Middle East scenery, to try and analyse how a peace process that seemed to have moved forward suddenly moved backward. Or, perhaps, did it move forward after all, even though it went recently through a temporary violent period? Hopefully, such an analysis, accompanied by concrete parameters, will help us understand what happened and how can we get back on a reconciliatory process that will work better in the following phases.

Notes

1 It is today widely recognized that intractable conflicts can not be resolved (in the sense of finished), and therefore it is our task to think what we can do to transform them from destrcutive scenes to more constructive forms of discussing differences of cultural, ethnic or religious perspectives (Kriesberg, 1998; Lederach, 1998; Bar-Tal, 2000).

2 The TRT group was composed of German Nazi perpetrators' descendants and descendants of Holocaust survivors. The Germans began meeting as a self-help group in October 1988, as a byproduct of the interviews the author carried out in Germany (Bar-On, 1989). After following their work for four years, the author asked the group if they would be ready to meet a group from "the other side." When they answered positively, he approached a few of students from his seminar at Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheva, Israel, on "the psychosocial after-effects of the Holocaust on second and third generations" (Bar-On, 1995a). In addition, he approached members of "One Generation

After," the organization of descendants of Holocaust survivors in Boston and New York. Volunteers of the three subgroups gathered for the first encounter in Wuppertal, Germany in June 1992 and met almost every year for the last ten years. Since 1998 the group invite practitioners who work on issues of reconciliation in current conflicts in South Africa, Northern Ireland and Palestinians and Israelis to take part in these encounters (Bar-On et. al., 2000).

3 In the case of Rwanda, it was decided that the initiators and major players of the Genocide will still be tried, either in The Hague or in local juridical system. Only the secondary perpetrators are tried by the local Gacaca courts.

4 "Ubuntu is very difficult to render into Western language... It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It Rather says: 'I am human because I belong, I participte, I share... we say: 'a person is a person through other people'." (Tutu, 1999: pp. 34-35).

5 Opening a window is based on the image of the "double wall" identified by the author when the relationship between survivors or perpetrators and their children or other social relations have been considered. Each side constructed their own wall and when one side tried to open a window in its wall, they usually met the wall of the other side (Bar-On, 1995b).

6 The present list of parameters was first prepared during the conference on Refugees and Reconciliation at Castellon University, Spain, May 11-12, 2002 and is based on earlier work of several colleagues and myself (Maoz, 2004; Villa-Vicencio & Savage, 2001). It was revised for a Hebrew version of this paper (Mishpat & Mimshal, in press) and a lecture at the Red Cross, Geneva, on April 6th, 2005. The current list is neither exclusive nor comprehensive and should be viewed as a beginning of a discussion rather than a final outcome.

7 PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East) is located near Beit Jala in the PNA, and is co-directed by Professor Sami Adwan of Bethlehem University and the author.

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