Approaching Peace
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I come to this conference as an educator who works, every day, with young people about whose mental health and wellness we worry constantly at this, as the Secretary General names it, "inflection point" in global history. The necessity for Global Solidarity echoes in the documents we read, reminding us of our common responsibility in addressing big problems—like poverty, health, climate, technology, protecting women and girls, and others. I am an interdisciplinary scholar in Religion and Black Studies. My work in Black Studies begins with solidarity: it is a core feature of the Black Studies Mind, and it is at the core of Catholic Social Justice—as Pope Francis put it, "Solidarity means thinking and acting in terms of community." Facing the destructive elements of global culture, solidarity seeks justice and, for Pope Francis, is "understood in its most profound meaning, is a way of making history."[1]

We seem to have become incapable of this work, losing, in our global modernity, the foundations of religious meaning and practice and the capacity to talk across cultures. The world's religions offer us images of and goals for peace: from seeking harmony, alignment with Heaven (*tian*), in Confucianism; to *shalom*, seeking completeness and wholeness in Judaism; to Jesus' call for us to live now in the Kingdom of God in Christianity through love; to Islam's sense of *jihad* as the struggle to do God's will; and to Buddhism's sense of interbeing, in Thich Nhat Hanh's work. These practices put us into right relation with the self, with those we see as "other," and with, if we believe in it, the divine. These calls for peace act as a baseline for dialogue and cooperation across nations and traditions, letting us address the larger interests that threaten the common human good.

The language used in diplomatic dialogue and negotiation emerges from our traditions. As thinkers like Jean Paul Lederach suggest, terms like "truth," "justice," "peace," and "mercy,"[2] for example, have different valances in different traditions and may be rejected by the non-religious, thereby creating dialogic misunderstandings. And such peace-making, practiced by and for nations with global interests, may lead only to what Johann Galtung has called a "Frozen Peace" and what Pope Pius XI called "the state of armed peace with is scarcely better than war itself."[3] As Native American Osage scholar George "Tink" Tinker recognized, rapid global change can put modern people in a kind pernicious present moment. We, in a state of forgetting, ignoring, or valorizing the past, "presume that [our] 'present' is the only reality."[4] Hence, we seek peace as stability, but without trust.[5] Galtung argues this is a false conception of peace, suggesting that peace is an ongoing dialectical and often paradoxical process, taking place, as Lederach suggests, in relationships in which we imagine the inclusion of those we now see as enemies, as we take the risk of "of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar frontier landscape of violence."[6]

In this time of heightened global tension, the risk may seem too costly; therefore, we fall back on what we know: war. Here, I want to think about why. I, first, want to talk about *this*, *our*, modernity and its challenges. To turn to solutions, I, second, I would like to discuss, as Lederach does but differently, the imagination. Toni Morrison, in *Beloved*, has a character, Baby Suggs, say that the only grace that we can have is the grace that we can imagine and that if we cannot see it, we will not have it.[7] Narrative, I will suggest, storytelling is, as the Truth and Reconciliation practice has shown, an imperfect but useful practice for imagining peace. I want to suggest that the "imagined community" of the nation, which is a foundation for our guiding narratives, has the capacity to reimagine itself by listening to "others," who participate in it in

multiple ways, tell their stories. Finally, realizing that this imagining may not happen, I want to turn to what the individual can do, thinking through Fr. John Dear's idea of "disarming the heart" as a mode of, as Thich Nhat call it, "being peace."

Our Modernity

Paul Ricoeur was courageous in arguing that we must live in "our modernity." To live in the present, Ricoeur argues is to establish a relationship to the past (historical time and human memory) that opens it to a future, to a horizon of expectation that we do not have if we forget or are unfaithful to the past.[8] The relationship is made in narrative, in how we tell our stories. Ricoeur calls this work "emplotment." Drawing discordant elements into a recognizable story that can be told, (re)configuring them, is a form of hermeneutics, of interpretation, that imposes structure on the flow of experience.[9] Emploting, for Ricoeur, is not telling the "truth": it recognizes that all the elements we narrate are contingent and that the story could have been different. This *differance*, as Derrida will call it, asks us to defer fixing meaning, and for Ricoeur, invites ethical evaluation: we are called to account as we tell and listen to stories.

Modernity is concerned with the "I," the self. Ricoeur argues, however, that emplotment makes us recognize that we are always part of a "we": that my story intersects with other stories, and that every person narrating is a full person, whether agent of action or sufferer. The storytelling moment is a made "now," in the construction of a present that should help us to recognize our intimacy with others. In it, relationship is the goal: a life in which we all participate with and for others[10] for the common good.

Narrative rebuilds; it is a task,[11] one of mourning and of justice for those who have been victimized,[12] one that does not allow us to abuse memory for power and self-justification.[13] It is

to look on our pasts with love, to care for the future. To actively narrate suggests that we are not doomed to repeat the past; we are required to engage it: not to forget. Repetition, which we find boring in the modern, is like ritual repetition, creative. It opens the past to the future through recollection.[14]

We often resist this relationship to the past. As Thomas Merton writes in his essay, "Gandhi and the One-Eyed Giant," using Buddhist language, we are all lost in illusion. The One-Eyed Giant, for Merton, is the Western orientation to the world—what bell hooks calls "Imperialist White Supremacist Capitalist Cis-Gender Patriarchy" that emerges, Tinker adds, from "euro-christian colonialism."[15] This is not about, at least anymore, whiteness as a skin color, though in colonialism and enslavement, whiteness played a key role. Whiteness describes a way of being in the world that Merton describes as "self-isolated" and individualistic and that is obsessed with change, progress and power.[16] Controlling matter and the human body in an objectified way, using scientific understanding without wisdom, Western epistemology keeps us in illusion, without tools or avenues to mercy.[17] Without wisdom, in our time, to paraphrase Azariah's prayer in the book of Daniel--we have rulers, but we do not have true leaders and prophets, and, in Buddhist terms, we ignore the bodhisattvas. This means, as the *Diamond Sutra* teaches, that we take

A shooting star, a clouding of the sight...

A dream, a lightening flash, a thunder cloud

as permanent reality, when they mark the illusory nature of all things. The mind is, as Pema Düddul reminds us, "a magician creating illusions," leaving us stranded "in the ocean of cyclic existence."[18] It makes us open to illusions performed by magicians who, in our time, create deadly illusions of dominance.

This is a moment in which, as Merton suggests in 1965 and is true now, the ancient wisdoms need each other and an honest evaluation of "our modernity." We must live in the time we are in. Originalism, a looking back to a national past as perfect, even when it discriminated against women, people of color and any "other" who scares us, is a dangerous practice, an abuse of memory, marking the "sickness of civilization."[19] We must recognize that nothing is permanent and seek wisdom, free ourselves and, as Merton argues, awaken to a mature political consciousness that is not exclusive, absolute, and intolerant and that does not, when faced with challenge, confabulate.[20]

National Memory and Imagined Community

Ricoeur, as we suggested, argues that the imagination of the self should be towards the greater purpose of living with and for others. This means that imagination is always in relation to history and tradition, or "heritage," a term we have heard used in the United States to justify divisive issues, like Confederate monuments.[21] For Ricoeur, however, tradition is not inert or static. It suggests there are moments at which human beings reached a high level of innovation and poetic activity[22] and that these moments are documented in myth and text because they have "potency."[23] Our relation to them should not be just to repeat them mindlessly, but to complete the work, to reconfigure the world under these plots.[24]

In the "social imaginary," therefore, we must be careful not to use tradition to justify new orders of domination.[25] This occurs when we take symbols literally. Myth is the "nucleus" that undergirds and distributes the functions of institutions, but we grasp this nucleus indirectly;

therefore, we go awry in claiming that we are or own the symbol: we *are* the kingdom, for example.[26] Under a more capacious and generous imagination, symbolic understandings can expand, leading to an idea like Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Beloved Community. The social imaginary, therefore, is not just for ideological control but for liberation, for the disclosure of possible worlds, and the work required is care.

We live in, therefore, imagined communities. Benedict Anderson[27] has most powerfully articulated the implications of this in his work on nationalism. A nation is a construct that undergirds identity. [28] National belonging

> is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.[29]

A nation is bounded, yet sovereign. Its boundaries may be flexible or closed, but its citizenship is limited. Those who live in it imagine it as community, "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in [it], the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship," as "fraternity" that inspires our loyalty to it and willingness to kill and die for it.[30] Jan Assmann argues that it preserves shared "cultural memory," with "figures of memory"—stories, heroic figures, etc.-- maintained through cultural formation and institutional communication,[31] creating a common past[32] for the social group.

Anderson argues that in the "dusk of religious modes of thought" in the Enlightenment, the nation, in some ways, took religion's place, making it seem eternal[33] in a "distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces" that link "fraternity, power and time meaningfully together."[34] The national consciousness becomes the modern consciousness. Print gave vernacular language force and built an "image of antiquity"[35] for the nation, while the

power of administrative language, and capitalism, which drove and bound all these forces, heightened the sense of belonging to a nation and spread with colonialism.[36] These forces came to mark the nation as eternal and, I suggest, *sui generis*, unique. In addition, they also grant a kind of immortality, emerging from a shared collective memory.[37] Nations gathered older/other cultures to themselves. George Steiner, for example, writes that the Bible informs Western historical and social identity and that, in translations of key passages, translators exerted a "gravitational force" that points forward to Christianity,[38] thereby making the Hebrew Bible the possession of the Christian West and a potent weapon in nationalist discourse. A nation, therefore, encountering an "other," may not inclusively expand the boundaries of its heritage but, with power, appropriate the stories of others as its own or destroy those that tell other stories.[39]

Recognizing this creates a demand for us to expand what John Paul Lederach calls the "moral imagination" that can develop

> …the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that include our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar frontier landscape of violence.[40]

Lederach recognizes that we live in "contending modernities,"[41] but that we also, communally, can focus our energies on the big problems that face all of us—issues like poverty, ecology, and peace—and seek ways to imagine a future together.

Narrative—storytelling—has been used to this end in structures like truth and reconciliation commissions, whose job is to investigate and record by listening to stories[42] and in grassroots, "inclusive,"[43] peacemaking efforts which seek to expand beyond the already

committed[44] to link local, national, and international voices. These efforts are not magical. They are examples of dialogic modes that potentially harness the energy of conflict and turn it to peace, refusing to be seduced by seeing the present crisis as unique. This involves hearing the stories of those across the systems involved in "generative dialogue."[45] Mark Clark, formerly of Generations for Peace, recounting his growing awareness that we need to listen to others' stories to move to a more stable coexistence, writes:

> It was in the remote, isolated communities of [Papa New Guinea] ... that I really began to learn to let go of my Western preconceptions, mental models, heuristics, and assumptions about what is going on. I learned to let go, to slow down, to withhold judgment, and to just be open and curious. "The system makes sense to itself, even if it doesn't yet make sense to me" became to my mantra. "Seek first to understand" became my primary task.[46]

Storytelling sets us in "the messy middle"[47] may reveal the human where we resist seeing her, building empathy so that we build the capabilities to belong to each other beyond national borders. Stories are relatable and accessible.[48] Introducing flexibility, story may help us to reexamine our values and abandon or reconstruct the destructive stories we tell in order to build peace.[49] As such storytelling, even within cultural constraints, has been called a decolonizing practice that builds bridges, counters stereotyping, begins emotional healing,[50] catalyzes change, and opens a way to transform.[51]

Practice

We, I fear, are not able, in our modern nations, to approach peace. Jessica Senehi, in thinking about storytelling and narrative brings forth the issue that we may, to our peril, ignore: geography. People shape identity in relation to and in time and in space. The late Dr. Charles H.

Long, argued—and I agree—that religion is "orientation in the ultimate sense, that is, how one comes to terms with the ultimate significance of one's place in the world."[52] On the group level, religions locate us in time and space in relation, as Catherine Albanese has understood, to extraordinary and ordinary things.[53] On the level of the extraordinary, we see that sacred spaces often are sites of immense violence, [54] because they constitute centers of meaning and being. Nations, as we have seen Anderson argue, are considered sacred spaces. So is, in an Enlightenment sense of property as a right, my yard. In terms of ordinary things, religions teach us how to treat the world and each other, involving ethical relations.

The United States was configured, in its Puritan founding, as the "New Jerusalem," and, as John Winthrop proclaimed in 1630, a City on a Hill.[55] This City, Ronald Reagan suggested, in his presidential farewell in 1989,

> [is] God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity. And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here.[56]

President Reagan speaks of an imagined community's imagined past. But it seems that the doors were and are closed to some, no matter their will and heart. I am not going to try to argue this issue but turn to the individual heart and suggest that how we perceive our borders is a sign of how open our individual hearts are, and modern hearts are closed and armed. Maybe where we start is there.

When I began to think about the question of approaching peace, my mind went immediately to Fr. John Dear and his 1993 book, *Disarming the Heart: Toward a Vow of Nonviolence*. I saw Fr. Dear[57] speak, in either 2004 or 2005, at a Gandhian Nonviolence

Conference. What I remember -- and this is my memory, not any transcript -- is, that even among a group gathered in a commitment to peace, Fr. Dear's words stirred immense unrest and even anger among the participants, who rejected or wanted to limit his call for radical nonviolence and who wanted to retain an option for violent response in endangerment to self and to the nation. The question that people asked, as we ask in Just War Theory, was: "When are we justified in fighting?" Fr. Dear said, without hesitation, "Never."

Fr. Dear began the path of nonviolence in 1984 when he and three friends "openly and honestly confessed [their] use of violence, [their] apathy in the face of systemic violence, [their] complicity in the structures of violence, and [their] failure to be people of nonviolence."[58] As a Secular Franciscan, this is my understanding of choosing a path of nonviolence as well. This understanding is not the end. Too often, we –I—say it, but do not change.

Fr. Dear and his friends made a vow. This action is important: it, "taken after serious preparation and in full freedom,"[59] opens, Dear argues, a channel. It sets one on a direction with others going the same way, pledging to be faithful to a way of life. For the Christian, a vow opens one to God's grace. Vows are remembrance of the past in a transgressive way, and this is important for Fr. Dear. Fr. Dear writes we have forgotten who we are. Dear calls on us to remember who we are: sons and daughters of a loving God who already has reconciled us.[60] For Buddhism, when we remember, we seek to actualize our Buddha nature which, the Dalai Lama argues, is nonviolent.[61] The Buddha never approved action that began with the intention to kill: "When asked if there was anything whose killing he approved of, the Buddha answered that there was only one thing: anger. In no recorded instance did he approve of killing any living being at all." He told his followers:

> We will remain sympathetic, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading these people with an awareness imbued with good will and, beginning with them, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves." —MN 21[62]

The vow keeps right action in active consciousness, affirming the power of tradition but making it active and adaptive.

Fr. Dear argues that a process of self-awareness begins, for Catholics, in living up to our baptismal vow, which we repeat at key rituals, rejecting evil.[63] In a parallel way, Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. These acts mark the decision to take a path, with others, that helps us to face the "internal dangers" that have always challenged human beings and to interrogate the quality of our own intentions, to realize that "to [live] in line with the belief that actions based on skillful intentions lead to happiness, while actions based on unskillful intentions lead to suffering."[64]

Journeying together, we can begin to disarm the heart, and like the bodhisattvas, to participate in the disarmament of the world. Such idea is terrifying to us in this historical moment in which we seek surety and submit to the magicians, to the fantasies of any strongman who says he will fix things.[65] We prefer the false safety of violence—and as Fr. Dear, reminds us, we are also addicted to it.

We are addicted to violence because it drives, undergirds, and makes rational our lives and systems to which we cling. Violence begins in our hearts because we have given in to fear, despair (we do not believe there is a way other than violence), hatred and anxiety.[66] We forget, in

the Christian sense, that we must love the neighbor. In Thich Nhat Hanh's Zen sense in the nonviolent Order of Interbeing, we forget that we "interare."[67] Nhat Hanh writes:

> We arm our hearts against the God of love and against others. We fester in self-hatred and a lack of peace. Soon we start to lie, cheat, hate whole groups of people, and act selfishly. Communication with others breaks down...
>
> We no longer see the face of God in the faces of other people... We are blind [to] and give in to the darkness of violence.[68]

We make idols of our instruments of violence[69]--nuclear weapons, the AK-47—and the "abnormality of violence becomes normal."[70]

Thich Nhat Hanh writes, as Ricoeur did, that ideologies are addictive ideas in the name of which, if we proclaim them as "the absolute truth," we can kill millions.[71] Dear argues that we need practices to get clean and sober. A Nichiren practitioner, Ven. Kenjo Igarashi, links such cleaning to the purification of mind[72] from the Three Poisons-- Greed, Anger, and Ignorance--which are an "inside stain, inside enemy, inside foe, inside murderer, inside adversary," causing blindness, the inability to see what is good for us, and the inability to know the Dharma.[73]

For Nhat Hanh, cleansing begins with mindfulness training: being in touch with the self so as to continue and make real and manifest the work of compassion in the present moment.[74] While we use different words to talk about this—for Christians, the heart and sin and for Buddhists, mind and karma and rebirth—we mean, I think, similar things: as Thanissaro Bhikkhu puts it, happiness in this life and the life to come and creating openings for living *a*—not *the*--good life[75] and, we hope, with others.

Openings and Speculations

Any practice is messy, and ideologies tell us they can free us from the work and mess of making peace. I have been contemplating on the raft in Buddhist thought. I think we want to see that we get on the raft empty-handed and ready and quickly paddle to the other shore, get off, and are clean, awake. In reality, we pile the raft with all the stuff we fear we cannot do without. It is weighed down, so we, burdened with false knowledge ourselves, struggle to get to the other shore in turbulent waters, full of others on the journey and the junk they are discarding. The struggle may ease some when we face that the way is not the old way that got us into the situation we are in now. We cannot hold on to ideologies and false selves. We start to throw all that mess off the raft. That does not mean that we let go of everything—we do not let go of our myths and traditions or the dharma. But we can learn to stand in a different relationship to them, a relationship that begins to cleanse us of the toxicity of our modernity. Maybe there will be a point that we do not need them at all—at least, not as crutches. When we get to the other shore, we leave the raft. Maybe someone else can use it for her journey. In this way, the past is useable, but not perfect or a strait jacket.

Narrative making and storytelling are tools in this work. They are effective because they transform the consciousness of the storyteller and the listener. They, to use a marketing term, make ideas "sticky," linking them to our self-understanding and developing investment. Stories show us that there is another way to understand the self and the other, the past and the now. As Jacques Derrida argues, we tend to believe testimony—to make an act of belief and fidelity to it[76]-- because our experience of testimony shows us "that the criteria of the attestation of truth in story and testimony area not objective, formal, and self-founded.[77] In the space of testimony, of story, which is a religious *and* a political space, the "unaccountable and incalculable," in their

impossibility, are possible,[78] can be centered, and we can deconstruct/decenter false universals, like ideologies, and imagine otherwise, reimagining the social bond.[79]

We are "hardwired for stories," and we identify with human beings and their struggles.[80] Stories provide models of order and meaning, as our imagined communities suggest. In peace building, I hope, storytelling, as a social activity, can engage the imaginative part of our brains,[81] the parts that participate empathetically and actively in the encounter with the "other" and let us ask Michel Foucault's question, "Why do we think things have to be the way they are?" That unease marks the beginning of struggle—making what the late Civil Rights activist and Senator John Lewis called "good trouble," necessary trouble, that builds towards a Beloved Community.[82] If narrative is how we organize meaning, my hope is that we, knowing each other's stories, come to take them into our own stories, so that, as my mentor, the late Robert Detweiler said, I can no longer know and tell my own story without telling yours; so that we can move, again and again, from enemy-making to narratives that synchronize[83] our stories with the stories of others, reframing, leading us to compassionate action in which we form new, more expansive and inclusive images and spaces of order and relationality.

[1] "Solidarity," https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/solidarity.

[2] I use terms from the United States Institute of Peace's *Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Manuel*. https://www.usip.org/public-education-new/reconciliation-truth-justice-peace-mercy.

[3] Pope Pius XI, Encyclical, "Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio," https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19221223_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio.html.

[4] George Tinker, "A Native American Response," in *Peacemaking and the Challenge of Violence in World Religions*, ed. Irfan A. Omar aand Michael K. Duffey (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 110.

[5] Enda McDonagh, *Immersed in Mystery: En Route to Theology* (Dublin: Veritas Press, 2007), 163.

[6] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005),5.

[7] Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

[8] Ricoeur, Memory, *History, and Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 380, 22.

[9] See Michelle L. Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma, and the Construction of Meaning* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), 47.

[10] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 165ff.

[11] Ricoeur, *Memory, History and Forgetting*, 87.

[12] Ibid., 89.

[13] Ibid., 90. Commemoration, actually, can do this.

[14] Ibid., 400. Recollection is a Christian form of meditation.

[15] Tinker, 110. bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 16.

[16] Thomas Merton, *Gandhi on Non-Violence: Selections from the Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Ed., Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1964, 1965), 1. Tinker, 110.

[17] Merton, 1.

[18] Pema Düddul, "Freedom from Illusion," *Tricycle* (Winter 2021), https://tricycle.org/magazine/reality-in-buddhism/.

[19] Merton, 2. He quotes Ananda Coomaraswamy.

[20] Merton, 31.

[21] See Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 130. Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/488538. For a criticism of "heritage" language, The Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy (1 February 2019), https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy.

[22] Richard Kearney, "Exploring Imagination with Paul Ricoeur," *Stretching the Limits of Productive Imagination: Studies in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Neo-Kantianism,* ed. Saulius Geniusas (Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).199.

[23] Jessica Senehi, "Constructive Storytelling: A Peace Process," *Peace and Conflict Studies Journal* 9.2 (2002), 43. DOI: 10.46743/1082-7307/2002.1026.

[24] Assmann and Czaplicka, Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 201.

[26] Ibid., 202.

[27] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[28] Ibid., 37. Being in a nation orients us in time and space: A nation is a "horizontal-secular, transverse time" construct.

[29] Ibid., 6.

[30] Ibid., 7.

[31] Assmann and Czaplicka, 129. This kind of memory concretizes identity, giving us an awareness of our unity (130): we are this, and/but we are not that.

[32] Ibid., 127.

[33] Anderson, 8.

[34] Ibid., 36. Religions offer privileged access and binding desperate persons and hierarchy, sets leadership and power, in structures like divine kingship. The nation offers a cosmology and a way of understanding time in which "cosmology and history are indistinguishable." All these, Anderson argues, combine to make the nation a force for "linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together."

[35] Ibid., 44. Anderson argues that even as cultures were found to be older than Western Europe—like Indian culture—these were "forced to mingle on equal ontological footing with a motley plebian crowd of vernacular rivals," driven by print capitalism (70).

[36] I am summarizing a dense point here. See Anderson, 37ff.

[37] See Nicholas Russell, "Collective Memory Before and After Halbwachs," *The French Review* 79.4 (March 2006): 794, 797. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25480359.

[38] George Steiner, "Introduction," *The Old Testament*: The King James Version (New York: The Big Nest/Everyman's Library, 1996).

[39] This can leave the dominated, in a sense, without a place in the nation. George Tinker said, as he prepared to leave Iliff School of Theology:

> When I first came to Iliff, I was interested in finding creative ways to hold Indian culture in tension with the gospel of Jesus Christ, trying to find a middle way to be both Christian and Indian. Iliff gave me the running room to actually explore that and to discover that it was a dead end. I couldn't do it and be honest to the Indian self "Stir Up the Mud From the Bottom of the Pond," Iliff School of Theology, https://www.iliff.edu/doctor-tink-tinker-2/.

[40] Lederach, 5.

[41] "Contending Modernities" is a project at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, led by Scott Appleby, Ebrahim Moosa and Atalia Omer to understand ways that we can advance collaboration for the common good. https://kroc.nd.edu/research/religion-conflict-peacebuilding/contending-modernities/.

[42] "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions," International Justice Resource Center, https://ijrcenter.org/cases-before-national-courts/truth-and-reconciliation-commissions/.

[43] See: Marthe Hiev Hamidi, "Why Grassroots Peacebuildinig? Is 'Inclusive Peacebuilding' a More Sustainable Recipe for Peace?" *Peace Insight,* https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/inclusive-peacebuilding-colombia-how-can-grassroots-organizations-contribute-national-peace-process/?location=colombia&theme=ddr.

[44] See, for example: https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/07/people-people-examining-grassroots-peacebuilding-efforts-between-israelis-and.

[45] Mark Clark, "Personal Reflections from a Grassroots Peacebuilding Journey," *New England Journal of Public Policy* 36.1 (June 2024): 19.

[46] Ibid. 8-9.

[47] See Mark Clark, "Mark Clark's MBE Post," Linked-In, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/markjmclark_on-31st-july-i-stepped-down-from-my-role-activity-7092467476709404672-Pnkg?trk=public_profile_like_view. See Scott Belsky, *The Messy Middle: Fiding Your Way Through the Hardest and Most Crucial Part of Any Bold Venture* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018). Belsky argues that the "messy middle," if we do not rush through it, contains all the discoveries that build capacity (1).

[48] Senehi, 44.

[49] Kirthi Jayakumar, "Storytelling for Peace," *Peace Insight* (14 May 2015), https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/storytelling-peace/?location=&theme=culture-media-advocacy.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Senehi, 45. Senehi helpfully examines the constructive and deconstructive possibilities of story, in relation to knowledge (47-48), identity (48-50), socialization (50-52), emotions (52-53), morality (53-54), and time and memory (54-55). She also adds the importance of geographic space—noting the importance of the natural environment and of territory. This may be the most difficult dimension to negotiate, as it includes borders and charged, sacred spaces.

[52] Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Aurora, CA: The Davies Group, 1999), 7.

[53] Catherine Albanese, 1992. *America: Religion and Religions* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1992). Albanese argues that the components of a religious system include creed, code, cultus, and community (18). Religion shapes and is shaped by creed (11), "explanations about the meaning or meanings of human life"—like beliefs, sacred stories, theology and philosophy and oral traditions (Albanese 1992, 9) and code, "rules that govern everyday behavior" (9), moral and ethical systems, as well as societal values and customs (9-10).

[54] See Ron E. Hassner, *War on Sacred Grounds* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[55] Abram Van Engen, "How America Became a 'City Upon a Hill: The Rise and Fall of Perry Miller" *Humanities* 41.1 (Winter 2020), https://www.neh.gov/article/how-america-became-city-upon-hill.

[56] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation," (11 January 1989), Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum Archives, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/farewell-address-nation.

[57] Fr. Dear is still a priest, but he was dismissed from the Jesuits for "radical disobedience. Joshua J.McElwee, "John Dear, Jesuit Known for Peace Witness, Dismissed From Order," *National Catholic Reporter*, 7 January, 2014, https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/john-dear-jesuit-known-peace-witness-dismissed-order. One quoted source said that Fr. Dear, who remains a priest, was "unavailable to mission," which is a key element of the Jesuit charism. See: Carl Bunderson, "Priest Dismissed From Society of fJesus Had "Lost His Way," *Catholic News Agency* (16 January 2014), https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/28795/priest-dismissed-from-society-of-jesus-had-lost-his-way.

[58] John Dear, *Disarming the Heart: Toward a Vow of Nonviolence* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 17.

[59] Ibid., 56.

[60] Dear, 43. In forgetting who we are, we, as Muslims argue, may commit *shirk*, putting in the place of God what is not God.

[61] The Dalai Lama, "A Buddhist Concept of Nature," His Holiness The Dalai Lama of Tibet, thedalailama.com, https://www.dalailama.com/messages/environment/buddhist-concept-of-nature,

[62] Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, "Getting the Message," *Insight Journal*, The Barre Center for Buddhist Studies (Spring 2006), https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/getting-the-message/.

[63] "Renewal of Baptismal Promises," *Catholic Online*, https://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=1653. We renew this vow at baptisms we attend and on each Easter Sunday. In confirming our direction of life, we reject Satan and Satan's works and empty promises, and reaffirm the elements of the Creed we believe and practice.

[64] Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, "Going for Refuge," *Insight Journal*, The Barre Center for Buddhist Studies (Spring 1996), **https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/going-for-refuge/.**

[65] See Historian Timothy Snyder's Blog, "Thinking About...," "The Strongman Fantasy and Dictatorship in Real Life" (14 March 2024), https://snyder.substack.com/p/the-strongman-fantasy. Gideon Rachman, *The Age of the Strongman: How the Cult of the Leader Threatens Democracy Around the World* (New York: Bodley Head/Vintage Books, 2002). Rachman writes that Strongmen have contempt for the rule of law, suggesting that the law stands in the way of what needs to be done since it is controlled by the elites in an obscuring way; therefore, they attack judicial independence. At the same time, they use the law as a weapon.

> Strongman leaders make the populist claim that they are representing and that they love "the real people," with whom they have a "unique rapport," against the elites, and preside over a politics driven by fear and nationalism. This allows them to deploy master signifiers—like "Build the Wall" or "Get Brexit Done"--that suggest that "there are simple solutions for complex forces." They desire to be admired for their strength, particularly as it stands between the people and "shadowy" external enemies.[65] This strength feeds the sense that they should have power for life, because only they can bring back the good times again, and they build that power by "merging the interests of the strongman with [those of] the state, letting family members be appointed to key offices, for example."

Strongman leaders are adept at using media, particularly social media. This direct, personal connection lets the strongman, as Giroux puts it, empty language of any ethics and responsibility and to "operate in the service of violence."

[66] Dear., 34.

[67] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987, 2005), 88. Nhat Hanh takes the term from the Avatamsaka Sutra. Interbeing means, "You are, therefore I am."

[68] Dear, 34.

[69] Ibid., 38.

[70] Ibid., 37.

[71] Nhat Hanh, 91.

[72] Ven. Kenjo Igarashi, "The Significance of Cleaning in Buddhism" (8 January 2018), https://sacramentonichirenchurch.org/the-significance-of-cleaning-in-buddhism/#:~:text=However%2C%20this%20concept%20of%20"cleaning,opportunity%20to%20purify%20our%20mind..

[73] See Itivuttaka 88, dhammatalks.org: Talks, Writings and Translations of Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/KN/Iti/iti88.html.

[74] Ibid., 86-88.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," in *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 70,

[77] Francesco Vitale, Conjuring Time: Jacques Derrida, Between Testimony and Literature. *Parallax*, 17.1 (2011): 54-64. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13534645.2011.531179

[78] See: Gil Anidjar, "A Note on Faith and Knowledge," in *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Religion*, 40.

[79] Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 80.

[80] For a popular discussion, see Carl Alviani, "The Science Behind Story," *Medium* (11 October 2018), https://medium.com/the-protagonist/the-science-behind-storytelling-51169758b22c.

[81] Pamela B. Rutledge, "The Psychological Power of Storytelling, " *Psychology Today* (January 6, 2011), https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/positively-media/201101/the-psychological-power-storytelling.

[82] Carla D. Hayden, "Remembering John Lewis: The Power of 'Good Trouble,'" Library of Congress Blogs (19 July 2020), https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2020/07/remembering-john-lewis-the-power-of-good-trouble/.

[83] Debora Ko, "The Psychology of Good Storytelling," *Medium* (July 3, 2023), https://psykobabble.medium.com/the-psychology-of-good-storytelling-e872a09e1b2b. Ko argues that storytelling works well because we are hardwired to pay attention to a good story and that storytelling is a social endeavor because:

- **It synchronizes our brains**: Studies show that when people are focused on the story, their brain waves start to mimic the storyteller's brainwaves. In other words, the storyteller can control their audience's brains (literally).
- **Emotional content is remembered more**. Humans are acutely attuned to emotions (in fact, we have specific neurons that help us feel the same emotion that we see in others).
- **Our social cognition and prediction centers of our brains light up when we read stories.** We react mentally the same way we try to make sense of other humans in the real world and predict their behaviors.