

Marvin T. Brown

A Climate of Justice: An Ethical Foundation for Environmentalism

OPEN ACCESS

 Springer

Library of Public Policy and Public Administration

Volume 16

Editorial Board Members

Simona Giordano, Reader in Bioethics, School of Law, Manchester University, Manchester, UK

Series Editor

Michael Boylan, Department of Philosophy, Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia, USA

Editorial Board Members

David Koepsell, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Director of Research and Strategic Initiatives at Comisión Nacional de Bioética (CONBIOETICA), Mexico

Seumas Miller, Research Fellow, Charles Sturt University, Australia and Delft University, The Netherlands, Australia

Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, Professor and Chair Philosophy, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH, USA

Wanda Teays, Professor Philosophy, Mount St. Mary's University, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Jonathan Wolff, Professor of Political Philosophy, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, UK

Around the world there are challenges to the way we administer government. Some of these have to do with brute force that is backed by self-interest. However, there are those intrepid souls who think we are all better than this. This series of monographs and edited collections of original essays seeks to explore the very best way that governments can execute their sovereign duties within the sphere of ethically-based public policy that recognizes human rights and the autonomy of its citizens.

Proposals to the series can include policy questions that are nationally or internationally situated. For example, regional migration from victims of war, terrorism, police integrity, political corruption, the intersection between politics and public health, hunger, clean water and sanitation, global warming, treatment of the “other” nationally and internationally, and issues of distributive justice and human rights.

Proposals that discuss systemic changes in the structure of government solutions will also be considered. These include *corruption and anti-corruption*, *bribery*, *nepotism*, and *effective systems design*.

Series benchmark: 110,000-150,000 words. Special books can be somewhat longer.

More information about this series at <https://link.springer.com/bookseries/6234>

Marvin T. Brown

A Climate of Justice:
An Ethical Foundation
for Environmentalism



Marvin T. Brown
Climate of Justice Project (climateofjusticeproject.org)
Berkeley, CA, USA



ISSN 1566-7669

Library of Public Policy and Public Administration

ISBN 978-3-030-77362-5

ISBN 978-3-030-77363-2 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77363-2>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022. This book is an open access publication.

Open Access This book is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this book are included in the book's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the book's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Advance Praise for *A Climate of Justice*

Marvin Brown has hit a homerun with his extraordinary new book. It goes to the heart of America's current crisis with a powerful summation that is both diagnosis and cure: we must change our social climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice. My fellow citizens, please read this book!

James Gustave Speth, author of *America the Possible: Manifesto for a New Economy*, and former dean, Yale School of the Environment.

In this elegant interrogation of life as it is in the midst of a climate of injustice, Brown offers a deep and critical analysis of our historical sources and current social practices. His multi-layered approach to "climate change" from a toxic ethos to one of justice is highly original. He speaks with a compelling voice of authority and wisdom born of a lifetime of active involvement in civic engagements, thus drawing the reader into his narrative through vivid examples and stories. This is not only a book that accurately describes the landscape of our current crisis, but also a manifesto for addressing it. Brown offers practical directions for ways people can become participating citizens for change. This is a book of hopeful realism. His inclusion of Reinhold Niebuhr will make this book appealing to religious scholars and practitioners who are re-discovering Niebuhr for the twenty-first century.

Sharon G. Thornton, Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School, Professor Emerita

In *A Climate for Justice*, Brown develops the vision he set out in *Civilizing the Economy*. In this instance the word "climate" broadens from considerations of the social/economic environment to the ecological environment, as well. In the first case important emphasis is given to various historical lenses that causally situate a process in which personal identity is viewed culturally as economic self-interest that has its basis in viewing land as a commodity (these attitudes led to the theft of land from native peoples by colonial adventurers). In turn, these attitudes further led to the Atlantic Triangle Trade (slavery) and White Economics in which slavery develops into an attitude of white privilege and a false sense of superiority over those

Africans so enslaved. In the last section of the book “Empowering the Civic” a vision of hope is set out built upon empathy, the creation of a commons, and a feminist ethics of care. There is a lot in this book to productively engage scholars and to stimulate students enrolled in advanced classes in social/political philosophy. Highly recommended.

Michael Boylan, Marymount University. Author of *A Just Society* and *Natural Human Rights: A Theory*.

Preface

Where should we go to understand ourselves? I suggest that we go to the Atlantic Ocean. For Europeans, Americans, and Africans, the Atlantic commerce of people, land, and products created a social climate of injustice that has never been repaired. One is tempted to see Europe apart from Africa and America, or Africa apart from Europe and America, or even America as though it does not belong to the same Atlantic commerce as Europe and Africa, but these are all forms of social amnesia. If you want to know why we are in the mess we are in today, visit the Atlantic.

That was a long time ago, but it still haunts us because the injustices that were inflicted have not been corrected. Perhaps they could have been if the Reconstruction following the Civil War had continued, but it was strangled with violence, lynching, and terrorism. The 1960s civil rights movements ended Jim Crow, but was cut short of creating a just society. “Black Lives Matter,” the January 6 insurrection, and thousands of preventable Covid deaths particularly among communities of color provide more evidence than we need to understand that we still live in the wake of the Atlantic calamity.

Why have we not transformed our social climate? I think that when “push came to shove,” so to speak, those seeking change have always compromised with those resisting change for the sake of our national well-being or what I will call, “American Prosperity.” Genocide and slavery were not tolerated and even encouraged for nothing. They were for wealth and growth; for the development of what could be called “the American Empire.” Now, and this is relatively new, the trends of American Prosperity threaten our habitat itself: the Earth. American Prosperity is leading us into our own desolation wilderness.

Annie Leonard’s 2007 video, “The Story of Stuff,” displays for all to see how current consumption destroys nature, exploits workers, poisons families, and pollutes the biosphere (2007). As she says, for our current consumption to continue, we would need three to five Earths, and we only have one. This trend isn’t just economic. It’s a whole package of national identity, prestige, dreams, lifestyle, and self-worth. When President George Bush called on us to stand up for America after

the attack on the World Trade Center, he encouraged us to go shopping. American Prosperity, in other words, is the god that some worship by sacrificing others.

This book argues that we must change the unsustainable trends of American Prosperity to protect our habitat. We cannot do that until we shift our social climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice. Addressing issues of social climate has led me to engage in three types of thinking: conceptual, narrative, and strategic. The conceptual explores four elements of an interpretive framework: the Earth, our humanity, the social, and the civic. The narrative retells American stories based on the principle of coherence. The strategic explores how to enable changes in social relations through civic encounters between those who need resources—civilians—and those who have access to them—citizens. The goal is to suggest how to create a social climate—a climate of justice—that makes implementing good environmental policy possible.

The difference between a climate of injustice and of justice is fairly easy to describe. In a climate of justice, people expect social relationships to be repaired, the vulnerable to be protected, and for everyone to get a fair share. There are expectations of fairness, of reciprocity, of reparations, and of negotiations. One can witness a climate of justice when people give their opponents the benefit of doubt, when people ensure that everyone is included, when those who have been wronged are taken seriously and the wrongs addressed, and when the Earth itself is shared and protected. Many of us have witnessed such acts, but we have also witnessed broken relationships without repair and people who act with impunity. Separating children from their parents at our southern border is only possible in a climate of injustice that gives officials permission to treat others as though they were less than human. It's a similar attitude that allows global warming to remain unaddressed .

In order to confront the legacy of the climate of injustice, we need to work together with the vulnerable communities who have suffered from American injustices. At the same time, I want to turn the spotlight on what I call the white man's world: a world created and maintained by the collective actions and attitudes of white male individuals, who themselves have been created by this world. This world continues to foster a climate of injustice and uses military force when necessary to maintain it, which prevents us from even listening to those who know what needs to be done as well as working together to do it.

To change the course of American Prosperity toward a viable future, we must face the paradoxical truth that those who are vulnerable from the perspective of American success are the groups who are essential for changing course. They are essential not only because they belong to our communities, but also because they know the limitations and limits of American Prosperity.

That doesn't mean, of course, that vulnerable communities necessarily know the right thing to do or the correct way forward on complex issues. This book is not about policy recommendations, but rather about the social condition or climate that is necessary for developing such recommendations. A climate of justice is necessary, but not sufficient for turning American Prosperity toward a sustainable future. Still, if those of us who live privileged lives listen and work with vulnerable civilians, we

can learn how to respect their humanity, and to respect our own, which will promote a climate of justice: an ethical foundation for environmentalism.

To participate in the development of this work, visit: www.climateofjusticeproject.org.

References

Leonard, A. 2007. www.storyofstuff.org.

Berkeley, CA, USA

Marvin T. Brown

Acknowledgments

I recently shared at a dinner party that for me “mindfulness” was a good way to acknowledge all the ideas that I had learned from others. My mind was filled with their ideas, stories, writings, and conversations. The “references” at the end of the chapters list some of them.

There are also colleagues and friends whose questions and comments have helped me to clarify all the things I am trying to accomplish in this book. It’s rather ambitious, but then so are the current challenges. That group includes Sharon Thornton, Georges Enderle, Nancy Southern, Elizabeth Doty, Neal Gorenflo, Tom Cavanaugh, Rebecca Mason, Michael Boylan, Gus Speth, Stan Buller, Lisa Brown, Marcello Garzo Montalvo, John Moyer, Rebecca Mason, Eddie Blyden, Caitlin Harjes, Josh Harjes, Donald Carter, and Susan Clark, who edited an early version of the text.

Thanks also to Michael Torre and Marjolein Oele of the Philosophy Department at the University of San Francisco for arranging a retirement symposium for me in 2019 that included reviews of part of the book by Ronald Sundstrom and Amanda Parris, and the honor of receiving a Lifetime Service Award.

A special acknowledgment to Mark Brown, who has served as a sounding board for those of my thoughts that seemed to have potential and those that did not. To Kirsten Brown for showing me how empowering others is possible at work, and to Erdmut, my wife, editor, critic, and even copy editor. Her support has been essential in following the internal development of my own journey with the various perspectives included in the book.

Michael Boylan, the editor of this series, has been an early and consistent supporter. I am grateful for his encouragement and his shepherding of the text through the publication process. Also, thanks to the reviewers at Springer and the Springer staff who participated in creating the final manuscript.

Contents

1	Introduction: Three Kinds of Engagement	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Developing an Interpretive Framework	4
1.3	Telling “Telling” Stories	8
1.4	Empowering the Civic	9
	References	13
 Part I The Interpretative Framework		
2	The Earth	17
2.1	Introduction	17
2.2	The Earth and Our Humanity	18
2.3	The Earth and the Social	19
	2.3.1 Indigenous Peoples’ “Original Instructions”	19
	2.3.2 Modern Instructions	20
	2.3.3 Earth as a Living Provider	21
2.4	A Modern Dwelling	22
2.5	The Earth and the Civic	24
	2.5.1 Environmental Victories	25
	2.5.2 A Stable Earth or a Hothouse Earth	27
2.6	Continuing the Work	28
	References	29
3	Our Humanity	31
3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	People of the Earth	32
3.3	Existing as Contemporaries	33
3.4	Neurobiology and Human Dignity	34
	3.4.1 Antonio Damasio’s Neurobiology	34
	3.4.2 The Western Individual	38
	3.4.3 Daniel Siegel’s Interpersonal Neurobiology	39

- 3.5 Personal Dignity 43
- References 43
- 4 The Social 45**
- 4.1 Introduction 45
- 4.2 Characteristics of Social Worlds 46
 - 4.2.1 Communicative and Behavioral Patterns 46
 - 4.2.2 Perceptions and Expectations 47
 - 4.2.3 Guarding Moral Boundaries 47
- 4.3 The Social Trend of American Prosperity 49
- 4.4 Our Social and Biological Lives 50
 - 4.4.1 Sex and Gender 50
 - 4.4.2 Race and Color 51
 - 4.4.3 Ancestry and Social Evolution 52
- 4.5 Experiencing the Social 52
 - 4.5.1 Social Diversity 53
 - 4.5.2 Social Divisions 54
 - 4.5.3 Social Conflict 54
 - 4.5.4 Social Rifts 55
 - 4.5.5 Social Amnesia 55
- 4.6 Social Philanthropic Trends 56
 - 4.6.1 A New Form of Feudalism 57
 - 4.6.2 Unequal Wealth Distribution 57
 - 4.6.3 The Problem with Philanthropy 58
- 4.7 Social Coherence 60
- References 61
- 5 The Civic 63**
- 5.1 Introduction 63
- 5.2 The Recognition of Civilian Rights 65
 - 5.2.1 The Protection of Civilians in International Humanitarian Law 65
 - 5.2.2 The Civilian/Military Quandary 66
 - 5.2.3 Civilians and Veterans 66
 - 5.2.4 The Rule of Law 68
- 5.3 A World of Limits 69
 - 5.3.1 The Earth’s Limitations 69
 - 5.3.2 Human Limitations 70
 - 5.3.3 Ernst Becker’s Heroism 71
 - 5.3.4 Social Limits 73
- 5.4 Moving Toward a Climate of Justice 75
- References 76

Part II Telling “Telling” Stories

6 White Compromises and American Prosperity 81

6.1 Introduction 81

6.2 Causes of the Civil War 81

6.3 The National Compromises to Allow Slavery 82

6.4 The Civil War Becomes a Freedom War 84

6.5 The First Period of Reconstruction 86

6.6 The Second Period of Reconstruction 87

6.7 The Era of “Redemption” 89

6.8 Unraveling the White Compromise 91

6.9 The Tailwinds of American Prosperity 92

References 93

7 Reinhold Niebuhr During the Time of the White Compromise 95

7.1 Introduction 95

7.2 Niebuhr’s View of the Ambiguity of Human Existence 96

7.3 Racial Conflict During the Time of the White Compromise 98

7.3.1 The Elaine Massacre 99

7.3.2 Anti-lynching Legislation 100

7.4 Niebuhr in Detroit 101

7.5 Niebuhr’s Christian Realism 102

7.6 Niebuhr’s Christian “Idealism” 103

7.6.1 The Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union 103

7.6.2 The Delta Cooperative Farm 104

7.7 Niebuhr on Non-violent Action 105

7.8 Niebuhr on American Power in the World 107

7.8.1 Children of Light and Children of Darkness 107

7.8.2 The Irony of American History 108

7.9 Niebuhr and Race in the 1950s 110

7.10 Niebuhr’s Dualism 110

7.11 Niebuhr and the White Compromise 111

7.12 Niebuhr and the Human Community 112

7.13 Niebuhr and American Prosperity 113

References 114

8 The Sharecropper’s Story and An Ethics for Environmentalism 117

8.1 Introduction 117

8.2 The Story of the Lands of the Atlantic 117

8.2.1 The Africans’ Land 118

8.2.2 The Americans’ Land 119

8.3 The English View of Land 121

8.4 The Latin View of Land 122

8.4.1 The Common Law and Roman Legal Systems 123

8.4.2 The Social Function of Land 124

- 8.5 Sharecropping 125
 - 8.5.1 Mill’s Evaluation of Sharecropping 125
 - 8.5.2 Southern Sharecropping 126
- 8.6 Reciprocity 127
- 8.7 Reparations 128
- 8.8 Restoration 130
- 8.9 Getting There from Here 131
- References 132

Part III Empowering the Civic

- 9 Civilian Empowerment: A Theological Inquiry 137**
 - 9.1 Introduction 137
 - 9.2 A Theology of Civilian Empowerment 138
 - 9.3 Western Religion and Nature 139
 - 9.3.1 The Gods of the Earth 139
 - 9.3.2 Good Luck or God’s Blessings 140
 - 9.4 Gods and our Humanity 140
 - 9.5 Gods and the Social 142
 - 9.6 Two Views of the Flow of GOD’S Power 143
 - 9.6.1 Paul Lehmann’s Christian Ethics 144
 - 9.6.2 Edward Hobbs’ Trinitarian Analysis 146
 - 9.7 Civilian Power 147
 - References 148
- 10 The Citizen’s Role in Creating a Climate of Justice 149**
 - 10.1 Introduction 149
 - 10.2 The Empathy Option 151
 - 10.2.1 Empathy and Self-Understanding 152
 - 10.2.2 Empathy and Disagreement 153
 - 10.3 The “Commoners” Option 154
 - 10.3.1 The Commons and Triadic Thinking 155
 - 10.3.2 The Commons Story 155
 - 10.3.3 Commoner or Citizen 156
 - 10.4 The “Ethics of Care” Option 158
 - 10.5 Making Civic Connections 160
 - References 161
- 11 An Invitation to Civic Dialogue 163**
 - 11.1 Introduction 163
 - 11.2 The Clash of Stories 164
 - 11.2.1 Confederate and Lynching Memorials 164
 - 11.2.2 Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial 166
 - 11.3 My Invitation 169
 - 11.4 A Caring Citizen 169
 - 11.5 Education for White People 170

- 11.6 Types of Civilian Invitations 172
 - 11.6.1 Invitations from Future Generations 172
 - 11.6.2 Invitation from Syrian Civilians 173
 - 11.6.3 Invitation from Migrants at the Southern Border 173
 - 11.6.4 Personal Invitation to Engage in Dialogue 174
- 11.7 Creating Conditions for Good Conversations 177
- 11.8 We the People 178
- References 179

- Index 181**

About the Author

Marvin T. Brown, Ph.D., has been teaching and consulting in social, business, and organizational ethics for almost 40 years. Early in his career, he focused on the challenges of creating the right conditions for good conversations among different and diverse groups. This led to years of teaching business ethics, ethics consulting with organizations, and giving presentations on what he named “an ethical process,” (*The Ethical Process, Third Edition*, 2003) a dialogical process that teaches people with opposing positions to listen to and learn from each other. His most recent rendition of this process is *Learning through Disagreement* (2014).

Over the years, the context for describing this process has expanded from the workplace (*Working Ethics*, 1990) to the corporation in society (*Corporate Integrity*, 2000), to civic systems of provision (*Civilizing the Economy*, 2010), and now to this book that focuses on the current dilemma of our social and environmental climate of injustice.

In 2019, Marvin Brown received a Lifetime Service Award from the Philosophy Department at the University of San Francisco, where he taught business and social ethics. He has also taught social and organizational ethics at Saybrook University, Alliant International University, and JFK University, all in the San Francisco Bay Area. Brown has also served as an ethics consultant for Levi Strauss and Company and the Northern California Automobile Association. He has given presentations at international conferences in Germany, Poland, Argentina, Venezuela, and China, as well as at meetings of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics and the Society of Business Ethics. His essays have appeared in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, the *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, *The Next Systems Project*, and *Catalyst: Strategic Design Review*. His books have been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, German, Polish, Italian, Korean, and Chinese. Marvin has a Ph.D. from Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, an M.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York, and a B.A. from Nebraska Wesleyan University. He has also received a Faculty Service Award from the University of San Francisco, and an Alumni Achievement Award from Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Three Kinds of Engagement



1.1 Introduction

If we were to visit the National Mall and surroundings in Washington, DC, we might first visit the Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt monuments, and then visit the monuments to men and women who were killed in our wars including World War I and II, the Korean and Vietnam War. We might also visit sacred national sites: the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Arlington Cemetery. All of these places belong to a story of national heroes who have protected the freedoms many of us enjoy.

We could also walk to the National Museum of the American Indian. What are we to make of what happened to them? Then we could walk to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. His stern look seems a bit strange for me. The look did not seem to represent his famous “I have a Dream” speech at the Mall in 1963, but maybe it does represent his call for justice in an unjust world. The cry for justice, of course, cannot be ignored in the Museum of African American History and Culture, the last stop of our visit.

The Museum has six floors, and most people start their visit, as I did, by taking an elevator down three floors that brings you to the beginning of the African American experience of living in America. You then walk from the ground floor to the third floor through multiple exhibits from the Atlantic slave trade, through the horrors of slavery, the Jim Crow era, to the civil rights movements. The top three floors above the ground floor are exhibits of African American contributions to the arts and letters, culture and sports. These exhibits erase any line that would separate contemporary American culture from the creativity of African Americans. At the same time, at least for me, these exhibits did not erase my memory of the violations of humanity exhibited on the lower three floors.

The Museum of African American History and Culture belongs on the National Mall like the Holocaust memorial belongs in the center of Berlin. They tell a truth about a nation's crimes against humanity. The African American Museum also makes us wonder about its place among the other monuments. We have to remember that Washington and Jefferson bought and sold enslaved human beings. They participated in crimes against humanity. Why? Not because they saw themselves as enslavers. No, because our national prosperity had depended and continued to depend on cheap land and cheap labor.

We need to acknowledge that our civic government came about in a climate of injustice, caused by the enslavement of Africans and the displacement and genocide of Native Americans. Although the early Federal government resisted having a standing army, in time that was not possible, because injustice is not a steady state, but a disequilibrium—an imbalance of things. Injustice always requires force to maintain it. In our case, State militia protected the enslavement of over four million people and Federal troops carried out the appropriation of Indian lands for American expansion. At the same time, white male national leaders could only tolerate living in such a climate of injustice by denying it and imagining a nation that followed the principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The gig is over. Too many people know too much to put the truth back into the bottle. Also, more and more of us know this climate of injustice prevents us from taking the steps necessary to provide a viable planet for our children and grandchildren. Furthermore, making the necessary international agreements for saving human civilization requires a government actually standing up for justice. If we cannot change the social climate, we will never restore the planet's climate to again support a habitat for all living things.

A climate of justice is not something you can take off the shelf. Nor does it come into being by wishing for it. It's also not a substitute for the hard, difficult work of developing policies that take into account different voices and probable consequences. It is the context for policy formation. While reading and reflecting on the social climate that needs changing, I wrote a poem that seemed to express my hope for change. I'll call it "The Tailwinds of American prosperity." There is nothing wrong with prosperity, of course, but the particular character of American prosperity, and its dependence on a climate of injustice, pushes us toward an unsustainable future.

The Tailwinds of American Prosperity

<p>The tailwinds are strong They carry our wrongs, If things don't change, we'll get where we're going. Some suffer, some don't Some go with the flow They fit right in Others get it on the chin. If you can go with the flow You won't feel a thing. Until it's too late Then you'll feel its sting The tailwinds are strong They just keep on blowing. Pushing us toward a future Where we cannot go. It didn't have to be this way Human choices created today The tailwinds are ours</p>	<p>They reflect the color of our skin They reveal the white man's sin. Yes, the tailwinds are strong They have such force, But the headwinds are growing We could change course It's a turbulent time Our stories are clashing The Oceans are rising and Civilians are uniting. We share a humanity born in Africa, Inhabiting the Earth Searching for a home. With every breath we take The wind does us make It's the breath of life that holds us together It's that simple; It's like the weather.</p>
---	---

The weather, of course, is no longer simple. It is actually moving toward chaos. If we want to stabilize it, we must change the current course of American Prosperity. And to do that, we must change our social climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice. It's not only our natural environment that needs changing, in other words, but also our social environment. They are co-dependent. To change the current climate of injustice to a climate of justice, I think we have to do three things: First, we need a deeper analysis of American Prosperity. What are its key components? The answer to that question depends on our interpretive framework—the lens we use to see and to talk about what is going on. Secondly, once we have some understanding of what needs changing (and the resistance to it) we can take the next step of figuring out how to change it. Since “American Prosperity” belongs to American history, changing it means changing history. We “change history” by

telling stories about the past in such a way that we see how we got to where we are and what we can change to move in a different direction.

These two kinds of engagement—creating an interpretive framework and telling “telling” stories—will result in an awareness of the climate of injustice that needs changing, but not the power to do it. That involves a different type of work: the empowerment of people. Let’s call the place where this type of engagement happens a “civic space.” It is a space not dominated by the tailwinds of American Prosperity nor military force, but by the power of reconciliation and mutual belonging. The three parts of the book cover these three kinds of engagement: (1) presenting an interpretive framework, (2) telling “telling” stories, and (3) empowering the civic.

Behind these three kinds of engagement lies a particular theory of change. First of all, the theory assumes that our perception of things depends on our interpretive framework. We don’t talk about things we don’t see, and we don’t see things we don’t talk about. Secondly, the theory assumes that what needs changing is the course of history. In our case, this involves changing the current direction of the tailwinds of American Prosperity by repairing past violations of humanity. There are theories that ignore the past and act as though the future is totally undetermined. “Anything is possible.” I don’t think so. We live in complex systemic trends that will shape our real future possibilities, until and unless we do the work of changing their direction. Finally, my theory of change assumes that those who have been and are vulnerable to injustice can help the rest of us grasp what is necessary to transform the social climate from a climate of injustice to one of justice. The following sections in this chapter give more details about the three type of engagement necessary for developing a sustainable future and provide an outline of the book’s three parts.

1.2 Developing an Interpretive Framework

A framework functions like a radar screen for observing and analyzing the drama of everyday life. It creates a field-of-vision that allows some things to appear and other things to disappear. It also divides things into different parts and keeps them apart from each other. Many widely used interpretive framework are triadic. They sees things in threes. There is the “good, bad and the ugly.” Right? Likewise, we think about the economy, government, and civil society. Modern economics uses this triad a lot. The market controls the economy, bureaucracy controls government, and civil society hosts what doesn’t fit in the other two spheres: non-profit and non-government agencies. Like most frameworks, this triadic framework has its strengths and weaknesses. It turns out that it is no more “natural” than the English language is “natural.”

As the anthropologist Georges Dumezil discovered; Indo-European languages, such as English, tend toward triadic formulations (Littleton 1973). In fact, when we think something through in an Indo-European language, we will probably end up with some sort of triad. This chapter, for example, has three kinds of engagement. True, there are other structures in Western thinking. The Greeks, for example,

thought of four fundamental elements—air, water, wind, and Earth. Still, triadic thinking, from Plato’s triadic structure of society—ruler, guardians, and peasants—to the Christian trinity—Father, Son and Spirit—clearly has first place in Indo-European languages.

The Christian trinity is an especially interesting case, since the three “persons” were first articulated in Semitic languages—Hebrew and Aramaic. The members of the Jewish Christian community believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and even though they had the concepts of Father, Son, and Spirit, they never formulated a triadic theory of “Three in One” (Hobbs and Porter 1999). For Greek theologians, on the other hand, this probably seemed quite logical. That doesn’t mean that Greeks could not think in fours. Aristotle is famous for his four, not three, causes: material, efficient, formal, and final. If he had been totally bound to triadic thinking, one of these four would have been omitted. I think we are in a similar situation today: triadic thinking prevents us from seeing what we need to see, so I have developed a quadradic interpretive framework that includes the Earth, humanity, the social, and the civic (Fig. 1.1).

In contrast to some triadic frameworks that draw a picture of three spheres that overlap each other, like a Venn diagram, this framework takes a contextual approach. The outside circle is the broadest. We are Earthlings. And we live on the Earth as primates. We are homo sapiens. We belong to the Earth, existing in human communities that develop and inhabit different social worlds. We are social beings. The social is ubiquitous. All of us live all of the time in some social world. Our most remarkable characteristic is that we design and re-design how we live together. We do that in what I want to call the civic realm. While the social separates us into different groups, the civic draws on our shared humanity to unite us at deeper level without erasing our social difference.

Instead of using the old triadic framework that separates civil society from the moral complexity of the economy and government, this framework would see civil society as part of the larger social world. We never totally escape our social position and location. The fourth element, the civic, does not erase our social differences and conflicts, but rather gives us a space to deal with them. Because we live today in a

The Earth is the habitat for all living beings

Our Humanity is grounded in our living bodies embedded in society

The Social is constructed through on-going communication patterns and behaviors

The civic offers a space for repair of social and environmental relations.

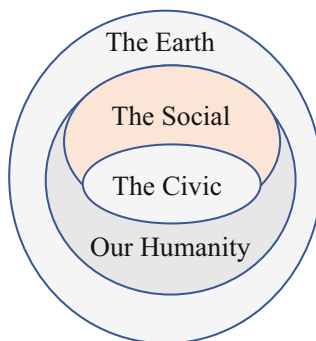


Fig. 1.1 Quadradic interpretive framework. (Original to the author)

climate of injustice, the civic involves two groups—vulnerable social groups (civilians) and secure social groups (citizens). Members of the civic may belong to one or another of these groups at different times. How these two groups work together can change the social climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice.

So, what are the advantages of this interpretive framework over the traditional Western triadic framework? There are several:

- It places our treatment of the earth on the agenda, which means we cannot avoid the issue of sustainability.
- It recognizes the humanity that we all share, which enables us to consider the violations of our humanity and how to respond.
- It allows us to acknowledge social location and position and to understand our social relationships.
- The civic realm allows us to address the legacy of social violence through the cooperative endeavors of civilians and citizens.

Right now, the tailwinds of American prosperity are distorting the meaning of each part of the framework.

- The Earth is understood as land: a commodity with a market price, which ignores it as a living system.
- Our humanity is sub-divided into a hierarchy with white males on top, which violates our shared humanity.
- The social is incoherent with individualists who dismiss the fact that we always exist in social relations with others.
- The civic is militarized to protect the injustices of America prosperity.

These descriptions of American Prosperity demonstrate why we are in the mess we are in, but not how to get out of it. We need not only analysis, but also a vision: a vision of prosperity that is sustainable for all of us as well as for the Earth. Once we create such a vision, then we know what we need to do—move from where we are to where we want to go, which would entail the following transformations (Fig. 1.2).

Interpretive Framework		American Prosperity		Sustainable Prosperity
Earth	From	Land as Commodity	to	Earth as a Habitat
Humanity	From	Racialized Humanity	to	Shared Humanity
Social	From	Incoherent Narratives	to	Coherent Narratives
Civic	From	Militarized Civic	to	Civilian Civic

Fig. 1.2 Transforming American prosperity to sustainable prosperity. (Original to the author)

While this chart outlines the necessary transformation to move toward a sustainable future, the transformations themselves involve a different kind of engagement than conceptual analysis. As we will see in Part II, making such a transition requires nothing less than re-writing history, of telling “telling” stories that reveal the incoherence of the “official” stories of American history and create coherent stories that show us how things could be different. Once we see a different historical future as a possibility, then we will need to govern with civilian power rather than military force—a civilian power that can shift the social climate to a climate of justice.

Part I covers these four elements of our interpretive framework in Chaps. 2, 3, 4, and 5. Chapter 2 on the Earth highlights the relationship between the Earth and our humanity and describes social relations with the Earth from the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and modern Europeans. The chapter then reviews efforts since Earth Day in 1972 to protect the Earth, and proposes that we continue this tradition, with a new urgency as we face the options of either a stable or a hothouse planet.

Chapter 3 on our humanity avoids some of the philosophical controversies about human nature by drawing on the science of neurobiology, especially the works of Antonio Damasio and Daniel Siegel. Neurobiology focuses on common experiences of emotions, feelings, consciousness, aspirations, and attachments to others. As the self emerges from these dynamics, one can even recognize the existence of human dignity as a relational entity. Whether we recognize this dignity or not depends a lot on the social worlds in which we live.

Chapter 4 explores the Social in terms of social worlds and social trends. American Prosperity is presented as a social trend that splits off the misery it causes and focuses on its optimistic future. It then turns to the important distinction between what is natural or normal (biological or social) in regard to issues of gender, skin color, and ancestry, as a way of highlighting our social existence. To further explore our experiences of the social, the chapter outlines a continuum of different social encounters from diversity, social conflict, to social amnesia. These social differences also show up in current social trends such as increasing wealth inequality and increasing paternalistic philanthropy, which take us further away from examining our social climate of injustice.

Chapter 5 details the character of the civic space in which a civic consciousness emerges when we connect our disparate social lives with our shared humanity. On the one hand, a deep awareness of the existence of the Other limits my horizon of possibilities, and on the other hand, engaging with others offers possibilities for fair and just relations. In the civic realm itself, this existence of limits is best illustrated by the status of civilians who are vulnerable and rely on the rule of law to limit military aggression. This civic principle of limits is then applied to the other parts of the interpretive framework—the Earth, our humanity and the social. It turns out that the recognition of limits functions something like a canary in the coal mine to alert us to our social climate and to the prospects for moving toward sustainable prosperity.

The four elements explored in Chaps. 2, 3, 4, and 5 highlight major dimensions of our everyday lives, and they become even more resourceful when we begin relating them to each other. How do we see the relationship between the earth and our humanity? What about our natural and social selves? Where can we reconcile our

social differences except in a place where we acknowledge our shared humanity? Can we create such a place, which I name the civic space in the framework? These and other questions will guide us in the second and third parts of this book: telling coherent stories and empowering the civic. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 use this framework in various ways to tell stories that tell us what we need to know about the challenges we face.

1.3 Telling “Telling” Stories

For years, I asked students in my Ethics classes to write a one-page history of the United States. After they understood that whatever they wrote was OK, they actually wrote quite a variety of stories. One cannot write a lot on one page, so some stories never got past the history of the Americas before the European take-over. A popular story was the war story—Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I and II, Korean War, Vietnam, and now Iraq and more generally the Middle East. Some wrote what you could call the occupation story—the original colonies, the expansion Westward, the Indian Wars, and on to California. Some stories included slavery. A few included the story of the struggles of women for suffrage and equality. Most of the stories were true in terms of what they said. They differed a lot in terms of what they didn’t say. The story told depended a lot on who was telling it, and the social worlds in which they lived.

So, how do you know if you are telling the right story? For us, the right story will be as broad and deep as our interpretive framework. Among all the things that happened, we want to know something about the story of the Earth, our humanity, social relations, and civic engagements. We also want to make connections among these four elements and use the fields of inquiry they open to tell stories that are guided by the principle of coherence.

The principle of coherence states that if A cannot be understood without B, then B cannot be understood without A. Here is an example of the principle:

Just as you cannot understand black America without understanding white America, you cannot understand white America without understanding black America.

Or, what about this version: “Just as you cannot understand Africa without understanding Europe, you cannot understand Europe without understanding Africa.” The first part of these statements makes sense. Does the second part? I think it does. Doesn’t the European/African version make just as much sense as the black/white American version? Isn’t it true that if you tell the story of Europe without any word about Africa, you have the same half-truth as you would have when telling the story of white America without any inclusion of black America?

Instead of telling a white American story or a black American story, we need to tell an American story. This story has its beginning on the Atlantic Ocean—relations among Europeans, Africans, and Americans. I know there are also stories about human relations around the Pacific Ocean, but the trends that are taking us toward a

chaotic future have their origin in the Atlantic ocean. Beginning there, I will employ the four-part interpretive framework—the Earth, humanity, the social, and the civic—to search for and connect selected events that tell telling stories. The principle of coherence, after all, not only brings together events and experiences that have been separated, but also reveals how the climate of injustice has been denied rather than rectified.

Modern American stories begin on the Atlantic shores, but our starting points belong more to the Atlantic ocean than the American continent. Now that we “own” the land from sea to sea, that is not always acknowledged. Our story begins with the Atlantic commerce of enslaved people and cheap land. There are stories within stories, of course, and the focus here is on telling coherent stories about the European settlers, the Africans they enslaved, the Native Americans they eliminated and the “land” they took. Europeans and Africans may find the stories edifying because they also endured and are enduring the Atlantic climate of injustice.

The first chapter in Part II tells a story of how the “success” of American prosperity began with a series of national compromises between Northern and Southern white men to allow the enslavement of millions of people. These compromises must have seemed “reasonable” to many, but we must remember that the colonies had already lived in a climate of injustice since the beginning of the Atlantic commerce. This social climate did not stop them from writing the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, but, at the same time, these documents that stated that “all men are created equal” did not correct the climate of injustice. The disruption of the Civil War did threaten the compromise, but as this telling reveals, white men reinstated it with the institution of Jim Crow, segregation, and the terror of lynching. The disruption of the 1960s opened the possibility of a coherent future for all, but this has certainly not happened yet, as we witnessed with the insurrection on January 6.

Chapter 7 tells a story of one good white man, at least by most accounts, who practiced social ethics during the time of racial oppression between the 1920s and the 1960s. The social ethicist and theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, confronted white bigotry as few did during his time, but also failed to create coherent stories of race relations. Niebuhr provides a good mirror for other whites to evaluate our work in striving for a climate of justice. Chapters 6 and 7 both demonstrate how deeply white supremacy runs throughout the story of American prosperity, and has influenced our understanding of the Earth, our humanity, the social, and the civic.

Chapter 8 takes up the challenge of carving out a viable future from our compromised past, by first focusing on different interpretations of the Earth from a “Mother” to private property, and then drawing attention to the experiences of sharecropping after the Civil War. The sharecroppers desire for sharing prosperity and security can serve as an entry to the development of an ethics of reciprocity, reparation, and restoration. Responding to the sharecroppers’ dream, in other words, and acknowledging what prevented it from becoming reality, gives us an opportunity to not only repair the past, but also to create a viable future for all. Engaging in such a process requires that we move beyond our social differences and estrangements to our shared humanity, which is possible through the empowering of the civic.

1.4 Empowering the Civic

The book's third part (Chaps. 9, 10, and 11) constructs a definition of the civic that affirms the possibilities of our shared humanity serving as the basis for healing our broken social relationships. The book focuses on restoring relationships between those who have suffered from American Prosperity and those of us who have benefited from it. Most of the time, American stories about these groups are about relationships between white people and people of color. In the civic realm, such stories are translated into relationships between civilians and citizens. By definition, civilians are groups who are vulnerable, need protection, and rely on the rule of law. Citizens are those who have access to resources to respond to rightful civilian claims. The civilian call for justice gives citizens the opportunity and a civic duty to join them in the repair of broken relationships. That's the kind of work that allows us to recognize the climate of injustice and transform it to a climate of justice.

Think of American Prosperity as a boat in a bottle, and the bottle is the climate of injustice. We cannot change the boat until you break the bottle, and those of us who are the boat's privileged passengers are very unlikely to break the bottle and may not even be aware of it. Those who have suffered from American Prosperity, on the other hand, know only too well we exist in a bottle, and that we have to break it if we want to change the boat.

One lesson we learned from the Covid Pandemic is that we are or can be both civilians and citizens. Many were vulnerable and many died. They could not protect themselves and depended on government policies, which in this instance, failed a lot of us. The courageous health care workers, doctors, nurses, and others who acted as citizens and as dedicated public servants did not fail us, but it's clear now that the Federal government and some State governments did. Perhaps the death count could have been half as large if public officials had developed and enforced policies of protection. In any case, in some sense, we were all in the same boat, and yet it is also true that one end of the boat was much more dangerous than the other.

The definition of civilian used here does have its origin in the traditional view of civilians as non-combatants. They are not in the fight, so to speak. It doesn't take much reflection to see that civilians are those who cannot defend themselves and are vulnerable to the actions of others. In the language of International Humanitarian Law, civilians have a right to not be harmed. They are vulnerable and deserve protection.

The term is used quite often in domestic situations concerning the relationships of vulnerable communities with the police. During the protests in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, for example, a black teenager told a reporter that the police approached black males as "suspects, first, civilians second" (Cobbina and Henion 2016). Instead of being approached as a criminal, the teenager deserved to be seen by the police as needing protection. We could also see our children and grandchildren as civilians, because they are vulnerable to our decisions about what kind of world we pass on to them.

I am not a civilian like the teenager in Ferguson, but rather a white male heterosexual citizen—a citizen who has had and continues to have privileges that many do not have. At the same time, I am not a warrior or a hero. I know about my vulnerability and limited capacity for making a difference. My bet is that an awareness of civilian vulnerability provides a good starting point for moving from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice.

Many of us have had experiences of human vulnerability and needing protection, but some of us may feel that we can and should protect ourselves. I remember this feeling when I spent an evening in 1965 learning non-violent techniques before traveling to Montgomery, Alabama, to join in the second civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery. We learned how to curl up to protect ourselves from police batons. Before that evening, I had seen myself as a fighter. In school, in sports, and even in church, I tried to excel. In my own way, I wanted to be a hero. I learned that night that most civilians are not heroes. Civilians need protection and when it doesn't seem likely, they need to protect themselves as best they can. At the same time, we met that evening to prepare for a civil rights march. We were not only needing personal protection but also demanding protection of civic rights.

The fact is that any one of us could be a civilian as well as a citizen. Civilian identity does not depend on nationality, class, gender, ethnicity, skin color, religion, or loyalty to this or that group. It is a civic identity that arises from the recognition of vulnerability and the right to be protected from harm. One image that captures this distinction between civilians and citizens is the Civilian Review Board.

Civilian Review Boards often mediate between local residents and police departments. The groups in the meetings include those who are asking for help or civilians, and those who have resources to help or citizens. If we assume that anyone could belong to either group, then the difference between civilians and citizens does not depend on personal identity, but rather on their social identity and civic role. The civic then becomes a gathering of civilians and citizens working together to promote environmental justice and to protect civic rights.

Remember the earlier figure (Fig. 1.2) that displayed the transformations necessary to move from American Prosperity to Sustainable Prosperity. That figure displayed what needs to happen, now we know where and how it could happen. It could happen in the civic realm where we meet one another as sharing a common humanity. Recognizing our humanity could bring those who have the resources to respond to those who need them, and in doing this work, create a climate of justice. Then the figure looks like this (Fig. 1.3):

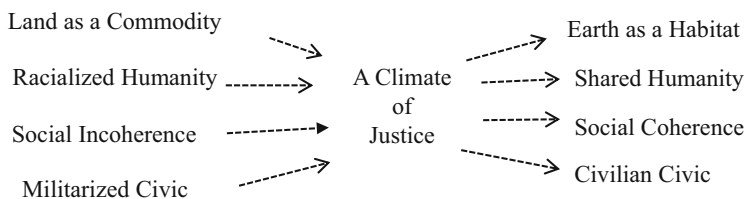


Fig. 1.3 From American prosperity to natural prosperity

Since this change has not yet happened, no one knows what the changes will entail. We do know that a climate of justice will encourage balanced relations (reciprocity) with each other and with the Earth. We also can say that sharing the expectation of such relationships requires substantial transformation of current social relationships. The three chapters in Part III examine what such a transformation would involve.

Chapter 9 explores the source for the empowerment of civilians from a theological perspective. Since the talk about the gods can easily be taken as talk about power, a theological inquiry should allow us to see how talk about god (in this case Christian theology) actually exposes our human capacity for creating purposeful communities. The empowerment of the civic, of course, requires more than empowering civilians. Citizens have to be responsive to the civilian's claims. Not as straightforward as it seems, at least for some of us.

Chapter 10 examines three options for citizens to relate to civilians: empathy, becoming commoners, and an ethics of care. Empathy for others certainly creates some kind of connection between people. One could argue that it is necessary for a good connection between citizens and civilians, but is it sufficient? Empathy may help us understand another, but does it help us understand our social differences and the relationship between our social worlds?

Another option is for all of us to become "commoners," sharing the production and distribution of resources. This option raises other questions about the very meaning of a citizen/civilian relationship. While both of these options appear tempting, in fact, following their directions prevents us from appreciating the difficulty of establishing trust in relationships that have been formed in a context of injustice. An ethics of care, the third option, at least turns our heads in the right direction: toward repairing broken relationships and restoring a human habitat for all.

People of privilege, especially white males who exist in white male worlds, may be surprised that their caring about relationships is not enough to join with vulnerable civilians in creating a viable future for all. One has to be invited. Chapter 10 takes up the invitation issue by first presenting vivid contrasts between American monuments that invite us to consider our history. The Chapter explores how citizens could respond to different types of civilian invitations: invitations from future generations (our children and grandchildren); extended relations, such as Syrian refugees; shared relations, such as refugees at our southern border; and personal invitations from people of color, where we may engage in a creative dialogue.

As a member of the white male social world, I offer recommendations for white males to prepare for such dialogues. How we all participate in these dialogues, of course, determines whether we can break out of the climate of injustice into a climate of justice. If we can, then we will have created an ethical foundation for environmentalism that functions as a springboard for collective action to secure a habitat for future generations.

References

- Cobbina, J., and A. Henion. 2016. *Blacks Believe Police View Them as “Suspects First, Civilians Second”*. <http://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2016/blacks-believe-police-view-them-as-suspects-first-civilians-second/>
- Hobbs, E.C., and A.P. Porter. 1999. The Trinity and the Indo-European Tripartite Worldview. *Budhi* III (2 & 3): 1–28.
- Littleton, C.S. 1973. *The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Genrges Dumézil*. Berkeley/London: University of California Press.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Part I
The Interpretative Framework

Chapter 2

The Earth



2.1 Introduction

If you grew up on a farm, as I did, you would know the Earth as where you plant crops, plow and weed, and test for moisture. I have seen the big sky, the white clouds, the hot sun, the tornado, the hailstorm, and the rainbow. I heard the grass blowing in the wind. I breathed the morning fog, the afternoon heat, and the evening cool. I have seen seeds become plants. I have seen plants mowed down by hail. I know all of this through my senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching. I would say that the Earth pulled me into its beauty. I participated, in other words, in the Earth. I now live close to the Hayward earthquake fault in the San Francisco Bay Area. Someday this living system will cause people here billions of dollars of damage and much human suffering. If we know anything about the Earth from this location, we know that it is not a respecter of persons. True, the earthquake will probably cause more suffering for poor people than others, but this is because of our social relations.

In fact, our understanding of the Earth depends largely on our social location and position, as well as our understanding of ourselves as human beings. To cover more of the significance of the Earth, we will examine how we see its relationship to our humanity, our social worlds, and then how we can honor and change those relationships in the realm of the civic. The Earth, our humanity, social worlds, and the civic constitute a quadradic interpretive framework that allows us to highlight not only where we have failed to protect the Earth, but also what is necessary to create a more honorable relationship with it.

2.2 The Earth and Our Humanity

A basic principle in this book is that humans are participants . We actually become human through participation—in the biosphere, in our family, in language, and in various social worlds. When air enters our body, we begin living our life as a human being. Like fish in water, we inhale and exhale in an ocean of air. We live in air, we are air-born—and we die when air no longer flows in and out of us. We did not create air or buy it. It is a commons, something we share with other forms of life. From birth to death, we belong to the biosphere and participate in its life.

That we depend on participation in the biosphere has been provocatively affirmed by the “I can’t breathe” protests after the killing of George Floyd by police officers in 2020. We need to breathe to stay alive. In fact, we stay alive because we participate in the biosphere as its air moves in and out of our bodies. Breathing allows us to release the energy we have within ourselves. Energy, of course, is not any individual’s creation. Our source of energy is the sun. The sun makes our planet habitable and provides us with the energy to live. The oxygen from the air and the energy from the sun belong to the planet, and as participants in planetary life, we enjoy living.

Breathing happens within the context of time. As each of us moves toward our own end-of-time, we live in human time. We also live in social and technological time—dinner time and internet time. Human time can be measured. It takes nine months from conception to birth. It takes about a year to learn to walk, and maybe a bit longer to speak. Puberty comes in time. In some societies it comes earlier than in others, as we witness the continual mismatching of Earth and social time. The Earth rotates around the sun in its time, which gives us daylight and night times. Time to work and time to sleep. Electricity allows us to keep the lights on, prolonging social time and sometimes it seems like erasing our awareness of the Earth’s time. As we witness continued global warming, melting glaciers, rising oceans, stronger hurricanes, tornadoes, and increased flooding, it seems like it’s time to take time to re-connect with the time of the Earth.

Our knowledge of the Earth ultimately rests on our knowledge of ourselves as living, natural beings. How we treat our body and the body of others parallels how we treat the Earth. Just as the story of the enslavement and exploitation of others’ bodies makes it painful to tell the true story of Western history, so does the story of the appropriation and degradation of the Earth make it difficult to tell the true story of the Earth. What have we done: to the soil, to the forests, to the oceans, to the streams and rivers, and the wetlands? This is a difficult question; not because we cannot answer it, but rather because the answer involves reflection not only on the meaning of the Earth, but also on us.

We need to remember that we belong to the animal kingdom. We share more than 99% of our DNA with other primates. Like other primates, we have an intuitive sense that we are worthwhile. Every newborn warmly held by a caring parent experiences the joy of being loved. This is true of other primates as well. There is a pleasure in being alive that our techno-society has largely erased from our collective memory. No one has written more thoughtfully and clearly about humans

as sensuous beings than the philosopher David Abrams. In his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, he writes:

The breathing, sensing body draws its sustenance and it's very substance from the soils, plants, and elements that surround it; it continually contributes itself, in turn, to the air, to the composing Earth to the nourishment of insects and oak trees and squirrels, ceaselessly spreading out of itself as well as breathing the world into itself, so that is it very difficult to discern, at any moment, precisely where this living body begins and where it ends (1997, pp. 46–47).

For Abrams, we know the Earth through our senses. As he writes in his book's Preface:

Humans are tuned for relationship. The eyes, the skin, the tongue, ears, and nostrils—all are gates where our body receives the nourishment of otherness. . . . For the largest part of our species' existence, humans have negotiated relationships with every aspect as the sensuous surroundings, exchanging possibilities with every flapping form, with each textured surface and shivering entity that we happened to focus upon. . . . And from all of these relationships our collective sensibilities were nourished (p. ix).

If we look at the Earth from Abram's perspective, our knowledge of the Earth depends a lot on our awareness of our body's sensuous participation in its aliveness. While we have such a capacity, our access to it largely depends on the social worlds in which we live. For the most part, we experience our humanity as a social phenomenon—the third element of the interpretive framework.

2.3 The Earth and the Social

Our social worlds are composed by the stories told to us and that we tell, and the patterns of interaction that provide social order. Changing stories and patterns of interaction can also change our social worlds, but before changing the social, we have to know something about why the stories were constructed as they were—a reoccurring theme throughout the book. One could see the stories we have learned as answers to various questions, such as the question: “How should we live together on the Earth?” Is there a “correct” answer to this question? Some answers are probably better than others. One answer comes from a collection of “original instructions” by Indigenous peoples.

2.3.1 Indigenous Peoples' “Original Instructions”

Indigenous people have been gathering for over 18 years at the annual Bioneers conference in Northern California to share their wisdom about living with the Earth. A non-profit environmental organization, Bioneers published the presentations of the Indigenousness speakers in the book, *Original Instructions: Indigenous*

Teachings for a Sustainable Future. In the Introduction, Malissa Nelson writes about the volume:

Original Instructions refer to the many diverse teachings, lessons, and ethics expressed in the origin stories and oral traditions of Indigenous Peoples. They are the literal and metaphorical instructions passed on orally from generation to generation, for how to be a good human being living in reciprocal relations with all of our seen and unseen relations. They are natural laws that, when ignored, have natural consequences (2008, pp. 2–3).

As you would expect, *Original Instructions* contains many challenging voices for us descendants of settler colonialists. Should we try to establish similar relationships with the Earth?. In this regard, I think Nelson’s distinction between “literal and metaphorical instructions” is quite instructive. Would you read the following passage from the book literally or metaphorically?

We, the two-legged species, the humans, are not alone here; we share this Mother Earth with many life forms, animate and inanimate. From the waters of the great oceans to the smallest rock, and from the smallest organism to the biggest animals, we are related to each other. The relationship to the sacredness of our Mother Earth and all her children defines our spiritual, our cultural, our social, our economic, and even the political relationships that we have with each other in all life (p. 221).

Is the Earth literally or metaphorically sacred? Is it “really” sacred? Or, is it “like” sacred? It depends on the social worlds from which we interpret its meaning. We should not forget that for most of human history most human communities lived with something like these “original instructions.” This is no longer the case for those of us who live in “modern society.” We need modern instructions.

2.3.2 *Modern Instructions*

For Earth’s sake, our modern instructions must not be based on assumptions that turn the Earth into our property: as a thing that people can manipulate to serve their wishes. We now know this was a mistake for several reasons: it ignored the Earth’s own system dynamics and its finite carrying capacity, it overlooked the Earth’s intrinsic value as a living system, and it has allowed immeasurable violence to the Earth’s vitality.

One could say that the culprit was Gunter’s chain, at least in the settler’s acquisition of American soil. Invented by the English mathematician, Edmund Gunter (1581–1635) the chain allowed one to map out a plot of land with clear boundaries. The Earth was transformed into parcels of land—acres, half-acres, sections, and so on. Instead of measuring different types of Earth by what was needed to grow crops, the Earth was measured by size, and went on the market as a piece of land worth so much per acre or plot. In his fascinating book on the history of land sales in the United States, Andro Linklater summarizes the impact of Gunter’s chain:

Once the earth could be measured by a unit that did not vary, supply and demand would determine the price, and it could be treated as a commodity. This was not Gunter's intention, but it was a consequence of the accuracy that was built into his means of measurement (2003, p. 20).

This tool, of course, did not create the perception of the Earth as something one could treat as property, but rather allowed the perception to become practical. In another book, *Owning the Earth*, Linklater describes the emergence of this perception of the Earth in the European early modern period.

The disruption of this pattern [communal ownership] is the great revolution of the last 200 years. The idea of individual, exclusive ownership, not just of what can be carried or occupied, but of the immovable, near-eternal Earth has proved to be the most destructive and creative force in written history (2015, p. 5).

This "great revolution" as Linklater calls it, or "the great transformation" to use Karl Polanyi's title, changed the meaning of land from a communal shared habitat to a piece of property that one could buy and sell, a commodity (1971).

In the modern world view, the Earth became a thing that could be manipulated to produce more by increasing the use of fertilizer and pesticides, destroying its vegetation, clear-cutting its forests, sterilizing it, and covering it with concrete. Its value was essentially its market value. How contrary to the notion of the Earth as sacred. This modern social world may not have the capacity to treat the Earth as sacred, but if we want to protect the Earth for future generations, we can no longer treat it as only a thing. We need a different story about our relationship with the Earth; one that protects it from abuse and recognizes its intrinsic value. One such story could be a story of the Earth as a living provider.

2.3.3 Earth as a Living Provider

In my book, *Civilizing the Economy*, I tried to tell a story of our relationship with the Earth as a story of various human providers transforming the Earth's provisions into provisions for our families and communities (2010). As an alternative to the modern story of treating land as a commodity, this view saw the Earth as a living system. This allowed us to see our relationship with the Earth in the connections between natural and social systems, like the natural system of photosynthesis and the social systems of providing food and shelter.

Most of our systems of provision today do not exist in reciprocal relations with the Earth. We take much more than we restore. The natural and social systems are not in-balance. All too often, the Earth is not treated as a living provider of goods, but rather as a thing that can be coerced into providing goods not for the sake of making provisions, but for the sake of wealth. To restore some balance between the Earth and the social, we will need to design systems of provision that protect the providers as well as those who are provided for. Since many of us dwell in cities and urban areas today, exploring the various dimensions of a dwelling may help us understand the relationship between the Earth and social life.

2.4 A Modern Dwelling

As the accompanying picture demonstrates, a dwelling, at least an urban dwelling, has several dimensions—a home, a house or building, and part of an urban and natural environment. The house or building consists of various materials, perhaps wood, a renewable product, or cement, not renewable. The building also provides its inhabitants protection from what we euphemistically call “the elements” (Fig. 2.1).

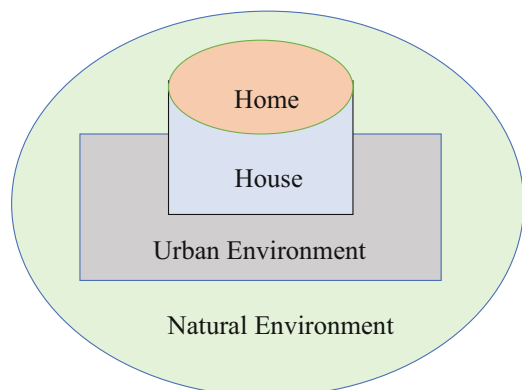
The dwelling is also a home that provides the privacy necessary for exercising one’s own autonomy and for developing one’s life-plans. It should also be a place that’s safe for vulnerability and engaging in intimate relations. The tragedy of homelessness in the United States is that homeless people are deprived of a place where their personal lives are protected. Homelessness, in other words, is not just about shelter, although that is certainly a basic human right, but even more importantly, it is about not being at home in the world.

Shelter, of course, is not trivial. We not only live with nature, but we also protect ourselves from nature. With changes in global climate patterns, we see the atmosphere becoming warmer, sea levels rising, storms intensifying, oceans acidifying, polar caps melting, and natural ecosystems deteriorating. In recent decades, many know the Earth only too well though hurricanes, heat waves, tornadoes, floods, fires and volcanoes. These trends raise new challenges for urban planners as they must retrofit their housing stock for a changing world

In response to global warming, some governments are passing regulations that require new homes to be self-sustainable. Advances in technology have made such requirements quite reasonable. Other technological developments, however, have created new problems such as the growing use of air-conditioning.

In her recent article on air-conditioning, Rachel Kyte writes that increases in temperatures in such countries as Pakistan (128.3 F), Iran (129.2 F) and the state of Arizona (118 F) have made air-conditioning more of a necessity than a luxury (2017). Growing populations in countries such as India have also increased the need for air-conditioning. Air-conditioning, however, not only takes electricity (there are still over 1 billion people world-wide without electricity), but also, in most cases, uses hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) that cause global warming. As Kyte

Fig. 2.1 A modern dwelling. (Original to the author)



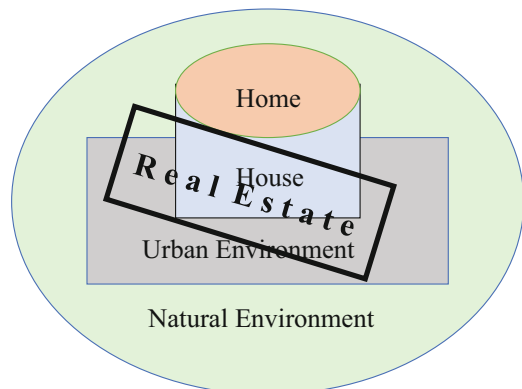
says, air-conditioning is both a lifesaver and a potential disaster. On the one hand, the trend of global warming has made hot zones even hotter, which could be managed by increasing the use of air-conditioning, but then air-conditioning increases the demand for electricity and HFCs in the atmosphere. On the other hand, if there is so much sun, then why not simply install solar panels and let the heat create electricity to cool things off? Solar power could be an essential part of the answer but finding the materials for the technology and the right incentives and regulations to persuade people to ensure its adoption—not so easy. We need to remember that this dilemma of increasing the use of air-conditioning belongs to a much larger issue of how to make life livable on our one planet (Fig. 2.2).

For some, seeing a dwelling only as a house, a home, and belonging to natural and urban dimensions totally misses what many homeowners and investors see as the most significant aspect of a modern dwelling—its real-estate value. Financial investors would argue that the property’s financial value makes possible the other values of the dwelling—as a home, a shelter, and a part of urban and environmental environments. For them, the only real question is “Is this a good investment?” Asking such a question, of course, assumes a different interpretive framework. Seeing a dwelling as something one can “buy low and sell high” dismisses the significance of what it means for humans to dwell on the Earth.

How we interpret the meaning of a building, or course, reveals how we see ourselves. If we see a house as nothing but an investment, then we become investors. This has consequences not only for us, but also for others. This is especially relevant for modern urban environments.

“If you owned your home, would you have the right to burn it down?” I have posed this question to students in my ethics classes and most of them answer that you do. After all, they reason, you own it. Then I ask them what the owner owns; it’s the property. As we have seen, however, this “property” belongs to an urban and natural environment. It’s real-estate value, in fact, depends almost entirely on its location in the urban environment. A similar building’s real estate value may vary from almost zero to millions of dollars depending on its location. Also, most houses have had a past and potential future as a family’s home and shelter. The significance of the

Fig. 2.2 A modern dwelling as real estate. (Original to the author)



house, in other words, is lost when its real-estate value blocks out everything else. That is not only true of our homes, of course, but also of the Earth itself. Recognizing and protecting the meaning of “things” does not prevent home ownership, but it does define ownership much more as a kind of stewardship of our dwellings.

Stewardship rests on the recognition of an entity’s value not only for its owner, but also for others and even for itself. To practice stewardship does not require a sacrifice of one’s holdings, but rather an awareness of a relationship with what is being held. In a climate of justice, the relationship would be based on reciprocity where relationships of giving and receiving are balanced. Reciprocity is possible, of course, between living things that share value and meaning. In our current climate of injustice, on the other hand, we are witnessing the further imbalance of our earthly existence. Increased global warming, resource depletion, and waste dumping continue to degrade the Earth’s viability. Also, the growing number of vulnerable refugees and the decreasing provisions for them rely and perpetuate a climate of injustice. Changing these trends requires that we change the social climate to a climate of justice which will require some heavy lifting on the part of all citizens. This brings us to the relationship between the Earth and the Civic.

2.5 The Earth and the Civic

The first definition of the Civic here is that it is a space where citizens (who have resources) and civilians (who need protection and provisions) work together to repair social relationships and to change the social climate to a climate of justice. This definition brings together two elements of the book’s quadradic framework: our humanity and our social worlds. Our shared humanity serves as a foundation for confronting our social differences and separations and calls for citizens to protect civilians. Civilians have a right to such protection because they too have human dignity and deserve the protection of the rule of law. The Earth has some similarities with civilians. Like civilians, the earth is vulnerable to exploitation and violence and needs the protection of laws that recognize the dignity of the Earth as a living system. It’s true that the United States has a long history of exploiting the Earth, but it also has a more recent history of people working to protect it. Their legacy offers us a trajectory into the future that we can join.

Since Earth Day in 1972, a host of activist groups and policy makers have been struggling to protect the Earth and its inhabitants. Some corporations and businesses have also been involved in decreasing their ecological footprint and increasing their use of sustainable energy and materials. Interface Inc., a global carpet corporation, for example, has taken on the task of becoming completely sustainable (2009). In fact, there is a rich legacy of persons and organizations working together to protect our Earth. Brian Howard has created an impressive list of such “environmental victories”

2.5.1 *Environmental Victories*

On Earth Day in 2018, *National Geographic* published Howard's list of 48 environmental victories since the first Earth Day in 1972 (2017). Although these victories have not by themselves completed the task of preserving the planet for our children and grandchildren, they do give us a legacy and a movement that can give us hope for continuing their work. I have edited Howard's list below to provide us with the rich history of people's work in caring for the Earth.

1. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 began the era of requiring environmental impact statements.
2. In 1972, the Notorious Toxic Chemical DDT was Banned.
3. In 1972, the Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act was passed, updating a 1910 law that had required truth in advertising for pesticides.
4. In 1972, the Clean Water Act passed.
5. In 1972, the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act started the country's system of marine sanctuaries.
6. In 1973; the landmark Endangered Species Act.
7. 1975; Global Agreement on Endangered Species.
8. The 1975 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species was drafted for signatures in 1973 and went into effect in 1975.
9. The 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act set quality standards for all U.S. drinking water systems.
10. In 1974, the EPA began a phaseout of lead from gasoline in the U.S., a process completed in 1995.
11. 1976 The Toxic Substances Control Act oversees the introduction of new chemicals into the marketplace. A notable example was the banning of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) after 1978.
12. 1978 Love Canal Causes National Outcry.
13. 1980 Superfund Program Launched.
14. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, commonly known as Superfund.
15. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in late 1980.
16. In 1982, the International Whaling Commission finally adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling.
17. In 1986, McDonalds started using biodegradable packaging.
18. In 1986, the sprawling Woburn, Massachusetts pollution case was decided in court. The case was depicted in the 1995 book (and later movie) *A Civil Action*.
19. 1987 Saving Condors action grew population from only 27 to over 400.
20. In 1987, the Montreal Protocol outlawed a series of chemicals that had been destroying the Earth's protective ozone layer.
21. The Water Quality Act of 1987 created the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which helped finance the upgrade of water systems across the country.
22. The 1988 Medical Waste Tracking Act compelled healthcare providers to treat their waste seriously and make sure it is disposed of properly.

23. In 1989 the U.S. began a phaseout of asbestos from many products.
24. 1990 update of the 1963 Clean Air Act.
25. 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
26. In 1991, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists began reintroducing black-footed ferrets to the American West. The species was declared extinct in 1979. Now, there are an estimated 1000 of the animals in several populations in the wild.
27. 1993 Erin Brokovich's wins lawsuit against Masry & Vititoe for poisoning people's groundwater with a toxic chemical.
28. In 1993, the U.S. Green Building Council was founded, helping kick off a revolution in environmentally friendly design that continues to grow each year.
29. In 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity went into effect after being ratified by enough countries.
30. 1995 Gray Wolves Reintroduced to Yellowstone.
31. 1995 Bald Eagle Recovery.
32. In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was adopted by some countries (although not the U. S).
33. In January 2001, the U.S. Forest Service adopted the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which protected 58.5 million acres of pristine forests and grasslands from most road construction and logging.
34. In 2002, California passed an aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standard in order to help stimulate the clean energy industry.
35. 2006 Al Gore's Movie, An Inconvenient Truth, helped raise public awareness around the threat of climate change.
36. In 2006 the U.S. started regulating the commercial fishing industry through catch shares, in an attempt to make fishermen partners in conservation instead of adversaries.
37. The Energy Independence and Security Act resulted in tougher new fuel economy standards.
38. Walk Score was founded in 2007, rating cities, neighborhoods, and more for how pedestrian friendly they are.
39. The 2009 Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument protects some of the most pristine waters in the ocean. The monument was expanded by Barack Obama to nearly 490,000 square miles.
40. In 2010, the Department of the Interior announced a ban on oil and gas drilling in federal waters off the Atlantic Coast until 2017.
41. In 2012, Washington's Elwha dams were removed, restoring a wild river to Olympic National Park.
42. In late 2015, nations came together in Paris and agreed to a new plan to limit global warming.
43. 2017 Tougher Ozone Standards.
44. In April, the lesser long-nosed bat became the first bat to be taken off the Endangered Species List. Yellowstone's grizzly bears were also removed from the endangered list, as well as the American wood stork in 2014.

We could add to this list the Paris Accords of 2016, where many nations agreed to make a concerted effort to decrease carbon emissions, and more importantly, for developed nations to create a fund to assist developing nations in a global effort to preserve the Earth for future generations. This agreement, unfortunately, has not led to actions that are proportionate with the continual increases in carbon emissions and global warming. Recent research appears to confirm the dire predictions of those who have argued for more urgent action than many nations have been willing to take.

A consensus of opinion about our current situation has recently been published by the National Academy of Science entitled: “Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene.” The essay presents two options for our future: a Stable Earth or a Hothouse Earth.

2.5.2 A Stable Earth or a Hothouse Earth

The time of the Anthropocene, as you may know, is the epoch in geologic history when Earth systems no longer follow their natural course but instead are directed by humans. That’s our time. The fate of the Earth depends on our choices (Steffen et al. 2018). We now have a choice between a “hothouse Earth” and a “Stabilized Earth.” Without a rather drastic change in current social, economic, and cultural patterns, increased warming will soon reach what the researchers call a “Planetary threshold” which is a kind of tipping point where global warming creates its own positive feedback loops, which further increase global warming and chaotic conditions.

Hothouse Earth is likely to be uncontrollable and dangerous to many, particularly if we transition into it in only a century or two, and it poses severe risks for health, economies, political stability (especially for the most climate vulnerable, and ultimately, the habitability of the planet for humans (p. 11).

To avoid the likely future of something like “Hothouse Earth,” we must find ways to coordinate international actions that drastically reduce carbon emissions and other causes of global warming. Not an easy assignment.

Ultimately, the transformations necessary to achieve the Stabilized Earth pathway require a fundamental reorientation and restructuring of national and international institutions toward more effective governance at the Earth System Level, with a much stronger emphasis on planetary concerns in economic governance, global trade, investments and finance, and technological development (p.13).

Are we ready for “a fundamental reorientation and restructuring of national and international institutions”? I doubt it. True, there are more organizations working on the issue of climate change than ever before. The US Climate Action Network, for example, lists over 185 such organizations and there are surely more than those on their list (USCAN). It’s also true that governments and non-governmental organizations are developing policies aimed at moving us toward a sustainable future. One question, of course, is whether the policies are bold enough to match the current

environmental crisis. Another question is whether it will be possible to actually implement bold environmental policies in our current climate of injustice.

We need to remember that making policies always occurs in a social context, and any group's capacity to implement policies depends on what their context allows. The "success" of the "environmental victories" have not brought us to a sustainable future, I suggest, because their social context remained a climate of injustice that allowed some progress, but not too much: not enough to threaten American Prosperity. Continuing the work in the wake of the "environmental victories" requires that we not only carefully examine our relationship with the Earth but also our social relationships with each other.

2.6 Continuing the Work

Although the list of victories doesn't show it, environmental progress since Earth Day in 1972 has not been sustained. The election of Ronald Reagan choked most of the 1970s momentum for saving the Earth and after the Trump administration, the Earth is at risk as never before. This legacy of struggles to repair and restore the Earth has countered "powers and principalities" that have blocked them from changing the course of Western, and now global, planetary devastation. Maintaining the status quo means continuing to insist on economic growth, increased consumption, no matter the cost to the planet. Even though there is mounting evidence of the deteriorating condition of the planet—higher sea levels, melting glaciers, stronger hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and fires—we continue to think in terms of growth and the American Dream ensuring that the protection of the planet does not endanger American prosperity.

The Earth as we know it flows through our bodies. It is not a foreign object or a piece of property, and neither are we. Our treatment of ourselves and of others parallels our treatment of the Earth. Too often the environmental movement has separated the violations of the planet's living systems from the violations of our shared humanity. We now need to recognize that the environmental movement needs the same ethical foundation as current social movements: a climate of justice.

As was pointed out earlier, we participate in the biosphere. We take in oxygen and send out carbon dioxide. Plants do the opposite. Through the process of photosynthesis, the atmosphere remains balanced, or at least it had remained balanced until we began pouring more carbon into the biosphere than it could absorb. For all of human history, until the recent modern period, humans have played their part in the life of the biosphere. Now we face a planetary crisis as global warming puts all of us—human and non-human communities—at risk. The crisis, one can hope, will remind us that we are only part of the planet, and must now consciously learn how to play our part.

So, what is our part? How should we relate to the Earth? A climate of justice favors the idea of reciprocity—of balanced relations between us and the Earth. On the one hand, balanced relations would entail some proportionality between what the

Earth provides and our response. In Richard Powers' novel, *The Overstory*, the character, Patricia, gives us an idea of what this might entail. She is standing in a forest:

Thank you for the baskets and the boxes. Thank you for the capes and hats and skirts. Thank you for the cradles. The Beds. The diapers, Canoes, Paddles, harpoons, and nets. Poles, logs, posts. The rot-proof shakes and shingles. The kindling that will always light. . . . Thank you for the tools, The chests. The decking. The clothes closets. The Paneling. I forget . . . Thank you" she says, following the ancient formula. "For all these gifts that you have given." And still not knowing how to stop, she adds, "We're sorry. We didn't know how hard it is for you to grow back (2018, p. 135).

This expression of gratitude brings urgency to another aspect of our relationship with the Earth; we need to protect it. A basic premise of this book is that the destruction of the natural world and the violations of our common humanity come from the same source: white supremacy and arrogance toward human and non-human communities. A leader in environmental justice, Carl Anthony has spent years asking us to take this fact seriously. He writes:

The dehumanization required to enslave people rests upon the same arrogance that allows the dominators to use, abuse, and pollute Earth's living ecosystem. This dehumanization continues when the contributions of people of color are missing from the history of the modern world. Humanity cannot develop a radically new ecological conscience until we re-tell its story to include the various histories and perspectives of people of color. Attempting to solve the problem of ecosystem exploitation will never work without facing up to its companion—waste and human exploitation caused by racism (2017, pp. 17–18).

If we are to create a climate of justice, it will not only change our perception of our relationship with the Earth but also with each other. The ethical term is reciprocity. Reciprocal relations are relations where the participants receive in proportion to what they have given or in some cases in proportion to what has been taken from them—to what they have lost. Achieving reciprocal relationships, however, requires some repair of the relationships between those who have lived in privileged social worlds at the expense of others, as well as restoring the balance among the Earth's different systems. So, we should be grateful for those who have worked to protect the Earth and at the same time, follow the direction laid out by our interpretive framework that connects the Earth as a living system with our humanity, our social worlds, and the civic.

References

- Abrams, D. 1997. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Anderson, R. with R. White. 2009. *Confessions of a Radical Industrialist: Profits, People, Purpose—Doing Business By Respecting the Earth*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Anthony, C. 2017. *The Earth, the City, and the Hidden Narrative of Race*. New York: New Village Press.
- Brown, M.T. 2010. *Civilizing the Economy: A New Economics of Provision*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Howard, B.C. 2017. 48 Environmental Victories Since the First Earth Day. *National Geographic*, November 7. <https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/environment-and-conservation/2017/11/48-environmental-victories-first-earth-day>
- Kyte, R. 2017. Air Conditioning Is a Lifesaver. It's Also a Potential Disaster. *IDEAS*. <http://time.com/4884909/air-conditioning-ac-climate-change-global-warming/>.
- Linklater, A. 2003. *Measuring America: How the United States Was Shaped by the Greatest Land Sale in History*. New York: Plume.
- . 2015. *Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Nelson, M. 2008. Introduction: Lighting the Sun of Our Future—How These Teachings Can Provide Illumination. In *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, ed. M. Nelson. Rochester: Bear & Company.
- Polanyi, K. 1971. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Power, R. 2018. *The Overstory*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Steffen, W., J. Rockstrom, K. Richardson, T.M. Lenton, C. Folke, D. Liverman, C.P. Summerhayes, D. Barnosky, S.E. Cornell, M. Crucifix, J.F. Donger, I. Fetzer, S.J. Lade, M. Scheffer, R. Winkelmann, and H.J. Schellnhuber. 2018. Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 115 (33): 8252–8259. First published August 6, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1810141115>. Edited by W.C. Clark, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, and approved July 6, 2018 (received for review June 19, 2018). <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/33/8252>.
- USCAN. <https://www.usclimatenetwork.org/member-organizations>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Chapter 3

Our Humanity



3.1 Introduction

In a workshop on decision making with engineers in Caracas some years ago, I asked the participants to stand in the middle of the room and then to move to one corner or the other depending on whether they assumed we (humans) were basically different or basically the same. I had placed flip charts at the opposite corners of the room. One said: “We are basically different,” and the other said “We are basically the same.” Before I asked them to move to the corner where they were most comfortable, I give them information about what I had in mind with the opposing assumptions. I asked them to imagine walking down a street in a large city and coming across a homeless person on the sidewalk. I then asked whether or not they thought that they could have been such a person. A “yes” answer would imply that we are all basically the same but have had different circumstances and opportunities. A “no” answer would imply that we are basically different: They would never become homeless. I asked them to move to the corner where they could agree with the statement on the chart. In this particular case, the whole group moved to the we-are-basically-different corner. I was surprised until I remembered that Venezuela is very much a class society and class differences regularly imply human differences. We do have lots of differences, but we also belong to the same species.

A basic premise of this book is that if a group, even a very diverse group, can somehow forge an appreciation of each participant’s humanity and are willing to repair ruptures in their social relationships, they will have realized the capacity to create a climate of justice: an ethical foundation for designing a sustainable future.

In many conversations, the foundation for human dignity is simply taken for granted. At the same time, we live in social structures that violate some people’s human dignity every day. If dignity were simply an attribute, like patience, then we could say that some value it and some don’t. But what if dignity is not a quality, but a

core element of human existence, and to violate one's dignity is to injure one's humanity? This Chapter brackets the taken-for-granted meaning of human dignity and searches for its source first in our experiences of living on the Earth, and then through the lens of neurobiology.

3.2 People of the Earth

We become human beings when air begins to circulate through our bodies after birth. At the same time, our caregivers bring us into the realm of the social. We are grounded (more literally than one might think) in the Earth and live in the social. We are members of the animal kingdom. Humans have around 24,000 genes, and we share over 98% of them with bonobos and chimpanzees. In fact, the genetic make-up of bonobos and chimpanzees is closer to ours than to apes and gorillas. Of the 2% we do not share with other animals, some are unique to the human species, and a few are specific to different persons, families, and communities due to migration, climate adaptation, and genetic mutation. The portion of our genetic code that makes us human is vastly outweighed by the over 98 percent we share with other animals. Like other animals, we are beings who dwell on the Earth. We live as long as we participate in the Earth's living systems.

We also participate in various social worlds—the arena of differences and conflicts. One can make a distinction between our biological and social body, but our identity arises from both. Our gait, for example, not only fits with a two-legged animal, but also with the social habits that families and peers have passed on to us. In a sense, the social is so all-encompassing that it's difficult to isolate our self from our social behavior. And yet, who would totally deny that what I feel, think, remember, imagine, and reflect on are “mine”?

As you know, the word “me” is one of several personal pronouns. First personal pronouns are “I” and “we.” Second personal pronouns are “you” singular and plural. Third personal pronouns are “she,” “he,” “it,” and “they.” What kind of “person” do these personal pronouns refer to?

Here's the thing! The original Latin meaning of the word “person” meant a mask that actors wore on the stage. Like a mask, one could say that our personal identity both reveals and conceals our humanity. Our mask, to be sure, is constructed in the language, patterns, and expectations of our social worlds, but we are also agents who act in the drama of life with others. Since the social worlds in which we exist are quite different from one another, no one plays exactly the same role. At the same time, we are all living now. We exist as contemporaries.

3.3 Existing as Contemporaries

The global currents of social and climatic change affect all of us. Families in Africa may experience severe storms as never before, as families in Asia experience a water shortage as never before. We all are part of a global population of over 8 billion, now trending toward 9 or 10 billion. And we all live on the same planet.

Seeing all of us as contemporaries may seem obvious today, but not so during the European Enlightenment. Europeans saw peoples living in Asia, Africa and the Americas as living in the past. In his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith illustrates this perspective with his idea of the evolution of four different “nations.” The nations are the hunter nation, shepherd nation, agriculture nation, and commercial nation (1994, pp. 737–748). The development of civilization, for Smith, was the result of moving through these different times, and arriving at the time of commerce. Those African or American peoples living in hunter-gather or shepherd “nations” were not seen as contemporaries. They lived in the past. Since the European commercial society was seen as “civilized,” these other societies were “uncivilized.”

To acknowledge that we are all contemporaries does not negate significant historical differences. These differences are the results of social rather than human evolution. Agricultural societies certainly differ from hunter-gather societies, and they both differ from commercial and industrial society. Asian societies also differ from European or African societies. These differences, however, are not signs of different types of human beings, but rather signs of different social histories and different social worlds. Terms like “Anglo-Saxon,” for example, refers to a geographical social group rather than a particular kind of human. When people take “Europeans” as more developed humans than “American Natives,” they have confused social evolution with human evolution.

In his book on cosmopolitanism, Kwame Appiah makes a similar argument: “If a normal baby girl born forty thousand years ago were kidnapped by a time machine and raised in a normal family in New York, she would be ready for college in eighteen years” (2006, p. xi). Our basic human capacity, in other words, has not changed. We do have differences, but these differences do not touch our essential and shared humanity.

Each one of us can experience our own humanity by paying attention to our breathing, moving, and feelings. This knowledge, however, will be incomplete, because it ignores the social worlds in which we breath, move, and feel. The meaning, even of these basic experiences, depends on participation in social relationships with others. Still, there is a beauty about being alive, and feeling worthwhile. Recent research in neurobiology provides us with evidence that such experiences belong to our humanity, and that the idea of human dignity is a fitting concept for naming them.

3.4 Neurobiology and Human Dignity

In contrast to the various philosophies of human existence that base their assumptions mostly on discernment, insight, and intuition, neurobiology begins with observations acquired from the use of brain scans and various types of laboratory research. Researchers in the field have not answered all of their questions, but they have provided a window to look at the dynamics of the human organism.

Our survey of neurobiology follows two leaders in the field: Antonio Damasio and Daniel Siegel. Damasio begins his research on the relationships between the body/brain and the mind, especially in terms of emotions and feelings, and then expands to think of consciousness and the self (2003). Siegel begins his analysis with that he calls “interpersonal neurobiology,” which connects the triad of brain, mind, and relationships (2012). Although the two have quite different approaches, they also complement each other. Since I am not a professional in the field of neurobiology, I have relied on written texts, and conversations with my wife, Erdmut Brown, a psychotherapist, as a guide through this material. It is fair to say that I am limited to what people might call “picking the low hanging fruit.” We start with Damasio’s description of the dynamics of the human body.

3.4.1 *Antonio Damasio’s Neurobiology*

Damasio’s key terms are neurons, body, brain, emotions, feelings, mind, consciousness, and self (2010). Understanding these terms should not be a problem as long as we remember that they refer to complicated processes rather than naming “things.” When thinking in English, this takes some effort because words like “emotions” are nouns, which define a person, place, or thing. Processes are more like verbs than nouns. To understand the research of these authors, we need to remember that their terms, even terms like “self,” refer to a process or set of processes rather than a thing.

No doubt, the human body is a piece of work. Most of it goes on without notice, until it stops working. Some aspects of the human body, such as immune responses, and metabolic regulations or even drives and appetites are necessary to keep us going, but they do not say much about who we are. We come closer to understanding ourselves by looking at the nervous system, and especially the role of neurons in the orchestration of the body’s many different processes. In a sense, the activities of neurons make everything possible from the automatic blinking of an eye to reflecting on the idea of the individual. Damasio’s research on the function of neurons demonstrates the dynamic connections between the brain and the mind.

3.4.1.1 The Brain and the Mind

The electrical firing of neurons in the brain allows the brain to monitor the body's reactions to stimuli and to represent these reactions. The representations occur through what Damasio calls "brain mapping." One could think of brain mapping as creating pathways and patterns in the brain's different sections or spheres. Damasio discovered that the activity of brain mapping creates mental images. He puts it this way:

The distinctive feature of brains such as the one we own is their uncanny ability to create maps . . . But when brains make maps, they are also creating images, the main currency of our minds. Ultimately, consciousness allows us to experience maps as images, to manipulate those images, and to apply reasoning to them (2010, p. 63).

This emergence of mental images out of the activity of brain mapping is central to the creation of consciousness and the self. It also gives us a way to think about the relationship between the body's emotional responses to impacts on the body and its capacity to manage them.

Parallel to the distinction between brain and mind, Damasio distinguishes between emotions and feelings. He defines an emotion as "a complex collection of chemical and neural responses forming a distinctive pattern" (p. 53). Emotions, in other words, are our body's response or reaction to things that impact it. The meaning of these emotional responses depends on the perception and appraisal of both internal and external changes in and to the human organism. This is the realm of feeling. As Damasio puts it: Emotions play out in the dynamics of the body, and feelings in the dynamics of the mind (2003, p. 28).

This distinction between emotions of the body and feelings of the mind should not be taken as indicating two separate spheres, but a method to better understand an integrated process. Damasio is quite clear that the mind arises from and depends on the brain and the body. "The entire fabric of a conscious mind is created from the same cloth—images generated by the brain's mapmaking abilities" (2010, p. 188). For Damasio, the mind exists for the body in the sense that its function is "to optimize the life of the human organism" (p. 206). To further understand the processes involved here, we can turn to Damasio's description of emotions.

3.4.1.2 Three Types of Emotions

Damasio distinguishes between three different types of emotions: background emotions, primary emotions, and social emotions (p. 43). He uses the idea of background emotions to refer to our more general condition, such as the difference between being enthusiastic or discouraged (p. 125). These emotions are not so much responses to specific stimuli as a more general way of being in the world. Background emotions seem similar to what one might call a person's temperament or mood. The primary emotions, on the other hand, are specific responses to impacts on

the body. The six basic emotions are: fear, anger, sadness, happiness, disgust, and surprise (p.123).

These emotions have become widely accepted as basic body responses—responses that are expressed in different facial expressions (Ekman and Friesen 2003) The look of surprise, for example, is different from the look of anger or fear. Although there may be some slight cultural differences in expressing these emotions, they have become recognized as fairly universal basic human emotions. So, one of the things all humans share are these six common emotions, even though some communities have given much more attention to some of them than others.

Just to give one example: in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* we find virtues for the emotional states of fear (courage), anger (good temper), joy (temperance), and disgust (righteous indignation), but not for surprise or sadness (Book II. 2014) Not so surprising, since Aristotle focused on the virtues for citizens of the city-state. Aristotle was clear that ethical decisions depended on our emotional reactions to concrete situations, and to the degree that we are out-of-touch with our emotions, we are limited in perceiving what we should do. This is not only true of our basic emotions, but of social emotions as well.

The social emotions are also bodily processes, but they occur in social relations. Damasio's list of social emotions includes compassion, embarrassment, shame, guilt, contempt, jealousy, envy, pride, and admiration (2010, p. 125). The social emotions, like background and primary emotions, refer to neural and chemical changes in the body and the brain. These emotional responses, however, do not just happen without any meaning. Just the opposite! Along with these emotional responses come feelings about them, and these feeling bring with them a consciousness of our activity and the emergence of a self. Consciousness, in other words, refers not only to feeling *something*, but also *someone* feeling and this someone can be understood as a self. Damasio proposes that the best way to understand these body processes is to think about three different but related selves.

3.4.1.3 Damasio's Different Selves

Damasio gives the following introduction to the three different human selves:

In the perspective of evolution and in the perspective of one's life history, the knower came in steps; the protoself and its primordial feelings; the action-driven core self, and finally the autobiographical self, which incorporate social and spiritual dimensions (p. 10).

The protoself refers to something like a witness to the body processes of emotions and feelings (emoting and feeling). It witnesses the mental feelings and images that connect to the brain's mapping of the body's physical (emotional) responses to maintain a well-balanced organism. Damasio uses the analogy of an orchestra creating its conductor to describe the emergence of the self.

For all intents and purposes, a conductor is now leading the orchestra, although the performance has created the conductor—the self—not the other way around. The conductor is cobbled together by feelings and by a narrative brain device, although this fact does not make the conductor any less real (p. 22).

Damasio proposes that the product of the protoself is a “primordial feeling” that provides “a direct experience of one’s own living body, wordless, unadorned, and connected to nothing but sheer existence” (p. 21).

When this experience is raised to consciousness, we gain an awareness of being some-body in the literal sense of being our own living body. We feel ourselves from the inside as living now. What we have in common here is simply the experience of being alive and being worthwhile. Other primates probably have a similar experience. Our humanity becomes even more interesting at the level of the core self.

The Core Self

The next stage of self—the core self—has a more explicit awareness of patterns created and changed by the body’s response to the impact of external and internal objects. Still, this core self is wordless. It exists in the here and now. Damasio describes the core self as the process of relating the image of an object and the image of the protoself changed by the object (p. 22). The core self, in other words, emerges from the interaction between the body’s responses and what the body is responding to. The core self is more than a witness, however; it also engages in actions that influences mind-object relationships. Whereas the protoself is rooted in the brain stem and connects with the limbic region of the brain, the core self belongs more to the limbic brain and its emotional responses to mental images. This activity of the core self—experiencing and witnessing the purposefulness of being alive—gives us evidence for human dignity. As these experiences become embedded in social relations, the dignity of humanity can be acknowledged, denied, or violated. Our autobiographical consciousness recognizes such experiences.

The Autobiographical Self

In contrast to the consciousness of the core self, which focuses on the present moment, the autobiographical consciousness, or what Damasio calls “extended consciousness” brings into the present past memories and an anticipated future. In his book, *The Feeling of What Happens*, Damasio emphasizes that the narrative of autobiographical consciousness does not require language.

The brain inherently represents the structures and states of the organism, and in the course of regulating the organism as it is mandated to do, the brain naturally weaves wordless stories about what happens to an organism immersed in an environment (1999, p. 189).

Recognizing this dimension of the autobiographical self that is known without language confirms Damasio’s notion that we know ourselves through our feelings or consciousness. At the same time, our autobiographies do include our experiences of living in social worlds. Damasio seems to recognize this in his later work:

Autobiographies are made of personal memories, the sum total of our life experiences, including the experiences of the plans we have made for the future, specific and vague. . . . The social experiences of which we were a part, or wish we were, are included in that history, and so are memories that describe the most refined among our emotional experiences, namely those that might qualify as spiritual. (2010, p. 201).

The fact is that an autobiography contains different dimensions including references to self and to others. Although the specific details of one's autobiography may vary according to one's particular social group, language, and circumstances, one's story does not exist in isolation and cannot be told without reference to others. An autobiography, then, is essentially a social story. This may sound strange to Western readers. Isn't an autobiography a story of an individual? One way to answer this question is to make a distinction between a person and an individual. Before we turn to the works of Daniel Siegel, let's try to clarify this distinction.

3.4.2 *The Western Individual*

In the Western tradition, the self is understood as an "individual," which many take as the primary description of our humanity. We are individuals and should be treated as such. Most of us living in Western culture may not realize that for most of human history, and in most human communities, the individual, as understood in Western terms, does not exist. As Yuval Harari points out in his study of Western history: "Millions of years of evolution have designed us to live and think as community members. Within a mere two centuries we have become alienated individuals" (2004, p. 204). The theory of modern individualism, in other words, only emerged in the early modern period in Europe, and even more recently, has spread all over the world. Modern individualism ignores its historical context, especially in its libertarian mode. The modern individual, in other words, does not recognize himself (it is mostly a male identity) as a participant of the biosphere, in the family, or in social relations. The individual is seen as a self-contained actor who relates to others only when it is advantageous.

Larry Siedentop's study of the origins of individualism traces its origin to the establishment of Christianity (2014). Before the introduction of Christianity, he argues, western society, like other human societies, was a society of families. The family was the religious, economic, and political center of human communities until the rise of cities, which provided a second identity besides one's family identity—an identity as a citizen. Still, as Siedentop points out, the Greeks and Romans continued to see society as an "association of families" not of individuals (p. 17). This perspective changed dramatically, according to Siedentop, with the advent of Jesus's story, especially as told by Paul.

For his [Paul's] understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection introduced to the world a new picture of reality. It provided an ontological foundation for the "individual" through the promise that humans have access to the deepest reality as individuals rather than merely as members of a group. Here we see the power of abstraction, which had previously led Hellenic philosophers to speculate about human nature prior to social conventions, being turned to a new moral use. The self can and must be reconstructed (p. 63).

This new reality did not take hold overnight, of course, but over time, Siedentop argues, Christian beliefs “destroyed the ancient family as a cult or religious association” and replaced it with a Christian association of individuals (p. 115). All people (men) were equal before the one god, and this one god was beyond any family or community relationships. And what was the consequence? Family and other social relations were discounted, and persons were seen as isolated, rather than as relational beings.

In terms of our interpretive framework of the Earth, our humanity, the social, and the civic, individualism isolates humanity from the other three parts. Individualism tends to deny that persons exist in and are held by natural and social relationships. Does this mean that we should view individualism, as it has been understood in the West, as a mistake? I think so. As the philosopher Michael J. Sandel has argued, the notion of the “unencumbered” self is an illusion (1984). Does this mean that we should limit ourselves to family and community relations? Well, no. As Harari points out, even though human communities were bound together by family and community for most of human history, this was not an ideal world that one would like to reinstate. As he says,

Life in the bosom of family and community was far from ideal. Families and communities could oppress their members no less brutally than do modern states and markets, and their internal dynamics were often fraught with tension and violence—yet people had little choice (p. 401).

Harari’s point is well taken, even though he, like many others, confuses the “history of humankind” with the history of European/American development. As one who has shared in this development, I do not find the family and community of the late middle ages very appealing and have no desire to return to pre-modern social relationships.

Our task today is to find the right balance between our self and our social identity. We are some-body, and especially our autobiographical consciousness knows this. We witness ourselves as purposeful living beings, living in family and social relationships. We not only live our lives, but we also feel that our lives are worthy. This knowledge of ourselves provides an intuition of our human dignity.

To further explore the relationship between ourselves and others, let’s turn to the interpersonal neurobiology of Daniel Siegel. While Damasio tends to see the relationship between the biological and the social as an evolutionary process—from the more primitive protoself, to the core self, and finally the autobiographical self, Daniel Siegel connects the biological and social from the very beginning. For him there is really not a biological self that is not interpersonal.

3.4.3 Daniel Siegel’s Interpersonal Neurobiology

Siegel’s approach to neurobiology is more interdisciplinary than Damasio’s, which provides him with a different vocabulary. Siegel focuses much more on the relational

dimensions of our humanity. In his recent book, *mindsight*, he uses his findings in neurobiology as a basis for his therapeutic work with clients. As the book's title suggests, the therapy involves developing awareness of how the mind functions in integrating brain, mind, and relationships in the flow of energy and information (2010, p. 52). Energy and information are key terms here. Energy refers to the capacity to act and information refers to data about something. Energy would include motion, emotion, and motivation. Information includes observations, stories, and reflections.

Like a fish in water or a human in the biosphere, persons exist through participating in the "flow of energy and information." Using Damasio's terminology, we can say that energy comes from the brain's chemical and neurological firings and information from the mind's images of the brain's mappings. This flow of energy and information integrates the brain, mind, and relationships in what Siegel calls "resonance circuits" (p. 62). As these circuits are integrated, they influence what Siegel calls the "triangle of well-being":

Relationships, mind, and brain form the three mutually influencing points of the Triangle of Well-Being. Relationships are how energy and information are shared as we connect and communicate with one another. Brain refers to the physical mechanism through which this energy and information flows. Mind is a process that regulates the flow of energy and information (p. 267).

If we compare Siegel's vocabulary with Damasio's, it may seem like we are looking at very different parts of the elephant. Although they are both exploring the interactions between the brain and the mind, Siegel includes social relations much more than Damasio. Siegel also includes both the research on mirror neurons and attachment theory in his overall approach, which deepens his approach to relationships.

3.4.3.1 Mirror Neurons

Mirror neurons were first discovered in monkeys in the 1990s and were later found in humans as well. These neurons "mirror" the movements and states of others in us. Siegel describes their function this way: "our brains use sensory information to create representations of other's minds, just as they use sensory input to create images of the physical world" (2010, p. 60). Actually, most of us have had such experiences. Who has not mimicked another's movements, expressions, or even emotions? Someone's sadness makes us sad. Someone's joy brings us joy.

The capacity of mirror neurons to establish empathy is more complicated than one might expect. Their existence demonstrates that we are designed to have empathy for one another, but whether empathy occurs or not depends on several significant factors, including our prior experiences in connecting or not connecting with others. To provide a better understanding of these experiences, Siegel includes modern attachment theory in his interpretive framework.

3.4.3.2 The Primacy of Attachments

One of the founders of attachment theory, the psychologist John Bowlby, draws the following conclusion from his study of human and other primate infants:

Human infants, we can safely conclude, like infants of other species, are preprogrammed to develop in a socially cooperative way; whether they do so or not depends on how they are treated (1988, p. 9).

In contrast to the more pessimistic views of human nature, attachment theory holds that humans are not preprogrammed to be greedy or selfish. Instead, they are wired to develop in and through cooperative relationships. Siegel puts it this way:

We come into the world wired to make connections with one another, and the subsequent neural shaping of our brain, the very foundation of our sense of self, is built upon these intimate exchanges between the infant and her caregivers (2010, p. 10).

The major factor that determines an infant's well-being, in other words, is not so much the infant's particular constitution as the quality of the relationship, or relationships, in which the infant develops. While the first relationships establish a person's relational or attachment style; later significant relationships throughout one's life may change it. Every significant relationship has the possibility of becoming a "secure base" that would facilitate a person's flourishing. As Bowlby suggests: "Although the capacity for developmental change is diminished with age, change continues throughout the life cycle so that changes for better or for worse are always possible" (p. 16).

Susan Johnson, a couples and family therapist, has written extensively on the application of Bowlby's attachment theory to understanding relationships among couples. Her approach begins with the assumption that "Dependency is an innate part of being human, rather than a childhood trait that we grow out of as we mature" (2004, p. 25f).

What we have in common, in other words, is our dependency on meaningful relationships. Johnson and others have documented the repetition of specific behavioral patterns as people move from one significant relationship to another. When one's behavior indicates a pattern of avoidance of close relationships, for example, that may be a sign of one's past relational experiences. Revisiting these past relational experiences can change their meaning and thereby open up new possibilities for future relationships. It's about changing relationships. Not unlike other primates, humans are relational beings.

Attachment theory reveals our common desire for secure relationships and our dependence on others for establishing a "secure base." When such security is missing, as it is for some, then we see other types of attachment behavior, such as withdrawing from relationships or, on the other hand, anxiously pursuing others. Most of us have multiple attachment experiences that result in the emergence of what Siegel calls "myself."

3.4.3.3 The Emergence of “Myself”

For Siegel, the different attachment styles provide different capacities for engaging in the flow of energy and information available in our interpersonal relationships.

With any activity, we can be receptive, or we can be reactive. These qualities of receptivity or reactivity can appear in any state, whether it’s helping a child with homework, giving a speech, shopping for clothes, or making love. Each of these activities, if repeated, pulls together feelings, skills, memories, behaviors, and beliefs into a cohesive whole. Some states are engaged frequently enough to help define the individual, the so-called self-states combined to create our personality. These are the many selves, receptive or reactive, that make up the person we call “myself” (2010, p. 199).

Siegel’s use here of the concepts of “individual” and “person” may have caught your attention. He writes that the various states of the self “define the individual,” that “create our personality,” that make up the “person we call myself.” Why do we “define” the individual, “create” a personality, and “make up” a person? Do we see here the difference between the notion of the individual as separate from social relations and the person as a composite of all relations—body, mind, and other? I think that for both Siegel and Damasio, one can say that the person is a composite of multiple selves.

Remember that in Damasio, even though the word “self” is taken as a noun, it actually refers to a process of awareness and consciousness. The core self is not a thing. The autobiographical self is a narrative, and an awareness of one’s narrative. This is self-consciousness. Siegel’s “self” is not that much different. Siegel does emphasize how mindful awareness of one’s own processes can actually change the brain. The brain can change because of its “neuroplasticity,” which means that different mental activities can bring about different brain activities (2010, p. 5). If the brain can change, then obviously so can any process we would call “myself.”

As our body/brain changes, we not only experience these changes, but also can influence them. This capacity to influence is not something external to the flow of energy and information, but a creation of the flow. The “self” belongs to all these flows and cannot be separated from them. In a deep sense, I belong to these processes more than they belong to me. At the same time, there is “someone” that I witness as “myself.” This “myself” depends on others. It is not a self-contained individual. Neurobiology is clear about that. Human dignity, therefore, belongs to this self we call a person, which is not an isolated thing, but rather lives from and with others. The Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, has aptly captured the social dimension of a person’s dignity: “The essence of dignity that is unique to humanity is manifested through the relations of one human being to another, one human being to the family, the clan, or community, in the relations between one collectivity and another, however defined, including race relationships” (2004, p. 97).

This is what we have been searching for: conceiving of human dignity as an integral part of social relations. Like Damasio’s analogy of the conductor of an orchestra, where the orchestra creates the conductor, it’s human interactions that allow the emergence of human dignity. Personal pronouns are not for nothing. They are references to us; to our dignity as persons.

3.5 Personal Dignity

This chapter has focused on a description of our humanity. The language of neurobiology highlighted those aspects of our humanity that are grounded in our body and the chemical/neurological processes of human relationships. In our everyday life, we always experience these processes inside the social worlds in which we live. One can, of course, try to extract one's self from social worlds and live as an imaginary isolated individual, but others can easily see that such persons continue to live in social relations with others. The "abstracted individual" still speaks in a particular language, lives in a particular social and historical context, and exists in multiple social relations. Denial of these facts does not make them any less real. Our humanity, in other words, is never really available by moving away from our social differences, but by moving through our social differences to experience our shared humanity. These experiences symbolize our worthiness not only for ourselves, but for others as well. In this sense, they are experiences of personal dignity.

Since we live in a world of social differences, sometimes these differences have been taken as differences in our humanity, yet neurobiology and our own experience shows us that these are not human differences, but social differences. We belong to the biosphere and the planet and we belong to social groups. Personal dignity is not based on membership in some social group. Nor is it a value that deserves our alliance. No, it is an acknowledgment and appreciation of the worthiness of each person's humanity.

References

- Appiah, K.A. 2006. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc.
- Aristotle. 2014. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Bowlby, J. 1988. *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. New York: Basic Books.
- Damasio, A. 1999. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York: Harcourt, Inc.
- . 2003. *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. New York: Harcourt, Inc.
- . 2010. *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Mind*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ekman, P., and W.V. Friesen. 2003. *Unmasking The Face: A Guide to Recognizing Emotions from Facial Expression*. Cambridge, MA: Malor Books.
- Harari, Y.N. 2004. *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. London: Vintage Books.
- Johnson, S. 2004. *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Marital Therapy*. Creating Connection. Basic Principles into Practice Series. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Sandel, M.J. 1984. The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self. *Political Theory* 12 (1): 81–96.
- Sidentop, L. 2014. *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*. London: Penguin Random House.

- Siegel, D. 2010. *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. New York: Bantam Books.
- . 2012. *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook of the Mind*. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Smith, A. 1994. In *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan. New York: The Modern Library, Random House.
- Soyinka, W. 2004. *Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World*, 2004. New York: Random House.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Chapter 4

The Social



4.1 Introduction

Neurobiologists can say a lot about the dynamics of the interactions between our body, brain, and mind, but to fully understand human existence, they have to enter the realm of the social. The neurobiologist, Antonio Damasio, for example, completed his analysis with the notion of the autobiographical self that participates in stories co-created by one's self and others (2003). Another famous neurobiologist, Daniel Siegel, argues that what he calls "myself" always exists in social worlds (2010). In each case, their analysis went beyond the dynamics of the body, brain and mind, into the embeddedness of our body-brain-mind in social worlds. For most of us, of course, we exist in multiple social worlds, some that conflict with each other and some, like Russian dolls, provide the container for others. The social world of American Prosperity, for example, provides the container for a vast variety of less grand social worlds, such as the social worlds of families and friends as well as the social worlds defined by such categories as class, race, gender, age, and ethnicity. One could say our social selves makes us particular persons and that the contours of our core self depends on our social existence.

The Chapter begins with a general description of the composition of social worlds and social trends, and then uses the case of American Prosperity as an example of this process. To avoid the mistake of seeing social trends as "natural" the Chapter then examines current controversies about sex, race and ancestry. This discussion opens the door to explore our different experiences of the social, ranging from social differences and diversity to social conflict and social amnesia. The Chapter then examines the trend of using philanthropy as a responsible way to counter the increasing wealth inequality and environmental destruction of American Prosperity The Chapter ends with a call for social coherence that brings together relevant social experiences.

4.2 Characteristics of Social Worlds

Most of us are probably familiar with such expressions as ‘the world of sports,’ or ‘the world of art.’ We experience such worlds when we attend a sports event or visit an art studio. We enter other “worlds” when we enter a church, synagogue or a court room. All these “worlds” emerge from different activities and different attitudes that over time establish patterns of behavior, expectations, and even perceptions. Although we live in these various worlds, they are not biological, but social, which means that they are constructed by on-going conversations and they exist in relationships, not in individuals. Individuals participate in them. They are constructed and maintained by on-going communication and behavioral patterns. These patterns constitute social perceptions and expectations. Guardians of social worlds set moral boundaries to protect them. Let’s look more closely at these three characteristics.

4.2.1 *Communicative and Behavioral Patterns*

In her book, *The Social World of Batavia*, Jean Gelman Taylor investigates the behavioral patterns among groups in the Dutch colony of Batavia, Indonesia in the seventeenth hundreds (1983). She describes how the interactions among European men and Asian women created unique “mestizo” social relations between persons of mixed Asian and European ancestry. This particular social world emerged in part because of the absence of European women in the colony and the impunity with which European men took Asian women as slaves, concubines, house keepers, nannies, and with the birth of children, as wives. Taylor writes:

The colonial ruling class was matrilineal in the sense that men passed on posts and privilege to their sons-in-law, the husbands of their daughters whom they kept in Asia [they sent their sons to Europe]. Women-based clans absorbed the immigrant males who came without wives; the clan enfolded the newcomer in a network of immigrants with locally born wives, Mestizo and Asian kin. At the same time, the clan eased adoption of Indies manners for the newcomers (p. 78).

How different than the social world of Anglo-Saxons in the Americas, where the one percent rule protected whiteness. In any case, this mestizo social world was overturned by the extensions of European imperialism in the eighteenth century.

In Taylor’s framework, the notion of a social world includes all the relationships that constituted the settlement of Batavia (now Jakarta). These relationships were established and maintained by the on-going communication patterns that defined the different social roles in the community as well as coordinated the participants’ interactions. At the same time, given the relations among merchant and enslaved, colonizer and colonized, men and women, one could imagine several social worlds where one might serve as a context for another as a whole with various parts, or one dominating another, like the social worlds of American settlers and American

Indians. These different communication and behavioral patterns would set up different perceptions and expectations for those who were located in different parts of the social world.

4.2.2 Perceptions and Expectations

The interactions among colonizers and colonized or even between managers and workers, can be taken as patterns of behavior that constitute a social world, or they could also be seen as different smaller social worlds belonging to a larger whole. If that is the case, then one can assume not one but rather a multitude of social worlds. We could even assume that participants have very different experiences of the various social worlds that constitute a nation's social life. Different social worlds, in other words, offer different perceptions and expectations. The social philosopher, Kenneth Burke, wrote about the relationship between social worlds and perceptions in terms of what he called "terministic screens":

When I speak of "terministic screens," I have particularly in mind some photographs I once saw. They were different photographs of the same objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here something so "factual" as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in text, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded (1968, p. 45).

The point is that we always use some filter in looking at what is going on. A non-filtered (non-social) view does not exist. As Burke says, "much of what we take as observations about "reality" may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms" (p.46). The terminology also provides some coherence as it connects the dots, so to speak, and maintains some social order. Social order is also maintained by the guarding of moral boundaries.

4.2.3 Guarding Moral Boundaries

The anthropologist, Christopher Boehm, gives us a good description of how communities began to use moral boundaries to maintain social order (2012). When hunter-gatherer societies began to hunt large game, Boehm reasons, they required the cooperation of all hunters. To ensure cooperation during the hunt, they made sure that after the hunt the kill was equally distributed. The shift to hunting large game, in other words, pushed social relationships toward "equalization." Boehm writes:

Although the earliest humans may have been egoists, around 45,000 thousand years ago, when hunter-gatherer communities required cooperation for survival, they became decisively equalitarian" (p. 154).

Even if early humans were not egoists, Boehm's observation still seems logical. Still, this equalitarian requirement by itself would not have made humans moral. They

could have simply been calculative. The added element, as Boehm points out, is that humans have the capacity (or liability?) to blush, a sure sign of shame. Shame occurs when we feel a gap between how we want to be seen and how we experience others seeing us. Shame, in other words, belongs to a social not an individual morality, and it becomes an important strategy to protect cooperation.

As Boehm tells the story of these early big game hunters, sometimes a few of the hunters sought to capture more than their share of praise for a successful hunt or to take more than their share of the killed game, which threatened the climate of cooperation necessary for the survival of the community. One common method of handling these members was shaming them through gossip. People would get back in line to avoid feeling shame. Gossiping about someone's self-centered behavior would so damage the person's reputation that they would not engage in such behavior again, especially if one's reputation was socially valuable in gaining access to community goods or a better mate.

In Boehm's research, he finds instances not only of shaming, but also of exclusion, ostracism, and even capital punishment. These acts of protecting an equalitarian social order, however, had another consequence: they produced a consciousness of what one should be like. As hunter-gatherer communities protected themselves from bullies and other deviants, in other words, they also developed a sense of what they were protecting—equalitarian and generous human relationship. What emerged over time was a consciousness not only of what was wrong (a bully) but also what was right (a generous person). Boehm writes:

Ultimately, the social preferences of groups were able to affect gene pools profoundly, and once we began to blush with shame, this surely meant that the evolution of conscientious self-control was well under way. The final result was a full-blown, sophisticated modern conscience, which helps us to make subtle decisions that involve balancing selfish interests in food, power, sex, or whatever against the need to maintain a decent personal moral reputation in society and to feel socially valuable as a person. The cognitive beauty of having such a conscience is that it directly facilitates making useful social decisions and avoiding negative social consequences. Its emotional beauty comes from the fact that we in effect bond with the values and rules of our groups, which means we can internalize our group's mores, judge ourselves as well as others, and hopefully, end up with self-respect (p.173).

These two processes—the protection of social norms and their affirmation through internalization—do seem to go together. In a very general way, our moral conscience knows that we should avoid bad and do good.

What counts as good and bad, of course, depends on what holds the community together, or what was needed for maintaining one's social world in the first place. For hunter-gather communities, one of their primary tasks was making provisions for their communities by hunting game. Good and bad behavior depended on its impact of accomplishing this goal. A similar analysis can be applied to the social trend of American Prosperity. It turns out, however, that the moral boundary in this case protected unjust social relations among whites and non-whites rather than just ones, which resulted in a climate of injustice.

4.3 The Social Trend of American Prosperity

The social world of American Prosperity has its origin on the Atlantic commerce between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The dominant pattern involved Europeans occupying the Americas and importing enslaved labor to create wealth for white property owners and investors. As the trend developed, whites maintained the social order through military might and terroristic practices toward enslaved and Indigenous peoples. Their land and labor served as the primary source of the “wealth of nations” that European traders and investors, and American settlers enjoyed.

This Atlantic commerce of cheap land and enslaved labor endured for over 250 years before the formation of the United States as an independent nation and more than another 100 years before the Atlantic slave trade was abolished (1807). Domestic slavery lasted until the Civic War, and after Reconstruction, a Jim Crow regime continued until the 1960s. The stories of American Prosperity and nation building were not about the experiences of American Indians or enslaved Africans and their descendants, but rather of rugged individuals and innovative technologies.

No one better illustrates this type of storytelling than the Scottish philosopher Adam Smith. Although Smith lived in Glasgow, Scotland, he knew a lot about the lucrative tobacco trade between the American plantations and the Glasgow merchants. Instead of recognizing the role of enslaved labor in producing wealth, he attributed it to an “invisible hand.” In fact, according to Smith, human evolution had “naturally” made European nations not only wealthy, but also civilized.

Like many others in the European Enlightenment, Smith posited four stages of history: first were hunter-gathers, then shepherds, then farmers or agriculture, and finally the age of commerce, or the stage of civilization (1994). Because Europeans were civilized, they were not required to treat others who were not yet civilized as they would treat themselves. The writers of the Constitution appear to have a similar stance when they wrote that all men are created equal. The writers, of course, knew that there were 4 million enslaved persons at the time, but they lived in a social world where the enslaved did not belong. In fact, the maintenance of their social world meant that they had to split off from their consciousness the misery of slavery. The “moral boundary” of American Prosperity, in other words, protected the status of white people as superior to others and allowed social inequalities to continue. American Prosperity, in other words, was taken as separate from the injustices on which it relied, and from the climate of injustice that these injustices created.

Many of us, most of the time, probably do exist in the “bubble” of American Prosperity. If you went to public schools similar to mine, you learned of American progress and innovation. Perhaps one of the most puzzling aspects of the American Prosperity social world is the dismissal of the social, even though American Prosperity could only exist in some social worlds and not others. Instead of seeing American Prosperity as a social reality, it was presented as “natural.” “That’s the way things work.” The fact is that things work that way in some social worlds and not others. What is “normal” for us in our social world is no more “natural” than what is “normal” in other social worlds. Enslaving others is not “natural.” It’s social,

and until we see it as social, it will be difficult to recognize the social climate it created and how to change it. To understand this better, let's look at three controversies that allow us to highlight the distinction between our social and biological lives.

4.4 Our Social and Biological Lives

Once we recognize the validity of different social worlds (different religions, cultures, and customs), then we can no longer take our moral boundaries for granted, but rather are challenged to examine their legitimacy. In fact, some moral boundaries have been barriers to understanding others and even ourselves. Three current controversies may give us more agility in tracking ourselves and others as social beings: the differences between sex and gender, between race and color, and between the social and biological evolution of our ancestry. Recent investigations of these topics have given us a language to think more clearly about the range of the social.

4.4.1 *Sex and Gender*

Since, for the most part, traditional social relations between men and women have been hierarchical and oppressive/submissive, we must be very careful how we use terms, so we honor everyone's human dignity and their social identity. The social philosopher, Sally Haslanger, suggests that we can understand the difference between sex and gender with the slogan: "gender is the social meaning of sex" (2012, p. 227). That would mean that sex is biological—it is about our anatomy or we could say our genes. Gender, on the other hand, is socially constructed. Haslanger also proposes that we use the terms male and female for our sexual identity and man and woman for our gender identity. One finds a similar distinction in Siddhartha Mukherjee's book, *The Gene: An Intimate History*:

By sex, I mean the anatomic and physiological aspects of male versus female bodies. By gender, I am referring to a more complex idea; the psychic, social and cultural roles that an individual assumes. By gender identity, I mean an individual's sense of self (as female versus male, as neither, or as something in between) (2016, p. 356).

This distinction may seem odd at first because our interactions between men and women depends on social perceptions and expectations (our social worlds), and most social worlds have rigid categories for male and female. In such worlds, sex and gender are not differentiated, and the social is taken as natural. As we have learned from the struggles of feminists and LGBTQ communities, these assumptions have been mistaken. Their struggles now give us a chance to rethink what is social and what is natural, and to construct a more viable understanding of sex and gender.

Recent scientific developments have made the picture of sexual identity even more complex. In the 1990s, researchers discovered what is called the SRY protein or gene, which acts as a master switch to turn maleness on or off. Even more recently, researchers have discovered the function of what they call “epigenetic markers.”

Epigenetic markers are “beyond-genes” that act as gene regulators. They also can make genes expressive or silent, but more importantly, they carry with them the impact of the environment. One’s height, for example, depends on one’s genes, which reflect one’s ancestor’s social and geographical history. Given the role of epigenetic markers, instead of thinking about the conflict between nature and nurture, we can now see how nurture—one’s social environment—changes one’s nature. When we apply this insight to one’s sexual identity, it makes more sense to see our identity on a continuum between male and female rather than on a rigid map of male or female.

The long history and even continued practice of men treating women as inferior now faces this science of human equality and social differences. The experience of one’s core self, to use Antonio Damasio’s language, is the same for all humans. This does not mean that in the future the social selves of men and women will be the same. It does mean that our gender identity partly depends on our collective actions of constructing the social world in which we live. We find a somewhat parallel situation in terms of race or following Haslanger’s terminology, in terms of race and color.

4.4.2 *Race and Color*

Men and women have to negotiate their gender identity by finding the right fit between their genetic makeup and their social identity. Race, on the other hand, does not refer to any meaningful genetic difference. First, there are no racial genes responsible for the complex morphologies and cultural patterns we associate with different races. Second, in different contexts racial distinctions are drawn on the basis of different characteristics; for example, the Brazilian and U.S. classification schemes for who counts as “black” differ. For these reasons and others, it appears that race, like gender, could be fruitfully understood as a position within a broad social network (Haslanger, p. 235).

Remember Haslanger’s slogan for gender: “gender is the social meaning of sex”? She also has a slogan for race: “race is the social meaning of ‘color’” (p. 193). Skin color is rather thought-provoking. All of our ancestors were black. Black is original. Migrations into different geographical and climate areas changed the human collection of skin tones and colors, along with other changes in our DNA. These differences are part of the DNA not shared by all of us—the 0.01% that is left over from the 99.9 that we share with each other. These tiny differences have opened a new interest in the issue of ancestry.

4.4.3 *Ancestry and Social Evolution*

Some people are using DNA research to find out about their ancestors and heritage. Even though DNA is “biological,” it actually records one’s social history. A person’s DNA provides a record of a family’s migrations, geographical locations, and interactions. So, although DNA is located in the human body, it provides us information about our ancestors’ life in the world. One organization that has allowed many to use this new science is the company, “African Ancestry” (www.africanancestry.com/home/).

African Ancestry matches a client’s DNA to the over 300,000 samples of DNA in their African DNA database, which will probably tell the country and maybe even the tribe of one’s ancestors. As of 2016, over 150,000 people had used the service to “re-connect with their roots.” One can imagine how significant this service is for African Americans who know their ancestors are African but have no knowledge of their specific African people. As Alondra Nelson makes clear in her book on the “social life of DNA,” the interest in one’s ancestry is not biological, but rather social. As she says: “What is certain is that while race may be spoken in the language of biology, it is fundamentally a political category” (2016, p. 109).

The Black Live’s Matter movement has made this abundantly clear. Their challenge to take seriously the historical and current relationship between Black and White lives has led some white people to examine their participation in oppressive social relations. Remembering these stories can be challenging, especially to those whose identity has depended on their assumption of superiority. The diversity trainer, Robin DiAngelo, writes about such challenges in her analysis of what she calls “white fragility.” (2018). She uses the concept of “white fragility” to refer to the defensive stance white people take when asked to talk about their white social world. Since this social world is largely based on not-being non-white, and on the privileges of being at the top of racial hierarchies, when these hierarchies are dismantled, there is little to stand on. What seemed socially coherent becomes incoherent, and things seem quite fragile. This also creates the opportunity, of course, for persons to develop more critical and mature responses to the social world in which they exist. Gaining an awareness to our own social world allows us to think about how we learned racist behavior and how to unlearn it. Awareness of our social world also allows us to experience other social worlds.

4.5 Experiencing the Social

For most of us, the social world in which we grow up seems “natural” until we encounter other social worlds where they think what’s “natural” seems quite strange to us. Then we have a chance to reflect on our “world” as one of several “worlds,”

instead of the only world that exists. Our experience of other social worlds, of course, is always shaped by the social world in which we exist. My experience of visiting China, for example, might be quite different than yours because we experience it from our particular social world. Once we acknowledge the existence of multiple social worlds, we can also outline a variety of ways that people experience the social, from social diversity to social conflict, to even social amnesia.

4.5.1 Social Diversity

In the 1990s, I worked as an external consultant in an ethics and diversity-training program at Levi Strauss and Company in San Francisco (Brown 1998). Mid-level employees attended a four-day program focusing on making good decisions in line with the values of the company. The company supported the training program because employees deserved to be treated with equal respect and because research had demonstrated that a diverse and open work environment benefited the company's productivity.

For many white employees, the idea that they were just as "different" as others was news to them. They had assumed that they could understand what others were experiencing in the workplace from remembering what they had learned from similar experiences—others were more or less like them. That their differences gave them privileges that others did not enjoy was not only new but also challenging. They had not really grasped that others had quite different interpretations of workplace interactions. Once they accepted the fact that people had very diverse interpretations of things, and that such diversity was a contribution to the work community, they were able to participate, in varying degrees, in a more open and thoughtful workplace.

The "diversity wheel" is one way of leading a conversation about these differences (Loden and Rosener 1990). The inner circle of the wheel represents "primary" social categories and the outer circle "secondary." The primary categories are more or less given while the secondary are more or less chosen, or at least are easier to change. Persons, of course, belong to several of these categories and will usually identify more strongly with some than others.

This diversity wheel is especially helpful in appreciating that different persons have different experiences, and because of different experiences they know things that others do not. As people learn more about each other's differences, such as differences in education or income, they also learn that they live in very different parts of the larger society that is composed of different social worlds. These different social worlds not only are a source of our diversity, but also of various social divisions.

4.5.2 *Social Divisions*

I experienced the reality of social division when I changed my commute route from my home in Berkeley to the University of San Francisco. When I began teaching, I traveled on the freeways and major city streets. I sat in the car listening either to music or the news, and worried about finding a parking place. Some years ago, I decided to use public transportation, which included taking a bus from the center of San Francisco through the Tenderloin to USF. On the bus, I became one among other bus riders, many of whom were women and people of color. I waited for the bus to kneel so people with wheelchairs could board and watched as others boarded and exited the bus. Instead of living in the world of car commuters, I joined the bus riders.

This experience highlighted what is perhaps the most obvious and most consequential of social divisions, housing segregation. There are lots of stories to tell. One is the migration of around 6 million African Americans from the Southern states to the Northern cities between 1915 and 1970. As Isabel Wilkerson writes in her book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, this was “America’s Great Migration” (2011). As a result of this migration, the percentage of African Americans in Chicago changed from 1.8% at the beginning of the twentieth century to 33%, and the African American population in Detroit changed during this same period from 1.4% to 44% (p.190). Other Northern cities had similar population changes.

As African Americans moved into the Northern cities, whites moved out. Whites moved to the suburbs and with the help of redlining and other forms of discrimination, divided our cities into over-served and under-served populations. Richard Rothstein in his book, *The Color of Law*, documents government’s active role in segregating housing and neighborhoods (2017). Social divisions show up in the unequal distribution of well-paying jobs, control of drug trafficking, incarceration, pollution, and safe shopping areas. Without adequate public resources, some people struggle much more than others to protect their families, educate their children, and create viable communities. All of us must deal with the struggles of everyday life, but some of us do so in a world of poverty, failing schools, and decaying neighborhoods.

There are other social divisions, but the continued existence of segregated neighborhoods illustrates the challenge we face in making a shift from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice. Because this social divide is so unequal, we continually experience episodes of social conflict, which is a more disruptive way of experiencing the social.

4.5.3 *Social Conflict*

Some of use may not have directly experienced social conflict, but it remains a major force for change especially in the tradition of Socialism, which emerged as a reaction

to the misery caused by Capitalism. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx formulates the conflict as a historical class struggle:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in a common ruin of the contending classes (1955).

The nineteenth and twentieth century did endure bitter and violent struggles as workers fought for the establishment of labor unions, collective bargaining, and workplace safety. These struggles, for the most part, achieved some legal protection for workers, but were not successful in changing the basic thrust of American prosperity, especially in terms of its exploitation of land and maintaining a racialized caste system.. The struggles of the 1960s and 70's for civil rights, women's rights, environmental protection, and gay rights focused more on challenging white male privilege. These struggles also brought about some change, but like other historical struggles, they did not shift our nation from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice.

These struggles continue today as demonstrated by recent occupations of Wall Street and protests against the "One percent," the Black Lives Matter movement, and the ongoing resistance of Native Americans at Standing Rock and elsewhere. Social conflict assumes that different groups can, at least, stand up and resist. Sometimes the social relations among groups are so totally destroyed that we are left with what could be called a social rift.

4.5.4 Social Rifts

Social rifts occur when one group violates the human dignity of another so deeply that they create relations of hate and fear. Many of us have experienced members of groups that have written us off as incapable of understanding them, and it's not that hard to understand their reasoning. Still, these social rifts cannot be ignored if we are serious about creating a climate of justice. Instead of facing the frustration of such experiences, it is easier to pretend that we can abandon these social relationships, which results in a kind of social amnesia.

4.5.5 Social Amnesia

Russell Jacoby wrote about "social amnesia" as a way to criticize how the contemporary generation of psychologists had ignored more critical aspects of Sigmund Freud's theory (1997). Instead of working from Freud's view of the dialectical relationship between the self and society, in which social repression caused

individual neurosis, neo-Freudians, according to Jacoby, forgot about the social dimension and focused on therapies for individuals. Jacoby quotes Freud in this regard: “No therapeutic argument should hamper the development of a theoretical construction which aims, not at curing individual sickness, but at diagnosing the general disorder” (p. 20). This notion of social amnesia applies not only to therapy, of course, but to many other fields as well. Jacoby defines two types of social amnesia: “a forgetting of the past and a pseudo-historical consciousness.” On the latter he writes:

Nowadays, the latter thrives. We are regularly instructed by “futurists” and advocates of cutting-edge technology that computers, cyberspace, and internets are changing life, and that we have entered a new world unlike anything in the past. Meanwhile, nothing changes (p. xi).

New technology by itself, of course, does not necessarily cause social amnesia, but the assumptions that usually accompany it leave little room for critical thought about the social conditions or the social climate in which it exists. Perhaps even more significant than the lack of critical social analysis is that social amnesia excludes the possibility of learning from others who are one’s contemporaries. Social amnesia allows us to forget about society and pretend that individuals exist only in themselves and with their families. Before we can change social systems and trends, of course, we must at least recognize their existence.

These different ways of experiencing the social; as diversity, division, conflict, rift, and amnesia, can be taken as a kind of keyboard on which we locate our own experiences and the experiences of others. Those who experience social amnesia, for example, by definition have forgotten or dismissed experiences of the social. For them, the first step in joining others in creating a sustainable future is to become aware of their own social history and to recognize how their history matches the social history of others. There are others who have recognized the existence of social worlds, such as the social world of refugees or homeless, but have ignored the larger trends that have created and maintain these social worlds. Without an understanding of the larger context in which they work, their efforts may actually prevent the deeper work that needs to be done. One such trend that has both limitations and possibilities is the current growth of philanthropy or charity as a solution to social problems.

4.6 Social Philanthropic Trends

Conceptualizing the social in terms of trends places social relations in a historical context and allows us to investigate how the trends developed and how they carry us into the future. In contrast to social worlds, which are taken as fairly stable, social trends are always moving—either increasing or decreasing in their dominance. They are social systems influenced by positive and negative feedback loops. If a trend’s influence or dominance is growing, then its very success will function as a positive

feedback loop that gives it an added push in its current direction. As they say, “Nothing succeeds like success.” On the other hand, once a trend starts to lose energy, its downward trend can also be reinforced, and it spirals further downward. Sometimes a trend will generate a resistance to its movement—a negative feedback loop—and it will slow down or wilt on the vine. We can easily recognize trends in such areas as fashion and diets, which may seem innocent enough. Other trends are more troubling such as the trend moving us toward a new form of feudalism.

4.6.1 A New Form of Feudalism

A few years ago, I attended a multi-day conference in Oakland, CA on Food Justice. Among the many workshops, they offered two workshops on how to approach corporations for funding—how to study the corporate foundation’s perspective and interest, write proposals, and “show and tell.” Fine, but not one workshop about how to approach city governments. In effect, they were supporting the empowerment of donors and the privatization of social services, rather than developing proposals to hold public officials accountable to their citizens. Instead of acting like citizens in a democracy, they were more like subjects submitting requests to their possible patrons. Doesn’t that look a lot like feudalism?

In some feudalist regimes, peasants may have actually lived quite well with generous rulers. The peasants could more or less take care of themselves, living off the commons, engaging in exchanges of produce in local markets, and even having time for festivals. A few talented individuals could even have rulers as patrons and with their support develop their artistic capacity. The church also provided comfort for many. Some may believe that that is the best we can hope for especially when one considers the growing disparity in wealth distribution.

4.6.2 Unequal Wealth Distribution

So, how unequal are we? Or, how unequal do we think we are? In a study of our ideas of wealth distribution, Michael Norton and Dan Ariely asked a nationally representative sample of “regular Americans” about their views of wealth distribution and then compared their views with current data on the actual distribution of wealth (2011) They asked respondents about their estimates of the distribution of wealth among the US population if it were divided into 5 groups—20% of the population in each group. The respondent responses believed that the wealthiest 20% owned 59% of the wealth, when the actual percentage is closer to 84%. The respondents, in other words, thought that the degree of inequality was much less than it actually is. The fact is that the wealth gap between the 1% and the 99% in the United States has made us the “richest and most unequal nation” (Sherman 2015).

The enormous wealth of the few has increased their influence in all of our institutions through campaign contributions, speculative investments, and corporate lobbyists. In 2015, corporations spent \$2.6 billion on lobbyists, which was more than the \$2 billion we spent to fund both houses of congress (Klein 2015). Instead of our elected officials working as representatives of citizens, if they followed the money, they are more likely to represent, or at least not to challenge, corporate interests.

In various studies of the widening gap between the extremely wealthy and the rest of us, researchers have also discovered that very few find this deplorable. The reasons appear to be not only that many people believe the wealth gap is not as great as it is, but also because they believe that they could also acquire wealth if they work hard. As Nicholas Fitz discovered in his research on American attitudes toward wealth inequality, even though most Americans believe that the economy favors the wealthy, 60% believe that most people can make it if they work hard (2015). Such beliefs—different versions of the “American dream”—protect the growing gap between the rich and poor from critical analysis as well as increased the number of people and organizations dependent on corporate and institutional philanthropy. As the wealth of the wealthy has grown, in other words, so has the number of groups and organizations that operate more like feudalistic subjects than democratic citizens, beholden to their source of money rather than the needs of the people they are supposed to serve. That’s only one of the current problems with philanthropy.

4.6.3 *The Problem with Philanthropy*

So, what’s the problem? Philanthropy has always played a role in American society. True, but now the growing influence of philanthropy as the source of resources to address social problems has crowded out political and legal responses. As a result, more and more of us are dependent on the good will of billionaires rather than on public institutions. In higher education, for example, Maria Di Mento and Drew Lindsay report in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* that capital campaigns target the wealthy as never before.

The top 1 percent of campaign donors to colleges and private schools account for 79 percent of dollars raised in 2015 — up from 73 percent in 2007, according to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. (2018).

Not only in higher education, but also generally, more of the donations given to nonprofits come from the wealthy. Mento and Lindsay also report that average Americans have continually decreased their giving since the Great Recession, which “has raised fears that the country’s economic divide is being replicated in philanthropy, with nonprofits increasingly having to rely on the wealthy.” This trend of the wealthy not only becoming more wealthy but also controlling more of the donations leaves the non-wealthy more subject to the agendas of the wealthy than ever before.

Rob Reich, the faculty codirector for the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, has presented a well-researched list of what’s wrong with philanthropy in his book, *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy is Failing Democracy and How It Can Do Better*:

In the United States and elsewhere, big philanthropy is often an unaccountable, non-transparent, donor-directed, and perpetual exercise of power. This is something that fits uneasily, at best, in democratic societies that enshrine the value of political equality (2018, p. 7).

By “big philanthropy” Reich is not referring to individual donors, but rather to large and not so large philanthropic foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Foundations, of course, come in different sizes, and they have been coming at lightning speed.

In 1930 in the United States approximately two hundred private foundations possessed aggregate assets of less than \$1 billion. In 1959 there were more than two thousand, in 1985 just over thirty thousand private foundations. As of 2014 the number was nearly one hundred thousand, with total capitalization of more than \$800 billion (p. 9).

Not only are powerful foundations largely unaccountable and have grown way out of proportion to their previous role in society, but they also drain the Federal treasury of much needed revenues. Because donations to foundations are tax-exempt, Reich calculates that in 2016 the government lost at least \$50 billion in forgone federal tax revenue (p. 9).

Given the voluntary nature of philanthropic foundations, it may seem that they exist beyond the State, but Reich shows us that the facts say otherwise. He calls them “artifacts of the State.” Like business corporations, foundations exist through laws that provide them their legal status, protect their property, enforce their contracts, and so on (p. 28).

One might argue that the size, power, and dominance of foundations is justified if they improve social relations—especially inequality—more than other alternatives. Reich is quite skeptical about such a claim. He writes:

What can we conclude from this data? The lesson is obvious: if we believe the purpose of philanthropic or charitable giving to be predominantly redistributive, an important mechanism to provide for the basic needs of others, the actually existing distribution of giving in the United States does not meet the test. Not by a long shot (p. 93).

As the sub-title of Reich’s book suggests, philanthropic foundations are “failing democracy,” and we need to make it “do better.” He proposes that we need to find a different purpose for foundations. Instead of doing better at addressing issues of poverty and inequality, which could be done by other agencies, he proposes that foundations could do better at promoting pluralism and at creating or discovering innovative solutions to social issues.

In sum, foundations, free of both marketplace or electoral accountability regimes, answerable to the diverse preferences and ideas of their donors, with an endowment designed to last decades or more, are especially well, perhaps uniquely, situated to engage in the sort of high-risk, long-run policy innovation and experimentation that is healthy in a democratic society and that address the interests of future generations (p. 162–163).

That's quite an order. Are foundations really ready to engage in such creative actions? I think we need to be a bit more critical not only of foundations, but also of Reich's analysis of their social role. The fact is that the triadic framework of State, market, and civil society, which Reich uses, easily leads us to make mistakes, especially when one separates civil society from the other two spheres, as he does.

His analysis begins with wealthy people, who have money to give away. They got their money as businesspeople in the economic sphere, but now they became members of civil society as philanthropists. How they got their money doesn't seem to matter. We are asked to assume that they can simply leave their social identity and become individuals of good will. As I have argued before, we always belong to some social world—the social is ubiquitous.

Reich's argument assumes a "liberal democratic state," an ideology based on social amnesia in terms of the essential role of Africans and Native Americans in the creation of white wealth. As he says, "For the purpose of my motivating framework, I assume lawful and just possession of resources" (p. 112). He doesn't seem to acknowledge that such an assumption doesn't question white privilege and white supremacy. One might wish to move from a climate of injustice in the economic and government sphere to a climate of justice in the civil society sphere, but that is an illusion. Civil society may be non-profit and non-government, but not non-social.

The only way to change from a climate of injustice to justice is to acknowledge and begin to repair the injustices that define our social legacy.. This means, of course, that the fourth part of our interpretive framework, the civic, is not some neutral place beyond the issues of injustice and justice, but rather a place where we work together to move from one social climate to another. Whatever our experiences of the social, the civic serves as the matrix in which we know ourselves and one another. It offers us a place to examine our social experiences from our own perspective and from the perspective of others. As these perspectives collide, we can gain a deeper understanding of social incoherence and social coherence.

4.7 Social Coherence

Social coherence is rather tricky. None of us like to live in, and usually cannot tolerate, incoherent social worlds, and yet, social incoherence epitomizes the climate of injustice in which we live. This chapter has focused on different experiences of the social, and most of them expose some degree of incoherence. In these cases, we can either enlarge our social world to include the differences and thereby create a new coherence, or we can dismiss or deny the experience and remain in a smaller coherent world. Remember the principle of coherence? "If you cannot understand A without understanding B, then you cannot understand B without understanding A." Our smaller worlds may give us a feeling of coherence, but this may be a false and even dangerous feeling, if the truth of our social world can only be understood in its relationship to other social worlds. There is a white male social world—a world of privilege and confidence—but any true understanding of this social world requires

that we see its interdependent relationship with social worlds in which people experience the misery of American Prosperity.

Social coherence relies on a story that includes all the groups necessary to understand any one group. You cannot understand women in America without understanding men, and you cannot understand men without understanding women. You cannot understand yourself without understanding those who have loved you and you cannot understand those who have loved you without understanding yourself. We are human beings that live in social relations, and this duality allows for the transformation of social relations in the realm of the civic, where all members are invited to make connections with each other.

References

- Boehm, C. 2012. *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism and Shame*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brown, M.T. 1998. Concepts and Experiences of the ‘Valuing Diversity and Ethics’ Workshops at Levi Strauss and Company. In *Ethics in International Management*, ed. B.N. Kumar and Horst Steinmann. Berlin/New York: Walter De Gruyter.
- Burke, K. 1968. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Damasio, A. 2003. *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. New York: Harcourt Inc.
- DiAngelo, R. 2018. *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Di Mento, M., and Lindsay, D. 2017. America’s Superrich Made Near-Record Contributions to Charity in 2017. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (February 06, 2018). Made/242446.
- Fitz, N. 2015. Economic Inequality: It’s Far Worse Than You Think: The great divide between our beliefs, our ideals, and reality. *Scientific American*, March 31.
- Haslanger, S. 2012. *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Klein, E. 2015. Corporations now spend more lobbying Congress than taxpayers spend funding Congress. *Vox*. July 15. <http://www.vox.com/2015/4/20/8455235/congress-lobbying-money-statistic>.
- Loden, M., and J. Rosener. 1990. *Workforce America: Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource*. New York: McGraw Hill Professional Publishing.
- Jacoby, R. 1997. *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Contemporary Psychology*. New Brunswick/London: Transaction Publishers.
- Marx, K., and Engles, F. 1955. *The Communist Manifest*, ed. S. Beer. Northbrook: AHM Publishing Corporation.
- Mukherjee, S. 2016. *The Gene: An Intimate History*. New York: Scribner.
- Nelson, A. 2016. *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation After The Genome*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Norton, M.J., and D. Ariely. 2011. Building a Better America—One Wealth Quintile at a Time. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6 (1).
- Reich, R. 2018. *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy is Failing Democracy and How It Can Do Better*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Rothstein, R. 2017. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York/London: Liveright Publishing Corporation.

- Sherman, E. 2015. America is the Richest, and Most Unequal, Country. *Fortune Magazine*, September 30.
- Siegel, D. 2010. *mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Smith, A. 1994. *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan. New York: The Modern Library, Random House.
- Taylor, J.G. 1983. *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wilkerson, I. 2011. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Chapter 5

The Civic



5.1 Introduction

The first premise of justice is to treat equals equally, and unequals unequally. Justice does not mean treating everyone the same. It means that treating people differently must be based on a valid distinction. Treating everyone the same, when there is a valid difference, in other worlds, is unjust. If the events of 2020 has made anything obvious, it is that some are vulnerable and need protection and others have a responsibility to provide it. In the civic realm, this distinction can be expressed as a distinction between civilians and citizens: civilians who do not have the means to protect themselves from undue harm from others and citizens who have access to such means. We do not need to attach this distinction to different persons, but rather to the civic relationship itself between those seeking protection and those who could, at least in some cases, provide it. If this is a significant difference—an inequality—then the civic would not be a place where everyone is treated the same, but where some receive more than others because some are in greater peril and risk than others.

True, we are all participants in the Earth's living systems and depend on its provisions. We also share a human capacity to thrive that serves as a location for human dignity. However, we have very different social experiences and locations and exist in social trends that provide privileges for some and misery for others. The civic realm does not extract us from these aspects of our existence, but rather brings them together under the rubric of citizen and civilian, which recognizes spheres of equality—the Earth and our humanity—and spheres of inequality—our social legacy. The distinction between citizens and civilians, in other words, translates the social history of racism and sexism into a language that allows the inequality to be rectified—the past repaired.

The type of civic meeting where civilians and citizens do the work of protecting civilian rights looks something like a Civilian Review Board. These boards usually handle complaints about police misconduct from civilians, but they can also consider

other issues. In contrast to the more traditional model of democracy—the Town Hall Meeting—the Civilian Review Board does not treat everyone equally, but rather gives more time and care to those who are more vulnerable and perhaps less skilled in argumentation. The Civilian Review Board should not replace the Town Hall Meeting, but we should recognize that in many cases the Town Hall Meeting usually favors the privileged over the vulnerable.

The distinction between civilian and citizen reflects the difference between the privileged and the vulnerable in our society and indicates their intertwined relationship. It assumes, in other words, that the enjoyment of American prosperity is significantly connected to the suffering it causes. That's the basis for the climate of injustice. Privileged people may not be conscious of this connection. Just the opposite. Privileged people easily disassociate themselves from those who suffer from their privilege. They can simply be blocked out from consciousness any type of social relation; we call that social amnesia.

Excluding social history from one's interpretive framework is not that unusual. Look at the futurist Buckminster Fuller's famous saying: "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." This seems to overlook that this "existing reality" exists in a climate of injustice that doesn't go away by ignoring it. Until one changes the climate, the "new model" continues to exist in the same climate.

If we were dealing with a worn-out bicycle, we could simply get a new one, but we are not fixing bicycles. We are trying to change the climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice, which will not happen without addressing the actions and policies that created the injustices. Reviewing our history would demonstrate patterns that have maintained the original climate of injustice. Changing these patterns requires a look at deeper connections than social relationships, which could become available if we remember (re-member) our shared humanity. As was said earlier, the civic realm not only includes social relationships—our inequalities—but also our shared humanity—a fundamental equality. The power of the civic, when such power exists, resides in the mutual awareness of our shared humanity, which not only serves as the basis for the civic inclusion of differences and disagreements, but also the adaption of civic perceptions and expectations of our relationship with the other parts of our interpretive framework: the Earth, our humanity, and the social.

Although our current focus has been on black/white and settler/indigenous relationships, anyone or any group that is vulnerable and needs protection counts as a civilian, not simply because they are in social danger, but also because they have human rights. The development of this understanding of the rights of civilians is fairly recent. Because honoring the rights of civilians plays such an important part in moving from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice, the following section traces its recent development and explores its relationship to the military and veterans, and then to the rule of law.

5.2 The Recognition of Civilian Rights

Civilians have existed since the beginning of warfare, sometimes as those who are not included in the conduct of war, and sometimes as weapons of war. After the massive killing of civilians in the two World Wars, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began work on a proposal to protect civilians in times of war. The Committee had already developed standards for the treatment of prisoners of war and wounded soldiers. In 1949, seventeen States signed the Red Cross's draft proposal in Geneva for the protection of civilians. Over 190 States have now signed the Geneva Protocol and its additions, including the 1997 "Draft Rules for the Limitation of the Dangers incurred by The Civilian Population in Time of War."

5.2.1 *The Protection of Civilians in International Humanitarian Law*

For the first time, as Helen Kinsella points out, the status of the civilian relied not only on public conscience (the civilized man), but on the dictates of law (2011, p. 113). Amanda Alexander gives the following description of the Protocol:

The basic principle of Protocol I, and of the laws of war generally, is that the civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations. This turns in large part on the requirement that attackers must distinguish between civilians and combatants and between military objectives and civilian objects. They must take all feasible precautions to avoid or minimize harm to civilians, and to this end may not attack civilians exclusively, or combatants and civilians indiscriminately (2015).

Central to this Protocol was the ability to make a distinction between civilians and combatants, which in recent years has become difficult, not because everyone is a fighter, but because civilians have been used as instruments of war. While the war on terrorism certainly makes the distinction more difficult, it also makes the distinction more necessary than ever. As Hugo Slim has argued:

The doctrine of the civilian needs to be as generous and forgiving as possible, for three main reasons. Practically, because we cannot be sure that we have the precise means to separate the innocent from the guilty as we attack people and places. Ethically, because many of the brutal things done to civilians (like rape, torture, murder, pillage, and starvation) are done without good reason and are terribly wrong. Personally, we need the civilian label for ourselves and for our children when we too become involved in wars that may be just or unjust and are usually beyond our control (2016).

Another reason, at least for us, is that the treatment of civilians can serve as a kind of litmus test for distinguishing between a climate of injustice and a climate of justice. We have some organizations today, such as the United Nations or the Human Rights Watch, that try to enforce the legal basis for civilian protection. As Jean-Marie Guehenno points out, more than 90% of the United Nations peacekeepers are

deployed protecting civilians (2016, p. 257). Their influence is quite limited, of course, and yet, their endeavors demonstrate that the international community has recognized a legal obligation to protect civilians by trying to limit war. At the same time, we have a history of our government using the military not to protect civilians, but rather to protect American prosperity, even when that has resulted in the killing of civilians. Our understanding of the relationship between civilians and the military has usually been more of a quandary than a settled matter.

5.2.2 *The Civilian/Military Quandary*

As has been pointed out before, the formation of our government occurred in a climate of injustice. Instead of a civilian government that used the military to protect people from harm, they used it to protect the owners of property--enslaved people and land—for the sake of American prosperity. Still, this civic-military relationship was not that of a military dictatorship. True, laws legitimized the institution of slavery and the displacement of Indigenous people. Over time, however, Congress changed these laws, especially after the Civil War. For a brief time, in fact, the military was used to protect citizens. During the period of Reconstruction, the Federal government sent troops South to protect the civic rights of freed African Americans. When they were later withdrawn, white southerners regained control of the South through terrorism and lynchings, which continued during the Jim Crow era until the 1950s.

There was a similar, if smaller event almost 100 years later, in 1965, when President Johnson called up the National Guard to protect protesters marching from Selma to Montgomery Alabama. I remember walking in this march to the State capitol building in Montgomery with troops lining both sides of the street. They were there to protect us. This seems to have been an exception rather than the rule. If one reviews the changing view of the military in the twentieth century, it's the military itself, not civilians, that has moved to center stage. No better illustration of this change than the increased status of veterans.

5.2.3 *Civilians and Veterans*

World War I ended—"the war to end all wars"—with an agreement to end the killing—an armistice. When the US Congress officially recognized the end of the war on June 4, 1926, it passed the following resolution:

Whereas the 11th of November 1918, marked the cessation of the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals and the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never again be severed, and

Whereas it is fitting that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations; and

Whereas the legislatures of twenty-seven of our States have already declared November 11 to be a legal holiday: Therefore be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that the President of the United States is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples. (US Department of Veterans Affairs 2015).

Notice that this resolution does not mention veterans. It is, if I might say so, a civilian holiday. This changed after World War II and the Korean War. In 1954, the word “Armistice” was replaced with “Veterans,” and November 11 became a national holiday to honor the American Veterans of all wars. The purpose of creating “appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples” had been deleted.

The fact is that soldiers are not the only ones who die during wars. When Armistice Day became Veterans Day, this seems to have been forgotten, at least in the United States. Not so in Germany. Their more complicated experience with the World Wars gives us an alternative perspective. After World War I, Germany, like other European nations, observed the end of fighting or the armistice, with a “Volkstrauertag,” which means in English, “people’s day of mourning.” When Hitler came to power, the name was changed to “Heldengedenktag” (commemoration of heroes), which the government used for Nazi propaganda. A few years after the Second World War, the German government returned to their Volkstrauertag, with the purpose of remembering all who were killed in war: both soldiers and civilians. At the same time, German veterans of more recent conflicts, such as the war in Afghanistan, have not received the same recognition as veterans in the United States.

Perhaps one could explain the difference between the German and American view of veterans and civilians here by pointing out that the war left Germany defeated and remorseful for what its military had done, while America was victorious in defeating the Nazi. If that makes sense, then one wonders what could have been the consequence of the US losing the Vietnam War.

In a sense, the Vietnam War became a domestic battle between the government that wanted to continue the war and citizens who protested against it. The citizens won. When the war ended, however, instead of honoring the citizens that had taken to the streets to protect Vietnam civilians, as well as American soldiers, the national conversation became a lament on the absence of a hero’s welcome for soldiers and veterans. The critics of the war were accused of being disrespectful of veterans and un-American. Instead of using the humiliation of defeat to correct what William Fulbright had called, “the arrogance of power,” protestors were shamed for being unpatriotic (1966). The protestors were seen as “deviant,” to use Boehm’s term in his story of the rise of morality, only this time the “morality” was unjust. Our government not only turned away from the plight of civilians and the acknowledgement of limits, but also turned toward a stronger identification as a global military force.

Today, we have military bases in 80 different countries, with an annual military budget of over 70 billion dollars. During the 15 years between the invasion of Iraq and 2018, as Stephanie Savell figures it, we spend \$32 million an hour on war (2018). Add to government military spending the selling of around \$40 billions of arms to foreign governments, it's clear that hundreds, if not thousands, of businesses depend on military contracts for supplying everything from socks for soldiers to new guidance systems (Mehta 2017).

Remember President Eisenhower's famous warning about the "military industrial complex"? I wonder if he could have imagined how intertwined military spending and economic growth have become. Today, the military gets 60% of the government's total budget. The military not only protects American prosperity by maintaining a climate of injustice, but also has become an integral part of the economy by providing a livelihood for millions of people. As the military plays a larger and larger role in American prosperity, civilian control of the government becomes even more difficult and at the same time, even more necessary for the protection of civilians and the planet. For the civilian government not to lose complete control, it must protect and honor the rule of law.

5.2.4 *The Rule of Law*

Remember that Martin Luther King Jr. and others led a civil rights movement trying to persuade the government to enforce the laws that protected their civil rights. King stands today on the National Mall not because he was a "fighter" or "hero," but rather because he served as a messenger for others whose civic rights had been denied. He was, if I may say so, a leader of civilians—vulnerable people who rely on governments to enforce the rule of law.

From a civilian perspective, it's hard to exaggerate the importance of the rule of law. At the same time, laws have been used for nefarious purposes. In Fritjof Capra and Ugo Mattei's recent book, *The Ecology of Law*, the rule of law is closely associated with modern laws of property rights. Following the French philosopher, Michael Foucault, they present the rule of law as an instrument of government control (2015). Without a doubt, governments have used the legal system to control its citizens. What Capra and Mattei give little attention to, however, is how the rule of law has also protected people.

The World Justice Project takes a very different perspective on the rule of law. They define it as four universal principles of accountability, just laws, open government, and accessible & impartial dispute resolution (World Justice Project a). Here is their vision statement:

Effective rule of law reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices large and small. It is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights (World Justice Project b.)

It seems fair to say that the rule of law has been used to both control and to protect people, and it continues this double function today. As John A. Power, the author of *Racing to Justice*, has written, law is a social institution, and reflects the social world in which it exists.

Because our courts and supporting institutions are a social system, interpersonal and structural biases are at play in lawmaking, court procedures, and decisions, even when the legal system is unwilling or unable to acknowledge them (2012, p. 121).

If we assume that the social world Powell has in mind exists in a climate of injustice, then the observation that laws belong to a social system would have negative connotations. Those who benefit from unjust relationships use the law to their advantage. True enough. Still, there is a significant difference between the corrupt use of the rule of law and its demise or absence.

The difference between a military dictatorship and a civilian government of laws should not be minimized. Written laws can be violated or ignored, but without the law, such acts would simply be instances where might makes right. Laws limit what might can do. We now have some laws that do this. As we have seen, international laws now limit what might can do to civilians.

If we take a civilian perspective, we can expand this notion of limits to the other parts of the interpretive framework. Just as we brought living on the Earth, our humanity, and social incoherence into the civic sphere to deal with inequality, we can apply the civic demand for limits to our relationship with the Earth, our humanity, and our social life. As members of the civic, in other words, we can set forth the requirement for a world of limits.

5.3 A World of Limits

There are limitations that should be recognized for each element of our interpretive framework; limits concerning the Earth, our humanity, our social relations, and the civic. The next section of this Chapter explores the limits on each one, beginning with the limits we face concerning the Earth.

5.3.1 *The Earth's Limitations*

The recent article on the “Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene,” has given evidence that our life on Earth has become extremely fragile (Steffen et al. 2018). The planet, for the first time in human history, could be on the way to becoming a “hothouse.” Current trends of increased global warming, rising ocean levels and changing weather patterns are threatening the habitat of human and non-human communities. The Earth no longer can be taken for granted as an endless resource for economic development but must be seen as a finite system. For

everyone on the Earth to live like those of us in developed societies, we would need three to five Earths. We only have one. To maintain a viable future, we must learn how to limit ourselves to match the limitations of the planet.

Some would disagree. They would argue that instead of changing course, we need to stay the course of continual growth and let science and technology solve the problems of climate change. Geo-engineering, they say, can reverse global warming and advances in food production can feed everyone. Yes, these people might say, some species are endangered, and some human habitats are threatened, but we should not let the Earth's limitations deter the clamor for prosperity.

In spite of all the evidence of global warming, and the continued increase of carbon emissions, the talk continues to be about economic growth—increased production and consumption. It does not seem to make a difference that the sources for capital extraction are limited, as is the biosphere's carrying capacity. In 1971, over 45 years ago, the Club of Rome, an international organization of scientists and system thinkers, published its findings on the "limits of growth." So far, its prediction that the current rate of growth could not sustain itself beyond the year 2100 have been on track (Club of Rome Report 1972). And yet, at the most, we try to improve our current economic system, rather than to change it.

Since the denial of the Earth's vulnerability seems so dumb, if I may say so, it makes sense to imagine that the source of this denial does not depend on evidence, but on something much deeper. Is there some similarity here between this denial of the Earth's limits and our assumptions about human limits? If there is one part of our interpretive framework that controls our assumptions about the others, it is probably our assumptions about human limitations.

5.3.2 *Human Limitations*

The ultimate human limitation, of course, is death. Death is as natural as birth. Animals, even human animals, live and die. The question is not whether such a limitation exists, but how we understand and respond to it. Our assumptions about our death and the death of those close to us may play a more decisive role than anything else in our dealing with a world of limits. One view of death that seems especially relevant in applying the notion of limits to our humanity has been articulated by the psychoanalyst, Ernst Becker, in his Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Denial of Death* (1997). Because the notion of human limitations—the limits of our humanity—seems so central for really connecting with the notion of limits, I will spend a bit more time exploring Becker's view that facing death is the stuff of heroes.

5.3.3 *Ernst Becker's Heroism*

Written in 1997, *The Denial of Death* appeared not long after the first half of the twentieth century, which included two world wars and the Holocaust. Although Becker lived in the United States, the book does not show any signs of the author's awareness of the various civil rights movements in the 60s and 70s, or the tragedy of the Vietnam war. In the second half of the twentieth century, economic growth depended on consumer consumption, just as economic optimism depended on continued dissociation from the misery of those who actually paid the price for affordable goods and services. Becker does not mention this collective denial of exploitative social relations, but as we shall see, he does criticize consumer society.

From the title, one would think the book is about the "denial of death." Indeed, as he writes in the Preface: "the fear of death is indeed an universal in the human condition." Still, that human animals die, like other animals, is not that interesting for Becker. What grabs his attention is what he calls the heroic response to it. It turns out that the book is really about the heroic, as is evidenced by the titles of the book's three parts: "The Depth Psychology of Heroism," "The Failures of Heroism," and "The Dilemmas of Heroism." One reads already in the Introduction that "our central calling, our main task on this planet, is the heroic" (p. 1).

Becker's individual has similar characteristics to a common notion of the individual—a person standing up for himself, separated from family relations and alone in the world. Becker adds to this picture the terror of death. We first experience this "terror of death," according to Becker, as children. The experience has two stages. Children first experience themselves as having a "sense of magical omnipotence" (p/22). They live as though they were immortal. Then, the second step: they see they are like other animals and will die. Here is Becker's description of the child:

In their tortured interiors radiate complex symbols of many inadmissible realities--terror of the world, the horror of one's own wishes, the fear of vengeance by the parents, the disappearance of things, the lack of control over everything, really (pp. 20-21).

You might find this description of the child quite strange, as I do. Still, one's picture of childhood says a lot about their basic assumptions. I have often asked my students how they think children should be "disciplined," and their answers are usually a good indicator of their assumptions about themselves and others. For Becker, each of us harbors a basic duality.

Man is literally split in two: he has an awareness of his own splendid uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty, and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in order blindly and dumbly to rot and disappear forever. It is a terrifying dilemma to be in and to have to live with (p. 26).

On the one hand, "man is a worm and food for worms," and on the other hand, man has the status of a "small god in nature." According to Becker, most of us, most of the time, escape this paradox by living in the world of culture, or we could say the world of the social. For Becker, culture functions as an escape from the fear of death. Culture tames our fears. People find little triumphs or heroics in their everyday lives

to get by. Participating in culture, in other words, allows us to deny the terror of our death.

In the more passive masses of mediocre men it [heroism] is disguised as they humbly and complainingly follow out the roles that society provides for their heroics and try to earn their promotions within the system: wearing the standard uniforms— but allowing themselves to stick out, but ever so little and so safely, with a little ribbon or a red boutonniere, but not with head and shoulders (p. 6).

Becker contrasts this type of social heroism with what he calls the “divine” or “cosmic” hero, incorporating the ideas of the nineteenth century existential theologian, Soren Kierkegaard, Becker draws a picture of the cosmic hero as someone who squarely faces the limitation of death and then moves beyond it.

The self must be destroyed, brought down to nothing, in order for self-transcendence to begin. Then the self can begin to relate to powers beyond itself. It has to thrash around in its finitude, it has to “die” in order to question that finitude, in order to see beyond it (p. 89).

In a sense, Kierkegaard’s “cosmic hero” rebels against human limitations and in this rebellion or defiance, is moved beyond the finite to “the brink of infinity” (p. 91). Becker’s hero does not necessarily experience Kierkegaard’s spiritual infinity, but he does have a similar defiance of the limits of human existence. Perhaps it helps to remember that both Kierkegaard and Becker are white male Europeans engaged in imagining the meaning of human limitations and how to make sense of it. Many people, of course, live in very different circumstances.

Think about the civilians walking from El Salvador to the United States, the civilian families in Aleppo, civilian teenagers in our cities, or civilian veterans on the streets; they experience the limitations of existence without any problem. They do not need to imagine their death to know about human finitude. They experience it daily as they live in situations beyond their control. Unlike people of privilege, they do not have the luxury of living unaware of their limits. They cannot escape them. Does Becker’s framework have a place for such experiences? Or, would he say that regardless of one’s situation, an individual can overcome their situation by a heroic endeavor? If you don’t engage in such an endeavor, you are just part of the crowd, the mass of people who live lives that do not matter.

Becker’s text seems to argue that our social life functions as a façade to shield us from the terror of death. This dismissal of meaning in our social relations doesn’t fit with contemporary Attachment Theory, which sees secure attachments not as a barrier, but a foundation for personal maturity (Bowlby 1988). The human and the social are not separate realms as Becker proposes. Our social history is recorded in our DNA, and our biological emotions stir our feelings and thinking. We are a part of nature, not apart from it. Nature is not a “brutal bitch,” as San Keen writes in his *Forward to The Denial of Death* (Keen 1973, p. xii.). In fact, this attitude toward nature prevents us from valuing the living systems that give us life. The fact is that nature is not our enemy, but our Mother—if I may use a metaphor here.

The privileging of the isolated hero over the social person is a Western illusion. We become ourselves in relationships with others. We do have a body and mind, but these are always developed in social relations. Our understanding of our human

limitations, for the most part, depends on our interpretive framework and specially on our understanding of the relationship between our humanity and the limits of the social.

5.3.4 *Social Limits*

Christopher Boehm's research on early human communities demonstrated that to maintain their capacity to hunt big game, they had to protect themselves from deviants and bullies (2012). There were other dangers as well. The need for protection, it turns out, has characterized human communities from the beginning. At least that is the conclusion of anthropologists Donna Hart and Robert Sussman who discovered that our earliest ancestors were gatherers and scavengers, not aggressive hunters, and they spent much of their energy protecting themselves from predators, such as saber tooth tigers and pythons.

Were our ancestors gentle savages or bloodthirsty brutes? They were social animals; they were primates; they were complex beings in their own right who were not necessarily headed in a foreordained direction. They were trying to adapt to their environment and reproduce successfully. Most primate societies and individuals exhibit cooperation as a social tool, not aggression. Success is not synonymous with brutality; it comes through finesse and friendship (2005, p. 117).

From Hart and Sussman's portrait of our ancestors, the story begins with our ancestors acting much like other primates. But they were different because they had moved to the edge of the forests, where they became bipedal (walking on two legs) and began to speak (probably at first to warn family members of approaching predators). As one would suspect, they spent most of their time making provisions for their everyday life and watching out to make sure they were not someone's dinner.

Today, of course, there are multiple communities or social worlds in which people have very different experiences of vulnerability and limitations. One can sort some of this out by distinguishing three different levels of the social: social systems, organizations, and persons.

Unlike planetary systems that are cyclical and balanced, social systems are trends that continue to move in one direction as though there were no limits, until they run off the cliff, so to speak. Social systems are guided by feedback loops that either are positive and increase a systems' expansion or negative and resist it. The problem is that a system can acquire such momentum before negative feedback loops can create enough resistance to stop it. The only way to effectively decrease the damage of social systems is through human intervention. They have to be managed.

Perhaps the biggest mistake in understanding social systems is the idea of the "invisible hand," that assumes that social systems will balance themselves. They don't. The rich just get richer and the poor get poorer without human intervention, which has become clear for everyone to see. Because business organizations function in the market system, they face similar dangers of overreaching and exceeding

their grasp. To prevent such unlimited growth, citizens need to design systems that meet people's needs rather than meet the desires of owners and investors.

In *Civilizing the Economy*, I proposed that the economy would be based on civic relations rather than property relations, and that its purpose was the making of provisions rather than the making of money (2010). An economy designed as systems of provision would involve the whole process of provisioning, from the farm to the table in terms of the food system. This would enable us to design systems of provision that were fair and sustainable. Each system of provision would have a specific purpose, such as the housing system of provision would have the purpose of providing housing for all. Instead of imagining an unlimited and totally open future, as is the case with a market driven economy, the future would be determined or limited to doing what needs to be done. Instead of the mantra of "economic growth," the economy would be measured by its capacity to make provisions for all with limited resources. How we live together in these systems of provision, of course, depends on our recognition of the limits in our personal relations with each other.

Instead of assuming that everyone belongs to the same social world and therefore has similar feelings and perceptions, seeing another person as belonging to a different social world reveals the limits of one's social existence. In this case, no one knows it all because others have knowledge from their own experiences. Social awareness of the other and other social worlds entails the experience of limits, which arises from the encounter of social differences and social conflict.

Some people experience social limitations very differently than others. Think of the experience of an African American in a car who is pulled over by a white police officer. Think of the female employee who is harassed at work by her male supervisor. Those who suffer such injustices must shield themselves from harm as best they can. At the same time, encountering another with an equal right to exist, even when our social location and position may be quite different, are experiences of human limitation, and in many cases, of mutual vulnerability.

Today, the Earth, our humanity, and the social are defined by the tailwinds of American prosperity that has been accompanied by a climate of injustice. To avoid the tragedy in store for us, the illusion of limitless growth and opportunity must be exposed, and the truth of the matter revealed. A gathering of civilians could do this, if they demand from governments protection of their civil rights, enforcement of the rule of law, and what Jean-Marie Guehenno, President of the International Crisis Group, call "a civilian protective environment."

Civilians can be said to be protected when they can be confident that there is a body of law that makes the government trustworthy, the security forces predictable and accountable, non-government militia deactivated and brought to justice, and a working judicial system in place (2016, p. 271).

Such an environment could arise and if it did, the civic would become a place from which to set limits for the protection of people and the planet. Working together to implement this world of limits could move us toward a climate of justice.

5.4 Moving Toward a Climate of Justice

My argument is that recognizing and responding to the vulnerability of civilians can create a climate of justice that will enable us all to repair relationships, rebuild trust, and shift the current course of our social systems. This work, of course, needs to happen on many different levels. Sometimes monuments of the vulnerability and the resilience of civilians can help us understand the kind of responses that are necessary. One such case for me was encountering the monument in Congo Square in New Orleans.



Monument at Congo Square, New Orleans

When the French and Spanish controlled New Orleans, enslaved people were given Sundays to themselves. They gathered at Congo Square to trade their produce from their gardens, and more importantly, to dance and sing. Doesn't this look like a gathering of civilians?

This is not a monument of heroes or warriors. They seem powerful and yet also vulnerable. So, what does it mean to be a white or a black civilian in New Orleans today? Or in any other place? How should we gather together now? Who will invite me to join them in the civic realm, and what do I need to do to enter? Can our understanding of this monument help us create a climate of justice for moving forward? Will it enable us to care about our relationships with each other enough to make the repairs necessary so we can move toward what is possible—a future that protects human and non-human communities and provides for everyone?

When a white man, like myself, stands in front of this memorial, several thoughts come to mind. I recognize their vitality. I see their aliveness. I feel sad about their condition. I think of the violation of their human rights. But there is something else. I sense the injustice of my relationship with them. What is the injustice? They were enslaved, and I was not. Is that it? Their forced labor created the trends of American prosperity in which I have prospered. Is that it? I am left with a feeling of a grave injustice.

It is not death, in other words, that brings me to an awareness of my limits, but the experience of living in relationships with others. At this point, I have a choice. I can ignore these relationships. That's what white privilege means. Or, I can acknowledge the injustice. If I do this in conversation with others, a climate of justice may emerge as a context for figuring out how we can create balanced and fair relationships with each other, and with the Earth.

References

- Alexander, A. 2015. A Short History of International Humanitarian Law. *European Journal of International Law* 26 (1): 109–138.
- Becker, E. 1997. *The Denial of Death*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks.
- Boehm, C. 2012. *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism and Shame*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. 1988. *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brown, M.T. 2010. *Civilizing the Economy: A New Economics of Provision*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Capra, F., and U. Mattei. 2015. *The Economy of Law: Toward a Legal System in Tune with Nature and Community*. Oakland: Barrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Club of Rome Report. 1972. <http://www.clubofrome.org/report/the-limits-to-growth/>
- Fulbright, J.W. 1966. *The Arrogance of Power*. New York: Random House.
- Guehenno, J. 2016. The United Nations and the Protection of Civilians. In *Protection of Civilians*, ed. H. Wilmot, R. Mamiya, S. Sheeran, and M. Weller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hart, D., and R.W. Sussman. 2005. *Man the Hunted: Primates, Predators, and Human Evolution*. New York: Westview Press.
- ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross. 1956. *Draft Rules for the Limitation of the Dangers by the Civilian Population in Time of War*. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/420?OpenDocument>
- Keen, S. 1973. Forward. In *The Denial of Death*, ed. E. Berker. New York: Free Press Paperbacks.
- Kinsella, H.M. 2011. *The Image Before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction between Combatant and Civilian*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Mehta, A. 2017. America sold nearly \$42B in weapons to foreign countries in 2017. *Defense News*. November 29. <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2017/11/29/america-sold-nearly-42b-in-weapons-to-foreign-countries-in-2017/>
- Powell, J.A. 2012. *Racing To Justice: Transforming Our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Savell, S. 2018. Guest Commentary: 15 years after the Iraq Invasion, what are the costs? *Missourian*, May 22. https://www.columbiamissourian.com/opinion/guest-commentary-years-after-the-iraq-invasion-what-are-the/article_78638018-2d56-11e8-b760-a3897a27fdaa.html

- Slim, H. 2016. Civilians, Distinction, and the Compassionate View of War. In *Protection of Civilians*, ed. H. Wilmot, R. Mamiya, S. Sheeran, and M. Weller. Weller: Oxford University Press.
- Steffen, W., J. Rockstrom, K. Richardson, T. Lenton, M. Folke, C. Liverman, D. Summerhayes, C.P. Barnosky, D. Cornell, S.E. Crucifix, M. Donger, J.F. Fetzer, I. Lade, S.J. Scheffer, M. Winkelmann, and H.J. Schellnhuber. 2018. Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science. PNAS* 115 (33): 8252–8259; first published August 6, 2018. Edited by Clark, W. C., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, and approved July 6, 2018 (received for review June 19, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1810141115>.
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. 2015. *History of Veterans Day*. <http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp>
- World Justice Project a. *What is the Rule of Law* <https://worldjusticeproject.org/about-us/overview/what-rule-law>
- World Justice Project b. *Mission*. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/about-us/overview/vision>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Part II
Telling “Telling” Stories

Chapter 6

White Compromises and American Prosperity



6.1 Introduction

If we want to provide a viable habitat for future generations, we have to understand the historical trends that now extend into our future and how to change them. We have to tell “telling” stories, in other words, that reveal the legacy of the troubles we face, and how to re-direct it—how to change the future of history. The troubles today lie in our disunity and alienation from each other and the Earth. Some people believe that we are still fighting the battles that caused the Civil War and I think they are right. Here’s what I think happened:

6.2 Causes of the Civil War

The slave states’ decision to separate from the United States to form their own nation brought about the Civil War because their decision violated a basic compromise between the slave and non-slave states that had held the Union together since the Revolutionary War. The compromises began with the famous Constitutional compromise of 1787 that allowed the slave states to count their enslaved people as 3/5 of a person for purposes of proportional representation in the House of Representatives. This compromise ensured that the Northern states would never have enough votes in Congress to abolish slavery.

The Northern states compromised their stance against slavery to protect the economic relations between the North and South. Northern prosperity was deeply intertwined with the prosperity of the South. The famous textile mills of Massachusetts, for example, not only received their cotton from the South but also sold their finished goods for the enslaved people on the plantations. The New York banks were deeply invested in the Southern cotton empire. Boston ships carried cargo from New

Orleans to New York and then to Europe. Economically, the North and South were united (Roediger 2008, p. 49). The 1787 Compromise after the Revolutionary War protected the growing prosperity of the nation, as did the similar compromises of 1820 and 1850. When the Southern states decided to separate and become independent of the North, they violated all of these compromises.

After the Civil War, following a short period of reconstruction—which allowed people to envision a civic integrated America—politicians in Washington agreed to a new compromise: the compromise of 1877. This compromise allowed white Southerners to take over the South, to institute a Jim Crow regime and to terrorize Blacks. During the industrial revolution, the Great Depression, and two world wars, this compromise remained more or less intact for the 70 years from the 1880s to the 1950s. It held the white nation together, for the most part, until the civil rights movement.

Northern and Southern white politicians made these compromises as a way to insulate themselves from the moral outrage of enslaving millions of Africans, and, after the Civil War, as a way of maintaining white domination. They also decided how they would deal with themselves. The political scientist, Lena Zuckerman, argues that the purpose of the four national compromises—the compromises of 1787, 1820, 1850, and 1877 was the protection and promotion of white supremacy (2016). While the compromises did protect white supremacy, they were not just about race. They were also about American prosperity. White supremacy did not depend on the union of the Northern and Southern states, but American prosperity did. Or, to put it another way, white supremacy was a significant pillar of American prosperity.

With the deconstruction of these compromises in the 1960s, we live today, as we have for over 50 years, without any substantial replacement that includes all of us. That's where we are: we zig to elect a black cosmopolitan and then zag to elect a white supremacist. This chapter analyzes the meaning and the history of these various compromises that protected American prosperity so we may gain a better understanding of the possibilities for changing the direction of its tailwinds toward a viable future.

6.3 The National Compromises to Allow Slavery

When the 13 colonies formed a united government, one could see why the leaders in the slave colonies were somewhat apprehensive. Court trials in England and Scotland in the 1770s had freed enslaved people that British citizens had bought in Jamaica and brought to Britain. Some Quakers had taken a stand against enslaving people as had the Methodist leader John Wesley. In 1776, Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, owned over 200 enslaved people. George Washington, the first President, also owned hundreds of enslaved people. Still, forces were gathering for the abolition of slavery. To ensure that the federal government would not abolish slavery, political leaders in the Southern states

believed that they must maintain a majority in the House of Representatives, which would be possible only if they could count each of their enslaved persons as 3/5 of a person in calculating their population for the House of Representatives. That stipulation became part of the Great Compromise of 1787.

The primary feature of the Great Compromise was that Congress would consist of two chambers: a Senate with equal representation from each state, and a House of Representatives where membership would be based on a state's population. The first part of the compromise was easy to manage. The 3/5s provision was more complicated because of changing population and the addition of more states to the Union. As the federal government admitted new states to the Union, Southern politicians scrambled to ensure a proper balance between slave and free states.

The Missouri Compromise in 1820 admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. The nation outgrew this compromise as new territories applied to become part of the Union. Would these states allow slavery too? This was answered in the famous compromise of 1850.

The Compromise of 1850 had several features. It admitted California as a free state, it allowed new states and territories to decide whether to be free or slave, it outlawed the slave trade (but not slavery) in the District of Columbia, and it enacted a fugitive slave law. The fugitive slave law required even ordinary citizens to assist in capturing possible fugitives and if they were fugitives, to return them to the slave states. Instead of strengthening the position of the slave states, it supported the various movements toward abolishing slavery. Also, the 1850 Compromise was upset with the Kansas Nebraska ruling of 1854 that allowed the population of each state to decide whether to be slave or free. The compromises that had held the nation together were falling apart.

Another force against the compromise was the abolitionist movement. There had always been groups against slavery in the Americas, such as the Quakers, but the first decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a vocal and sometimes militant movement against slavery. The best-known abolitionist was William Lloyd Garrison, who began the publication of *The Liberator* in 1831. In 1837, the first national meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society was held in New York, and in the following year, the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women was held in Philadelphia. Many of the leaders of the women's suffrage movement included the issue of slavery in their struggle for equal rights (Smith 1997, p. 230). Frederick Douglass's voice also joined the chorus against slavery. He founded a black abolitionist paper, *The North Star* and he wrote an autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*. Douglass' description of his experience as a slave had almost as much impact upon the abolition movement as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Garrison 1997, p. viii).

It is fair to say that the moral outrage of the abolitionist movement did not end slavery, nor did it prevent a war, but it did give support to create a new nation after the guns were silenced. W.E.B. Du Bois refers to the abolitionist movement after the war, at the time when Congress had to decide what to do with four million freed civilians, as the "moral moment" when the abolitionists' demand for justice made a difference (1935, p. 717).

A third assault on the compromise was the growing fear of a slave rebellion. Although there were many local slave rebellions throughout the south, the successful slave revolution in the French colony of Saint Domingo in 1804 haunted the nation. Taking the name of Haiti after defeating Napoleon's army and declaring independence, the Haitian Revolution and its leader, Toussaint Louverture, inspired slaves from the 1811 revolt in New Orleans to John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1851. In his book on Africa, W.E.B. Du Bois described the impact of the Haitian revolution:

The spectacular and astonishing triumph of revolution in Haiti threatened the whole slave system of the West Indies and even of continental America. It was this revolt more than any other single thing that spelled doom not only for the African slave trade but of slavery in America as a basis of its industrial system. The revolt encouraged the abolition movement in the United States and in Brazil; it flamed in practically every island of the West Indies (2015, p. 65).

The likelihood of a slave rebellion, of course, not only scared the slave owners, but also many northerners. In a sense, the compromise had come to mean that the slave states would keep the four million enslaved Blacks from invading white society and upsetting the economic apple cart. As Thomas Jefferson famously said, "we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go" (1824). When the Southern states seceded in 1861, they let the wolf go. They violated the white man's compromise and the nation fell apart. The question was how to put it together again. One could interpret the next 20 years as three answers to that question: the war, reconstruction, and redemption.

6.4 The Civil War Becomes a Freedom War

In the introduction to a book on key documents about the confederacy, Loewen and Sebesta give four widely held reasons for the secession: slavery, states' rights, tariffs and taxes, and the election of Lincoln (2010, p. 4). He believes that the immediate cause was the election of Lincoln, because Lincoln had spoken out against slavery. The main motive, however, was to protect the institution of slavery. A few Northern states had refused to enforce the Federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, and instead of honoring the rights of these states to determine their own laws (a state's rights policy), the Southern states argued that their Northern neighbors were violating the Constitution by not enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act.

It is also the case that the Southern states were an integral part of the "cotton empire" and Southern leaders may have believed that their future lay more with the global cotton trade than with the Northern states, so the tariffs and taxes played a contributing role. When the Civil War began, cotton exports constituted 61% of all U.S. exports (Beckert 2014, p. 37). The South's prosperity, in other words, was dependent on enforced labor to provide raw cotton at competitive prices on the global market. Enslaved workers were seen as essential to their prosperity.

So why did the Federal government not allow the Southern states to form a new nation? There are multiple reasons here as well. At the beginning, the answer actually has more to do with the compromise than with slavery. The reason for making the compromise, after all, was that American prosperity depended on enslaved labor. The slave states produced the tobacco and then the cotton that were major American exports. Northern banks and businesses from ship owners to cotton mills depended on Southern plantations. Perhaps it would have been possible to separate the states, but not the nation's economy. Although President Abraham Lincoln was against slavery, at the beginning, he was apparently more interested in saving the union than in freeing the slaves. In 1862, he said:

If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at this same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount objective in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I can save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I can save it by freeing all the slaves, I would also do that. What I do about slavery in the colored race, I do because I believe it would help save the union (quoted in De Bois 1935, p. 85).

This position makes sense when we remember that the key mythology of the nation was based on progress and prosperity, and in the 1860s, the south was an integral part of the idea of the American promise. For Lincoln, at least in 1862, the reason for the war was to put the nation back together again.

As the war expanded, Lincoln's view of the enslaved population changed. They became a significant participant in the war itself. Would the confederacy use them to fight against the North, or could the North use them to fight against the South? Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 answered the question. The four million Blacks in the confederate states were free.

The conflict over slavery that had been avoided by various compromises now divided and defined the nation as a nation at war. At first, it was a war between white men wearing blue and gray uniforms. After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Blacks played a major role in defeating the Confederate armies. W.E.B. Du Bois writes that as soldiers and laborers, between 300,00 and 400,000 Blacks helped in winning the war (1935, p. 112). Enslaved Blacks were not so much fighting in a war between the states as fighting for their freedom. The 1863 Emancipation Proclamation changed their status from the property of owners to what I would call today "civilians:" people who were vulnerable, need protection, and rely on the rule of law.

As you can imagine, most newly freed civilians were without any means of providing for themselves or others. As the Northern armies moved south, planters abandoned their plantations leaving black laborers without work. In some cases, however, black civilians occupied the land and began farming for themselves and others. One such case was the Sea Islands along the coast of South Carolina. In 1865, General Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, designating the Sea Islands as land for Blacks. He needed to rid his troops of the multitude of freed people following his campaign through Georgia. Also, since all the planters had left their plantations, the land was easy to give to the freed people. In any case, the War Department supervised distributing the land to black families. Each family was

allowed 40 acres and they could use mules on loan from the army. This is the source of the famous phrase “40 acres and a mule.” In a few months, 40,000 black civilians had settled on 400,000 acres (Foner 2002). All this before the war had officially ended.

When General Lee surrendered in 1865, over 600,000 people had been killed, the Southern economy was shattered, and the political identity of the seceding states was in limbo. It seemed like the end of white compromises. The year of Lee’s surrender witnessed the passage of the 13th Amendment, the founding of the Freedman’s Bureau, and the writing of “black codes.” These conflicting arrangements shaped the first period of Reconstruction.

6.5 The First Period of Reconstruction

Reconstruction, as you might imagine, follows deconstruction. The compromise had been deconstructed. The question was what would be reconstructed. As always, there are different stories to tell. Whatever story of reconstruction one tells, however, it is hard to exaggerate the significance of the loss of Abraham Lincoln, not only because he appeared to have the potential to bring all Americans together, but also because his replacement, Andrew Johnson, never intended to. Johnson appears to have lacked the ability to see Blacks and Whites as equal. The loss of Lincoln was probably as great for the nineteenth century as the loss of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Robert Kennedy was for the twentieth. In any case, the Executive branch’s abandonment of the struggle for Black equality left the heavy lifting of uniting the whole population to Congress.

The first new institution for facilitating this change was the Freedman’s Bureau. Legislation for the Bureau was passed in March 1865. Its general purpose was to assist freed civilians in moving from the conditions of slavery to the conditions of freedom. As Eric Foner points out, the full name of the Bureau—Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Land—gave the Bureau a more specific purpose to “divide abandoned and confiscated land into forty-acre plots, for rental to freedmen and loyal refugees and eventual sale with ‘such title as the United States can convey’ (language that reflected the legal ambiguity surrounding the government’s hold upon Southern land)” (2002, p. 69). This “ambiguity” eventually allowed the plantation owners to take back their land, but it did not destroy the connection between freedom and land in the mind of Southern civilians.

Johnson not only allowed the plantation owners to retake their land, but also permitted the Southern states to develop “black codes.” The codes criminalized everything from black unemployment to an “insulting” gesture toward whites. Once arrested, Blacks were imprisoned, and then leased to corporations to pay off their fines. In many Southern states, any man not fully employed could be arrested and fined for vagrancy. To pay off their fines, many Blacks had to sign work contracts with their “bosses,” that had been their former masters. (Blackmon 2008, 71). Du Bois described the impact of the black codes as follows:

The Negro's access to the land was hindered and limited; his right to work was curtailed; his right to self-defense was taken away, when his right to bear arms was stopped; and his employment was virtually reduced to contract labor with penal servitude as a punishment for leaving his job. And in all cases, the judges of the Negro's guilt or innocence, rights and obligations were men who believe firmly, for the most part, that he had "no rights which a white man was bound to respect" (1935, p. 167).

The prevalence of the black codes in the Southern States, as well as Johnson's pardon of planters, made the Republicans (at that time the Northern liberal political party) in Congress wonder if lives lost in the Civil War had been wasted. Furthermore, it actually looked like the Southern states would gain power in the Federal government because now their number of representatives in the House would increase since each freed person counted as a full person rather than only 3/5s. On top of that, 1866 witnessed the birth of the Ku Klux Klan, which represented a more organized form of white terrorism against black advancement. The Republican controlled congress decided to act. Their actions created the second period of reconstruction.

6.6 The Second Period of Reconstruction

Over President Johnson's veto, Congress passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867 with the following provisions:

- Creation of five military districts in the seceded states, with the exception of Tennessee.
- Each district was to be headed by a military official empowered to appoint and remove state officials.
- Voters were to be registered; all freedmen were to be included as well as those white men who took an extended loyalty oath.
- State constitutional conventions, comprising elected delegates, were to draft new governing documents providing for black male suffrage.
- States were required to ratify the 14th Amendment prior to readmission ([US History](#)).

In passing The Reconstruction Act of 1867, congress recognized that it was not enough to abolish slavery; they also had an obligation to protect black civilians, so Federal troops were stationed in the Southern states. Federal protection allowed Blacks to realize their rights as citizens, as stated in the 14th Amendment, which stated that all citizens had the right to equal legal protection, and that these rights cannot be denied without due process.

To meet the Federal requirements for readmission to the Union, the Southern states actually recognized the Black's right to vote before many Northern states. This was finally corrected with the 15th Amendment (passed by Congress in February 1869 and ratified by three quarters of the states in March 1890), which guaranteed

that the right to vote would not be denied “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude” ([Library of Congress](#)).

The Reconstruction Act brought about a different America than whites had ever envisioned. Black citizens began to exercise their political freedom, admittedly under the protection of Federal troops, but still a clear break from the past. For the first time, hundreds of Southern blacks participated in local, state, and national politics. Each of the Southern states has its own history, but taken together, well over 600 Blacks served as legislators, which represented a stunning change in American politics. Between 1869 and 1876, sixteen Blacks were elected to Congress. Eric Foner gives the following description of this brief period of openness:

Blacks and whites sat together on juries, school boards and city councils, and the Republican Party provided a rare meeting ground for like-minded men of both races. Thus, if reconstruction did not create an integrated society, it did establish a standard of equal citizenship and recognition of blacks’ right to a share of state services that differed sharply from the heritage of slavery and presidential Reconstruction and from the state-imposed segregation that lay in the future (p. 372).

Perhaps as empowering, and certainly more enduring, was the Black’s advancement in education and the creation of various civic and community organizations, from the Urban League to the black churches. Much of this civic activity was supported and facilitated by Northern blacks and whites—so called carpetbaggers—whose presence in the South was seen quite differently by whites and blacks. In terms of promoting the education of poor Blacks and Whites, however, these Northerners’ contributions should not be overlooked. Du Bois credits the abolitionists and especially the teachers for bringing public education to the South. He also argues that in the long run the building of educational institutions had the most lasting impact on the future of black communities.

Had it not been for the Negro school and college, the Negro would, to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery. . . . But already, through establishing public schools and private colleges, and by organizing the Negro church, the Negro had acquired enough leadership and knowledge to thwart the worst designs of the new slave drivers (1935, p. 667).

Still, the achievements of Reconstruction were multiple. Foner offers the following summary:

Biracial democratic government, a thing unknown in American history, was functioning effectively in many parts of the South. Men only recently released from bondage cast ballots and sat on juries, and in the Deep South, enjoyed an increasing share of authority at the state level, while the conservative oligarchy that had dominated Southern government from colonial times to 1867 found itself largely excluded from power. Public facilities had been rebuilt and expanded, school systems established, and tax codes modernized. Occurring at a critical juncture in the transition from slavery to freedom, Reconstruction had nipped in the bud the attempt to substitute a legalized system of labor discipline for the coercion of slavery, and enhanced Blacks’ bargaining power on the plantations. All in all, declared a white South Carolina lawyer in 1871, “we have gone through one of the most remarkable changes in our relations to each other, that has been known, perhaps, in the history of the world (p. 410).

These achievements, however, were largely negated with the re-establishment of a compromise among white men. After the national election in 1876, Northern and Southern white politicians, agreed to another white compromise.

With the abolition of slavery, and the Southern states’ return to the Union, Congressional support for Reconstruction began to wane. The presidential election of 1876 provided an occasion for white politicians to make another compromise. In the popular vote, Samuel J. Tilden outpolled Rutherford B. Hayes, but the Electoral College votes were decisive. Tilden had 184 electoral votes to Hayes’ 165, but since 20 Electoral College votes were contested, neither candidate had a clear victory. The politicians struck a compromise. Rutherford B. Hayes would become president and federal troops would be withdrawn from the South. Northerners had less interest in protecting the political rights of black citizens in the South and Southern Democrats had already gained control of many State governments, so the compromise was not that difficult. The era of Reconstruction was replaced by the era of “Redemption.”

6.7 The Era of “Redemption”

Once the federal troops left the south, white southerners regained control of state and local governments, passed legislation that segregated Blacks from Whites, rewrote labor and shareholder contracts, and began lynching Blacks who resisted their reign. They called themselves the redeemers, because they saw themselves redeeming the south from Blacks, carpetbaggers, and scalawags (white southerners who were allies of Blacks). The redeemers included a number of quite different groups from state representatives to the KKK, but as Eric Foner points out, they held some things in common:

They shared, however, a commitment to dismantling the reconstruction state, reducing the political power of Blacks, and reshaping the South’s legal system in the interest of labor control and racial subordination (2002, p. 588).

Their project of erasing the achievements of black civilians was greatly enhanced by the terrorism of the KKK and other white supremacist groups. Neither the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870, which forbade governments from denying citizens the right to vote, nor the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which guaranteed African Americans equal access to public accommodations, could counter the violence of the KKK. (The Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights bill unconstitutional in 1883.) By the end of the 1880s, all the Southern states had been “redeemed,” which meant not only that Whites controlled state governments, but also Black lives.

The episodes of “reconstruction and redemption” following the Civil War were given various interpretations that David W. Blight has laid out for us in his book, *Race and Reunion* (2001). As you might imagine, those who were enslaved interpreted the war much differently from those who lost their enslaved labor and lost the war. Many white Southerners adopted a memory of the war as a “lost cause.” The phrase was a title of a book written by Edward Pollard in 1867 that journalists

and preachers made into a set of beliefs (p. 51). The “story” of the lost cause presented the Confederacy as more virtuous, principled, and religious than the North, fighting for ideas and family. The South suffered for being right, while the North won the war due to their superior numbers and technology. Confederate soldiers who had fought and lost, in other words, were morally superior to their Northern invaders. Furthermore, their generals, such as Robert E Lee and Stonewall Jackson, had greater virtue and integrity than the likes of Northern generals such as Ulysses S Grant. In this story most “Negro slaves” were loyal and obedient.

Charles Reagan Wilson points out in his book on the “lost cause” that it was a peculiar mixture of evangelical religion and Southern patriotism. The links between the Christian religion and the destiny of the lost cause are difficult to miss in Wilson’s quote from a lost cause advocate:

Without the welding together of our people by the fiery trials of war, of reconstruction, of threatened servile domination, we could not have been the conserving power we have been. If this government is still to stand for liberty and freedom, it will be the south that will preserve it, and in the good providence of our God, bringing good out of evil, our suffering will help us bring a blessing to all people (2009, p. 77).

Missing from this passage is any mention of enslaved people. This omission became part and parcel of the white compromise that held sway not only in the South, but throughout the nation. Look at President Woodrow Wilson’s speech on the 50th anniversary of the Battle at Gettysburg.

How wholesome and healing the peace has been! We have found one another again as brothers and comrades in arms, enemies no longer, generous friends rather, our battles long past, the quarrel forgotten—except that we shall not forget the splendid valor, the manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another, now grasping hands and smiling into each other’s eyes (Wilson 1913).

Not a word here about African Americans. Even though the Civil War began to save the Union, its greatest moral accomplishment was the short period of reconstruction when the nation protected the rights of black civilians. This possibility was not realized then and is still not realized today. In his classic work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote about what could have happened if reconstruction had continued:

Had political exigencies been less pressing, the opposition to government guardianship of Negroes less bitter, and the attachment to the slave system less strong, the social seer can well imagine a far better policy—a permanent Freedman’s Bureau, with a national system of Negro schools; a carefully supervised employment and labor office; a system of impartial protection before the regular courts; and such institutions for social betterment as savings-banks, land and building associations, and social settlements. All this vast expenditure of money and brains might have formed a great school of prospective citizenship, and solved in a way we have not yet solved the most perplexing and persistent of the Negro problems (1996, pp. 33–34).

What did happen was the establishment of a segregated Jim Crow South enforced by the terrorism of the KKK and lynchings, and a segregated North through housing red lining and job discrimination. These institutions and practices continued into the 1950s. They allowed white people to think of their national history as though their

prosperity was of their own making, or in other words, as though people of color did not exist. The various movements for people's rights in the 1960s as well as the United States' failure in the Vietnam War in the 1970s, cracked open this white bubble.

6.8 Unraveling the White Compromise

The nation's white compromised life did change very slowly after the Second World War. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that schools must be desegregated in the *Brown versus Board of Education* decision. 1955 witnessed the Montgomery bus boycott. In the early 1960s, the civil rights movement mushroomed into an agent of change. When Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it looked like blacks might gain the same rights as whites. The 60s and early 70s were filled not only with a civil rights movement, but also the feminist movement, the Chicano movement, the Native American movement, the gay rights movement, the environmental movement, and the anti-war movement. All these movements not only gave voice to people's dignity and rights, but also attacked the white male power structure. There was a high price to pay: the assassinations of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert Kennedy. Still, many hoped that we could change course, especially after the failure of the invasion of Vietnam. I remember listening to George McGovern's speech calling America to come home:

From secrecy and deception in high places; come home, America

From military spending so wasteful that it weakens our nation; come home, America.

From the entrenchment of special privileges in tax favoritism; from the waste of idle lands to the joy of useful labor; from the prejudice based on race and sex; from the loneliness of the aging poor and the despair of the neglected sick—come home, America.

Come home to the affirmation that we have a dream. Come home to the conviction that we can move our country forward.

Come home to the belief that we can seek a newer world, and let us be joyful in that homecoming, for this “is your land, this land is my land—from California to New York island, from the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream Waters—this land was made for you and me.” (McGovern 1972).

As a nation, we did not come home. We drifted instead. Conservative nationalists shamed anti-war progressives for not honoring the veterans of Vietnam, and used military sacrifice, rather than civilian rule, as the symbol of our national identity. The government's “war on drugs” plus the three strikes policy resulted in the incarceration of thousands of black men. Today, more black men are in prison than were enslaved in 1850 (Alexander 2012). The multiple video recording of police shooting Blacks has brought to every one's attention that racism has not lost its sting. We still live in a world where people need to say, “Black Lives Matter.”

On the other hand, Affirmative Action policies opened opportunities for many to make significant contributions to different organizations and institutions. The election of Barak Obama appeared to demonstrate that we had moved beyond the era of

segregation. A black family lived in a white house that was built by black enslaved civilians.

His election, however, also brought to the surface a level of white hatred of Blacks that had been largely under-cover. In a sense, since the failure of McGovern's Presidential campaign, leading white politicians have pretended that our historical unity was not based on white compromises that ignored the violations of our shared humanity. These violations have become so obvious during Trump's Presidency that it seems impossible to hide them again.

We exist now in a curious place with so much revealed but very little healed. It's not just white supremacy that blocks our moving forward, but also the very thing the compromises tried to save: American Prosperity. Its tailwinds continue to move us in an unsustainable direction. Acknowledging the trajectory of these tailwinds during our national history might give us some understanding of what will probably happen to us, unless we begin to work on the difficult task of moving from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice.

6.9 The Tailwinds of American Prosperity

One way to understand the history of our Republic is to examine how its continual support for American Prosperity has changed our relationship to the Earth, our humanity, social relationships, and the civic—from our origin in the Atlantic commerce of Europe, Africa, and America to the present. In the beginning, we find the following perceptions:

The Earth is seen as a commodity
 Our humanity is seen as a racialized hierarchy
 Our social relations are incoherent
 The civic is seen as militarized.

Treating land as a commodity has probably changed the least in our history. One would have thought that the US could have learned something from the many Indigenous communities they removed from their places. What if our government had listened to the Native American's view of the Earth as a sacred place? Instead of learning from others, the US sought to teach Native Americans how to treat land as a commodity. In 1887, Congress passed the "General Allotment Act," which divided up Indian lands into parcels of 160 acres and allotted a parcel for each family, so they could use the land as the colonial settlers had (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, p. 157). The land left over after each family had received its allotment, which were most of the Indian lands, was sold to white settlers. The program was a failure because Indian culture did not see land as a thing without meaning. The program was later dropped, leaving the Indians with less land, and whites as limited as before about the meaning of land. There were exceptions, of course, such as the forester, Aldo Leopold, who wrote in his *Sand County Almanac* that we should recognize the land as a biotic community (1949, p. 2). When one considers that our treatment of "land" determines how we

live together on the Earth, it follows that if we cannot change our way of inhabiting the Earth, all the other changes we make will more than likely be for naught.

The second aspect of American prosperity—racialized humanity—has continued to infect American politics and culture. White supremacy is so intertwined with the other aspects of American prosperity that one must change the whole thing to really change any part of it.

This third aspect of American prosperity—incoherent social relationships—has made some changes. The 2020 movement to “defund the police” and related demands have brought about a greater awareness of wrongs that have been ignored before. This learning, however, has been somewhat isolated from the issues of protecting our earthly habitat and what transformations are necessary to limit financial capitalism and economic growth. Without the development of limits, American Prosperity will continue to frustrate our efforts for a sustainable future.

The fourth element of American prosperity—a militarized civic—has been criticized in terms of the militarization of city police department, but the climate of war appears as strong as ever in our relations with others. As Dunbar-Ortiz demonstrates in her book on an indigenous people’s history of the United States, our strategies of war has not really changed since the Indian wars (2014, p. 57). We have “tomahawk” missiles,” and “Apache” helicopters. The Navy SEAL team’s code name for Osama bin Laden was “Geronimo.” We have new technology, of course, and yet the climate of war has not changed since our beginning.

Looking at the present from this Chapter’s story leaves us in a curious situation. Trump’s supporters dreamed of a return to a white America. Their dream, however, assumed that the old white compromises could be re-established. That will not happen. Still, it’s not given that we can create a climate that would expect all of us to repair the social relationships caused by the violations of our shared humanity—a necessary part of creating a climate of justice. We need to remember that prosperity is not the ultimate problem, the ultimate problem is the violations of humanity that have not been repaired. The problem is that we still exit in a climate of injustice rather than justice.

References

- Alexander, M. 2012. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Beckert, S. 2014. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Blackmon, D.A. 2008. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Doubleday.
- Blight, D.W. 2001. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1935. *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880*. New York: The Free Press.
- . 1996. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Penguin Books.
- . 2015. *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the part which Africa has played in world history*. New York: International Publishers.
- Dunbar-Ortiz, R. 2014. *An Indigenous Peoples History of The United States*. Boston: Beacon press.

- Foner, E. 2002. *Reconstruction: American's Unfinished Revolution 1863–1877*. New York: Perennial Classics.
- Garrison, W.L. 1997. Preface. in Douglass, F. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*. ed. W. Andrews & W. McFeely. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Jefferson, T. 1824. *Wolf by the Ears*. <https://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/wolf-ear-quotations>.
- Leopold, A. 1949. *Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Library of Congress, Search Guides. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/15thamendment.html>.
- Loewen, J.W., and E.H. Sebesta, eds. 2010. *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader: The "Great Truth" about the Lost Cause*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- McGovern, G. 1972. *Address*. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-democratic-national-convention-miami>.
- Roediger, D.R. 2008. *How Race Survived U.S. History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon*. London/New York: Verso.
- Smith, R.M. 1997. *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- US History. <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h417.html>.
- Wilson, W. Address at Gettysburg 1913. *The American Presidency Project*: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-gettysburg-0>.
- Wilson, C.R. 2009. *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920*. Athens/London: The University of Georgia Press.
- Zuckerwise, L. 2016. There Can Be No Loser': White Supremacy and the Cruelty of Compromise. *American Political Thought: A Journal of Ideas, Institutions, and Culture* 5 (Summer): 467–493.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Chapter 7

Reinhold Niebuhr During the Time of the White Compromise



7.1 Introduction

The Reconstruction era ended with the “white compromise” of 1876 when Northern and Southern politicians agreed to let Rutherford B Hayes become President and to withdraw Federal troops from the former Confederate states. The compromise allowed white Southerners to “redeem” the South from Black citizens and to institute a Jim Crow regime that continued to dominate the South until the 1950s. The four strands of American prosperity—commercializing of land, racializing humanity, incoherent social relationships, and the militarization of the civic continued without limits. This expansion was not without its critics, even white male critics. Foremost among them was the theological ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr. Even though Niebuhr did not address all four strands of American prosperity, his work on setting limits does offer us important lessons for what white males and others could do and not do today.

Reinhold Niebuhr’s most influential time was in the 1940s and 1950s. As co-founder of the Americans for Democratic Action, he and his cohorts determined much of American foreign policy. *Time* magazine featured his picture on its 1948 cover. In 1964, Niebuhr received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest recognition given to civilians in the United States.

We have recently seen a revival of interest in Niebuhr’s life and work. In 2017, the Public Broadcasting Corporation presented a Reinhold Niebuhr documentary, “An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story” (PBS 2017). They may have been inspired, at least in part, by President Barak Obama naming Reinhold Niebuhr his favorite philosopher. In a 2007 opinion piece on President Obama in the *New York Times*, the columnist David Brooks shares what Obama said he had learned from Niebuhr:

The compelling idea that there's serious evil in the world, and hardship and pain. And we should be humble and modest in our belief we can eliminate those things. But we shouldn't use that as an excuse for cynicism and inaction. I take away . . . the sense we have to make these efforts knowing they are hard, and not swinging from naïve idealism to bitter realism (2007).

I think President Obama is talking about a balance here between idealism and realism, a balance that certainly belongs to a climate of justice.

Niebuhr's reputation largely derives from his idea of Christian Realism, which highlighted the complexity of doing good or even being good, especially for groups and nations. Instead of aiming for some idealistic resolution of national conflicts, Niebuhr believed that the aim should be their containment. He was aware, in other words, of the limits that must be placed on some parts of American prosperity namely, its militarized civic. His development of this notion of limits, its relationship with the other strands of American prosperity, and its impact on the national climate of injustice are the topics of this chapter.

Growing up in Nebraska in the 1950s, I took for granted the construction of white male supremacy as normal until my time at Nebraska Wesleyan University when I began hearing of the voter registration efforts and the freedom rides in the segregated south. When I joined others in 1965 walking down the streets of Montgomery, Alabama to hear Martin Luther King Jr. speak at the State Capital, I knew the times "they were a changing." Later that year I began my studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and in 1966 I took a graduate seminar on Reinhold Niebuhr's thought with Dr. Beverly Wildung Harrison, who later became a leading scholar in feminist ethics (2004). At the end of the semester, we were invited to a meeting with Niebuhr who had retired, but still lived at Union. He graciously answered our questions about his two-volume book, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941). In this work, Niebuhr provides the theological and Biblical grounding of his belief in the fundamental ambiguity of human existence (Fig. 7.1).

7.2 Niebuhr's View of the Ambiguity of Human Existence

So where is the ambiguity? Is it living in a world where we are destroying the Earth's capacity to provide for us? Or, declaring that we welcome "the huddled masses yearning to breathe free"; yet putting immigrant families in detention camps? One thing seems certain: for Niebuhr American life was ambiguous. He grappled with the race issue more than many other whites during his lifetime, and certainly was aware of the difficulty of dealing with white privilege, as well as social change. In his most famous book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr gives advice that has particular relevance for our efforts in creating a climate of justice:

The ability to consider, or even to prefer, the interests of others to our own, is not dependent upon the capacity for sympathy. Harmonious social relations depend upon a sense of justice as much as, or even more than, upon the sentiment of benevolence. This sense of justice is a product of the mind and not the heart. It is the result of reason's insistence upon consistency (1960, p. 29).



Fig. 7.1 Photo with Reinhold Niebuhr and Beverly Wildung Harrison (Original to the author)

I hear something quite like “a climate of justice in Niebuhr’s phrase “a sense of justice,” and I agree with him that sympathy alone is not sufficient. On the other hand, a sense of justice is a product of both the mind and the heart, to use his metaphors. In other words, I would not say what he said quite in the same way; and yet, I would not say what I do say without having heard what he said. He raises the questions, and, if we feel the answers are not complete or quite accurate, we are, at least, looking at the questions. If we are to correct the injustice of the white compromise and create a new climate of justice, I know of no better way to discover what that requires than to listen to what Niebuhr said and then to figure out what we should say now.

So, where did Niebuhr learn this view of the limited human capacity for change during the time of the white compromise? My assumption behind this question is that learning involves a circular process between experience and ideas. Our ideas give us a particular reading of our experiences, and these experiences influence our understanding of our ideas. At the same time, this learning process occurs in what are largely taken-for-granted social worlds. In what follows, I will describe some of the highlights of Niebuhr’s experiences and ideas, and make a plausible interpretation, I hope, of their meaning in the time of the white compromise. The purpose is not to dismiss Niebuhr’s ideas, but rather to gain a better understanding of how to build on them and of what we must do differently if we want to move toward a climate of justice not just for our social relations but also for our relations with the Earth.

The white compromises, from the compromise to count enslaved people as $\frac{3}{5}$ ths of a person to the compromise that allowed white Southerners to “redeem” the South following the demise of Reconstruction, held white America together and forced

others to submit. These compromises allowed white people to understand their good fortune as though people of color did not exist. This was not true for Reinhold Niebuhr. He was quite involved at different times in the “negro problem.” At the same time, there were traumatic events for black people that Niebuhr appears to ignore. The story about his relationship with issues of race is fairly complex and requires some discernment. We begin with a few of the many episodes of racial conflict in the early twentieth century that were excluded from the American story I had been told, and yet these episodes belong to any truthful recording of the American experience: the urban race riots, the second rise of the KKK, the Elaine massacre in 1919, and attempts to pass legislation against lynching.

7.3 Racial Conflict During the Time of the White Compromise

Cameron McWhirter calls the summer of 1919 the “red summer,” because it was a summer on fire with race riots (2011). The confluence of the migration of Blacks moving North, the rise of the KKK, the battles between labor unions and owners, the socialist revolution in Russia, and soldiers returning from WWI all made for racial explosions in many urban centers, including Charleston, Chicago, Cleveland, Austin, Knoxville and Omaha. By reviewing various records, McWhirter writes, “at least 25 major riots and mob actions erupted and at least 52 black people were lynched” (p. 15). Most of these riots were in Northern cities where Black migration from the south had changed the demographics.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, most Blacks lived in the south. There were black professionals and activists in the North, such as W.E.B. Du Bois in Boston, and in the Caribbean, such as Edmond Blyden, Markus Garvey, and John Henrik Clarke, who are noted for advocating that Blacks should return to Africa. In the South, besides a small educated and professional class including church and education leaders, most Blacks belonged to a working class of poor laborers. Many who had the means migrated to the Northern cities to find better paying work and to escape the terrorism of the Jim Crow regime. When the migration ended in the 1970s, over six million Blacks had moved to Northern and Western cities. The percentage of Blacks living outside the South had changed from 10% to almost 50% (Wilkerson 2011, p. 10).

In Northern cities, Blacks encountered a racial regime of segregation that kept them from settling in any other place than in what became known as “black ghettos.” As Beth Tompkins Bates points out: “The black ghetto marked a new phase in residential restrictions by limiting where American citizens could live” (2014, p. 93). As the Black population grew so did the growth of the Klan.

After whites had gained control of the South in the 1870s, the Klan faded into the background, but it returned in the early twentieth century. . This second incarnation of the Klan held on to the old belief in white supremacy, but also added hatred

toward Jews and Catholics. It was much more popular in Western and Northern urban areas than in the old south. The 1915 film, "Birth of a Nation" greatly enhanced its popularity. Originally named "The Clansman," the film portrays the Klan as a positive force protecting whites against aggressive Blacks. Although the NAACP protested its showing in several cities, it was a great success. The Klan's national popularity peaked in 1925 with around sixty thousand men marching down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington DC. 1919 was the worst year for Blacks during this resurgence of the Klan. Perhaps the most shocking event in the "red summer" of 1919 was the Elaine massacre.

7.3.1 *The Elaine Massacre*

Elaine was a town in Phillips County, Arkansas. Phillips County was located in the Arkansas Delta, which along with the Mississippi Delta provided some of the best soil for growing cotton. Actually, the "alluvial empire," as Nan Elizabeth Woodruff names it, was forested with hardwood trees, which brought mostly Northern lumber companies to the area. In 1919, 20,000 people in Arkansas worked for lumber companies (2003, p. 17) Once the land was cleared, it became ideal for raising cotton, with sharecroppers doing most of the work. Most Blacks preferred sharecropping to working for wages because it seemed less like slavery. As Eric Foner points out:

While sharecropping did not fulfill blacks' desire for full economic autonomy, the end of planters' coercive authority over the day-to-day lives of their tenants represented a fundamental shift in the balance of power in rural society, and afforded blacks a degree of control over their time, labor, and family arrangements inconceivable under slavery (2002, p. 406).

The basic idea was that laborers would contribute their labor and the landowner would contribute the land, and when the laborer didn't have his own tools, the landowner provided them and sometimes a mule, to grow and harvest the crop. The crop was then shared, usually 50/50. Although this looked like a good deal, it didn't turn out that way. The sharecropper needed provisions for the family until the crop was harvested, which meant the family was usually in debt to the landowner. Also, they had to get family provisions on credit at company stores, so their share of the crop rarely paid off their debts. It turned out to be a kind of debt slavery.

Following the First World War, the price of cotton increased as did cotton yield, but the sharecroppers did not see their income increase, in part because they had to sell their share to the landowner rather than on the open market. The sharecroppers began to talk about improving their situation. In 1919, a sharecropper union, the Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America (PFHUA), arranged for a meeting at a church near Elaine, Arkansas. Around 200 people attended. A few whites came to the church and engaged in a gun exchange with the PFHUA guards. One white man was killed. Soon, over a hundred white men from around the area gathered at the church and began shooting. This violence escalated when federal

troops were brought in to gain control. Over several days, white civilians and Federal troops combed the region, shooting black men, women and children—some estimates put the number of murdered in the hundreds. Other reports that seem undisputed put the number at over 200 (Woodruff 2003, p. 103).

After an investigation by an all-white committee, 122 black men and women were charged with such crimes as murder and “night riding,” which was a kind of terrorism made famous by the KKK. At the first trial 12 men were sentenced to death. They became known as the “Elaine Twelve,” and after lengthy legal proceedings, they were all released. The anti-lynching activist, Ida B Wells, visited Phillips County in 1920 and wrote a book on the events. Her summary focuses on the economic impact of the Elaine massacre or riot for both whites and blacks:

It means that the white lynchers of Phillips County made a cool million dollars last year off the cotton crop of the 12 men who were sentenced to death, the 75 who are in the Arkansas penitentiary and the 100 whom they lynched outright on that awful October 1, 1919! And that not one of them has ever been arrested for this wholesale conspiracy of murder, robbery and false imprisonment of these black men, nor for driving their wives and children out to suffer in rags and hunger and want (1920, p. 32).

Perhaps because no whites were held accountable for the Elaine massacre, it has been largely erased from our national story, as have attempts to stop the terroristic practice of lynching.

7.3.2 *Anti-lynching Legislation*

Between the 1880s and the 1950s, there were over 5000 lynchings (Cone 2011, p. 31) Some lynchings were large-scale public events with hundreds of whites watching the spectacle. In some cases, the victims were tortured before they were lynched and burned afterwards. It’s incredible that the government allowed these crimes against humanity to continue for decades. Black activists did appeal to Congress to stop it. W.E.B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells along with white allies, did persuade Congress to draft anti-lynching legislation. Working through such agencies as the National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), and the Council for Interracial Cooperation (CIC) as well as the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) an anti-lynching bill was placed before Congress in the 1920s (Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill 1922). It passed the House of Representatives but was defeated in the Senate by Southern senators. Finally, in 2005, Congress did formally “apologize” for not passing legislation against lynching (S.Res. 39(109))

As far as I know, Reinhold Niebuhr never wrote about these events. Niebuhr’s early biographer, Richard Wightman Fox never mentions the Elaine massacre or the attempts to pass anti-lynching legislation in the 1920s. Fox writes that Niebuhr didn’t preach about the race issue until 1925, when the KKK supported a candidate for Detroit mayor (1996, p. 96). Fox surmises:

His Christian prophecy was so completely rooted in his reading of the industrial conflict between skilled white workers and their employers—in his hope that the American worker could join with enlightened professional people to form a Labor Party on the British model—that it had no place for the black struggle for equality (p. 94).

At the same time, Niebuhr was involved in the organizing of sharecroppers in the 1930s, which we will review in the course of following his career from Detroit to New York and beyond. We begin with his time in Detroit.

7.4 Niebuhr in Detroit

Niebuhr began his career as a Lutheran pastor in Detroit, Michigan. During his time in Detroit, from 1917 to 1928, the city changed dramatically. Due to the enormous growth of the auto industry and the jobs it provided, millions of African Americans, as well as white southerners, came to Detroit for work. In the 1920s, Detroit was the fourth largest city in the United States.

The increase of the black population in Northern cities was matched with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. In the Fall of 1921, there were approximately 3000 Klan members in Detroit; in 1924 there were more than 22,000. If one were to look at Detroit through a pair of binoculars, one eye would see the over-crowded black ghetto, and the other eye would see the Klan's political agitation. This tension between white and black groups defined the context in which Niebuhr carried out his parish ministry. He not only witnessed this racial crisis, but also served as Chairman of an Inter-Racial Committee. In his notebook, later published with the title, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, Niebuhr wrote about the misery of the black community.

It has been a rare experience to meet with these white and colored leaders and talk over our race problems. The situation which the colored people of the city face is really a desperate one, and no one who does not spend real time in gathering the facts can have any idea of the misery and pain which exists among these people, recently migrated from the south and unadjusted to our industrial civilization. Hampered both by their own inadequacies and the hostility of a white world they have a desperate fight to keep body and soul together, to say nothing of developing those amenities which raise life about the brute level (1957, p. 115).

Niebuhr's biographer, Fox, surmises that Niebuhr must not have seen black people as part of the industrial struggle between labor and owners, or perhaps believed they were not yet developed enough to participate. On the other hand, while Niebuhr may not have taken up the issue of racism in Detroit beyond this passing reference, he did take on the rising influence of the Ku Klux Klan. In the 1924 city election campaign, the Klan supported one of the candidates for the office of mayor, Niebuhr described the Klan as "one of the worst specific social phenomena which the religious pride of a people has ever developed" (Fox 1996, p. 91) The Klan candidate was not elected, and soon afterward Niebuhr left for New York.

Niebuhr left Detroit in 1928 for a position in Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Sherwood Eddy, a social activist with family

money, and at that time the director of the New York YMCA, covered Niebuhr's salary during his first years in New York (p. 105). Eddy, in fact, used his family money numerous times to support various projects that involved Niebuhr. When Niebuhr arrived in New York, one might imagine that he brought with him his experiences of black and white community conversations. How could he not have? So how did these experiences influence his ideas and actions? In 1945, he wrote a short piece in the journal *Christianity and Society* about racial bigotry:

Race bigotry is, in short, one form of original sin. Original sin is something darker and more terrible than mere stupidity and is therefore not eradicated by enlightenment alone, though frequently enlightenment can break some of its power by robbing it of some of its instrument of stupidity. While the general predisposition is not malice, it does issue in specific attitudes which have malice in them. Racial bigotry, like every other form of human pride and sin, is something more than ignorance and something less than malice (1945, p. 233).

What are we to make of Niebuhr's idea here that racial bigotry is a form of original sin? Niebuhr appears to ignore the relationship between groups and how they co-create each other. One may certainly characterize a group as you would an individual as having particular traits, but a social perspective would see these traits as results of certain types of behavioral patterns developed over time, perhaps generations.

One characteristic of white privilege, which was taken-for-granted during the time of the white compromise, is that whites did not have to examine their relationship with Blacks? One can speak of the plight of poor Blacks, which Niebuhr certainly did, or white racism, as he also did, but he omitted speaking about the social relationship that created these different social worlds.

Another aspect of living during the white compromise for white people was that one could exclude one's self from one's analysis. Nowhere do we see Niebuhr writing about his understanding of himself as a white male. Like most academics and religious leaders during his time, and even today, Niebuhr appears to take a universal perspective from which he surveys what is going on, as though he did not have a social identity. I took a similar stance earlier in my career.

When I was working in the Ethics and Diversity Program at Levi Strauss and Company in the 1990s, I learned that a necessary step in entering into conversations with others about race and related issues was to become more aware of myself as a white male. Today, we can recognize that the movement beyond the white compromise has created a different social world than the white world of social amnesia. At the same time, we still live in a world similar to Niebuhr's, and his notion of Christian Realism continues to have its advocates.

7.5 Niebuhr's Christian Realism

Although Niebuhr does not draw a direct line between his experiences with individuals and groups in Detroit and his ideas about moral individuals and immoral collectives or groups, one can imagine that these experiences are related. The

connection is easily obscured, if there is one, because of Niebuhr's flexibility in using different terminologies. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), he uses the ideas of collective egoism and the notion of individual and collective impulses:

The inferiority of the morality of groups to that of individuals is due in part to the difficulty of establishing a rational social force that is powerful enough to cope with the natural impulses by which society achieves its cohesion; but in part it is nearly the revelation of a collective egoism, compounded by the egoistic impulses of individuals, which achieve a more vivid expression and a more cumulative effect when they are united in a common impulse than when they express themselves separately and discreetly (1960, p. xii).

I assume these "impulses" refer to the notion of "basic drives." In a collective, the individual impulses join together to become a group force almost impossible to control. Is this Niebuhr's interpretation of the KKK? We don't know. Niebuhr actually applies this idea of the immorality of collectives to all groups—groups promoting racism and groups against racism. This is just the nature of collectives. Group cohesion depends on some kind of "group pride," which may be restrained, but not eliminated.

If we cannot overcome the faults of group morality, as Niebuhr suggests, then maybe we should tend our own garden, so to speak, and stay away from grandiose projects. Instead of moving in this direction, however, in the 1930s, Niebuhr founded several organizations that promoted economic and racial justice. These activities do not receive a lot of attention today, but for us they illustrate an attempt to break through the silence about the Jim Crow reign in the south. Let's call this Niebuhr's Christian "idealism."

7.6 Niebuhr's Christian "Idealism"

In 1931–1932, Niebuhr served as chairman of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He left the group in 1933, because he no longer agreed with their pacifism. He joined with others in 1932 to organize the Fellowship of Socialist Christians. Niebuhr was the editor and major voice for the organization's journal, *Radical Religion*, which he used to spread his ideas. In 1934, he helped establish the Committee for Economic and Racial Justice. Among his many activities during these years, he became involved in the organizing of sharecroppers in Arkansas and Mississippi through the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU) and the Delta Cooperative Farm.

7.6.1 *The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union*

During the Depression, cotton farmers produced more cotton than customers could afford to buy, so the Federal Government, through the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), paid farmers to take land out of production. Since the owners received government payments for not farming all their land, the sharecroppers had

less land to farm, which drove them deeper into poverty. As in the case that led to the Elaine meeting, the sharecroppers began to organize, only this time with the help of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU).

The STFU was founded by white Southern radicals with socialist affiliations and included both black and white sharecroppers. One of the organizers, Howard Kester, wrote a booklet about the work of the STFU in 1936. He writes;

However well-meaning the present administration of the affairs of the Department of Agriculture may appear to the casual observer, it is a fact recognized by practically every competent economist that the actual working-out of the AAA in the cotton industry has had a calamitous and devastating effect on the masses or people, white and colored. Indeed, it is doubtful if the Civil War actually produced more human suffering and pauperized more individuals in proportion to the population than the AAA has done in its few years of existence (1997, p. 27).

Kester worked for Niebuhr's Committee for Economic and Racial Justice. Niebuhr wrote the following in his Forward to Kester's book:

There is no more striking irony in modern politics than the fact that the provisions of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, designed to alleviate the condition of the American farmer, should have aggravated the lot of the poorest of our farmers, the Southern sharecroppers ("Forward," 1997).

Kester and Niebuhr, along with a few others, were also involved in the organizing of a cooperative farm for both black and white sharecroppers.

7.6.2 The Delta Cooperative Farm

In 1936, through the Fellowship of Christian Socialists, Niebuhr helped Sherwood Eddy, his fellow activist and philanthropist, set up a cooperative farm for sharecroppers from Arkansas and Mississippi called the "Delta Cooperative Farm." Nineteen black families and twelve white families worked the farm together and shared their productivity. In time, they built houses for all the members, a sawmill, tended a large vegetable garden, and established a school for black children, who were not permitted to go beyond 4th grade in the state schools. By 1937, the farm was receiving national attention as a successful experiment in racial justice. The reality, however, was more complicated. The farm never achieved financial independence, but always depended on donations. Also, members of the Trustees had different opinions about farm leadership. And finally, some members left for other careers. In 1942 the trustees sold the farm and the new owner kept the farm in operation for another 14 years on donations. In 1956, the farm ceased all operations.

Niebuhr never wrote about these projects. How much he was involved is difficult to know. Still, they do represent attempts to change the status quo for Blacks in the South. In contrast to his work in Detroit, as the chairman of an interracial committee, where he encouraged civic dialogue, in the South, instead of focusing on changing

social relations among blacks and whites, he helped form an alternative group within the existing society.

Both the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the Delta Project assumed that human freedom entailed control over land. Land, in other words had a social meaning. This insight, however, could not be fully articulated in the language of American prosperity where land is a commodity. So, while the sharecroppers recognized there was more to land than its economic value, they did not have the language to treat it as a human habitat, and neither did Niebuhr.

At the same time, these projects to empower sharecroppers did address the issue of control over one's own work. There are many worker-owned cooperatives today that can be seen as belonging to this tradition (Alperovitz 2013). They certainly provide an alternative to the dominant model of private enterprise, but do not address the issue of how to repair past violations of our common humanity. This issue is tricky because it involves the powerless making claims on the powerful. Some activists, such as those involved in the anti-lynching campaign, did engage in such work. I don't see any evidence that Niebuhr did. He does, however, write about the use of non-violent action.

7.7 Niebuhr on Non-violent Action

In his analysis of the merits of non-violence, Niebuhr uses the example of Gandhi, who employed such practices to force the British government to grant independence to India. Niebuhr proposes that the success of non-violence rests on making a distinction between moral individuals and immoral society.

One of the most important results of a spiritual discipline against resentment in a social dispute is that it leads to an effort to discriminate between the evils of a social system and situation and the individuals who are involved in it. Individuals are never as immoral as the social situations in which they are involved and which they symbolize. If opposition to a system leads to personal insults of its representatives, it is always felt as an unjust accusation. William Lloyd Garrison solidified the south in support of slavery by the vehemence of his attacks against slave-owners. Many of them were, within the terms of their inherited prejudices and traditions, good men; and the violence of Mr. Garrison's attack upon them was felt by many to be an evidence of moral perversity in him. Mr. Gandhi never tires of making a distinction between individual Englishmen and the system of imperialism which they maintain (1960, pp. 248–249).

Niebuhr proposes that the Negro community take a similar approach of non-violent resistance. Even though educational efforts may help a few, he writes:

However large the number of individual white men who do and who will identify themselves completely with the Negro cause, the white race in American will not admit the Negro to equal rights if it is not forced to do so. Upon this point one may speak with a dogmatism which all history justifies (p. 253).

For Niebuhr, racism and discrimination is not an individual problem, but a social problem, and social problems are not easy to solve. He seems to advocate non-violent action not only because it has the best chance of actually changing social beliefs, but also because it assumes that individuals who belong to white supremacist groups are not necessarily white supremacist.

Niebuhr would appear to look at black/white relations as a kind of social division—groups are segregated into communities of class, education, wealth, and location. Would members of black communities have a similar experience of black/white relations or are they more likely to experience a social rift—an alienation between the two social worlds. During the time of the white compromise, when lynchings and race riots were occurring under the white man’s nose, whose experience would give us a better understanding of the social relationship between whites and blacks? Should the white man’s experience determine the strategy for change? One answer to this question was given by Martin Luther King Jr. In his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” King responds to those who have advised him to go slower and give more time for whites to adjust to an integrated society. In the letter, King answers those who found his actions “unwise and untimely,” by arguing that there is no “right” time to bring about the necessary change. He writes:

We know though painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed (1964, p. 88).

As Taylor Branch points out in his biography of King, during his graduate studies at Boston University, he had wrestled with and was greatly influenced by Niebuhr’s realism (1988, p. 87). In the letter just quoted, King acknowledges what he has learned from Niebuhr:

Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust power; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals (p. 80).

Still, Niebuhr’s remarks about non-violence were written during the time of the white compromise, and King’s remarks were written as it was being destroyed. They probably agreed on the tactic of non-violence more than they disagreed, although Niebuhr emphasized its function in not triggering the hostility of white individuals, while King emphasized its function in the empowerment of black communities. King saw this empowerment through the union of power and love, which he eloquently expressed in his 1967 speech at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference:

Now we got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love. And this is what we must see as we move-on (2015, p. 172).

We want to get this thing right as well. Do we limit our actions for change by the degree of discomfort those in power can tolerate or do we limit our actions by what is

necessary to empower the powerless? How do we balance these two goals? We will see Niebuhr's answer later. For now, we will follow the trajectory of Niebuhr's career in the 1940s, and 1950s, as he turned his attention to the pressing issues of foreign policy.

7.8 Niebuhr on American Power in the World

Niebuhr didn't return to the issue of race relations until the 1954 Supreme Court ruling outlawing segregation in the public schools. From the late 30s to the 1950s, the rise of Nazism, Soviet Communism, World War II and the Cold War brought difficult questions about the development of suitable relationships with other powers. Niebuhr addressed such issues and established himself as a leading American thinker. In 1952, Niebuhr suffered a stroke that paralyzed his left side and impaired his speech, but that did not halt his continued influence in American thought. We will consider only two of his multiple works during this period: *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* and the book *The Irony of American History*.

7.8.1 *Children of Light and Children of Darkness*

Niebuhr's 1944 book on the differences between the "children of light" and the "children of darkness," contrary to what you might expect, focuses more on the problems of the children of light—the good guys—than on the children of darkness. For Niebuhr, evil is not that difficult to understand; the difficulty is with the limits of goodness. The challenge of the children of light is that they tend not to take seriously enough the children of darkness nor to comprehend their own darkness.

Since the survival impulse in nature is transmuted into two different and contradictory spiritualized forms, which we may briefly designate as the will-to-live-truly and the will-to-power, man is at variance with himself. . . . The fact that the will-to-power inevitably justifies itself in terms of the morally more acceptable will to realize man's true nature means that the egoistic corruption of universal ideals is a much more persistent fact in human conduct than any moralistic creed is inclined to admit (1944, p. 21).

Darkness and Light, in other words, are inseparable. Still, they are also different. The light needs just as much attention as the darkness. Recognizing this complexity of human action provides "A Vindication of Democracy and A Critique of its Traditional Defense, which is the book's subtitle. The traditional vindication relies on the liberal notion of freedom, which Niebuhr criticizes as naïve in its understanding of power. His vindication of democracy, on the other hand, is that it checks power with power, and that it affirms both man's will-to-live truly and man's will-to-power. Or, as Niebuhr says:

Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary (p. xi).

The virtue of democracy for Niebuhr was not that everyone was equally represented so much as it could mediate between divergent powers within groups and balance the power between conflicting groups.

The preservation of a democratic civilization requires the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. The children of light must be armed with the wisdom of the children of darkness but remain free from their malice. They must know the power of self-interest in human society without giving it moral justification (pp. 40–41).

It may seem like Niebuhr has a rather static view of groups, an inherent tension between darkness and light within as well as without. Groups are trapped in their hunger for power and the best one can do is to restrict their impulses. One might think that Niebuhr believed that groups cannot escape the tendency to think of themselves as more perfect than they are—to be pretentious—but that is not the end of the story. Niebuhr provides something of a step-by-step process for dealing with pretensions in his book on the irony of American history.

7.8.2 The Irony of American History

Niebuhr begins and ends this book with a description of irony, which he presents as a process of exposure, recognition, and response. These are not Niebuhr's words, but I think they describe his proposed sequence, which includes the following steps:

1. One of life's incongruities appears
2. When examined, one uncovers a relationship in the incongruity;
3. The person involved becomes conscious of the relationship;
4. The irony is dissolved either through contrition or "a desperate accentuation of the vanities to the point where irony turns into pure evil" (2008, p. viii)

As Niebuhr makes clear in the book's final chapter, this view of irony matches his understanding of the Christian faith. "Yet the Christian faith tends to make the ironic view of human evil in history the normative one" (p. 155). In fact, irony is almost inevitable when one accepts Niebuhr's dualistic view of human nature: humans are both creators and creatures of history. If you accept this theory, then you have a formula that can be applied to multiple situations.

One could apply this ironical interpretation, for example, to Niebuhr's experience in Detroit with black and white individuals and groups. The incongruity would be the white pretension of superiority over others. When this incongruity is exposed, people have a choice of contrition or as Niebuhr says, an "accentuation of the vanities." Perhaps he witnessed contrition by some white people on the inter-racial commission he chaired. He probably also witnessed, especially with the rise of the KKK, "pure evil." Niebuhr doesn't use such experiences to illustrate his theory. In fact, this book on the irony of American history totally ignores the history of black/white relations. What could be more ironic than that?

The book was published in 1952, at the time of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. Although Niebuhr attacked communism for its hypocrisy, he seems more worried that the United States would exaggerate its capacity for doing good, because it had little experience in global conflicts. Niebuhr describes the image of the nation, drawn from the ideas of the Puritans and Thomas Jefferson as a nation beginning something new, without the baggage of European history.

We were not only innocent a half century ago with the innocence of responsibility; but we had a religious version of our national destiny which interpreted the meaning of our nationhood as God's effort to make a new beginning in the history of mankind (p. 4).

Niebuhr sees this image of the new beginning as somewhat pretentious. His point, however, is not to expose the incongruity between the official story of the nation's beginning and its actual beginning (slavery and confiscation of land), but rather to focus on the incongruity of a nation that sees itself as a new beginning and its current role as a global power with the responsibility to avoid total war. Exposing this irony, if I read Niebuhr correctly here, opens the options for the nation of either becoming contrite or defending its pretensions. Niebuhr's concern over the danger of the nation losing any awareness of its complicated relationship with its own power leads him to write:

Nations, as individuals, who are completely innocent in their own esteem, are insufferable in their human contacts (p. 42).

One could imagine, perhaps wish, that Niebuhr had applied this insight to the white compromise, but in this book, Niebuhr's story of American history does not include African Americans or Native Americans. Perhaps the ultimate irony of this book on irony is that it ignores the incongruity between white American history and the complete history of America. His story, in other words, is incoherent.

The principle of coherence says that if you cannot understand A without understanding B, then you cannot understand B without understanding A. Or in this case: "If you cannot understand black America without understanding white America, then you cannot understand white America without understand black America." In this book, Niebuhr writes as though one could isolate white America from non-white America, which was a basic tenant of the white compromise. At this stage in Niebuhr's life, it seems to be in full force.

In Niebuhr's biography in the 1963 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, his Union colleague, John Bennett, quotes Hans J. Morgenthau's naming Niebuhr "the greatest living political philosopher of America" (2017). At the same time Bennett does not write one word about Niebuhr's contributions to understanding racial pride and white supremacy. Not only Niebuhr's work, but also interpretations of his work, seemed to be by and for whites only. At the peak of his national influence, whatever he learned from the years in Detroit working with black and white groups was not something he referred to in his political writing. Niebuhr did address the issue of race relations in a couple of short articles about the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which struck down the "separate but equal" ruling.

7.9 Niebuhr and Race in the 1950s

Although Niebuhr supported the Court's ruling, his primary worry seems to have been that those who saw it as a victory for civil rights would not recognize their own group pride, and even worse, would not have enough sympathy for those white families who disagree with the ruling. In an article written in 1956, Niebuhr cautions against pushing white parents too fast to adjust to black and white children attending the same schools (Kisshauer 2015). Some have taken his remarks as supporting a more incremental approach to racial issues, but as Gideon Mailer points out in his recent essay on Niebuhr and race, Niebuhr actually argued that legal actions could help in changing customs, and that changing customs take time (2015). According to Therese B. DeLasio, when Niebuhr noticed the lack of progress in the integration of schools, he became more critical of white groups, especially white churches (2008). Still, his cautiousness about creating negative backlash reminds me of the earlier analysis of his pragmatic approach to non-violent action.

So how should one understand the relationship between Niebuhr's early experiences in Detroit and Mississippi and his later response to the integration of public schools? Perhaps the racial bigotry he experienced in Detroit influenced his theological analysis of human nature in his first years at Union. He then used this theological framework to interpret the limits of group morality and the need to keep in check any group's power, which served as the foundation for his Christian Realism. It seems that Niebuhr used this perspective to interpret such events as the World Wars and the rise of Communism, and then applied this cautionary approach to race relations in the 1950s.

In Detroit, Niebuhr certainly recognized the suffering and misery of black groups and the "racial pride" of white groups, but he didn't give enough recognition to the relationship between these groups, or how their social identity depended on each other. He seems to see groups as isolated entities, just as he sees individuals as isolated entities. The reason for this may be grounded in his dualistic protestant theology.

7.10 Niebuhr's Dualism

A key principle in Niebuhr's theology is that man (sic) is created in the image of God. In Protestant monotheism, this can easily imply that since God is one, whatever God creates is also one. One God equals one man, or one group—a collective one. An alternative view of Christian theology sees three gods, or three-in-one, which is the more orthodox trinitarian view of Father, Son and Spirit. The theologian Paul Lehmann thinks that Niebuhr's theology does not pay enough attention to the third part of the trinity; the Holy Spirit, which refers to the potential for the creation of a loving community (1956). Without this possibility for creating new communities, groups that are estranged from one another can only try to improve themselves, but

not the broken relationships that could re-unite them. This possibility for the creation of community between opposing and conflicting groups does not seem to get much attention in Niebuhr's thinking.

Niebuhr's participation in the Delta Cooperative indicates that he did know about the creation of community, and perhaps even something about the relationship between community and land, but none of this is explicitly stated in his later social ethics. Niebuhr does use the word "community" in his final book: *Man's Nature and His Communities* (1965), which appeared eleven years after the *Brown v Board of Education* decision and 10 years after Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of the bus. In the early 1960s the freedom riders, the Birmingham boycott, the march on Washington, the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as well as other events, had so ruptured the white compromise that it no longer held sway over the nation. So, Niebuhr's final book was written in a different world. Before we look at this book, I want to conclude my interpretation of Niebuhr in the time of the white compromise.

7.11 Niebuhr and the White Compromise

In his profound and challenging book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, James Cone asks the following question about Niebuhr's years at Union Theological Seminary:

Why did Niebuhr fail to connect Jesus's cross to the most obvious cross bearers [those lynched] in American society? (2011, p. 132).

This is not only a disturbing question for our understanding of Niebuhr's work, but also, for some of us, for understanding our own work. Even though the civil rights movement destroyed the staying power of the white compromise, it has not—not at all—been replaced by a new agreement among all of us. The development of Niebuhr's career is not so different from the career development of many others.

As I have presented Niebuhr's experiences and ideas, he seems to have both accepted and rejected the white compromise. He clearly rejected the widespread agreement to not bring black and white people together to talk about their relationship, especially in Detroit and in his participation in the Delta Cooperative Farm in Mississippi. These practices, however, were not what made him famous or admired. In fact, his fame was largely based on his thinking and writing that had nothing to do with race. In a sense Niebuhr's fame demonstrates the success of the white compromise—to think and write as though America was white America.

How did Niebuhr accept the white compromise? First of all, his stories of what I would call "Atlantic history" included only Europe and European/Americans and excluded Africans and Native Americans. In his book, *Children of Light and Children of Darkness*, he writes of Adam Smith as one who belongs to the "Children of Light" because Smith believed that self-interest was subordinate to a larger good. Niebuhr appears not to know, or at least not to acknowledge, that Smith's world was

dependent on the Atlantic trade of enslaved people. In fact, Niebuhr never sees American history as a history of multiple peoples, but only of white people, as though people of color did not exist.

In his book on the irony of American history, he writes that Americans represented a new beginning separated from European, but he doesn't say that the United States continued using enslaved people long after the British outlawed it. Furthermore, he assumes an innocence of European Americans and an American optimism that actually rests on the appropriation of the land of Native Americans and the enslavement of millions of Africans. Until the Civil War, the United States was a slave nation, not that much unlike Saint Domingue before the Haitian Revolution. Unlike the Haitian revolution that ended the enslavement of people, the American Revolution protected it.

Niebuhr does not question, and may actually reinforce, what had become a key myth of the compromise: America's prosperity was the result of hard work and good fortune. He believed that the danger here was hubris, not deception. What is missing from his focus on pride is any recognition that some groups have greatly benefited from the exploitation and domination of other groups. Most of his work appears to assume that groups, like individuals, are isolated units existing in their own world rather than in a common world. He addresses this issue in his final book on human communities.

7.12 Niebuhr and the Human Community

In *Man's Nature and His Communities*, Niebuhr shares some of the changes he had made in his thinking. A good sign of the change can be seen in the difference between his early terminology of "moral man and immoral society," and this book's title of "Man's Nature and His Communities." Does this change represent a different view of human groups? It's not entirely clear. The doctrine behind the notion of immoral society was original sin. In the introduction to this volume, Niebuhr shares that he learned that stressing this theological concept was "anathema to modern culture" (1965, p. 23). In this book, he uses different terminologies, including the terminology of tribalism and a common humanity. With this terminology Niebuhr writes:

The difficulties America has experienced in acknowledging the common humanity with a racial minority marked by observable racial identification of dark color and by historically caused cultural backwardness to give a vivid example of the basic paradox of man's inhumanity to man. This paradox consists, on the one hand, in the obvious unity and common humanity of men, derived from their rational freedom over nature and the indeterminate creative possibilities of that freedom, which distinguishes them from other animals and constitutes the human race as one single species. It consists, on the other hand, in the fact that this supposedly rational creature is able to recognize a common humanity only in the uncommon and unique marks of a tribal "we group," or more recently, "national"—communities in which the dignity of man is expected and rights are acknowledge and enforced; while others, lacking these obvious marks of tribal identity, whether racial,

linguistic, cultural, or religious, are treated brutally as if they were not part of a common human race (pp. 90–91).

Niebuhr concludes here with a hopeful note that since this paradox had become a “national interest” it might be resolved but it may take “at least a century.” Still, he provides some hope that in fact, our differences are not natural, but social which could mean that they can be changed.

No one could deny that the cultural and moral differences between groups and nations are real. But only time and experience will prove that they are not innate, and that in any case, they cannot reasonably deny a common humanity to all men (p. 95).

Niebuhr is not saying that this “common humanity is just another term for original sin; rather, he means it as a reference to human dignity. This does not mean that Niebuhr believes that an awareness of our common humanity is easy to achieve, but nor does he say it is totally beyond our grasp.

In this book’s final essay, Niebuhr explores the paradoxical nature of humans as self-seeking and self-giving. In his view, the paradox is that a total focus on self-seeking doesn’t bring one self-fulfillment but self-giving does. The reason for the paradox is “the social substance of human existence” (p. 107). This looks quite different from Niebuhr’s early contrast between moral man and immoral society. Instead of treating society as collectives that inhibit or even prevent individual moral action, Niebuhr sees community more as the basis for such action. As he writes: “This is true because the self needs other selves in order to be itself. This is the nature of the self, and also its destiny” (p. 112). On the other hand, it would be a mistake to say that Niebuhr has abandoned his dualistic thinking—it is now between self-seeking and self-giving. Still, he appears to have grounded his dualism in social relations rather than in natural impulses. This will make a difference in exploring the relationship between Niebuhr’s work and the four strands of American prosperity--treating land as a commodity, racializing humanity, maintaining social incoherence, and a militarized civic.

7.13 Niebuhr and American Prosperity

Niebuhr’s Christian Realism was a direct challenge to the American Prosperity language of manifest destiny, the widely held view that Western expansion was part of God’s plan for Christian Anglo-Saxons. Still, as a descendant of settler immigrants, he didn’t appear to challenge the dominant view of land as a commodity. On the other hand, I don’t think he believed in a racialized humanity. He focused on social differences rather than human differences. At the same time, he appears to have overlooked the need to repair the broken relationships among different groups before they could actually share a common humanity.

Niebuhr was certainly aware of the social groups and the misery of black communities. . . His early involvement in the empowerment of sharecroppers illustrates his concern for the poor, but not so much for how they got poor. For the most

part, he focused on the nature of groups rather than on their relationships with each other. Still, we should not forget his reflections on the complexity of human action, nor his call for the powerful to embrace humility.

The fourth element of American prosperity a militarized civic, received Niebuhr's strongest criticism. His theory of containment, which argued for the recognition of limits in international relations, called for a balance of military forces. With hindsight, we can say today that the theory of containment could not create a climate of justice because it failed to take seriously the violations of humanity that were part and parcel of American prosperity. The white compromise held its sway in allowing white men, including Niebuhr, to live in the illusion that there was an America without people of color.

Niebuhr did address some aspects of dangers of American prosperity, especially its racialized humanity and the military civic. The part of the American prosperity he considered the least, and that now our planetary crisis has made a necessity, is the treatment of land as a commodity. Until we re-think our relationship with the Earth, I doubt if we will be able to save it as a human habitat.

References

- Alperovitz, G. 2013. *What Then Must We Do: Straight Talk about the Next American Revolution*. White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Bates, B.T. 2014. *The Making of Detroit of Henry Ford*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Bennett, J.C. 2017. Reinhold Niebuhr *Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia. Britannica Online*, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Reinhold-Niebuhr>.
- Branch, T. 1988. *Parting The Waters: America in The King Years 1954–1963*. New York: A Touchstone Book.
- Brooks, D 2007. Obama, Gospel and Verse. *The New York Times*. April 26. http://select.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/opinion/26brooks.html?_r=1.
- Cone, J.H. 2011. *The Cross-and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- DeLisio, T.B. 2008. Did Reinhold Niebuhr Care About Race in America. *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 61 (3–4): 1–16.
- Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill 1922. <https://www.naacp.org/naacp-history-dyer-anti-lynching-bill/>.
- Foner, E. 2002. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Business 1863–1877*. New York: Perennial Classics.
- Fox, R.W. 1996. *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Kester, H. 1997. *Revolt Among The Sharecroppers*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- King, M.L. 1964. Letter from Birmingham Jail. In *Why We Can't Wait*. New York: A Mentor Book New American Library.
- . 2015. Where Do We Go From Here? In *The Radical King: Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Cornel West. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kisshauer, C. 2015. *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Perspective on Desegregation as Influenced by Christian Realism*. <http://www.belmont.edu/burs/pdf/History%20-%20Kisshauer%20-%202015.pdf>.

- Lehmann, P. 1956. The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr. In *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*, ed. C.W. Kegley and R.W. Bretall. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Mailer, G. 2015. Not eradicated by enlightenment alone.; Reinhold Niebuhr and the conflicted meaning of racial factions in American life. 49” *Parallel*, Issue 35. <http://49thparalleljournal.org>.
- McWhirter, C. 2011. *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and The Awakening of Black America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- PBS. 2017. An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story. <http://www.pbs.org/video/2365984011/>.
- Niebuhr, R. 1941. *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
- . 1944. *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a critique of its traditional defense*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
- . 1945. Christian Faith and the Race Problem. *Christianity and Society*. Vol. 10, Spring. in *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics: His Political Philosophy and Its Application to Our Age as Expressed in His Writings* ed. Davis, D. R. and Good, R.C. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960, 233.
- . 1957. *Leaves From the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- . 1960. *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
- . 1965. *Man’s Nature and His Communities: Essays on the dynamics and enigmas of man’s personal and social existence*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
- . 1997. Forward. In *Revolt Among The Sharecroppers*, ed. H. Kester. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- . 2008. *The Irony of American History*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
- S.Res. 39(109th) 2005. *Lynching Victims Senate Apology resolution*. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/109/sres39/text>.
- Wells-Barnett, I. 1920. *The Arkansas Race Riot*. Chicago: Ida B. Wells-Barnett.
- Wilkerson, I. 2011. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration*. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc.
- Woodruff, N.E. 2003. *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Chapter 8

The Sharecropper’s Story and An Ethics for Environmentalism



8.1 Introduction

As an immigrant nation populated with people from different nationalities and cultures, the belief that has kept many white people and some others together has been the promise of American prosperity. From the beginning, the proclamation of this promise relied on the denial of the injustice of the appropriation of Native American land and the assumption that it could be turned into private property with impunity. The refusal to repair these social injustices has kept us from examining our unjust relationship with the Earth by mistaking it as a “thing” that one can commercialize, exploit, and destroy. This all seems quite “normal” to many who have adjusted to living in a climate of injustice. Those who have not adjusted and who have tried to maintain a connection with the Earth as a living habitat for all living beings invite us to tell a different story about the “land” of the Americas.

The story here begins with the lands of the Atlantic before they were reconceptualized by Atlantic commerce beyond any one’s imagination. It then turns to the experience of sharecropping, which provides an opportunity to imagine a different future than the one we inherited—a future based not on dominance and submission, but on reciprocity, reparation, and restoration.

8.2 The Story of the Lands of the Atlantic

For most of the past 400 years, the Atlantic Ocean has remained fairly dependable. Its trade winds facilitated the European appropriation of American lands and the exploitation of African people, the sharing of technological development, the Industrial Revolution, and the globalization of commerce, culture, and everyday life. Recently, the ocean has begun to change. It’s getting warmer, its storms are more

violent, and potential changes in its jet streams threaten the livability of some of the nations that surround it. There are other oceans, of course, but none so central to the identity of the United States as the Atlantic and its triangular connections. Bernard Bailyn, one the leading scholars in the field of Atlantic history, writes of the Atlantic:

The integration of the once-disordered American into the emerging Atlantic system was profoundly favored by the ocean's physiography. The clockwise circulation of winds and ocean currents, sweeping westward in the south and eastward in the north and linked by deep riverine routes—the Elbe and Rhine, the Amazon and Orinoco, the Niger and Congo, the Mississippi and St. Lawrence—to immense continental hinterlands, drew the Atlantic into a cohesive communication system (2005, p. 83)

The Atlantic “communication system,” carried Enlightenment ideas of liberty, equality, and prosperity. What made these exchanges possible, however, was the development of the Atlantic triangular trade based on the enslavement of millions of Africans. Bailyn quotes Barbara Solow, a specialist on the Atlantic trade of enslaved people:

What moved in the Atlantic in these centuries was predominantly slaves, the output of slaves, the inputs of slave societies, and the goods and services purchased with the earnings on slave products . . . Slavery thus affected not only the countries of the slave's origins and destinations but, equally, those countries that invested in, supplied, or consumed the products of the slave economies (p. 93).

This Atlantic commerce not only radically changed the well-being of Europeans, but also radically changed the African and American indigenous communities. To understand this, you have to imagine what it meant to separate people from their traditional habitats. Although I will use the term “land” in the following section, remember it represents a particular Western perception of the Earth.

8.2.1 The Africans' Land

What did it mean for enslaved Africans to be torn from their habitat and brought to the Americas to labor on another's land and to make it productive, not for themselves, but for their owners? What did Africans lose? In addition to the horrific loss of freedom, they lost their community. Losing connections to that community meant that they also lost their connection to their community's home. They became homeless. Who can ignore the tragedy here that Europeans who left their homes took Africans from their homes to work on someone else's land—land that the homeless Europeans had taken from Native Americans? Perhaps the homeless Europeans had no idea of what they were doing. How did Africans view their land? The view of the Sudanese Mossi represents what one can assume was a view of many African communities. Elliott Skinner quotes them as saying:

Land is the mother; it fed the ancestors of this generation; it feeds the present generation and its children; and it provides the final resting place for all men (1964, p. 107).

Like much of Africa, the Mossi land was not colonized by European nations until the late nineteenth century (1880–1914) during what has been called “the scramble for Africa.” Before then, the European nations, for the most part, viewed Africa as a trading partner.

Why did the Europeans not colonize Africa earlier? There were probably several reasons. The tropical climate may have discouraged them. African tribes were quite successful in preventing Europeans from moving inland. African tribes and European nations were early trading partners. In any case, Europeans, for the most part, did not settle Africa, but bought Africans and shipped them to the Americas to work the land.

8.2.2 *The Americans’ Land*

We know today that what was a “discovery” for Europeans was an occupation and, in some cases, an ethnic cleansing and genocide. What we may not always recognize is that the history of the treatment of the land of America is central to the history of America. As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz writes in her book, *An Indigenous Peoples History of The United States*:

Everything in US history is about the land— who oversaw and cultivated it, fished its waters, maintained its wildlife, who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity (real estate) broken into pieces to be bought and sold on the market (2014, p. 1).

As one might imagine, the more than 500 tribes in the Americas had various views of the land. In general, Native Americans viewed land as a common ground that gave them their provisions. Many farmed the land, owned what they harvested, but did not “own” the land. So, if they did not use the land, someone else could. Some tribes viewed the land as part of a web of life, as ‘Mother Earth.’ This does not appear to have been universal, however, because some tribes sold their land to the colonists and later to the US government, which one would hardly do to “Mother Earth.” In fact, as Stuart Banner points out, the colonists-settlers acquired more land by purchase than by conquest (2005, p. 26). Banner also reminds us that these sales were made in particular contexts that in many cases gave the tribes little choice.

The selling and buying of land meant quite different things for the Native Americans and the Europeans. For the Native Americans, selling land meant that the buyers would become an integral part of their social and political network. For the English, the deal meant that they would now have exclusive use of the land and the Indians would have to vacate it, a concept quite foreign to Native Americans (p. 58). Through a long history of forced sells and broken treaties, as well as lost wars, North American Natives lost most of their land.

I recently attended a course by the filmmaker, Christopher McLeod, on the history of Indigenous peoples’ struggles to protect their sacred places, such as Mt. Shasta in California and The Black Hills in South Dakota. In 1980 the US Supreme Court agreed that the Black Hills belonged to the Sioux nation and the

government offered to pay \$106 million in reparations. The Sioux rejected the payment. For them the Black Hills are sacred (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, p. 208). Tribes like the Sioux are not only struggling to gain recognition of the spiritual meanings of these sites, but also to have non-natives learn from such sites that the Earth possesses an important spiritual dimension that could be a guide to sustainability.

This perspective is quite different from the one I acquired while growing up on a farm in Western Nebraska. Both of my parents came from farm families. Most of my cousins lived on farms as well. We were farmers, not land speculators. We were more interested in the price of wheat and corn than in the price of land. One could say that we were stewards of the land, but we did not treat it as sacred, as many Indigenous people did. We did improve the land's productivity through the use of hybrid seeds, fertilizers and irrigation. Still, I think we recognized and experienced gratitude for the Earth's fertility and the landscape's beauty. We did not acknowledge, however, in any adequate way that our land had been taken from Indigenous peoples.

At different times, the Nebraska territory was the home to the Arapaho, Arikara, Cheyenne, Dakota, Fox, Kansa, Kiowa, Omaha, Oto, Pawnee, Ponca, Sauk, and Winnebago tribes. Some tribes immigrated to the Nebraska territory, such as the Sioux who came from Minnesota. Others had lived in the general territory for centuries, such as the Pawnee.

Once the Pawnee acquired horses that the Spaniards brought to the Americas in the sixteenth century, they lived as farmers and hunters. In the Spring and Fall, they planted and harvested crops, and in Summer and Winter they hunted bison. The first whites they encountered were fur traders in the early nineteenth century. The continued growth of settlers increased the pressure to sell their land to the federal government before they lost it completely. The convergence of various events led to the Pawnee's losing their land. Here is Stephen R. Jones's description of their experience:

As the whites crowded in, capitulation became inevitable. In 1833 the four Pawnee bands gave up 13,000,000 acres south of the Platte River in exchange for \$4600 in goods to be paid annually for 12 years. In 1848 they relinquished 110,000 acres north of the Plate in exchange for \$2000 in goods. In 1857 they turned over most of their remaining lands, about 10,000,000 acres north of the Plate, for 21.7 cents an acre.

The promised annuities rarely came. Grasshoppers devoured the crops that Indian agents had advised Pawnee to plant. Smallpox and other imported diseases decimated the population, reducing it from about ten thousand in 1832 to fewer than two thousand in 1874 . . . In addition, the depleted villages became virtually defenseless against repeated raids by the well-armed Lakota. Finally, in 1874 the Pawnee gave up the rest of their land in Nebraska and trudged South to "Indian country" in Oklahoma (2000, p. 46–47).

Most settlers and their decedents would agree that forced removal from one's home is a traumatic event, but how much worse it must have been for people whose relationship with the land was sacred and not commercial. Jones quotes from George Cronyn's book, *American Indian Poetry*, the Pawnee shaman, Tahirussawichi's description of dawn as a time of creation and wonder:

As we sing the morning start comes nearer, moving swiftly toward its birthplace . . . We call to Mother Earth, who is represented by the ear of corn. She has been asleep and resting during the night. We ask her to awake, to move, to arise, for the signs of Dawn are seen in the east and the breath of new light is here.

Mother Earth hears the call; she moves, she awakes, she arises, she feels the warmth of the new-born Dawn. The leaves in the grass stir; all things move with the breath of a new day; everywhere life is renewed.

This is very mysterious; we are speaking of something very sacred, although it happens every day (p. 40).

What a difference between the perspective of the settlers and the settled. As a descendent of settlers, I can say I did sometimes experience a silent connection with nature with the morning sun shining in my bedroom window or the sea gulls following behind the plowing of fields in the spring, but I did not imagine the Earth as sacred.

For most of human history, and for most human communities around the world, my experience—the experience of settlers and their decedents—has been the exception. Even as a boy on a farm, my perceptions were influenced more by the Western framework of what the sociologist Max Weber called the “disenchantment of the world,” than by the Native American assumptions of a spiritual world (1922). Weber’s observation was that the scientific approach had eliminated the spiritual dimensions of the Earth. No one illustrates Weber’s view of disenchantment more than the English view of the land.

8.3 The English View of Land

As many of us know, the signature idea of the English view of land is private property. The philosopher, John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government* summarizes this view:

Though the earth and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature hath placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other men; for this labour being the unquestionable property of the laborer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others (1980. p. 18).

According to this view, one acquires ownership of land by separating it from the commons through labor. By mixing one’s labor with the land, it becomes one’s private possession. This theory, however, has little relationship with the facts. Those who mixed their labor with the land seldom owned it. The landed gentry did. There are actually two developments that aptly illustrate the English view of the land: enclosure legislation and land speculation.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth century, England passed multiple “enclosure laws,” that gave the landowner absolute control of property. This break from feudalistic relations between the nobility and commoners lead to the migration of commoners to European cities to find work, and to the Americas. The enclosures also broke the connection between land and people. As Andro Linklater writes in his book *Owning the Earth*, the enclosure movement “split asunder the principle of mutual obligation implicit in land use around the world” (2015, p. 14). One might find some similarity between the enclosure movements and Locke’s theory of property—they both support private ownership—but the difference is also obvious: the landowner’s control of the land was not due to his labor, but rather to legislation. The people who actually worked on the land were the ones driven off.

Although the enclosure movement gives us some understanding of the uniqueness of the British view of land—that its owner had exclusive rights to it—the British view also treated land as an investment. Instead of evaluating land in terms of what it could produce, it was evaluated as a piece of property. As one could imagine, the creation of property you could buy and sell would lead to land speculation. And speculate they did. As Linklater writes,

More than in any other economy of the time, American land was the prime producer of wealth, partly from crops and livestock, but mostly from the increase in its value (p. 148).

We should take notice here that land speculation had nothing to do with John Locke’s notion of land ownership. Owning land does not necessarily include the right to treat it as an investment. To see land as a commodity is to base its value not on what it can provide, but rather on the market of supply and demand. This British view was not shared completely by all European countries, especially those with a Latin history.

8.4 The Latin View of Land

In the occupation and control of Latin America, the Spanish and Portuguese granted large tracks of land to former Conquistadors and other favorites of the Crown as a reward for their efforts in gaining control over the Americas. They were not given ownership of the land, however, but rather dominion over the people on the land. This polity of *Encomienda*, which means “entrusted,” entitled Spaniards to dominate the native population and extract tribute from them in return for protection, much like in feudalistic Europe. In many cases, the policy of *encomienda* allowed practices that were as cruel as enslavement. Still, the native population was included in the social order rather than excluded from it. As the historian J.J. Elliott points out, although *encomienda* had nothing to do with land ownership during the colonial period, some privileged families were able to become owners over time (2006, p. 40). For American peoples, the difference between the English and Latin view of land and people may seem insignificant, but as we try to forge an ethics for environmentalism, it does offer significant options.

Elliott attributes the differences in approaches to different experiences with “others” in Europe: Britain’s experience with the Irish and Spain’s experience with the Moors. Although the Spanish fought the Moors, they did not experience them as culturally inferior. The British, on the other hand, believed they were superior to the Irish, and adopted policies of segregation to avoid racial intermarriage.

Where the Spaniards tended to think in terms of the incorporation of the Indians into an organic and hierarchically organized society, which would enable them in time to attain the supreme benefits of Christianity and culture, the English, after an uncertain start, seem to have decided that there was no middle way between anglicization and exclusion (p. 85).

These different views of the peoples of the Americas paralleled differences between the common law and the Roman legal systems.

8.4.1 The Common Law and Roman Legal Systems

The Latin colonists lived in the legacy of Roman law, which had developed codes of mutual obligations among different classes, including between master and slave. English people, on the other hand, lived in the legacy of the British Common Law, which was not based on codes or principles, but on precedent. There was nothing in this legacy to counter the English trends toward the view of the individual free from all social bonds with others, with the result that, in Linklater’s words:

In sharp contrast to Roman law and for that matter to the civil obligations of landowners under Chinese and Islamic customs, the version that evolved under English common law had no counterbalance. Far from subjecting rights of individual ownership to those of social obligation, throughout the sixteenth century the law heaped civil liberties, political power, and legal protection upon the freeholder at the expense of everyone else (2015, p. 31).

The treatment of land as private property, of course, has been one of the foundations of Western and now Global civilization. Who knows where we would be without it? Linklater sums up quite well its dual legacy:

The idea of individual, exclusive ownership, not just of what can be carried or occupied, but of the immovable, near eternal Earth, has proved to be the most destructive and creative cultural force in written history. It has eliminated ancient civilized nations wherever it has encountered them, and displaced entire peoples from their homelands, but it has also spread an un-dreamed of degree of personal freedom and protected it with democratic institutions wherever it has taken hold (p. 5–6).

Hard to disagree with Linklater’s assessment that the practice of treating the Earth as private property—as something devoid of social connections—has brought us to where we are today. It is even more difficult to disagree with the assessment that continuing to treat land as a commodity and as private property accelerates the destruction of the planet. The ideology of private property, in its current form, actually blocks us from moving in the direction of creating a sustainable world, a world where instead of privatizing the Earth for the few, we share the Earth with

everyone. There is a legacy that opens up a path that takes us in that direction: the Latin idea of the social function of land.

8.4.2 The Social Function of Land

For most countries in Latin America today, land is interpreted as having a social function. The French Jurist, Leon Duguit, first articulated this idea in 1919 (Ankersen and Ruppert 2006, p. 95). He reasoned that since the state's function was to provide for certain social needs, the state had an obligation to ensure that land was being used productively—that it was fulfilling its social function. As Thomas Ankersen, and Thomas T. Ruppert, point out, by the middle of the twentieth century, the Social Function Doctrine had been incorporated into most of the Constitutions in Latin America (p. 99). This Doctrine gave the State the right to confiscate lands that were not serving any social function and distribute it to landless people who would use it. In Brazil, the organized squatter movement—the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, or MST—used the Social Function Doctrine to justify their occupation of large landholdings. In the past 30 years, MST has assisted over 350 thousand landless families to take unused land (Stedile 2002, p. 85).

This Latin doctrine of the social function of land carries with it an assumption that land and society are deeply related to one another. Indigenous communities have always known this. This knowledge has been recently collected in a volume on “original instructions,” where we can learn, as Melissa Nelson writes, “how to be a good human being living in Reciprocal relation with all of our seen and unseen relatives” (2008, p. 3). For me, these “original instructions” question many of our Western assumptions. That's a great service. At the same time, they do not make much room for the experiences of enslaved Africans working on land that belonged to their master—their owners.

Enslaved Africans and Native Americans did share a common desire to have a place—to inhabit the Earth. Most Native Americans were removed from their habitat and forced to live on “reservations,” which was not their land but land “set aside” or “reserved” for them. Their place, in other words, in many cases, was not a home. Enslaved Africans, of course, lived on their master's land. After they fought and gained their freedom in the Civil War they took a chance to create a place for themselves through sharecropping. What could be more natural than sharing crops among those who have contributed to their growth? The historical record, of course, is much more complicated, and yet I think we can find in the history of sharecropping a place to ground an ethics of environmentalism that is broad enough to include not only our relationship with the Earth, but also with each other.

8.5 Sharecropping

Sharecropping, as T.J. Byres points out, is as old as recorded history and practiced in China, India, Africa, and Europe (1983). Landowners and farm workers did not share ownership, but they did share in their efforts in producing something of value from the land.

Although sharecropping has a bad reputation today in the United States, that has not always been the case. In the nineteenth century, the British economist, John Stuart Mill described sharecropping in a more positive light as it was practiced in Northern Italy. His evaluation deserves our attention because it demonstrates what the system of sharecropping could have been in the Anti-Bellum period in the United States.

8.5.1 *Mill's Evaluation of Sharecropping*

When Mill examined various accounts of the status of the sharecropper, or “metayer,” in Italy during the nineteenth century, he found their living conditions quite superior to the Irish farmers suffering from the so-called potato famine.

It [sharecropping] establishes a community of interests, and relations of kindness between the proprietors and the metayers; a kindness which I have often witnessed, and from which result great advantages in the moral condition of society. The proprietor under this system, always interested in the success of the crop, never refuses to make an advance upon it, which the land promises to repay with interest. It is by these advances and by the hope thus inspired, that the rich proprietors of land have gradually perfected the whole rural economy of Italy. It is to them that it owes the numerous systems of irrigation which water its soil, as also the establishment of the terrace culture on the hills: gradual but permanent improvements, which common peasants, for want of means, could never have effected, and which could never have been accomplished by the farmers, nor by the great proprietors who let their estates at fixed rents, because they are not sufficiently interested. Thus, the interested system forms of itself that alliance between the rich proprietor, whose means provide for the improvement of the culture, and the metayer whose care and labour are directed, by a common interest, to make the most of these advances (1848, II. 8. 11).

What makes the metayer system in Italy so different from its practice elsewhere? As Mill says, the difference is custom rather than competition. The reigning custom in this case was one of mutual cooperation between the sharecropper and the landowner. Competition, on the other hand, would motivate the landowner to take advantage of his status as owner of the means of production. Mill knew that this could happen.

But if we suppose him converted into a mere tenant, displaceable at the landlord's will, and liable to have his rent raised by competition to any amount which any unfortunate being in search of subsistence can be found to offer or promise for it; he would lose all the features in his condition which preserve it from being deteriorated; he would be cast down from his present position of a kind of half proprietor of the land, and would sink into a cottier [Irish farmer] tenant (II. 8. 17)

It would be hard to find a more opposite case of Mill's description of the nineteenth Italian system of metayer relations than the nineteenth century sharecroppers' experience in the Southern United States.

8.5.2 *Southern Sharecropping*

After the Civil War, planters and freed workers had different views of how they would relate to each other. Planters tried to get the workers to work for wages. Many Blacks rejected such contracts, because they believed they could be made to work in gangs, as they had done as enslaved workers. What they wanted was "40 acres and a mule" as they had been promised. They wanted, in other words, their own land. As W.E.B Du Bois reminds us, the two key advocates of the Freedman's Bureau in Congress, Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, were perfectly clear that owning land was an essential aspect of reconstruction. Du Bois also argued: "for 250 years the Negroes had worked on this land, and by every analogy in history, when they were emancipated the land ought to have belonged in large part to the workers" (1935, p. 368). The union organizer, Howard Kester, who worked with sharecroppers in the 1930's, acknowledged that after reconstruction both blacks and poor whites perceived sharecropping as a better option than working for wages.

At that time, it looked like a just and workable scheme that would benefit both. . . . The Negroes and eventually the poor whites began sharecropping as a means of deliverance (1997, p. 21).

It turned out that sharecropping vastly privileged the landowners over the workers. Kester writes, "what seemed just and workable during the chaotic and black seventies and eighties had re-enslaved him [the workers] once more" (p. 21). Sharecroppers became indebted to landowners for family provisions until the crop was harvested, so their share of the crop was used to repay the debt. The sharecropper also had to buy provisions at the owner's stores; usually on credit and at inflated prices, which kept sharecroppers into a kind of "debt slavery." In contrast to Mill's description of the cooperation between workers and owners in the villages of Italy, the sharecropping experience for Blacks in the South was a disaster. Still, besides recognizing the failure of Southern sharecropping, we could also focus on the significance of the sharecroppers' desire for their own land as a better alternative than becoming totally dependent on wages. No better formulation of this belief than the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union's creed:

All actual tillers of the soil should be guaranteed possession of the land, either as working farm families or cooperative associations of such farm families:

The earth is the common heritage of all, and the use and occupancy of the land should constitute the sole title thereto; This organization is dedicated to the complete abolition of tenantry and wage slavery in all its forms, and to the establishment of a new order of society wherein all who are willing to work shall be given the full products of their toil (Lichtenstein 1997, p. 50).

Granted, STFU was not successful in realizing its goal. In the late 30s, many sharecroppers left for better jobs, and those who stayed did not have the means for further mobilization. Still, this fight for land seems like a place from which we could imagine an alternative to the trends of American prosperity that are now destroying the Earth's living systems. In his recent book, *Between The World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates paints a persuasive picture of where the trends of American prosperity are taking us in terms of the American Dream:

Once, the Dream's parameters were caged by technology and by the limits of horsepower and wind. But the Dreamers have improved themselves, and the damming of seas for voltage, the extraction of coal, the transmitting of oil into food, have enabled an expansion in plunder with no known precedent. And this revolution has freed the Dreamers to plunder not just the bodies of humans but the body of the Earth itself. The Earth is not our creation. It has no respect for us. It has no use for us. And its vengeance is not the fire in the cities but the fire in the sky. Something more fierce than Marcus Garvey is riding on the whirlwind. Something more awful than all our African ancestors is rising with the seas. The two phenomena are known to each other. It was the cotton that passed through our chained hands that inaugurated this age. It is the flight from us that sent them sprawling into the subdivided woods. And the methods of transport through these new subdivisions, across the sprawl, is the automobile, the noose around the neck of the Earth and ultimately, the Dreamers themselves (2015, p. 150–151).

The dream for the automobile—the noose around the neck of the Earth—represents the refusal to see the Earth's limits, which reveals the Dreamer's ignorance of the human animal's place in the planet's living system. An alternative to this Dream of having it all is the dream of the sharecropper, who recognizes the need to share—to share a place. This idea of receiving one's share belongs to the notion of reciprocity; perhaps the most widely held, if not always the most widely practiced, principle of communal life.

8.6 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is probably as universally practiced as is sharecropping. The idea is central in the Analects of Confucius:

Zigong asked: "Is there any one word that can serve as a principle for the conduct of life?"
Confucius said: "Perhaps the word 'reciprocity': Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you (1998, XV:233).

Confucius' definition of reciprocity will remind Western readers of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others what you would want them to do to you." In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* one finds a slightly different notion:

In communities based on exchange, however, what binds the parties together is what is just in this way, namely, reciprocity that is proportionate and not equal. For it is proportionate reciprocity that keeps a city together (2014, p. 85).

If one were to ask, what could hold us together if not making compromises, the answer here is simple: reciprocity. Reciprocity, for Aristotle, is not strictly treating

everyone the same—equally—but rather honoring relationships between different persons or groups fairly, in terms of what is fair for each participant. Reciprocity, in other words, is about human relationships, not personal virtue. The point is that all parties see the exchanges as fair. In his book on reciprocity, Lawrence Becker points out this basically positive aspect of reciprocity (1986, p. 49):

Clearly, since the whole idea of reciprocity is to return *good* for good, the return of evil for it will by definition be unfitting, as well be a return of something valueless. Further, since the point of being disposed to reciprocate is to create and sustain balanced social relationships, the good returned will have to be good *for the recipient* and (eventually) *perceived* by the recipient both *as a good* and *as a return* (p. 107).

When Becker writes “the point of being disposed to reciprocate is to create and sustain balanced social relationships,” he comes close to my understanding of a climate of justice. One could call this a kind of disposition a “civic desire” to do what is necessary to balance “unbalanced social relations,” to make things right.

In theory, sharecropping actually exemplifies the core element of reciprocity: participants received goods in terms of their participation. In the language of systems thinking, those participating in the system share the values created by the system based on their participation. This system worked in nineteenth century Italy but not in the Southern states, because “white redeemers” were successful in re-establishing the old plantation system that had been interrupted by the Civil War and Reconstruction. Instead of co-creating a system based on balanced relations, white redeemers perpetuated the ideology of the “lost cause” that replaced their shame in losing the war with a pride in being right and white.

Today, it's not the lost cause, but rather the aspirations of the sharecroppers that provide an opening to a viable future. One could talk about the human need for provision and protection without the sharecroppers' stories, of course, but then it is merely an idea. If we see these ethical principles embedded in human struggles and suffering, then we become aware of where in our story we could change the future, and who must be involved to make the change happen. Encapsulated in the history of American prosperity that now threatens the Earth, in other words, is the story of other Americans struggling to have a secure place on the Earth.

The sharecroppers' desire for balanced social relations looks a lot like a desire for a climate of justice where differences are not erased, but rather treated in a fair manner, which means that imbalances are balanced. Reciprocity, in other words, requires a re-balancing of unjust social relations, which entails some form of reparation.

8.7 Reparations

The idea of reparation is simple enough. Wrongs are made right. Of course, it's not so simple. For most Westerners, the most well-known case for reparations was the Jewish claim for reparations after the Holocaust of World War II. Germany sent

large payments to Israel, and even though that may have been necessary, it was not sufficient. After the allies occupied Germany, they divided it into different protectorates, and established the Nuremberg trials to prosecute Nazi leaders for crimes against humanity. It was impossible to hide Nazi atrocities from anyone, especially the German population. This situation gave them a chance to create a different social world. And they did. Multiple institutions brought about this change through extensive re-education of the German people. Re-education entailed not just teaching new things, but also enabling people to think differently--to change their orientation toward their future.

One of these institutions was the Evangelical Academies. Eberhard Mueller, a protestant pastor, organized the first meeting of the Evangelical Academy in September 1945. Lawyers, economists, and church leaders met to reflect together on the future of their society. The idea of such centers of dialogue quickly spread throughout Germany. Within one year, there were six other Academies and soon there were seventeen (Brown 1980). Their notion of the “Dritte Ort” or “third place” represented a space for different opinions and interests to find common ground. Two conflicting groups could meet together in a neutral or “third” place.

I spent a semester at the Academies in Germany as an intern when I was a student at Union Theological Seminary in New York. In the US, I had been active in protests against the Vietnam War and became frustrated that we were only talking with people who already agreed with us. When I attended the conferences in the Academy in Bad Boll, participants’ readiness to listen to another’s opinion and to actually learn from each other opened my eyes to new possibilities. As participants dealt with current problems in different types of organizations, they were also continually creating and maintaining a culture of openness and dialogue. These institutions were part of a larger re-education of Germany that changed the nation from one that had violated our common humanity to one that respected human rights.

What changed? They changed their language. Words like *obrigkeit* (high authority) were eliminated from their vocabulary. They educated their teachers to use fewer authoritarian methods. More importantly, they learned that they were one among others, rather than superior to others. We see this with their promotion of the European Union, advocating a shared European currency, participating in creating a sustainable economy, and more recently in their willingness to accept refugees from the Middle East and Africa. This does not make Germans saints, but they do show us how a people can construct a more humane world after living through an inhumane one.

Can you imagine the United States sharing a currency with other nations in the Americas? Can you imagine the United States accepting one million refugees? Can you imagine the United States letting go of its ideology of American exceptionalism and seeing itself as one among other peoples? This is hard to imagine today, even though such a national posture is more necessary than ever before. And what would be the benefit? Ta-Nehisi Coates has said that very well:

Reparations beckon us to reject the intoxication of hubris and see America as it is—the work of fallible humans (2017, p. 2020).

The benefit, in other words, is that talk about reparations gives us a chance to deal with what we have called white arrogance, and as an alternative, to create social systems of reciprocity. This will not be easy. Enslaving people and buying and selling them has now been recognized as a “Black Holocaust” and a crime against humanity by the 2001 United Nations “World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and other Forms of Intolerance” (Marable and Mullings 2001). If we could accept this conference’s pronouncement and engage in conversations that included representatives of both victims and perpetrators, we might find in these conversations the power to change us. We could become a better people; not perfect, but closer to our highest ideals. We would be dealing with what Coates has called our “deep wound.”

American prosperity was built on two and a half centuries of slavery, a deep wound that has never been healed or fully atoned for— and that has been deepened by years of discrimination, segregation, and racist housing policies that persist to this day (2014, p. 35).

So, what prevents us from paying for our crimes? The conclusion we must reach from what we have learned already is that the barrier is not just an administrative problem in paying reparations. The real barrier arises from our unwillingness to acknowledge the climate of injustice that propels the dream of American prosperity. It’s not just the existence of evil deeds, but also the social climate these deeds created and continue to box us in.

James Cone offers a way forward: “Just as the Germans should never forget the Holocaust, Americans should never forget slavery, segregation, and the lynching tree” (2011, p. 165). Not forgetting gives us the chance to repair not just our relationships with each other, but also to restore the Earth as a human habitat.

8.8 Restoration

When John Locke wrote about the ownership of land, he states that originally land was a commons. Humans made it into their private property through mixing the labor with it. This myth has a kernel of truth. Many Native Americans were farmers and “mixed” their labor with the land as much as any colonial settler. They just didn’t let such work turn the Earth into a thing—private property. You could say that Native Americans treated the land as a common heritage that provided them with their daily needs. They existed, in other words, in a reciprocal relationship with the Earth.

Southern sharecroppers did not go that far, at least not in an explicit manner. They did acknowledge, if I may put it this way, that we are not people of money, but people of the Earth. The economist Henry George may have had something like this in mind when he wrote:

The equal right of all people to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—a right proclaimed by the very fact of their existence (2010, p. 187).

Today, of course, not everyone has opportunities for living closely with the Earth. Many of us acquire most of our provisions through the market. It's impossible that everyone "mix" labor with the Earth. Still, in some sense, we belong to the Earth. How does one make sense of this in contemporary urban environments?

Let's consider the meaning of a dwelling: A dwelling's first meaning is that as a home; a home in an urban and natural environment. A home is a place for security and privacy that we all deserve. Today, we are not just people of the Earth, but also inhabitants of the city. If we agree with this logic, then cities would be seen as the legal institution that provide us protection and provisions. In such a case, a city's inhabitants would have claims to the wealth that the city creates. Since much of this wealth comes from increases in real estate values, largely due to the city's efforts to improve infrastructures and other public facilities, inhabitants should share in this wealth. Just as we should share the Earth with all the people of the Earth, we should share the city's wealth with all inhabitants.

For homeowners, agreeing that most increases in real estate value are caused by a building's location is not that difficult. This increase is a kind of "unearned income" for the landowner. They acquired the income simply by owning the property. Such unearned income, of course, also causes unearned hardships for others, such as higher rents or lack of affordable housing. Sharing the unearned income with all the members of the city would allow all to share in the city's increase in wealth.

Sharing a city's wealth means that the city is no longer ruled by race or by money, but by laws that protect and provide for all inhabitants. It also means that the economy includes all and focuses on making provisions rather than acquiring property. It also means that cities accept their responsibilities of promoting a climate of justice.

Like other species, if we do not restore our human habitat, we will not have a chance to protect our communities. In terms of protecting our habitat, it is clear that we must protect everyone's habitat if we are to protect anyone's. If we want to work for the survival of the planet, we must attempt to bring into balance our relationships with each other and our relationships with the environmental systems in which we live. The sharecroppers' intentions give us a vision of where we need to go. The question is how to get there.

8.9 Getting There from Here

The Atlantic Ocean temperature is increasing. The strength of its storms is getting stronger. The sea levels are rising. If we do not change current trends, devastating hurricanes will continue to hit Haiti and the United States, floods will inundate Holland and Italy, and droughts will wipe out crops in Mexico and East Africa. Some scenarios see the disappearance of the Gulf Stream that keeps much of Europe from freezing over. These climatic changes, plus the social unrest that will follow in its wake, will only increase the migration of peoples from the South to the North. More than ever before, the Atlantic has become a commons whose future affects us

all. It is not an exaggeration to say that unchecked changes of the Atlantic changes everything. It threatens the habitat of millions.

The trends of American prosperity have become easy to discern. They take us where we do not want to go. They are destroying our natural habitat—our home. No better indication of this than the thousands of homeless in our cities and the millions of refugees, the highest number since World War II, moving around the world. Their cry for protection and empowerment also signals that civilians are not in control. There is work to be done.

If we do transform the trends of American prosperity so they turn toward a sustainable future, will the concept of American prosperity survive? Unlikely. It is too contaminated with racism and social incoherence. It is simply unsustainable. We know we must design a sustainable prosperity, but we don't do it. Why not? We continue to exist in the tailwinds of the climate of injustice that makes it hard to turn around and to change our historical trends. That's the job ahead. That's the work of creating an ethical foundation for environmentalism.

References

- Ankersen, T. T. & Ruppert, T. 2006. "Tierra y Libertad: The Social Function Doctrine and Land Reform in Latin America" *Tulane Environmental Law Review*. Vol. 18.
- Aristotle. 2014. *Nicomachean Ethics*. trans. Reeve, D.C Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Banner, S. 2005. *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bailyn, B. 2005. *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*. Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press.
- Becker, L.C. 1986. *Reciprocity*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, M.T. 1980. *On Time and In Place: The Work of the Evangelical Academies in West Germany*, ed. Leiterkreis der Evangelischen Akademier in Duetschland e.V. 7325 Bad Boll.
- Byre, T.J. 1983. Historical perspectives on sharecropping. In *Sharecropping and Sharecroppers*, ed. T.J. Byres. New York: Routledge.
- Cone, J.H. 2011. *The Cross-and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll/New York: Orbis Books.
- Coates, T. 2015. *Between The World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.
- . 2017. *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*. New York: One World.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1935. *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880*. New York: The Free Press.
- Dunbar-Ortiz, R. 2014. *An Indigenous Peoples History of The United States*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Elliott, J.H. 2006. *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492–1830*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- George, H. 2010. In *Progress and Poverty. Why There Are Recessions and Poverty Amid Plenty—and What to Do About It!* ed. B. Drake. New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation.
- Jones, S.R. 2000. *The Last Prairie: A Sandhills Journal*. New York: Ragged Mountain Press/McGraw-Hill.
- Kester, H. 1997. *Revolt Among The Sharecroppers*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Lichtenstein, A. 1997. Introduction The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union: A Movement for Social Emancipation. In *Revolt Among the Sharecroppers*, ed. H. Kester. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Linklater, A. 2015. *Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Locke, J. 1980. In *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C.B. Macpherson. Hackett Publishing Company Inc.
- Marable, M., and L. Mullings. 2001. World Conference Against Racism—Durban, South Africa. In *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: An African American Anthology*, 2nd ed. Lanham/Boulder/New York/Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Mill, J. S. 1848. *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Application to Social Philosophy*. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/mill-principles-of-political-economy-ashley-ed>
- Nelson, M. 2008. Introduction: Lighting the Sun of Our Future—How These Teachings Can Provide Illumination. In *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, ed. M. Nelson. Rochester: Bear & Company.
- Skinner, E.P. 1964. *The Mossi of the Upper Volta: The Political Development of a Sudanese People*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Stedile, J. P. 2002. Landless Battalions: The Sem Terra Movement in Brazil, *New Left Review*, 15, May–June.
- The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 1998. trans. Ames, R. T. and Rosemont Jr., H. New York: Ballantine Books, XV: 23.
- Weber, M. 1922. “Science as a Vocation,” from *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Tübingen, Germany. 524–55.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Part III
Empowering the Civic

Chapter 9

Civilian Empowerment: A Theological Inquiry



9.1 Introduction

The power to change the direction of unsustainable trends resides, at least in democratic nations, resides in the realm of the civic—a space created by persons recognizing their shared humanity as a basis for dealing with their social estrangements. That’s not the case, of course, in nations governed by dictators or kings. Even in democratic governments, however, citizens must choose between military force and civic power. Military force can protect the civic, but not empower it. That takes civic power, and civic power arises through the collaboration of those who have access to resources and those who need them, or between citizens and civilians. In fact, civilians must be empowered in order for citizens to collaborate with them.

By definitions, civilians have the right to protection from undue harm, but not the means to protect themselves. This is certainly true of civilians in refugee camps who have fled war zones with nothing more than they can carry. Today, there are around 80 million refugees in the world, or about 1% of the global population. We also use the term to refer to people dependent on the protection of police and other government agencies that serve them. Civilians are vulnerable, and rely on the rule of law, when there are laws to protect them. This does not mean, however, that they are powerless. Their power is not the power of the gun or of the terrorist. It is a different kind of power, and the purpose of this Chapter is to engage in a theological inquiry into its character.

Theology is about god or the gods, and this theological inquiry is about the gods as sources of power. Because civilians are vulnerable—not fighters or warriors—they may be tempted to find or to create gods to protect them. After all, who has more power than the gods? In a sense, isn’t that the very essence of a god—to have powers that humans do not? If that is true, theology can be seen as a study of power. Since civilians are certainly interested in the power to change things, or to prevent things from changing, a theology for civilians would search for those gods in the different

parts of our interpretive framework—the Earth, our humanity, the social and the civic—that might empower such change.

9.2 A Theology of Civilian Empowerment

During my Ph.D. studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley (in theology and rhetoric), I learned from the New Testament scholar and theologian, Edward Hobbs, that the word “God” for the early Hebrews was not some guy in the sky, but rather an exclamation of the experience of freedom from Egyptian slavery. “God” was not some entity that lead them out of Egypt, in other words, but rather the experience of getting out of Egypt. It was like: “O God, we escaped and now are free.” I know this may seem a bit unusual, partly because Western religions have been strongly influenced by the Greek thought of a metaphysical force separate from human affairs, or what Aristotle called the “unmoved mover.”

One might think of the difference between seeing “god” as a reference to particular human experiences and seeing “god” as some existing entity as the difference between a window and a mirror. The window approach sees theology as opening a window so one can see god, then worship and obey, and so on. The mirror approach sees theology as studying the gods to see our own human possibilities. There are multiple ways of approaching theology, of course, but a theology that focuses on those human experiences that theologians interpret as mirroring our human capacity seems especially appropriate for civilians.

My Ph.D. dissertation, *The Interpreter’s Audience*, was aligned more with the mirror approach. It explored the role of an interpreter’s audience or community in the process of interpreting the ancient Bible to them. I proposed that the fears and hopes of one’s audience could help an interpreter know what the Bible might mean for them. I assumed that they were looking for meaning in their world, not the world of ancient Palestine. As I continued my studies and reflections on these topics, the enduring challenge has been to create the conditions that empower those who understand the contemporary possibilities for human fulfillment and maturity.

For the most part, the Christian theology I studied was composed within the triadic framework of Indo-European languages. This triadic formula leaves out of its vision, for the most part, the life of the Earth or our common ground: the ground that turns into mud when it rains, and dust when it doesn’t. When I look back at my theological education, and even my own research, it’s clear that European/American Christianity mostly ignored the American indigenous tradition of seeing the Earth as sacred. A 4-part interpretive framework of the Earth, our humanity, the social and the civic allows us to remedy this omission. Before we turn to the different elements of this framework to explore how they invite us to talk about the gods (about power), let’s look at the roots of the relationship between Western religions and nature.

9.3 Western Religion and Nature

In the West, the three great religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—spring from the victory of the patriarchal, nomadic Hebrew tribes over the agricultural, matriarchal cultures of the settled communities of Canaan. The contrasts between the Canaanites and the Hebrews were stark. The Canaanites practiced agriculture and worshipped multiple gods and goddesses through fertility festivals and rituals. The Hebrew tribes were nomadic shepherds who worshiped Jehovah, or Yahweh, a single male god. Whereas the Canaanites found vitality in the natural world, the Hebrews found vitality in the story of their relationship with their god. The Earth for them, was something to subdue and conquer. Well, the West has succeeded beyond its wildest hopes. It has not only subdued the Earth. It is now smothering it.

Western culture still lives with this dominance of the male principle of control (or protection) over the female principle of fertility (or providing). Although there have been many variations and oppositions to it throughout Western history, the patriarchal tradition continues to foster the view of nature and “land” as something at our disposal, for our use. It just seems “natural” to treat the Earth as property. If we examine how most communities have treated the Earth, however, this view is quite unnatural. For many peoples, the Earth was seen as sacred and their gods were gods of the earth.

9.3.1 *The Gods of the Earth*

Many indigenous people view the Earth as sacred. Mother Earth provides for them, accepts their dead, and receives their gratitude. Viewing the Earth as sacred provides a sharp alternative to seeing it as something to be dominated and controlled or as an asset for commercial use. Indigenous people’s message about the Earth’s sacred character could call us to look again at our view of the significance of the Earth’s life, and perhaps to develop a more reciprocal relationship between us.

So, where does the vitality of life on this Earth come from? Today, we know that all energy ultimately comes from the sun. If the sun burned out, the Earth would no longer sustain life. If we are looking for power, the “forces of nature” are hard to underestimate. The Earth’s fecundity—its power to provide—deserves our respect and stewardship. Access to this energy happens not only through the extraction of its energy deposits, but also through participation and alignment with the patterns of its ecosystems.

One might suggest that we should all become nature worshipers. That would assume that what Max Weber called the “disenchantment of the world,” can be reversed (1922) While that seems impossible, it is possible to recognize our experiences of the beauty, the power and the grandeur of the natural world. We can also recall Western beliefs about nature as God’s creation. Such traditions certainly bring

us closer to the kind of attitude we need toward nature if we are to align ourselves with its survival rather than act as its enemy.

Our Earth belongs to a large galaxy, circles around the sun, and through various forms of homeostatic processes, such as photosynthesis, maintains its balance. The Earth's "story" not only includes its evolution, but also the evolution of plants and animals, including humans. The terminology we select to talk about the Earth—dirt, the planet, or "Mother Earth"—does make a difference. A piece of the planet could be a farm, a territory, a park or property. One way of evaluating our view of nature as impersonal or personal is to think about the difference between good luck and God's blessings.

9.3.2 Good Luck or God's Blessings

Say a tornado rips through your town and destroys your neighbor's house, but not yours. Do you "thank God" for saving your house, or do you say, "I am a lucky person"? If god gets credit for saving your house, then does he also get credit for destroying your neighbor's house? Maybe we feel grateful or thankful and we thank "god" because that's simply what people do. We may also want to express our feeling of humility that our house is still standing, and our neighbor's is not. If I win at bingo, I should feel lucky, Should I feel grateful? There is no "god" that gave us the winning bingo numbers. They were picked at random. If I win at bingo, I may certainly feel lucky, but to feel thankful to someone for something that was merely a matter of chance seems like a category mistake.

The idea of a climate of justice does assume a just relationship between people and the planet—justice as balanced relationships. The planet is certainly not a machine or simply a piece of property. It is a living vibrant system. It is beautiful, bountiful, and a home for all living things. Its storms and viruses are also destructive, even deadly, to human communities as we all know. We may use rich metaphors to make our experiences meaningful for us, but we should also be able to tell the difference between our social constructions and natural dynamics. This issue of finding the most appropriate language becomes ever more acute when we turn our attention to the second strand of our interpretive framework: our humanity.

9.4 Gods and our Humanity

Like other primates, our humanity lives with the Earth. We live by the Earth's air—the biosphere—breathing in and out of us. To properly understand this, we need to see the Earth as having its own value. The Earth, in other words, is itself a living, beautiful planet. It does not belong to us. We belong to it. Humans are one species among others, and yet, also distinct from others because of our special capacities. Many of those capacities arise from our participation in a language that allows us to

tell stories, develop concepts, reflect on things, and even to do things differently than they have been done in the past.

The neurobiologist, Antonio Damasio, provides evidence that we witness our own body's purposeful vitality (2010, p. 22). This seems to entail a basic human dignity. We experience this vitality sometime after birth, after we are breathed into and begin to participate in the life of the biosphere. We then enter and develop as persons in a series of on-going conversations that provide the social patterns and stories that give our life meaning. For most peoples, these stories and patterns have included gods. Some of the stories or myths follow patterns such as the pattern of fall and redemption, a journey from innocence to wisdom, or a pattern of leaving and returning home. These patterns belong to different social worlds. Any newborn has the capacity to participate in any one of them. There are certainly vastly different social worlds with different assumptions about human nature.

Neurobiology, of course, also exists in a social world created in part by scientific inquiry about body/brain/mind dynamics. Still, it describes our humanity as essentially alive and well. Some theologians may wonder if neurobiology is overlooking something. What about a person's insecurity and incompleteness without a god? Don't we need something beyond human vulnerabilities, without our flaws and limits, to protect and guide us, whether we call it god or superman? Isn't our humanity incomplete without some spiritual element? What about the millions of civilians who have suffered the horrors of war and neglect? Has neurobiology missed the presence of evil or wickedness?

One way to check out our view of evil is to examine our treatment of young children.. We not only have different theories, but also different cultures in which adults have different ways of raising children. An old guideline for Western cultures has been: "Spare the rod and spoil the child." If you see the child as "willful," then it may seem quite logical to "break" their will. One might also conclude that since my parents spanked me, and I turned out OK, I should also hit my children. Recent studies have provided evidence that indeed spanking is harmful to children (Caren 2018). Still, whether one takes these studies seriously, of course, depends on one's view of human nature.

Children are certainly "bundles of energy" and as they go through the different stages of life, their energies change. The changes, however, largely depend on our primary attachment relationships and the stories that create our social worlds. Some people have not experienced secure attachments in their early life and must live with various degrees of insecurity and anxiety, which may incline them toward evil actions. Still, our shared humanity is not something to be despised or feared but rather something to be relied on. Our social worlds are multilayered and complicated. There are instances of "crimes against humanity," but our humanity is not the origin of such crimes. They belong to the social trends that have been created and maintained by communication and behavior patterns.

Since we almost always experience our shared humanity in some social clothing, our understanding of the relationship between the gods and our social life brings us closer to how the power of gods figure in our everyday lives.

9.5 Gods and the Social

In our interpretive framework, religious language—the language of the gods—would belong to the social as all languages do. If you belong to a social world that gives credence to a sacred language or sacred words, then this probably makes sense to you. If you live in a different social world, it may seem like word magic. All languages, even the language of theology, are social creations. This means that all the gods, even “universal” gods, are social gods. They belong to some social world, including those social worlds that treat them as universal.

One could argue, of course, that since one can translate the meaning of a saying from one language to another, there are universal meanings that are only imperfectly expressed in any social language. Could be. There are certainly experiences that seem universal. Giving birth, raising children, fearing harm, grieving, hoping, and so on. These seem like basic human experiences that involve deep emotions and feelings. These experiences, however, belong to the emotions and feelings of the body. It’s like laughing and crying—that’s what human bodies do. What stimulates laughing and crying, as you know, can be quite different in different social cultures. So, whether there are universal experiences of god or not seems like an open question, because these experiences are always expressed in some particular language, and all languages are social.

Missionaries, of course, tend to overlook the social limits of religious language. They claim that their gods are superior to other gods, and it usually follows that they believe that their social worlds are superior to other social worlds. A missionary’s social world will deeply affect their message. The social world of individualism, private ownership, wealth accumulation, and philanthropy, for example, provide the conditions for the missionary activities of protestant churches in America, where success is measured by increases in membership and budget. This is not to say that the missionaries’ intent is merely to “grow their business,” but only that the capitalistic social world conditions the ways in which the church maintains its existence. There seems no better expression of this than the advice of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley: “Make all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.” What he did not say, of course, is to “Spend all you can” and yet, in a social world dependent on an economics of consumption, it makes sense to add this command to the other three.

So, what about the relationship between these religious social worlds and civilians? International Humanitarian Law today recognizes civilians without any reference to the gods. At the same time, civilians belong to some social world with its specific language, customs, and religions. Still, while one’s social world may recognize human dignity or perhaps deny or violate it, it does not create it. Human dignity resides in our experience of ourselves as purposeful living beings—as worthwhile. We are humans with dignity. How we move from this non-verbal awareness of ourselves to a reflective enjoyment of our human dignity does depend on the social relationships in which we live, and the power relationships they entail. So, the religious views of the gods should not be discarded, because their stories and

beliefs are about the powers that control the world. If we want to protect and even empower civilians, we need to know something about these powers and our access to them. It all depends on how we construe the relationships between the gods, religious institutions, and civilians. Let's look at two options, using the Christian idea of church as the religious institution.

9.6 Two Views of the Flow of GOD'S Power

How do civilians gain access to the powers they need to protect and provide for themselves? One answer is that the power of God is channeled through the church (or any other religious institution) and then the church fulfills its mission to share what it has received from God. It's a flow from God to the church to the world:

God → Church → Social Worlds

The key point is that the only way to know God's power—what God is doing—is through the church, or through the church's interpretation of its sacred text.

The other answer is that God is always, already in our social worlds, and the church has the task of exposing and celebrating God's work. In this case, the church, or any other religious institution, actually has a circular connection with social worlds. It is a witness of what God is doing in the world, which it expresses and interprets with its own perspective and language, and then its interpretation makes God's action more accessible. This answer changes the direction of the arrows.

God → Social Worlds ↔ Church

In this answer, God does not belong to the church, or any religious institution, but rather belongs with those events and movements that reflect God's power in the world. If we accept this second answer to the question of the relationship between God, the church and our social worlds; the church, with its historical and conceptual resources, would have the task of helping us understand what God is doing in the world. This means that the church, or any religious organization, is not the place to know God; the place to know God is in the world. Or we could say that what the word "God" refers to is what "god" is doing in the world—what is happening in the world that appears as god-like. This changes the basic location of God's activity—from the church to the world. It also raises a serious question: how do we know what activities are God's activities? We could always be mistaken. Couldn't we? To examine this more carefully, I will draw on the work of two eminent theologians I studied with: Paul Lehmann and Edward Hobbs.

9.6.1 *Paul Lehmann's Christian Ethics*

In his book, *Ethics in a Christian Context*, Paul Lehmann writes that the question to answer is: "What is God doing to make and keep human life human?" (1963). This question fits with the second formula of the relationship between God, social worlds, and church, and it fits more with the mirror than the window type of theology. What did Lehmann mean with the phrase "make and keep human life human?" Human life, for Lehmann, is not limited to what one can observe from the perspective of neurobiology. Nor is it merely the social self. What Lehmann wants to "keep human" is what we could call, given the vocabulary of our interpretive framework, the social human or we could say, the person. The social human depicts the fact that our human existence always comes embedded in sets of social relations, language, and culture. Why do we need something to "make and keep" our human life human? Our humanity itself is already human. Still, we recognize our humanity and the humanity of others only in the realm of the social. So, what "makes and keeps" human life human is the social recognition of one's innate dignity, which is finally located in our purposeful living in secure attachment with others. To understand what Lehmann has in mind here, we need to follow his thinking.

Central to Lehmann's approach is the idea of the "Christian Context." For him it's the Christian context that sets forth the conditions for "making and keeping human life human." He defines this context as a "fellowship-creating reality of Christ's presence in the world" (p.49). To further define this reality of Christ's presence in the world, Lehman uses the Greek term for community or church: *koinonia*. In contrast to the institutional church, *koinonia* represents a living community in the world. In terms of the distinction between the church and social world, *koinonia* exists in the social world. This "church" for Lehmann is not the building or the believers attending a Sunday morning service. No, it is people participating in a "fellowship-creating reality" in the world. In conversations I had with Prof. Lehmann, he explained that even though the creation of a mature human community had always been possible, the Christian message now made this evident. Lehmann writes:

A Christian ethic seeks to show that the human in us all can be rightly discerned and adhered to only in and through the reality of a climate of trust established by the divine humanity of Jesus Christ and the new humanity, however, incipient, of all men in Christ (p. 130).

His "climate of trust" seems close to a climate of justice. but could this climate only be established, as Lehmann seems to suggest, "by the divine humanity of Jesus Christ"? Was the Christian message necessary for the creation of this type of fellowship? Could ordinary civilians, who might belong to other religious traditions, also participate in such a creative occasion? In our conversations we discussed this question at length, and he was reluctant to agree that one could realize this type of community with a different vocabulary than that of the Christian tradition. Still, he did not reject the possibility. As he writes in his book:

There is, of course, one marginal possibility, which must always be kept in mind. Indeed, it emerges precisely in the context and course of God's action in Christ in the fellowship of believers in the world... God's action and God's freedom are never more plainly misunderstood than by those who suppose that God has acted and does act in a certain way and cannot, therefore, always also act in other ways (p. 72-73).

Let's put it this way: Does the Christian faith know something about being human that non-Christians cannot know, or does the Christian faith express something about being human that is possible for everyone? This is a serious question, especially when we want to repair relationships among different groups—including groups that have been harmed by institutional religion and racist church policies.

We can gain some knowledge of Lehmann's use of his theological ethics when he writes about desegregation: "Desegregation is a concrete human action which is a sign of God's action" (p. 152). Desegregation, in other words, was not merely a change in policy, but also a carrier of meaning—of making and keeping human life human—carried out by citizens, not necessarily by Christians. For Lehmann, desegregation signaled—through the legal changes in social relations among blacks and whites—the possibility of a fellowship creating activity. Lehmann suggests this is always a possibility:

What is the living word? It is the verbal expression of the full complexity and totality of the existing, concrete situation. And what is ethical about the existing, concrete situation is that which holds it together. And what, it may be asked, holds the concrete situation together? The answer is: that which makes it possible for human beings to be open for each other and to one another (p. 130).

Is it "possible for human beings to be open for each other and to one another" in and between different social worlds? Does this power to do so reside in human relational capability? Can we meet one another as civilians, without our gods?

The Jewish theologian, Martin Buber, appears to have written about a similar type of community as Lehmann where participants can "be open for each other and to one another" in his discussion of genuine dialogue.

There is genuine dialogue no matter whether spoken or silent—where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them (1993, p. 22).

Buber's most recognized phrase for such relationships is that of "I and Thou" a relationship in which persons recognized as living beings, rather than merely things (an "I and It" relationship).

The point here is that we have the capacity to call each other into a community of inclusion and fundamental equality.

In our conversations about the empowerment of civilians, what concepts we use does make a difference. Sometimes, however, the words that provide the opportunity for recognizing such possibilities come from unexpected sources. James Cone's book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, for example, encourages us to see the lynching tree as a contemporary Cross (2011). Could the meaning of lynching bring people together today as the meaning of the Cross had for others? Does lynching in America help us understand the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion? I think Paul Lehmann would have found this an intriguing question and would have invited us to look at different sources for developing an answer. The same is true for another theologian I had the privilege of studying with, Edward Hobbs, who used the Christian trinity to explore what it means to be human.

9.6.2 *Edward Hobbs' Trinitarian Analysis*

Prof. Hobbs not only had provocative ideas about the Hebrew use of the word “God,” which I referred to earlier, but he has also interpreted the Christian trinity in such a way that it exposes some basic aspects of human relationships (1970, p. 32). For Hobbs, the Christian Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—refers to three basic human experiences. He relates the Father to our experience of limits. Hobbs believes that when one experiences one’s limitation, the response, and this sounds a bit odd, is gratitude. How can the experience of limits result in gratitude? In contrast to Ernst Becker’s view that the experience of limits elicits what he calls the “cosmic hero,” who overcomes limits, Hobbs believes that the experience of limits elicits gratitude (1997). The idea here is that with the acknowledgement of one’s limitations—vulnerabilities—comes an openness to entering into relationships with others, and to experience being recognized and accepted as one among others in the community. Gratitude comes from the experience of recognition and acceptance.

Remember the story of Adam and Eve. When Adam ate the fruit, he wanted to be like god. So, they were expelled from the Garden. A strange story about human relations, but a clear story about limitations. Adam is not a god, and if you like the story, neither are we. The story of the first person of the trinity—God the Father—refers to such experiences when we blow ourselves up bigger than life and then someone pokes our “bubble,” and we acknowledge ourselves and are acknowledged by others, as one among others. Vulnerable civilians, of course, do not have the luxury of pretending they are gods. It’s a disease that affects people of privilege who have split themselves off from the misery of others as well as their own vulnerability and pretend to live a life of unlimited possibilities.

The second person of the Trinity—the Son—refers to a somewhat different experience: the experience of exposure. Here something about us is revealed we wanted to conceal. The exposure occurs, for example, when a harm we have covered up is uncovered. Exposing the harm will reveal the wrong, but once this wrong is recognized, the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation arises. If we were to apply this approach to the violation of the humanity of Native Americans, the answer would be clear: expose the violation and repair it. The point is that we do have the power to do this.

The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit relates to the experience of encountering the needs of others, which results in meeting their needs. One does not have to believe in the Christian trinity to have these human experiences. In fact, the experience of overreaching and falling back on our heels, of encountering our failures and needing forgiveness, and of feeling a need to respond to the needs of others are fairly universal human experiences, at least for those of us living in modern Western cultures. Even if they are not universal human experiences, Hobbs’ exploration of human experiences through the lens of the Christian Trinity demonstrates how religious texts and traditions can be interpreted in such a way that they help us locate the power to “make and keep human life human,” to use

Lehmann’s phrase. Although there are not any gods in the civic realm, the gods of different social worlds—different religious traditions—can help us understand the powers available to civilians.

9.7 Civilian Power

Years ago, when doing research for my book, *Working Ethics*, I discovered that two social economists had come up with very similar typologies of power (1990). One was Kenneth Boulding. He developed a triad: threat, exchange, and integration. Power based on threat said, “You do what I say, or I will harm you.” Exchange power said, “If you do something for me, I will do something for you.” And the power of integration said simply, “Let’s do this together.” (1990). The third type of power—the power of integration—seems similar to the power of community building that we saw earlier in Paul Lehmann’s notion of what is keeping human like human.

The second political economist was Kenneth Galbraith, who had a more institutional and historical approach to his three types of power (1983). He wrote about the power of Kings or personality, the power of money or capitalists, and the power of organization. In a sense, Galbraith’s power of personality paralleled Boulding’s power of threat; the power of money paralleled the power of exchange; and the power of organization paralleled the power of integration. We could also see parallels among these three and the powers of the military, the market, and the power of the civic. Civilians do not have access to the powers of threat. Nor do they have much to exchange. So, the powers available to them are the powers of organization and integration.

As was said at the beginning of this Chapter, civilians are vulnerable, cannot protect themselves, and rely on the rule of law. Still, they are not powerless. They can organize, stand up and speak out, and hold government officials accountable. Jeffery Stout in his book, *Blessed are the Organized*, puts it this way:

Democratic action aims to create a society in which even bosses, generals, and presidents are held accountable to the rest. Holders of high office will always have power at their disposal, but in a healthy democracy that power can be held in check. What holds it in check is itself a kind of power. Ordinary citizens, by relating wisely to each other and to elites, are able to influence and contest decisions made on high (2010, p. 92).

There are many different kinds of organized groups, of course, from the Tea Party, Patriot Boys, to Black Lives Matter. It’s not just about making demands but making demands that respect human dignity and promote a climate of justice. One does not have to be a believer to learn from Edward Hobbs’ analysis of the Christian trinity to recognize the importance of a group culture that is circumspect, open, and caring. The power of civilians is not the power to erase their vulnerability, but rather the power to persuade those with resources to honor their rights to protection and provisions, and in many cases, to persuade them to simply obey the law.

References

- Becker, E. 1997. *The Denial of Death*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks.
- Boulding, K. 1990. *Three Faces of Power*. New York: Sage.
- Brown, M.T. 1990. *Working Ethics: Strategies for Decision Making and Organizational Responsibility*. San Francisco Oxford: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Buber, M. 1993. *Between Man and Man*. New York: Routledge.
- Caren, C. 2018. Spanking is ineffective and harmful to children, pediatricians' group says. *New York times*. Nov. 3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/05/health/spanking-harmful-study-pediatricians.html>
- Cone, J.H. 2011. *The Cross-and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll/New York: Orbis Books.
- Damasio, A. 2010. *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Mind*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Galbraith, K. 1983. *The Anatomy of Power*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Hobbs, E. 1970. An Alternative Model from a Theological Perspective. In *The Family in Search of a Future*, ed. H.A. Otto, 25–41. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Lehmann, P. 1963. *Ethics in a Christian Context*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Stout, Jeffrey. 2010. *Blessed are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Weber, M. 1922. "Science as a Vocation," from *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Tübingen, Germany. 524–55.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Chapter 10

The Citizen’s Role in Creating a Climate of Justice



10.1 Introduction

As different groups enter a civic space, the social inequalities and social harms that constitute their social relationships appear as relationships between civilians and citizens. By definition, civilians are those who are vulnerable and rely on the rule of law for their protection. Citizens are those who have access to resources and can protect the human rights of civilians. While civilians can empower themselves to speak the truth to those in power, they cannot by themselves make those in power or citizens understand. If we can accept this distinction, then I am clearly a citizen most of the time rather than a civilian and a white male citizen at that. In a sense, the question this Chapter addresses is how citizens—people like me—can make meaningful connections with vulnerable civilians; connections that ultimately transform the current climate of injustice into a climate of justice.

Even though civilians are vulnerable, they can empower themselves through the creation of community among themselves, as we witness when their voices are heard in civic gatherings, on the streets, and in more structured forms like Civilian Review Boards. Whether their voices are heard and listeners learn from them depends a lot on the social climate in which we live. Given our nation’s social climate of injustice that has its origin in the Atlantic commerce of land and people, and has never been corrected, their voices may not even be heard, or if heard, not understood. “Black lives Matter,” for example, may have been heard, but was it understood, and if understood, did it help to change the social climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice? What about the pleading of nurses for us to wear masks and to stay 6 ft apart? What about the homeless groups who ask for basic services?

Social groups often enter the civic realm with opposing claims for protection and provisions. There are voices for and against gun control, for example, or voices for and against changing zoning laws. In regard to policy decisions, both sides deserve a hearing. In regard to creating the social climate for making good policy decisions,

not all voices are the same. The vision of some civilian groups will match the vision of the climate of justice and some will not. The vision includes four elements: the earth is seen as a habitat for all, human dignity is shared, our social stories are coherent, and the civic is open to the protection of civilians. Voices that are aligned with this vision play an essential role in promoting the change from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice.

The problem is that living in a social climate of injustice allows us to accept broken relationships and not to expect that injuries can be repaired. In this context, why not say that people should live with the cards they were dealt? For those of us who were dealt a good hand, that seems fair. We don't have to worry about who was the dealer or who got what. That's not the case for others, and yet, in the climate of injustice, it's not that easy to communicate the truth across the gap between those who have benefited from social injustices and those who have suffered. Still, it's the truth that allows us to change the social climate, which is the first step toward deliberating about different policies that will correct our current course toward an unsustainable future.

Vulnerable people, as you might suspect, can be very forgiving but also suspicious of non-vulnerable people who initiate contact with them. They are forgiving because they tend to give others the benefit of the doubt. They are suspicious because others usually focus on understanding them more than on understanding themselves, or the injustices of their relationships. It's not that easy to get this right, so this Chapter attempts to clarify what is helpful by first examining a couple of options that may look promising, but when taken alone lead us in the wrong direction. It then offers a third option that opens the possibility of creating relationships that could shift our social climate to a climate of justice.

As humans, our capacity for developing meaningful relationships with each other comes from our bodies, from our minds, from our prior experiences, and yes, from our capacity to discern and to speak the truth. Our bodies make connections with others through "mirror neurons." These neurons are sometimes called the "empathy neurons," because they allow us to empathize with others and to feel what they are feeling. Is this possible for citizens and civilians in a climate of injustice? If not, what needs to be added or changed so citizens and civilians can engage in a common endeavor to create a climate of justice.

Another option is to brush aside the difference between civilians and citizens and to treat everyone as a commoner—participants in a commons. Examining this option will help us understand the importance of using the citizen/civilian terminology to capture our current situation and to create a strategy to change it. The social critic, Jeremy Rifkin, has written about both of these options in his books *The Empathic Civilization* (2009), and *The Zero Marginal Cost Society* (2014). Rifkin finds the current expansion of empathy and what he calls the "collaborative commons" quite powerful in facilitating a viable future. The following will explore just how adequate they are for creating a climate of justice and then offer an alternative option: a feminist "ethics of care" that fits more with our concern with the empowerment of and solidarity with vulnerable civilians. Let's begin with Rifkin's idea of the age of empathy.

10.2 The Empathy Option

In *The Empathic Civilization*, Rifkin tells a story of how changes in energy consumption (from burning wood, to electricity) and parallel changes in communication technology (from oral to digital communication) have resulted in extensions of empathy (2009). He tells a story of Western expansion of empathy from the time of the Hebrews to the present. A good example of how he structures his narrative is the section of the city of Rome.

From the very beginning, Rome wore two faces. There was the Rome that conquered the world, enslaved millions of people, occupied other lands, delighted in cruelty, and build a stadium—the Colosseum—that could seat 50,000 spectators, who cheered as Christians, criminals, and slaves were fed to the lions. It was also a place where self-awareness grew, individuality began to develop, and tolerance toward other religions became commonplace (p. 226).

This Roman empathy certainly did not extend to the enslaved people fed to the lions in the Colosseum, but it did, from Rifkin’s perspective, increase European empathy for other Europeans. This focus on the evolution of Western empathy would seem to contradict this book’s notion that the Atlantic commerce of people and land created a social climate of injustice that has never been repaired. Or, is Rifkin’s notion of Western empathy based on a kind of social amnesia that has split off from consciousness the Western nations crimes against humanity? In any case, perhaps one should bracket this thought and look at Rifkin’s description of our current “age of empathy” brought about by what he calls the “third industrial revolution.”

The peer-to-peer sharing of energy among millions, and eventually billions, of people marks the beginning of a new era that could see the steady erosion of traditional hierarchical modes of organization and management and the widespread adoption of distributed networks characterized by mass collaboration (2009, p. 527)

This is the world of the millennials, who Rifkin believes are predisposed “to be the most empathic generation in history.” As he says, “A distributed, collaborative, non-hierarchical society can’t help but be a more empathic one” (p. 543).

So, what are we to make of this? Let’s leave aside Rifkin’s Eurocentric perspective for this analysis and focus on his notion of the current age of empathy. Is this an age of empathy? Is this how citizens and civilians could connect with each other? If citizens and civilians live in different social worlds; if their relationships are embedded in legacies of oppression and exploitation; can empathy reveal and heal the whole truth of these relationships? Rifkin does recognize differences, but they don’t seem to play much of a role in his analysis. He writes:

That doesn’t mean that empathetic moments erase status and distinction. It only means that in the moment one extends the empathic embrace, the other social barriers—wealth, education, and professional status—are temporarily suspended in the act of experiencing, comforting, and supporting another’s struggle as if their life were one’s own (p. 161).

I don’t doubt that we can know something about the feelings of another’s experience through empathy, but how much can empathy tell us about the meaning of that

experience for us? I might empathize with your anger, for example, by getting in touch with my anger, but what makes us angry could be quite different, even opposite. What if you are angry toward me? My mirror neurons may allow me to understand your anger, but not whether your anger is justified or whether it is based on a stereotype that angers me as well. In the current climate of injustice, empathy may help us understand that someone experiences injustice, but that understanding of the other is not the same as an understanding of myself. For a citizen to connect with a civilian, understanding the feelings of the civilian is not enough, the citizen needs to also understand themselves in this relationship. This involves both empathy and self-understanding.

10.2.1 Empathy and Self-Understanding

We all always live in some social world (not the same one) and much of who we are is a result of our participation in that world. We all have feelings, but the meaning of these feelings depends on the social relations and worlds in which we live. I may have empathy for how you feel, but totally miss your experience of me as a participant in my social world, which means I miss understanding my social identity. You are not only responding to me as a person, but also to the social world I inhabit. Especially when I am unaware of my own social world and its relationships to other social worlds, my empathy for your vulnerability tells me precious little about who I am in this relationship.

Here we encounter a weakness of the Civilian Review Board as a model or paradigm to understand civilian/citizen relations. In such cases, civilians are petitioning for help and citizens have at least some means to give it. It's commendable when citizens use empathy to better understand the civilian's plight, but it should not stop there. If that happens, then the citizens have not learned anything about themselves or the relationship that needs to repair. Also, remaining on the level of empathy with others does not allow citizens to become aware of the social climate that serves as the context for the communication: the climate of injustice. Relying on empathy alone can actually become rather chaotic when other levels of the exchange and context are ignored. Consider the following exchange:

So, you want to feel what I feel.
 I already do. You know the mirror neurons
 Really, do you feel my anger toward you?
 I didn't pick that up. I was feeling your sadness. I was feeling sad.
 Really, and what made you feel sad?
 Well, if I were in your shoes, I would feel sad.
 How do know how it feels to be in my shoes?
 The mirror neurons. I listen to my feelings and they tell me what you feel. It's called empathy.
 Do you think I can feel what you are feeling?
 But I am not sad. I feel good about my life
 Yes, I know, I feel what you feel.

So, you feel happy.
 If you are.
 But I thought you said you felt angry.
 Right, I feel angry that you feel so happy. When you try to feel sad because your neurons are firing sadness in your brain.
 So, we are not feeling the same thing.
 Right, I could feel sad for you because you are so out-of-it.
 I don't know if my mirror neurons can pick that up.
 Probably not!
 So, if you really want to know what I am feeling, you could ask.
 Good point.

It would be hard to imagine such a conversation in the framework provided by Rifkin's approach because his view of empathy leaves little space for social conflict or even disagreement. Actually, disagreement, it seems to me, provides a good test for the power of empathy.

10.2.2 Empathy and Disagreement

Most of us, most of the time, do what we think is right, considering the world we think we live in. Few of us, in other words, try to discover how to do what's wrong. In fact, without disagreement, most of us will do what we think is right even though it is wrong. We really have no way of knowing if we are really right until our opinion is compared with others. Only when a group compares multiple proposals, will it know the strengths and weaknesses of each one (Brown 2003).

Developing a connection between citizens and civilians should not stifle disagreement. Creating a climate of justice, in other words, does not eliminate different opinions about what should be done. Just the opposite. It dissolves the forces that were protecting an acknowledgement of injustices and allows participants to deliberate about the best course of action.

If one begins a conversation with expressions of empathy, it is tempting to dismiss one's opinion as of less value than another's. Empathy, after all, is reaching for the other and understanding their feelings about their opinions. An essential step in dealing with disagreement, but not necessarily the first or the last step.

Most conversations about how to change things, which are the type of conversations envisioned here, begin with disagreement. If everyone agreed, the problem would have probably already been solved. If we return to the Civilian Review Board, usually the first step is to listen to those who come before the Board to voice their complaints or proposals. One could imagine that mutual empathy would be possible here, but that would probably not also mean agreement about what should be done. Civilians do not necessarily know the right thing to do. That's something that must be developed by all parties, If there is enough trust to enter into the disagreement then people could give each other the benefit of the doubt and listen to each other's opinions. I doubt if empathy alone with establish such trust. In fact, vulnerable people usually wait for some indication that others not only understand their

vulnerability, but also that they understand their relationship with a person's vulnerability—some sort of self-understanding.

To engage in a conversation with someone who sees the world differently than we do requires some connection. Empathy connects people on the levels of feelings, which is necessary but not sufficient, because empathizing with others does not tell us much about ourselves. In relationships that exist in a climate of injustice, those who benefit from the injustices—people of privilege—need to not only understand the other, but also to understand themselves. Making connections to vulnerable people should not lead to the dissolution of the ideas and opinions of the privileged, but rather to their examination through a conversation that aims at the best thing to do when people disagree. Empathy may play a role here, but if it dominates the process, the climate of injustice will remain as silent and hidden as before the conversation began.

So, what about the second option of making connections with civilians by switching to the language of a “collaborative commons” which proposes that we think of ourselves and others as “commoners” rather than citizens/civilians? I do not agree with this option, but in terms of what I just wrote about disagreement, sometimes considering another's position can help us to understand ours. I do think that considering this option will help clarify the rationale and the meaning of sticking with the language of civilian and citizen.

10.3 The “Commoners” Option

In his book, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society*, Jeremy Rifkin describes how the evolution of technology has brought us to the emergence of a “collaborate commons”

The coming together of the Communication Revolution with a digitalized renewable Energy Internet and automated Transportation and Logistics Internet in a seamless twenty-first century intelligent infrastructure—the Internet of things (IoT)—is giving rise to a Third Industrial Revolution. The IoT is already boosting productivity to the point where the marginal cost of producing many goods and services is nearly zero, making them practically free and shareable on the emerging Collaborative Commons (2014, p. 13)

In his description of the collaborative commons, Rifkin uses many of the ideas and practices that I learned about several years ago from conversations about the commons with members of The Common Strategies Group—things like peer-to-peer production, collaborative networks, a sharing economy, and a focus on civil society organizations (Bollier and Helfrich 2012).

I have been following what might be called the “commons movement” since 2010, when Michel Bauwens of the Peer-to-Peer Foundation selected my book, *Civilizing the Economy*, for the Foundation's Book of the Year (P2P Foundation 2011). The idea of the commons is quite attractive, in so far as it highlights community cooperation in the production and distribution of provisions. One could even see the commons movement belonging to the legacy of sharecropping.

It’s about sharing. The commons movement, however, ignores the exploitation suffered by sharecroppers and their rights for reparations. It invites us to a world beyond the messiness of economic and political relations, and to congregate in the realm of civil society not affected by a climate of injustice. It can make such an invitation because of its use of the traditional Western triadic framework.

10.3.1 The Commons and Triadic Thinking

No better illustration of triadic thinking than the title of the main text for the 2013 conference on the commons in Berlin: *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market & State* (Bollier and Helfrich 2012). The book’s sub-title tells much of the story. They located the commons “beyond” market and state. The commons exists in the third realm, or civil society, which is usually the place for non-profit and non-government organizations. This realm has been expanded by the increased role of corporate and nonprofit foundations in philanthropic endeavors, and thereby moving us toward a new kind of feudalism. Although many local commons activities are self-sufficient, they do not really alter this trend toward feudalism.

So what is wrong with government—the realm of interaction between citizens and civilians. In their recent book, two leading theorists of this approach to the commons, David Bollier and Silke Helfrich, state that they don’t like the idea of governance “because it is so closely associated with the idea of collective interests overriding individual freedom” (2019, p. 120). That seems to be true. That’s what the rule of law does. It put collective interest over individual freedom. Personal freedom, of course, is also a collective interest. That’s the reason for the Bill of Rights. In a military dictatorship, one could say that collective interests never override individual freedom—the freedom of the dictator! There seems to be something strange going on here. Let’s take a step back and review a bit of the background of this triadic thinking that separates the commons from both the State and the market.

10.3.2 The Commons Story

Most people who know about the idea of the commons probably know it from comments about Garrett Hardin’s 1968 famous essay on the “tragedy of the commons” (1968). The topic of Hardin’s essay was the problem of increasing global population. As Hardin saw it, over population was inevitable, because the procreation instinct was stronger than any effort to decrease birth rates. It turns out he was wrong. Protections are now that the global population will level off around 11 billion; a challenging increase but not a tragedy.

Hardin illustrated the threat of over-population—and our failure in dealing with limits—with the analogy of individual shepherds sharing a common pasture without any regulations on their individual behavior. If each shepherd acted in their self-

interest, he said, each shepherd would increase their flock with the result that the total number of sheep would destroy the pasture.

Harden's analogy of the destruction of the commons by individual shepherds over grazing the pasture became the story to refute, which was not that difficult when researchers examined how common resources were actually used. The economist, Elinor Ostrom, in her study in the actual practice of people governing common resources, demonstrated that peoples behavior was the opposite of what Hardin's analogy suggested (1990). Ostrom shows that the right governing institutions can avoid the problem of over-use. She provides examples of such governing institutions as villages in the Alps of Switzerland governing the grazing on common pastures and villages of Japan governing common fisheries.

Few have noticed the difference in Harden's essay between the global problem of over population and the local character of his analogy about managing a shared pasture. Refuting his view of the local issue has been easy because there are numerous examples, as Ostrom and others have shared, of local communities developing rules to share common resources. This research, however, has not answered the key question of Harden's essay: how to manage global trends. Such global trends as increasing carbon emissions, continual global warming, and rising number of refugees, would seem to call for global responses. One can certainly "think globally, act locally," but the result is that global trends continue unabated. Addressing international issues requires nation states agreeing to honor International Humanitarian Laws. The effectiveness of 1949 Geneva Protocol for the protection of civilians, for example, depends on the enforcement of the rule of law. The same is true of the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement. These are agreements dependent on national governments; governments that could be responsive to the claims of civilians, at least that is the argument here. This assumes, of course, that people in these nations take seriously their role as citizens. So, what will it be: commoner or citizen.

10.3.3 Commoner or Citizen

Although modern commoners use Elinor Ostrom's research on the Swiss villager's management of the commons almost like a Bible, it is often misread. Here is what she wrote:

Access to well-defined common property was strictly limited to citizens, who were specifically extended communal rights. As far as the summer grazing grounds were concerned, regulations written in 1570 stated that "no citizen could send more cows to the alp than he could feed during the winter." That regulation, which Netting reports to be still in force, imposed substantial fines for any attempt by villagers to appropriate a larger share of overgrazing rights (p. 62).

This is not a description of some self-governing entity beyond the market and state, but instead a description of how citizens govern an economics of provision, which is quite a different picture than the previous picture of the location of the commons in

civil society. Here, the commons exists in the overlap of the economy and the State; a space for citizens to cooperate in developing laws and regulations for their collective interest. Ignoring Ostrom’s use of the word “citizen” not only misrepresents what she wrote about managing the commons, it also ignores the social location and position of the commons, as well as commoners.

When one locates the commons beyond the market and State, it is easy to forget that individuals and organizations in this realm—the realm of civil society—are embedded in economic and state relations. They also belong to social trends that are dominated by a climate of injustice. As we already know, silence about injustices does not make them go away. Statements like the one below, from the Introduction to *The Wealth of the Commons*, seem to ignore these social realities

We are commoners— creative, distinctive individuals inscribed within larger holes. We may have many unattractive human traits fueled by individual fears and ego, but we are also creatures entirely capable of self-organization and cooperation: with a concern for fairness and social justice; and willing to make sacrifices for the larger good and future generations. (2012, p. xv).

This statement fails to address one’s own social identity or relationships with other social worlds; not because the author aims to create a local identity, as a member of a community, but rather a universal identity. In their recent book, Bollier and Helfrich see the idea of citizen as belonging to a “fading era.” They write:

Citizen, also called “a national” identifies a person in relation to the nation-state and implies that this is a person’s primary political role. The term “citizen” is often used to imply that noncitizens are somehow less than equal peers or perhaps even “illegal.” A more universal term is Commoner (2019, p. 61).

Do commoners vote, run for political office, develop policies for the homeless, for those with disabilities or who are sick? Or they just free individuals; free from those who are vulnerable and need protection, free to enjoy their privileges”. Or, to put it another way, should we dismiss the nation-state, and live as though we could only manage the local? This book’s answer is no; the current trends of American prosperity are unsustainable. To change its direction, people need to move into a civic realm defined by civilian/citizen cooperation in repairing and healing past injustices and creating a climate of justice in which we can design a viable future. Furthermore, dismissing the nation-state ignores the central challenge in the civic realm: the challenge of learning how to move toward a climate of justice.

To better understand the advantages and disadvantages of the commons movement, we can explore its relationship to four elements of our interpretive framework:—the Earth, humanity, social, and civic. The commons approach addresses the issue of the Earth quite well. It envisions the Earth as belonging to communities who share in its provision and protection. On the other hand, the commons approach ignores the issue of our racialized humanity, probably due more to social amnesia than social conflict. In fact, this approach appears to not be aware of the social incoherence of civil society. Finally, it totally ignores the role of the militarized civic in maintaining a global climate of injustice that must be transformed into a civilian civic to foster a climate of justice.

It's important to remember that the government has the military, the law enforcers, the courts and prisons, and the obligation to protect its people. These will either be controlled by citizens or not. Citizens, of course, by definition, are also members of cities. Cities can be seen as a commons in the sense that they belong to all inhabitants. Still, they are not governed by commoners, but by citizens.

If one takes a step back, the commons movement fits more or less with the social trend of the new feudalism. It tends to ignore the big issues, which leaves them to the elite, and focuses on local gardens; sometimes with financial help from Foundations and wealthy donors. If one believes that it's too late to change course, then why not develop a communal plot on which to live together? That may be an option for people of privilege, but not for civilians. They need, in many cases, protection from the elites—the drivers and maintainers of unjust systems—and they need a responsible agent to listen to their claims for protection. They need a responsive collection of citizens—a responsive government—to hear their claims. Empathic persons will not suffice here, because they ignore their own role in creating relationships that have left some vulnerable to others. Creating a commons will not work either, because it ducks its head from the really heavy winds that are determining the future. Our third option seems to move us in the right direction.

10.4 The “Ethics of Care” Option

Among the different movements of the 1960s, none was more influential than the women's movement. Through local consciousness raising groups, women throughout the United States and elsewhere supported each other in finding their voice to call for equality in family, work, and political relations. As these developments were taking place, the Harvard moral psychologist, Carol Gilligan, discovered that Lawrence Kohlberg in his work on moral development had excluded the experience of women from his evidence on moral reasoning because their experiences did not fit his model. So, she did her own research, which appeared in her 1982 book, *In a Different Voice* (1993).

Gilligan discovered that adolescent boys and girls responded quite differently to the case of Heinz and stealing. Heinz had to consider whether or not to steal a drug which he could not afford to buy in order to save his wife's life. When the boys were asked what Heinz should do, they said he should steal the drug. Their reasoning compared the principle of not stealing and the principle of saving a life and decided that the second principle was more important. The adolescent girls said that Heinz should not steal, but what was most interesting was their reasoning. They thought that Heinz should ask the pharmacist to give Heinz the medication and he could return to pay later, or Heinz should ask others to loan him the money needed to pay for the drug. Instead of thinking about a conflict of different principles as the boys had done, the girls thought about how to solve the problem by exploring Heinz's network of relationships and the possibilities for help (p. 29). These different responses plus other research led Gilligan to make a distinction between a masculine

ethics of justice based on the logic of contrasting principles, and a feminist ethic of care that focuses on relationships.

This contrast between justice and care has been modified since Gilligan’s book, in part because one can find male views of justice that are fundamentally relational, such as Aristotle’s notion of justice in his *Ethics*, and in part because they really do belong together. As the feminist philosopher, Virginia Held writes:

Justice is badly needed in the family as well as in the state: in a more equitable division of labor between women and men in the household, in the protection of vulnerable family members from domestic violence and abuse, in recognizing the rights of family members to respect for their individuality in the practice of caring for children or the elderly, justice requires us to avoid paternalistic and maternalistic domination (2006, p. 69).

The importance of justice has recently been expressed in the “#MeToo” movement that has demonstrated that men can no longer act with impunity because women will no longer be silent. This movement enlarges the ethics of care to caring about one’s own dignity as much as caring for the dignity of others. The point of the ethics of care is not to exclude justice but rather to argue that those who need care, and those who work as caregivers, should have priority in our thinking about how to live together.

During the 2020 Covid pandemic, especially during the heavy months when thousands were dying every day, who did not witness the ethics of care. In a sense, we all were vulnerable, and many followed the directions of the CDC to protect themselves and others. Here I want to highlight the service of caregivers who went to work knowing they were putting themselves at risk, because “that was the job.” Even when exhausted from over work, they showed up and continued to save lives when possible and give comfort to the dying. Perhaps the best way to honor their caring is to care as they did for justice.

Why else should we care? The reason, according to Virginia Weld, is quite simple: we should care for others because we have been cared-for (p. 132). The fact that we have been cared-for may not carry much weight for some men, because we think we have cared for ourselves, “Thank you very much, but I’m just fine.” Men may also find the fact that we all need care—would not be alive without care—challenging to our understanding of what it means to be a man. We are the protectors. How can we also be “cared-for”? What do we do with this fact—we have been cared-for—except carry it forward—to care for others? The rub is that we were cared-for as newborns and as children, and if we are to be men, we must put away childish things and be a man.

Perhaps our strong individualism creates a fear of being like everyone else—like the weak, the vulnerable, the enslaved, and the dying. Refusing to be like everyone else certainly explains the creation of a social hierarchy that places males on top, and they remain on top by continually pushing others down. Such acts as lynching, raping, and killing of civilians maintain a social order; a social order that has been described in the language of progress, human evolution, and American exceptionalism—the story of American prosperity.

There is another story, however, and its recent episodes included the caring for Covid patients, the caring for “Black Lives Matter,” and the caring for our democracy itself. Caring for justice is certainly about repairing broking relationships, and it is about caring for the rule of law. Civilian projection does not only depend on the caring of others, but also on others caring for their rights under the rule of law. Creating a climate of justice requires not only that we care for justice, but also that we care about correcting injustices. Some of us are not so affected by social inequalities and injustices as others, so caring about injustice may require that we get in touch with our shared humanity. Our awareness of our own privileges, and then seek to make right past wrongs.

10.5 Making Civic Connections

We have said that the true civic emerges when citizens and civilians engage in a process that repairs social relationships in such a way that the process changes the social context or climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice. In a sense, the process involves skills in interpretation. The French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur described the practice of interpretation as consisting of three movements: a first naivete, a critical moment, and then a second naivete (1967).

The first naivete refers to listening as though whatever we heard was true. We simply grant the speaker the benefit of the doubt. The second step occurs when we step back and consider what we have heard in terms of other things we know, how it fits with its context, and so on. We become critical reviewers of what we have heard. This step also involves an inspection of one's own social world and how one relates to it. In this step, one sees themselves from the perspective of another. This self understanding and social criticism is not the end of the process. The third step requires that we re-connect with the message and try to discover what meaning it has for us. Whereas the first naivete led to the bracketing of one's own opinion, and accepted the claims of the other, the second naivete occurs after one has reflected on the message and is now ready to turn the conversation into one of mutual engagement and learning.. In a sense, this movement ends with a respect for what we have heard and a desire to know more about the other and their social world and our selves and our social world.

Everyone brings into any situation their prior experiences. In most cases, those who have suffered from the systemic trends of American Prosperity know much more or at least other things than those who have benefited from it. If we follow the three steps of interpretation, the first step in the civic space is for citizens to listen for something they did not know. Then they can engage in a conversation about what it means. At some point, of course, some sort of mutual respect must emerge for the

conversation to bring about the power of the civic itself to repair broken relationships and to restore a meaningful relationship with the Earth.

The role of citizens in creating a climate of justice is first to carefully listen to civilian claims for their rights to protection and provision, then to reflect on how what they have heard fits with their care for justice and just relations, and then to engage again with civilians in a civic conversation that changes its very context to a social climate of justice.

References

- Bollier, D., and S. Helfrich. 2012. *The Wealth of the Commons: A World beyond Market and State: A World Beyond Market and State*. Amherst, MA: Levellers Press.
- . 2019. *Free Fair and Alive: The Insurgent Power of The Commons*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.
- Brown, M.T. 2003. *The Ethical Process An Approach to Disagreements and Controversial Issues*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle-River: Prentice-Hall.
- Gillian, C. 1993. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hardin, G. 1968. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, December 13.
- Held, V. 2006. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ostrom, E. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- P2P Foundation. 2011. <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/details-about-the-p2p-foundations-book-of-the-year-for-2010-civilizing-the-economy/2011/01/05>
- Ricoeur, P. 1967. *The Symbolism of Evil*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Rifkin, J. 2009. *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin.
- . 2014. *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, The Collaborative Commons, and The Eclipse of Capitalism*, 2014. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Chapter 11

An Invitation to Civic Dialogue



11.1 Introduction

We could move toward a climate of justice. If I'm right, we know what to do. We have to learn more and more about the American people—all the people. We have to recognize our shared Earth and humanity, our social differences and the capacity for creating community. As citizens, we have to protect vulnerable civilians and the vulnerable Earth. We have to work at establishing justice as reciprocity, which will result, among other things, in the sharing of a city's wealth with all members. To do that, we must repair social relationships, caused by violations of humanity and become involved in the creation of civic community. Civilians, almost by definition, would be open to such an endeavor, if they could trust others to understand them as equals. It's more difficult for citizens, like myself, who live in a social world that encourages us to focus on our own lives instead of the different social worlds in which we live. At the same time, the tailwinds of American Prosperity are carrying us toward an unsustainable future. It's hard not to recognize we are in a turbulent time with the social and environmental challenges growing every day. To put it in a nutshell:

It's a turbulent time
Our stories are clashing
The Oceans are rising and
Civilians are uniting.

Today, the clash of stories abounds. When you open your eyes, you cannot avoid it. Walk around the National Mall. Walk by Washington Monument, and the Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt memorials, then the memorials to the two World Wars, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and then the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, the National Museum of the American Indian and the Museum of African American History and Culture. All these memorials have their stories, told

by louder and louder story tellers. Outside the National Mall, controversies about our monuments. Some have interpreted these controversies as “cultural wars,” but I think a deeper appreciation will recognize the controversy as opening a door to receive invitations from others that offer the possibility of healing the wounds of the past.

11.2 The Clash of Stories

The call to remove Confederate Memorials, the names of enslavers and those who profited from slavery dominated most of 2020, and the controversy of their “place” in our understanding of ourselves continues. What we can agree on, or so it seems, is that the different memorials offer us opportunities to engage in critical conversations. As strange as it may seem, these clashes offer opportunities for creating an inclusive and just future, not because they will lead to the right policies, but because they may lead us to consider our social climate: a climate of injustice that has its origin in the Atlantic trade of people and land and that has never been fully repaired. Perhaps no clash is as challenging and therefore as potentially rewarding as the clash between the Stone Mountain relief of Confederate figures in Georgia and the new lynching memorial in Montgomery, Alabama: The National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

11.2.1 *Confederate and Lynching Memorials*

Stone Mountain is a large granite dome, which was the site of the second founding of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915. The owners of the mountain, the Venable family, deeded its north side to the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1916 to create a Civil War monument. They hired sculptor, Gutzon Borglum, to design and carve the monument, but he left the work unfinished in 1925. A second sculptor, Augustus Lukeman, took his place and designed the relief with three Confederate figures—Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson, but In 1928 the Venable family reclaimed their property leaving the monument unfinished. Almost 40 years later, the Project resumed largely in response to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to end school segregation and the growing Civic Rights Movement. The Georgia Governor, Marvin Griffin, stated in his 1955 inaugural address: “So long as Marvin Griffin is your governor, there will be no mixing of the races in the classroom of our schools and colleges of Georgia.” (Boissonneault 2017). The State of Georgia then took control of the project and resumed its development in 1964. It was formally completed in 1972. Today, Stone Mountain Park is the hottest tourist spot in the state of Georgia (Fig. 11.1).

In the neighboring state of Alabama, sits the Memorial for Peace and Justice. A project of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. On its website, its statement of purpose reads:



Fig. 11.1 Stone Mountain, Georgia (Pixabay License by Paul Brennan, Winder, United States)



Fig. 11.2 National Memorial for Peace and Justice (original to the author)

The Equal Justice Initiative is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice, and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society (The National Memorial for Peace and Justice).

They began work on this memorial to lynching in 2010 and it opened to the public in 2018. In their research for the memorial, they documented over 4400 lynchings. The memorial structure symbolizes these events with over 88 steel columns hanging from the ceiling at different heights, one for each county where a lynching occurred. The names of the lynching victims are engraved on the columns (Fig. 11.2).

The stories that give meaning to these monuments could not be more opposite: one created during the Jim Crow era honoring the Confederate heroes, the other acknowledging the victims of the Jim Crow era who suffered the terror of the Klan and white mobs. Given the chasm between these two stories, how can we create a world in which we can talk with each other? This would not be the world of “either/or” nor the world of “both/and” but a new world, held together by the bond of reparation and reciprocity. How could such a world come into being? Before I try to answer these questions, I want to share another clash of memorials that tell different stories about our relationship with the earth: the clash between Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial.

11.2.2 Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial

Mount Rushmore gets its name from Charles Edward Rushmore, a lawyer in Philadelphia who befriended miners in the Black Hills. The idea of Mount Rushmore belongs to Doane Robinson, a state historian of South Dakota. He wanted South Dakota to have something like Georgia’s Stone Mountain—the impressive rock carving of three Confederate figures. Robinson enlisted Gutzon Borglum who had previously worked on Stone Mountain and after some negotiations selected the Rushmore peak for the site. Borglum began carving the images of four Presidents—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt—in 1927. The work was finished in 1941. Borglum give the following reason for his work:

The purpose of the memorial is to communicate the founding, expansion, preservation, and unification of the United States with colossal statues of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt (National Park Service, Mount Rushmore).

The purpose of the memorial, in other words, was not just the honoring of four Presidents, but also the celebration of the unity of the whole country. President Calvin Coolidge’s Dedication Speech on August 10, 1927 includes the following about the memorial’s location in the Black Hills:

Its location will be significant. Here in the heart of the continent, on the side of a mountain which probably no white man had ever beheld in the days of Washington, in territory which was acquired by the action of Jefferson, which remained an unbroken wilderness beyond the days of Lincoln, which was especially beloved by Roosevelt, the people of the future will see history and art combined to portray the spirit of patriotism (1927),

Coolidge probably did not have any inkling that “the people of the future” would not only visit Mount Rushmore, but also, less than 10 miles away, the Crazy Horse Memorial. Henry Standing Bear, a Lakota chief, wanted an Indian leader to be added to the four Presidents at Mount Rushmore. When his request was denied, he and other Lakota leaders began planning their own memorial (Figs. 11.3 and 11.4).

In 1938, Chief Henry Standing Bear contacted the Polish-American sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski. Ziolkowski had worked on the Rushmore moment with



Fig. 11.3 Mt. Rushmore (Pixabay License by Guy Johnson, Ottumwa, United States)



Fig. 11.4 Crazy Horse Memorial (Pixabay License by Michael, United States)

Borglum but left before it was finished. After some delay and service in the army during World War II, Ziolkowski with his wife and family began carving the mountain in 1947. Currently, the monument is the largest in the world: 841 feet long and 563 feet high. I found it very impressive when we visited it in the summer of 2018. Ziolkowski and his family's dedication to this work was also impressive. His family still continues to work on the monument, which will take decades to finish. Maybe I shouldn't be so impressed, but here is a white guy ensuring that we have a chance to know the greatness of the American Crazy Horse, and through him, the life of First Americans. When I visited the Monument, I read this piece of wisdom that Ziolkowski left for us.

“When the legends die, the dreams end;
When the dreams end, there is no more greatness.
Don't forget your dreams.”

So, which dreams should we not forget? There is the dream represented by Mount Rushmore. The dream of Western expansion that shuts out the nightmare of the genocide of Native Americans and the dreams of dominating the Earth for American Prosperity. If you just visited the Rushmore Monument and read its publicity, you would never know that the mountain as well as the Black Hills were sacred sites to the Lakota people. The dream of Crazy Horse is that of a warrior who fought to protect his family and their place on the Earth. He was not a civilian. But he did fight to protect civilians. The Presidents atop Mount Rushmore were civilian Presidents. They were there, however, because the military had cleared the land for white settlers through military expansion. Today we live with multiple stories of the land “from sea to shining sea.”

If we want to engage in a civic conversation, where should we meet? At Stone Mountain? At the Peace and Justice Memorial? Who will invite whom? Who will come? If the invitation comes from Stone Mountain, will only white people come? Why would anyone else come to a memorial to the “Southern Regime”? No, the invitation needs to come from a memorial that is not shrouded in a climate of injustice but rather one that opens the path to creating a climate of justice such as the Peace and Justice Memorial in Montgomery.

Some might want to meet in the middle. Is there a middle between enslavement and freedom, justice and injustice? Is there a middle between vulnerable civilians and secure citizens? Let's not forget that these stories of clashes are not clashes between peoples on the same playing field. The clashes were between master and slave, between American expansion and Native American genocide. Their legacy is a legacy of oppressor and oppressed, exploiter and exploited, the privileges of living in a white world and the stigma of being a Person of Color. Remember that Mount Rushmore exists in the Black Hills, a sacred place for the Lakota people. What happens when you stand on this sacred ground and think about the relationship between these two monuments? Do you feel welcome here? Do you think you need an invitation? When I was a college student, I received an invitation that changed my life; not from the Black Hills, but from Montgomery, Alabama.

11.3 My Invitation

In the Spring of 1965, I joined a small group of college students in Nebraska who had told the organizers of the civil rights march from Selma and Montgomery that we would come if we were needed. After the marchers were turned back with brutal force at the Edmund Petrus Bridge in Selma, the organizer of our group received a call that invited us to come to Montgomery during the week of the second march. Their idea was to have some white kids in the black community to make it less likely that white supremacists would harm them. We drove to Montgomery in a VW bus and spent a week passing out flyers during the day about that night's rally and in the evening attending the rallies. When the marchers from Selma arrived on the edge of Montgomery, they held a mass meeting that we joined and the next day marched with them into the city. We listened to the leaders of the civil rights movement, including Martin Luther King, Jr. It was the first time I heard him speak. I also heard Dr. King in 1966 in a Chicago church when I was working during the summer for the Chicago Missionary Society, and in 1967 when he gave his famous speech about the Vietnam War at Riverside Church in New York City. I have never heard another voice that resonated with the truth as King's. When I look back, I had this opportunity not because of what I had done, but because I had been invited.

This invitation could be seen as an invitation to join a civilian movement, if we see the marchers as vulnerable and depending on the rule of law for protection. I was certainly not invited to become a member of the black community. Nor was I expected to be someone I was not—to become “not-white.” At the same time, by accepting the invitation, I had acknowledged the wrongs of white supremacy; wrongs that others suffered that I had not because I was a white male. I could denounce white supremacy and critically expose white arrogance, as I have done in this book, but I could not deny that I had benefited from my white skin and ancestry. Perhaps my invitation was an invitation to become a caring citizen—an identity worth considering.

11.4 A Caring Citizen

If we stay with our definition of civilians as vulnerable people who rely on the enforcement of the rule of law, one may wonder if someone who has access to the privileges of the white man's world can honestly connect with civilians. They may have empathy, but is that enough? Empathy may help us understand someone else, but it does little to help us understand our relationship with someone else, especially from that person's perspective. I could also imagine that we are all humans, which is true from some perspective, but if that perspective erases our social differences, then I have further isolated my self from the other rather than become closer. First and foremost, one needs to care about the relationship. Motivation, of course, is not enough. I was motivated to join the Selma to Montgomery march, but I also needed

to be invited; I could not invite myself. We can only invite others to our social worlds. You need an invitation to join someone else's.

Privileged citizens can ask to be invited, but they may not receive an invitation because civilians may not believe that they have separated themselves enough from the normal perceptions and patterns of the white male world to enter another's social world. Moving between different social worlds requires some social agility. Let's use Antonio Damasio's notion of the self as the conductor created by the orchestra to illustrate the requirement here (2010, p. 22). If all the people in your orchestra that constitute your self are just like you, then it will be hard to enter another's social world. If your orchestra includes people from different social worlds, it will be much easier. We can even ask each other; "Whom have you included or excluded in your understanding of yourself? People like me who are white males do not need to have a completely white orchestra. We can choose one that is more inclusive and richer in sound, which changes our consciousness of being a person.

What about this question: "What would a white male caring citizen look like?" From my experiences, I would describe such a person as one who tries to be watchful of biases, continually critical of white arrogance, and works with others in the creation of a climate of justice. In small ways, I have done this type of work in the classroom as well as in ethics programs in corporations and in my writing. This does not mean, however, that I have transcended my social identity or the internalization of white biases. Robin DiAngelo, who conducts workshops on white racism, is probably right when she writes that the best white people can do is to be "less white" (2018, p. 149). I am not sure about "less white," but we can be more human. By that I mean we can become more aware of the differences between our social and natural or biological selves.

As living human beings, we all have dignity and deserve respect. At the same time, we all exist in very different social worlds that have greatly benefited some and greatly harmed others. That's true, but we make a mistake when we see our particular social identity as all that we are. The interpretive framework that we are using here includes four basic elements: the Earth, our humanity, the social, and the civic. We are all participants in the Earth's processes. We belong to the Earth. We are also humans who are designed to live purposeful and relational lives. We do this in social worlds and social relationships that have violated some people's human dignity and have broken relationships among most of us. The civic is the place where we have a chance to repair these relationships when we respect our shared human dignity and care about our social relationships. No one is ever nothing but his or her social self. Maybe a little education for white people will prevent us from making such a mistake.

11.5 Education for White People

To engage in the work of creating a climate of justice based on the repair of social relations and mutual recognition, we need to overcome a major obstacle: white supremacy and arrogance. It would be a mistake to put all white persons in the

Fig. 11.5 Education for White People

Education for White People

1. Distinguish between personal and social stories
2. Explore the sources of white arrogance
3. Talk about how you have benefited from racism
4. Listen to how others see you
5. Compose stories that include all Americans
6. Participate in the creation of a climate of justice

same box, but we need to acknowledge that the box (a white privileged social world) exists. White persons may not be able to get out of the box, but they can become aware of it. Such awareness includes not only a critical analysis of the white social world's patterns and on-going conversations, but also critical reflection of how this social world has shaped one's beliefs. Learning about this white social world as a white person is an educational process that includes the following steps (Fig. 11.5).

Because of the strong individualism of American prosperity that assumes that we do not have a social identity, it's easy for persons to take any criticism of the racism in their social world as a criticism of them. The truth is that while we live in a social world, we live in it as persons, with a personal story. True, our social world gives us our perceptions and expectations, however, we can distance ourselves from those that diminish the dignity of others. Making a distinction between our personal and social stories gives us space to examine the social amnesia of the social world of white arrogance and to reject its racialized humanity. We can certainly acknowledge how we have benefited from being white in the white social world, but we can also tell coherent stories that tell how others have paid the price for our benefits when that is the case. Furthermore, when we are honest, these social advantages do not protect us from the human vulnerabilities that we all face.

Instead of acknowledging vulnerabilities, many white men, and other men as well, see vulnerabilities as a challenge to overcome. The truth is that vulnerability is a human condition not a human problem. My guess is that most of us have in our circles of friends vulnerable people—people who struggle with illnesses, lose, addiction and death. We may split them off from our lives and avoid responding to their invitations for conversations, but that prevents us not only from understanding their social worlds, but also our own. Once others are included in our lives, we gain a better understanding of ourselves. With this broader social understanding, we can listen and tell stories that reveal relationships that need repair and restoration. We can then participate with civilians in the creation of a climate of justice. This process begins with an invitation from civilians. Since we are more closely related to some civilians than to others, there are different types of invitations, and therefore different appropriate responses.

11.6 Types of Civilian Invitations

The International Red Cross Committee's 1949 Geneva Protocol on the protection of civilians did not distinguish between civilians who are far away or close at hand, but distance does seem to make a difference. One way to take these differences into account is to think of civilian connections on a continuum from personal face-to-face relations to imaginary relations with civilians of future generations. Michael Boylan provides a model for making these distinction in his book *Morality and Global Justice* (1975). He distinguishes between personal, shared and extended relationships. For our purposes, let's say that the personal refer to face-to-face relations. Shared relationships refer to situations where we as citizens share the same national boundaries as the civilians. Extended relations, on the other hand, would refer to civilians who exist outside our national responsibilities, but may or may not be influenced by US foreign actions. Since future generations fit the definition of civilians—vulnerable and rely on the protection of the rule of law—I propose four types of connections: personal, shared, extended, and imaginary. We can think of these as different types of invitations, if we understand an invitation simply as a request that asks for a response, and different invitations will elicit different challenges.

11.6.1 *Invitations from Future Generations*

How would you imagine an invitation from future generations? What would it mean to identify them as civilians? I imagine the invitation would ask us to protect them, and to give them a chance for a viable future, which means that we also protect the Earth. They would ask us not to use more than our fair share, and to make sure they get their share. Perhaps their most challenging request would be to pass on to them a climate of justice rather than a climate of injustice. This would mean that we would have to tell each other the truth and repair broken and injured relationships.

How would future generations know whether or not we have accepted their invitation? They could tell by what things get our attention, what stories we tell, and how we listen to each other. If we are focused on the stock market, shopping, and entertainment, then their despair may almost be palpable. If we tolerate injustices in silence, they may wonder if and when we will listen to those who are speaking up. Our responses to contemporary civilians may represent better than anything else our connection to future generations. "The tailwinds are strong; they carry our wrongs." Unless we change the social climate behind these tailwinds, future generations will not inherit the life we would wish for them. We can change these tailwinds by paying attention to the other types of civilian invitations: the extended, shared, and personal. As an example of an extended civilian invitation, we can imagine an invitation from a Syrian civilian.

11.6.2 Invitation from Syrian Civilians

The civilians of Syria have endured war more or less since the Arab Spring in 2011, and millions now live in refugee camps.. What kind of invitation could you imagine from them? What kind of response fits with your picture? One may feel empathy. Certainly. Empathy may help us feel what they feel but not what they feel about us or what we would feel if we looked at ourselves from their eyes. What does American prosperity and our military establishment have to do with Syria?

This question raises other questions, such as: How dependent is our economy on weapon sales in the Middle East, not only in regard to sales and therefore domestic jobs, but also in terms of the stock market's growth? Why have we not created an arms embargo to prevent millions of weapons from entering Syria? The United Nations now spends much of its peace-keeping work protecting civilians. Why have we not given the UN sufficient support in its mission?

The truth is that we have not developed a foreign policy that gives a high priority to the protection of civilians. As John Tirman shows in his book, *The Death of Others*, the killing of civilians has often been part and parcel of American war strategy (2011). The US is not alone in this strategy. The point here, however, is that the silence about these casualties prevents us from moving from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice. Our response to the Syrian invitation, therefore, is at least two-fold. We should think about the interventions of international agencies, such as the Red Cross that are addressing the "humanitarian crisis." What can they do to the social climate of the refugee camps? How does their work affect the social climate of the Middle East? We should also examine our military role in the Middle East and evaluate whether it is guided by the protection of American prosperity or the protection of civilians.

When we move from extended connections with civilians beyond our national boundaries to shared connections at our national boundaries, the invitation becomes even more an invitation to understand ourselves as well as an invitation to understand others. This is especially true with civilians at our Southern border.

11.6.3 Invitation from Migrants at the Southern Border

Migrants from violence and terror in South American countries have come north to find a safe home. One could say they are seeking a climate of justice, where their cases would receive a generous hearing and fair disposition. They appear to be escaping a climate of injustice where gangs commit violence with impunity, but are they finding a climate of justice here?

Do we really want to understand our connection with these "American" migrants? Our common history reveals that there is much that we share. Until 1849, most of the southwest, from California to Colorado was part of Mexico. While the national boundary may separate us, much more unites us. Why not propose that just like

European countries formed a European Union, American countries should form an American Union? Instead of a wall, what about another bridge? If we recognized the plea of these migrants to ensure that they are given the protection that civilians deserve, we would not only have a clearer understanding of them, but also of ourselves.

Invitations from shared connections—even more directly than extended invitations—ask us not only to acknowledge the situation of others but also the relationship between their plight and our well-being. This involves both empathy and self-understanding. There is no shortage of such invitations. One thinks of the invitation by the Lakota tribe to join them at Standing Rock to protect their territory and water supply. Or the communities throughout the nation who have lost their homes due to fires, floods, and hurricanes. Or the black communities unable to acquire good housing, life provisions, education, or even safe neighborhoods.

For those of us who live in the last days of American prosperity, there are many such groups that are calling for our attention, and in most cases, the invitation is not only to acknowledge their civil rights but also our role in their plight. Engaging in this work of justice could take various forms, but perhaps the most effective is one similar to the strategies to stop the killing of Vietnam civilians years ago—education, protest, and other forms of political action. Although our responses to an invitation from a shared connection can be quite personal, sometimes we also receive face-to-face personal invitations. In these invitations, we can engage in a personal dialogical process, or at least we have the possibility.

11.6.4 Personal Invitation to Engage in Dialogue

An invitation from another person to a dialogue does something for me that I cannot do for myself: it transforms me into a “you.” Personal invitations use second person pronouns. “How are you?” “How do you feel?” “What do you think?” Instead of reporting on “me,” I am asked to become someone in the face of the person who has extended the invitation. My answer could be just a report about “me,” of course, which would be a case of not hearing the invitation. The invitation not only invites me to step up as a “you,” but also to respond to the other by inviting them to become a “you” as well. When the relationship becomes a you-you relationship, the participants can enter into a creative dialogue.

Each dialogue has a life of its own, of course, and yet there are several elements that are fairly well known. The following list of six elements are a result of years of collaborating with others in teaching the dynamics of dialogue (Fig. 11.6).

Not every civic conversation will include all of these aspects of dialogue at least not explicitly. The process must be open-ended and grounded in mutual respect. In terms of a civilian dialogue, one must take care of the differences and conflicts arising from people coming to the dialogue with very different experiences and assumptions. What would such a dialogue look like? It would have some of the characteristics listed above, and it would probably have a flow of questions and

Six Elements of Dialogue

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Recognize Others | Listen to what you have not heard before |
| 2. Ask Questions of Inquiry | Ask questions where you don't know the answer. |
| 3. Listen to know more | Honor what others know that you do not. |
| 4. Explore the Unknown | Explore what the dialogue brings to mind. |
| 5. Develop thought | Respond to that is thought-provoking |
| 6. Gain self-understanding | Synthesize different voices |

Fig. 11.6 Six Elements of Dialogue (original to the author)

answers. The following dialogue illustrates this process as well as presents some of the issues that need to be addressed in conversations between privileged white and unprivileged black persons.

- W. I would like to share my ideas about how we should live together.
 B. You want to talk to me about how we should live together?
 W. Yes.
 B. Did I invite you?
 W. Well, no. I do assume we have similar interests. Right?
 B. No, not really, do you know anything about my interests?
 W. What do you mean?
 B. Do you know enough about me to know what interests me?
 W. Probably not, but I could learn about you if we engage in a conversation
 B. Do you really want to learn about me?
 W. Of course, at least as much as you want to know about me.
 B. I already know enough about you.
 W. How can you say that? We have not started sharing.
 B. I know that you think you can engage in a conversation with me whenever you want to.
 W. I guess so. What is wrong with that?
 B. It indicates that you don't really understand our social differences/ Did you notice that I am a different gender and skin color? We really do live in different social worlds. I would never approach you as you have approached me.
 W. Why not?
 B. Because you remain unaware of things that are different for us, so I cannot really trust you.
 W. My goodness, I didn't know that. I assumed that I could express my ideas and then you would respond with your ideas, and we could then continue an interesting exchange of ideas.
 B. Sorry, I know I will lose if we engage in such an exchange of ideas. You are really good at dealing with ideas.
 W. You make that sound like a liability.
 B. It's only a liability when it diverts us from paying attention to what is preventing us from developing a relationship.
 W. I thought we are relating.
 B. Well, we are talking, but so far, we have been sending messages to each other, not really engaging in the creation of a dialogues that unites us—a dialogues that allows us to really see and feel each other's presence.

- W. What needs to happen for us to move into that kind of dialogue?
- B. I need to invite you.
- W. What?
- B. For me to invite you, I would have to see that there is more between us than our social differences.
- W. And what would that be?
- B. Let's call it our shared humanity.
- W. And what is preventing you from inviting me?
- B. As I said, it is a matter of trust.
- W. Listen. We really are in this together. We are both persons who at this moment are engaged in this conversation.
- B. We are not in this together. I live in a legacy of violations of our common humanity through racism, sexism, and imperialism, and you do not. In fact, your family has benefited from these inequalities.
- W. OK, I can admit that. Still, I didn't choose my parents any more than you did. I am not responsible for how things happen.
- B. I am not blaming you. Your privileges make my realities invisible to you. I am expressing the need to repair the violation of our common humanity.
- Without repair, we will never really be able to invite each other into a truly civic dialogue
- W. I find this really humiliating.
- B. And?
- W. I'm not guilty for what happened years ago. I wasn't even born, and my parents may be white, but they worked hard for what they got.
- B. Let me ask you something. What makes you feel humiliated?
- W. I feel so presumptuous.
- B. What does that mean?
- W. I assumed I could help improve things. I do have resources. But I didn't have any idea you would give me so much flack. It's just uncomfortable.
- B. And why do you feel that way now?
- W. It's the way you look at me.
- B. You mean the way you see yourself in my eyes?
- W. I don't know. I just feel vulnerable.
- B. I will not harm you.
- W. Will you help me understand myself?
- B. We have helped the likes of you for a long time.
- W. I am sorry.
- B. If you want to help, think about how to repair the violations of our shared humanity.
- W. So, what should we do?
- B. Can I ask you a question?
- W. Yes.
- B. When you were growing up, did your mother tell you that you were special?
- W. Of course!
- B. Well, you are not special. You're one of us. Just another person
- W. (long pause) That's a weird idea. I was just accepting the idea that we are different.
- B. We are different, and we are the same. To engage in a meaningful dialogue, we must be open to learning what this means. Can you do this?
- W. I can try.
- B. So, what do you say?
- W. We are in trouble.
- B. Yes, I know. The powers-that-be are endangering the life of our children and grandchildren. Your white male world is a world that refuses to acknowledge this.
- W. Why?

- B. Because you refuse to accept the limitations and vulnerabilities of human life. In your world, limitations are not barriers, but hurdles to jump over. Your world is built on a conspiracy not to tell the truth about how our worlds are related. You cannot see this until you join in exposing our real relationships, repairing them, and restoring our relationship with the Earth.

I could imagine that this dialogue, or some dialogue like this, needs to happen until there is a large and loud enough gathering of civilians to change our social climate to a climate of justice.. This will only happen, of course, if we are successful in creating the conditions for good conversations..

11.7 Creating Conditions for Good Conversations

One of the exercises in my book, *Learning Through Disagreement*, is designed for a self-evaluation of one's capacity for good conversations (2014, p. 15). Participants are asked to rank their experience with seven people they select on a scale of 1–5 in terms of the degree they can do the following: feel safe, ask questions, develop good reasons, trust each other's good intentions, value differences, and work together. As it turns out, most people give high marks to some of the seven participants and low to others. Most people sometimes have good conversations with some others but not everyone. I then asked them to imagine how those who had received low marks on their sheet would fill out the same chart with people they selected. "Would they also have people on their list of seven with high numbers and low numbers?" Most believed that would be the case. So, what does that mean? The quality of a conversation does not depend on each individual's capacity, but on the quality of the relationships in which the individuals participate. A good conversation, in other words, requires good relationships. Most of us can do this in the right conditions. So, what are the right conditions?

This work of creating the right conditions for good conversations has been a major theme throughout my career, beginning with my intern year in 1967 at the Evangelical Academies in Germany. The Academies were centers of dialogue for diverse groups from different organizations and institutions where members would come and explore their different views (1980). Instead of speaking only to those who already agreed with you, which is what I had experienced in the protests against the war in Vietnam, people with different views actually listened to one another. At the time, I saw this as a new mission for the church in the United States. Church leaders could facilitate conversations among diverse groups in various organizations, especially business organizations. The church I belonged to was not interested in this type of mission, so I continued this journey with others who were. After finishing my doctorate in the area of interpretive theory, I began teaching and have continued to teach organizational and business ethics focusing on this idea of creating the right conditions for good conversations.

From 1993 to 1997, I had the privilege of working as an external facilitator in the Ethics and Diversity Program at Levi Strauss and Company (1998). The program

offered employees two days of ethics training—learning how to use the company’s values in dealing with disagreement—and two days of diversity training—learning how to appreciate differences through dialogue and self-reflection. At the center of the program was the emphasis on dialogue—bracketing our judgments, mutual inquiry, careful listening, and questioning assumptions.

Creating the conditions for good conversations, as the sample dialogue tried to show, must be open to sharing perceptions and acknowledging one’s vulnerabilities. At the same time, differences need to be sorted out. Is the difference rooted in hierarchical racist assumptions supported by a climate of injustice, or a cultural/social difference that could promote a climate of justice? There are other questions. Is the personal relationship grounded in a shared humanity that allows mutual learning about the different social worlds in which the participants live? Is there an attempt to expose and re-balance the inequities of the social relations, or are they ignored? Is there an awareness of each other as a living being belonging to the Earth in need of a secure habitat? We may think we know the answers. Coming to the answers in a conversation with others who come from different social worlds could enable a change in the social climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice.

Think of a civic center not simply as a place, but also as a gathering of civilians and citizens who form a social climate that allows us to envision a viable future. In this context, one could imagine how all four strands of American prosperity—treating land as commodity, protecting a racialized humanity, maintaining social incoherence, and a militarized civic—are redirected toward Earth as a human habitat, a shared humanity, social coherence, and a civilian civic. Can we do this? We have to do something like it. Staying the course ruins the Earth for us. Changing course is the only real alternative. We do have the possibility of doing this, because:

We share a common humanity
Born in Africa
Inhabiting the Earth
Searching for a home.

We are all descendants of African people. Black is the original human color. Today we come in many colors as a result of inhabiting the Earth searching for a home. What we need, and have a right to, is a place for all of us. After all, we are the people.

11.8 We the People

The meaning of words depends on their context. When the framers of the Constitution wrote “We the People” they were living in a context or social climate of injustice. The “we” was limited to those privileged white males, who compromised themselves to make sure American Prosperity was not threatened. If we can change our social climate to a climate of justice, the meaning of “We the People” could also

change. The “people” would be ruled by the rule of law of their own making. Civilians could count on the rule of law, and on citizens making laws that protect human and non-human communities. This is possible to realize in civic conversations among civilians and citizens from different social worlds who consent to live on this planet in this time, and to make the repairs necessary to move toward a climate of justice together.

In this civic realm we can ask: “What should we do?” On the one hand, we do what is necessary to maintain the relationship created by seeing each other and thereby allowing each other to become a “you.” This is the realization of an awareness of our mutual dignity as human beings, and the recognition of the repairs of past injustices that must be made so we can trust each other to take care of our life together. This will mean, of course, making amends for past injustices. It will mean, of course, ensuring there is a secure home for us on the Earth. It will mean, of course, that we reverse the current trends toward inequality, authoritarianism, systemic racism, and planetary chaos and direct them toward a just and sustainable future.

So, how do we get there? We cannot do it with force. We do it through negotiation, trial and error, and the hard work of designing a sustainable prosperity for all of us. For this vision to take hold, we have to be empowered by the creation of a community based on our shared humanity, and a community unafraid of addressing past wrongs and repairing social relationships.

The existence of the monuments to Confederate heroes and the monuments to lynching cannot be denied. They and their contradictions stare us in the face. Same with Mt. Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial in the Black Hills. Is the Earth ours to exploit or is it our living habitat? If “We” are “the people” then these contradictions must be held together by something besides the current climate of injustice in which they exist. If we can acknowledge the vulnerability and the pain behind these monuments, and begin the work of making reparations, a climate of justice could emerge that would not exclude our wounds but rather heal them. If we could do this, the recognition and repair of our unjust past would give us a foundation for designing a sustainable prosperity for all.

References

- Boissonneault, L. 2017. What Will Happen to Stone Mountain, American’s Largest Confederate Memorial? *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 22. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-will-happen-stone-mountain-americas-largest-confederate-memorial-180964588/>
- Boylan, M. 1975. *Morality and Global Justice: Justifications and Applications*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Brown, M.T. 1980. *On Time and In Place: The Work of the Evangelical Academies in West Germany*, Ed. Leiterkreis der Evangelischen Akademien in Deutschland e.V. 7325 Bad Boll.
- . 1998. Concepts and Experience of the ‘Valuing Diversity and Ethics’ Workshops at Levi Strauss and Company. In *Ethics in International Management*, ed. Brij Nino Kumas and Horst Steinmann. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- . 2014. *Learning through Disagreement: A Workbook for the Ethics of Business*. Tonawanda, NY: Broadview Press.

- Coolidge, C. 1927. *National Park Service*, Mount Rushmore; <https://www.nps.gov/moru/learn/historyculture/calvin-coolidge.htm>
- Damasio, A. 2010. *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Mind*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- DiAngelo, R. 2018. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- The National Memorial for Peace and Justice. <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial>
- Tirman, J. 2011. *The Death of Others: The Fate of Civilians in American's Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- National Park Service. Mount Rushmore. <https://www.nps.gov/moru/index.htm>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Index

A

Abolitionist movement, 83
Abrams, D., 19
Affirmative action, 91
African Ancestry, 52
Age of empathy, 150, 151
Air-conditioning, 22
Alexander, A., 65
American Dream, 127
American history, 88, 108, 109, 112
American prosperity, ix, xi, 2, 6, 10, 45, 49, 64, 66, 74, 82, 85, 93, 113, 117, 127, 130, 132, 157, 159, 163, 174
Ancestry, 52, 169
Ankersen, T., 124
Anthony, C., 29
Appiah, K., 33
Ariely, D., 57
Aristotle, 5, 36, 127, 138, 159
Armistice Day, 67
Atlantic Ocean, 8, 117, 131
Atlantic trade, 112, 118
Attachment theory, 40, 41, 72
Autobiographical consciousness, 37, 39
Autobiographical self, 36, 37, 39, 42

B

Bailyn, B., 118
Balanced social relationships, 128
Banner, S., 119
Bates, B.T., 98
Bauwens, M., 154
Becker, E., 70

Bennett, J., 109
Birth of a Nation, 99
Black codes, 86
Black Hills, 119, 166, 168
Black Lives Matter, 55, 91
Blight, D.W., 89
Boehm, C., 47, 73
Bollier, D., 155, 157
Borglum, G., 164, 166
Boulding, K., 147
Bowlby, J., 41
Boylan, M., 172
Branch, T., 106
Brown v Board of Education, 109, 111
Buber, M., 145
Burke, K., 47
Byres, T.J., 125

C

Capra, F., 68
Caring citizen, 169
Christian Realism, 96, 102, 110, 113
Christian trinity, 5, 145, 146
Christianity, 38, 138
Citizen, 38, 157
Citizens/civilians, 6, 12, 150, 151, 154, 155, 160
Civic, 128
Civic conversation, 174
Civic realm, 147, 157
Civic relations, 74
Civic, militarized, 93, 114, 157
Civilian, 64, 65

Civilian government, 66, 68
 Civilian perspective, 68, 69
 Civilian Review Board, 63, 152
 Civilian vulnerability, 11, 137, 146
 Civilizing the Economy, 21, 74, 154
 Civil society, 5, 155–157
 Civil War, 8, 66, 81, 82, 84, 89, 90
 Climate of injustice, 2, 60, 66, 68, 96, 130, 152, 154, 155, 157, 178
 Climate of justice, xi, 28, 60, 74, 93, 96, 128, 131, 140, 144, 149, 153, 157, 160, 170, 178
 Club of Rome, 70
 Coates, T.-N., 127, 129
 Collaborative commons, 150, 154
 Committee for Economic and Racial Justice, 103
 Common Law, 123
 The Common Strategies Group, 154
 Commoner/citizen, 12, 122, 154, 156–158
 Commons, 18, 121, 130, 150, 155, 156
 Compromise in 1820, 83
 Compromise of 1787, 81, 83
 Compromise of 1850, 83
 Compromise of 1877, 82
 Cone, J., 111, 130, 145
 Confucius, 127
 Congo Square, 75
 Core self, 37, 39, 51
 Crazy Horse Memorial, 166
 Crimes against humanity, 2, 100, 129, 141

D

Damasio, A., 7, 34, 36, 37, 40, 42, 170
 DeLasio, T.B., 110
 Delta Cooperative Farm, 104, 111
 Democracy, 59, 107, 108
 Desegregation, 145
 Di Mento, M., 58
 Dialogue, 129, 145, 174, 177, 178
 DiAngelo, R., 52, 170
 Disagreement, 153, 154, 178
 Disenchantment of the world, 121, 139
 Diversity wheel, 53, 54
 Douglass, F., 83
 Du Bois, W.E.B., 83–86, 88, 90, 98, 100, 126
 Dualistic thinking, 113
 Duguit, L., 124
 Dumezil, G., 4
 Dunbar-Ortiz, R., 93, 119
 Dwelling, 21–23

E

Earth, 17, 28, 120, 121, 131, 138, 157
 as a human habitat, 12, 105, 130, 178
 as living provider, 21
 as living system, 17, 24, 127
 as property, 20, 28, 121, 123, 139
 as sacred, 21, 121, 138, 139
 stable or hothouse, 27
 Earth Day, 24, 25, 28
 Eddy, S., 101, 104
 Elaine massacre, 98–100
 Elliott, J.H., 123
 Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, 85
 Emotions, 34–36, 40
 Emotions and feelings, 34–36
 Empathy, 12, 152
 Empathy neurons, 150
 Enclosures, 122
Encomienda, 122
 Enslaved Africans, 124
 Environmental victories, 25
 Epigenetic markers, 51
 Equal Justice Initiative, 164, 165
 The era of Redemption, 89
 Ethics and Diversity Program at Levi Strauss and Company, 102, 177
 Ethics of care, 12, 150, 159
 European Union, 129, 174
 Evangelical Academies, 129
 Exceptionalism, 129, 159
 Experience of being worthwhile, 37
 Experience of injustice, 152
 Experience of limits, 74, 146
 Experience of personal dignity, 43
 Experience of social worlds, 37
 Experience of vulnerability, 11
 Experience our humanity, 19, 33
 Experience social amnesia, 56

F

Fellowship-creating reality, 144
 Fellowship of Reconciliation, 103
 Feudalism, 155, 158
 15th Amendment, 87, 89
 Fitz, N., 58
 Foner, E., 86, 88, 89, 99
 Food Justice, 57
 14th Amendment, 87
 Fox, R.W., 100, 101, 120
 Freedman's Bureau, 86, 126
 Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, 84

Fulbright, W., 67
 Fuller, B., 64
 Future generations, 12, 21, 27, 60, 157, 172

G

Galbraith, K., 147
 Gandhi, M., 105
 Garrison, W.L., 83
 Gender identity, 50, 51
 General Allotment Act, 92
 Geneva Protocol 1949, 65, 172
 Genocide, 2, 119, 168
 George, H., 82, 91, 120, 130
 Gilligan, C., 158, 159
 Global warming, xi, 18, 22, 24, 26–28, 70, 156
 Great migration, 54, 98, 131
 Group pride, 103, 110
 Guehenno, J.-M., 65, 74
 Gunter's chain, 20

H

Haitian Revolution, 112
 Harari, Y., 38
 Hardin, G., 155
 Hart, D., 73
 Haslanger, S., 50, 51
 Held, V., 159
 Helfrich, S., 155, 157
 Heroism, 71
 Hobbs, E., 138, 143, 145
 Homelessness, 22
 Homeless person, 31
 Howard, B., 24
 Human and social differences, 43
 Human dignity, 31, 33, 37, 39, 113, 141
 Human limitation, 70, 74
 Human time, 18
 Humanity, 38, 43, 130, 141, 144, 176
 Humans as participants, 18
 Hunter-gatherer societies, 47

I

Indigenous people, 19, 119, 120, 139
 Individualism, 38, 39, 142, 171
 Injustice, 12, 76, 97, 117, 150, 160, 172
 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 65
 International Humanitarian Law, 10, 142
 Interpretative framework, 39, 69, 70, 138
 Invitations, 12, 169, 171, 172, 174

Irony, 108, 109, 112

J

Jacoby, R., 56
 Jefferson, T., 2, 82, 84
 Jim Crow, 1, 66, 82, 90, 98, 103, 166
 Johnson, A., 86
 Johnson, S., 41
 Jones, S.R., 120
 Justice, 1, 97, 174
 Justice and care, 159
 Justice as reciprocity, 163

K

Keen, S., 72
 Kester, H., 104, 126
 Kierkegaard, S., 72
 King, M.L. Jr., 1, 68, 86, 91, 96, 106, 111, 169
 Kinsella, H., 65
 Kohlberg, L., 158
 Ku Klux Klan, 87, 89, 90, 98–101, 103, 108, 164, 166
 Kyte, R., 22

L

Lehmann, P., 110, 143, 145
 Leopold, A., 92
 LGBTG communities, 50
 Limits, 96
 Limits of growth, 70
 Lincoln, A., 85, 86
 Lindsay, D., 58
 Linklater, A., 20, 21, 122, 123
 Locke, J., 121, 122, 130
 Lost cause, 89, 90, 128
 Louverture, T., 84
 Lukeman, A., 164
 Lynching, 89, 98, 100, 105, 130, 145, 159, 164, 165

M

Mailer, G., 110
 Mattei, U., 68
 McGovern, G., 91
 McLeod, C., 119
 McWhirter, C., 98
 Mill, J.S., 125, 126
 Mirror neurons, 40, 150, 152
 Modern dwelling, 22

- Monotheism, 110
 Moral boundaries, 50
 Moral Man and Immoral Society, 96, 103
 Morgenthau, H.J., 109
 Mother Earth, 20, 119, 121, 140
 Mount Rushmore, 166, 168
 Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem
 Terra, 124
 Mueller, E., 129
 Mukherjee, S., 50
 Museum of African American History and
 Culture, 1, 2
- N**
- NAACP, 99
 National Memorial for Peace and Justice, 164
 Native Americans, 2, 55, 60, 92, 112, 118, 119,
 124, 130, 168
 Nelson, M.K., 20, 52
 Neurobiology, 32–34, 39, 43, 141
 Neurons, 34, 35
 Nicomachean ethics, 36
 Niebuhr, R., 95, 97, 100–114
 Non-violent action, 105, 110
 Norton, M., 57
- O**
- Obama, B., 26, 91, 95
 Original Instructions, 19, 20
 Ostrom, E., 156, 157
- P**
- Paris climate Agreement, 156
 Parks, R., 111
 Patriarchal tradition, 139
 Pawnee, 120
 People of privilege, 12, 64, 146, 154, 158
 People of the earth, 130, 131
 Person, 32, 45, 152, 170
 Person and individual, 38
 Personal dignity, 42
 Personal pronouns, 32
 Philanthropy, 7, 58, 59, 142
 Polanyi, K., 21
 Power, J.A., 69
 Private property, 123, 130
 Progressive Farmers and Household Union of
 America, 99
 Property owners, 23, 66, 85, 122, 131
 Property relations, 74
 Property rights, 68
 Property's value, 23
- Q**
- Quadratic interpretative framework, 5
- R**
- Race and color, 51
 Racial bigotry, 102, 110
 Racialized humanity, 93, 113, 114, 157, 171,
 178
 Racial justice, 104
 Reciprocity, xi, 28, 29, 127, 128, 130, 166
 Reconstruction Act of 1867, 87
 Reconstruction, 66, 86
 Reich, R., 59
 Religious language, 142
 Reparations, xi, 120, 128, 130
 Richard Powers, 29
 Ricoeur, P., 160
 Rifkin, J., 150, 151, 153, 154
 Robinson, D., 166
 Roman law, 123
 Rothstein, R., 54
 Rule of law, 68, 69, 74, 155, 169, 179
 Ruppert, T.T., 124
- S**
- Sandel, M.J., 39
 Self
 as conductor created by orchestra, 42, 170
 as individual, 38
 as person, 42
 as process, 34
 as social behavior, 32
 Self and social identity, 39
 Self-consciousness, 42
 Self-understanding, 152, 174
 Selma, 11, 66, 169
 Settlers, 121
 Sharecropper, 99, 101, 103–105, 113, 126–128,
 130
 Sharecropping, 99, 124–126, 128, 154
 Siedentop, L., 38
 Siegel, D., 39–42
 Sioux nation, 119
 Skinner, E., 118
 Slim, H., 65
 Smith, A., 33, 111
 Social amnesia, 53, 56, 64

- Social awareness, 74
 Social differences, 43, 113
 Social division, 106
 Social evolution, 33
 Social function of land, 124
 Social history, 72
 Social human, 144
 Social identity, 50, 51, 110, 157, 170
 Social incoherence, 157
 Social limits of religious language, 142
 Social problem, 106
 Social relations, 17, 36–38, 40, 50, 57, 59, 72, 113, 144, 145, 152
 Social selves, 45, 51
 Social systems, 56, 57, 73, 130
 Social trends, 57, 141, 157, 177
 Social vs. human evolution, 33
 Social worlds, 5, 19, 20, 32, 50, 97, 102, 141, 142, 145, 157, 170, 179
 Solow, B., 118
 Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU), 103–105
 Soyinka, W., 42
 Special Field Order No. 15, 85
 Standing Bear, H., 166
 Standing Rock, 55, 174
 Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, 59
 Stevens, T., 126
 Stone Mountain, 164, 166
 Stowe, H.B., 83
 Sudanese Moss, 118
 Summer, C., 126
 Sussman, R., 73
 Systems of provision, 21, 74
- T**
- Taylor, J.G., 46
 Theology
 a study of power, 137
 window/mirror analogy, 138
 Theory of containment, 114
 Tirman, J., 173
 Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene, 27
- Triadic framework, 4, 60, 138
- U**
- Unearned income, 131
 United Nations, 173
 United Nations peacekeepers, 65
- V**
- Veterans Day, 66, 67
 Vietnam War, 67, 91, 129, 169
 View of evil, 141
 Violations of humanity, 1, 114
- W**
- Washington, G., 1, 2, 26, 82, 99, 111, 163, 166
 Wealth distribution, 57
 Wealth inequality, 7, 58
 Weber, M., 121
 Wells, I.B., 100
 Western religions and nature, 138
 White arrogance, 130, 169–171
 White compromise, 89, 92, 93, 97, 102, 106, 109, 111, 114
 White fragility, 52
 White man's compromise, 84
 White man's world, xi, 169
 White privilege, 60, 76, 96, 102
 White redeemers, 128
 White supremacy, 29, 60, 82, 98, 109, 169
 Wildung Harrison, B., 96
 Wilkerson, I., 54
 Wilson, C.R., 90
 Wilson, W., 90
 Women's movement, 158
 Woodruff, N.E., 99
 Worker-owned cooperatives, 105
 World Justice Project, 68
- Z**
- Ziolkowski, K., 166
 Zuckerwise, L., 82