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Ethics of Remembering

Ética del Recuerdo

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Abstract
Many communities today continue to be haunted by conscious and unconscious memories of past atrocities as they struggle to live with the legacies of brutality and related trauma. These dehumanising events are not just recent wars, violent intercommunal conflicts, genocides, apartheid, and forced displacement, but also more distant outrages, including the occupation of indigenous lands, enslavement, and colonialism. So the trauma was transmitted from one generation to the next, and the effects of dehumanisation are kept alive in our collective memory. In this context, this article explores remembering as beyond the cognition and beyond language. It draws on the normative theory of collective memory and pays attention to remembering as the embodied and the emotional, including the ways that potent sensations and sentiments might encapsulate the unspeakable and in-articulatable experiences of loss, grief and injustice. This allows a further investigation into how remembering the past brutality can transmit and reinforce our identity, relational orientations and actions. As what we remember and how we should remember the past can determine our experience of our dignity and well-being, this article proposes that it requires the ethics of remembering aimed at enriching the healing and transformative potential of collective memory, and inspiring our responsibilities for co-creating a just and humane world.
KeyWords: Intergenerational trauma, mass atrocity, ethics of remembering, embodied memory, emotions

Resumen
Muchas comunidades hoy en día siguen siendo acosadas por recuerdos conscientes e inconscientes de atrocidades pasadas mientras luchan por vivir con los legados de brutalidad y el trauma relacionado. Estos eventos deshumanizantes no son solo guerras recientes, conflictos violentos entre comunidades, genocidios, apartheid y desplazamiento forzado, sino también atrocidades más lejanas, como la ocupación de tierras indígenas, la esclavitud y el colonialismo. Entonces, el trauma se transmitió de una generación a la siguiente, y los efectos de la deshumanización se mantienen vivos en nuestra memoria colectiva. En este contexto, este artículo explora el recuerdo más allá de la cognición y más allá del lenguaje. Se basa en la teoría normativa de la memoria colectiva y presta atención al recuerdo como lo encarnado y lo emocional, incluidas las formas en que las sensaciones y los sentimientos potentes pueden encapsular las experiencias indecibles e inexpresables de pérdida, dolor e injusticia. Esto permite una mayor investigación sobre cómo recordar la brutalidad pasada puede transmitir y reforzar nuestra identidad, orientaciones relacionales y acciones. Qué recordamos y cómo deberíamos recordar el pasado puede determinar nuestra experiencia de nuestra dignidad y bienestar, este artículo propone que requiere la ética de recordar destinada a enriquecer el potencial curativo y transformador de la memoria colectiva, e inspirar nuestras responsabilidades para co-creando un mundo justo y humano.
Palabras Claves: Trauma intergeneracional, atrocidad masiva, ética del recuerdo, memoria encarnada, emociones

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Ethics of Remembering

My great fear is that we are all suffering from amnesia.
Eduardo Geleano
(Young, 2013)

Introduction

Remembering in the context of historical atrocity is complex and multifaceted. It tends to involve recounting, reinterpreting, re-sensing and meaning-making (Rotberg and Thompson, 2000). Contemporary movements, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), tend to focus on *the effects* of remembering, including truths, accountability, justice, restitution, reparation, and even reconciliation. In post-conflict societies, where there are needs for public memories, remembering generally aims at the following interconnected objectives and outcomes:

To ensure truthful representations of historical facts. Although 'truths' can be told from different angles, e.g. from the perspectives of the victims/ survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders, achieving truthful understanding of the historical events remains an imperative (Bakiner, 2015). In particular, when those in power deliberately distort and manipulate the ways historical facts are represented, the victims and survivors can feel betrayed, perpetuating cycles of violence and reinforcing victimhood (Ross, 2003).

To respect victims/survivors' sufferings. (González and Varney 2013). The process of truths-seeking and remembering must be sensitive to the memories of the victims, survivors and their family members, including their experiences of the aftermath of the harm inflicted upon them, such as intergenerational trauma, PTSD, continued oppression, and so forth. These are mutable and relentless and require respect from those who have perpetuated the harm.

To seek justice, reparation and restitution. Accepting the effects of brutality can be the basis for seeking justice for those who have suffered and continued to suffer the wounds of the past. This will be followed by a reparative and restitutive procedure (Greiff, 2006).

To repair the relational rapture and reconcile. Collective memory provides an important public space for encounter, listening, sharing and experiencing complex feelings and emotions. It can contribute to restoring the relationships that were severed by the acts of violence. It is particularly important for the perpetrators' group to condemn past wrongs, recognise the wounds of atrocity, show remorse and offer political apologies, all of which can lead to reconciliation.

To right the wrong. This overarching aim is accumulative of all other objectives. Indeed, collective memory not only seeks to bring to light the facts of brutality, acknowledge victims and survivors' sufferings, identify the harmful effects and intergenerational trauma, restore the community, it also recognises the structural injustice and systemic failings that had led to the atrocities. Remembering can thus result in political accountability and responsibility for just society.

For many countries, the TRC and other similar public remembering processes are launched *in order to* appease the victims and families, address the consequences of dehumanisation, recognise the roots of violence, weave the society together across the divides and support systemic transformation. Political apologies, reparation and reconciliatory practices are amongst the key pathways to help

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communities heal (Tutu, 1999). That is why TRC has been integrated in more than 40 countries over the last three decades, (Rotberg, 2000) and has brought hope to many societies suffering historical trauma and injustice. In all the TRC processes, attention has been consistently directed at the above mentioned objectives, and thereby the effects, and the improved social conditions for the groups that were victimised, marginalised and dehumanised. In fact, the TRCs tend to be evaluated accordingly (du Toit). This also means that criticism of TRC is generally directed the lack of such effects. (Flisfeder, 2010)

For the TRC process, remembering or truth-telling is *instrumental* for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation. So the question is, if there are no immediate reconciliatory and social justice outcome, would the public remembering have been wasted? In fact, few TRCs have reached their promises, especially the reconciliatory effect (Flisfeder, 2010), and yet the communities have never ceased to demand TRCs. Why?

Clearly, for those involved in the TRC and other collective memory processes, there is no such a thing as zero-sum game in remembering. As people remember collaboratively, they bond as a community of memory (Booth, 2006). The Community of memory remember together, by recalling, telling, listening, attending, witnessing, and above all, feeling and being touched and moved by the complex emotions experienced. People remember regardless whether the remembering has led to the anticipated outcome or effects. In some cases, this kind of remembering requires unprecedented courage, at great risks of traumatisation and re-traumatisation as the community visit and re-visit the harrowing past events that have haunted them. Given these risks, still people remember, share memories of those whose lives were cut short, mourn them, and grieve the loss.

Here we can see that remembering is not purely instrumental, e.g. solely aimed at the desired goals and objectives. In effect, remembering is also fundamentally *non-instrumental*. It is not merely an event *in order to* achieve a certain outcome. People remember because remembering is inherently human, and remembering has already been at the core of our life. There has no community on the planet that do not have their own rituals and practices of remembering. In remembering, the past, present and future co-exist, (Bergson, 2004) as the very act of remembering involves a synthesis of our past and present, with a view of the future (Hyppolite, 2003). In remembering, we can feel dignified after being stripped of dignity by the violence, reclaim strength and resilience despite being made vulnerable by the legacies of brutality, and attempt at undoing the undoable, such as healing and transformation.

In this article, I explore these topics in three parts: Part One examines remembering as a normative concept to understand the central place of remembering in human life; Part Two takes a closer look at our tendency to remember past atrocities through the embodied and the emotional; Part Three argues for the need for the ethics of remembering, essential for healing, justice, and collective well-being.

A. Remembering in Human Life

Remembering is constitutively normative (Myin and van Dijk 2022). Human life, past, or present, is always remembered. Even our future is anticipated remembering (Cheung, et al. 2020). As well as the effects of remembering, human life is cherished, cherishable and thus remembered precisely because human beings are bearers of primary non-instrumental value, and human life (and our well-being) has such non-derivative value. (Gill and Thomson 2018; Thomson and Gill 2020). Our primary value as persons determines our dignity, and our dignity lies in living a fully human life. In this sense, remembering human beings who are already comprised in our good life, and remembering our common lives together is itself intrinsically or non-instrumentally valuable.

Remembering is always directed at what matters most to us, including people, events, activities and experiences. It is important for us to live together as a community. For example, remembering can capture the valuable aspects of our common life, and highlight our capacities for learning, innovating, acting, transforming, and transcending. Remembering cherished moments, such as the glory of human tenacity, the joy of our family, or the triumphs of faith, can ensure that the community always has the moral compass. Celebrating elders' wisdom, forebears' courage, friendships with other groups, or community's outstanding talents consists in the community's way of being. These memories can stress the meaningfulness of our culture and practices, and sustain our connections amongst ourselves, and deepening relational bonds with others across borders. Because human life has meaning and significance, it is imperative that these are cemented in our remembering. Remembering, although hinged on memories of the past, as already suggested, is a bridge linking the past, present and future.

Human's primary, non-derivative, non-

instrumental value also suggests that it is an error to instrumentalise each other, and treat people as mere objects, or as less than fully self-conscious subjects who are agents. This argument forms the basis for the notion of human equality, namely that all people are equally non-instrumentally valuable. This means that no one, no group, no community should be treated as less than human, or less valuable than others, or those in other groups and other communities. Violence, brutality, discrimination, exploitation, marginalisation and alienation are all instrumentalising acts by treating some people, some groups, some communities as less valuable. Hence, remembering cannot be a process that instrumentalises persons, be them ourselves or others, not even our enemy.

As remembering has always been integral to being human, collective memory should be a key ingredient of life in the community. In remembering, we become who we are as a people, including being aware of the narratives of where we have come from, what we value, or what matters most for us, how we have got here in this collective journey, and the direction we are heading. (Gill, 2022a; Harari, 2018). Our life has purpose and continuity, and in remembering, we engage in meaning-making, values-affirming and direction-setting. From this perspective, remembering should therefore constitute, in part, our flourishing life and well-being.

Public spaces, such as community assemblies, town square, monuments, streets and museums, cultural festivals, are all sites for remembering; the arts, including paintings, photos, theatre, music, dance, and so forth, are also forms of remembering, alongside education, history, cultural knowledge of all sorts, which are likewise modalities of remembering. We remember the teachings and stories of our religion and the wisdom of our spiritual tradition; we reminisce our practices of love, faiths and resilience that have sustained our relationships, integrity and dignity.

However, history is not always filled with enchantment. Sadly, a greater part of our remembering is directed at tragedies, often the tragedies of one group seemingly at the hands of another. James Baldwin thus highlights another potency of history as embodied. He writes:

> history, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations (Baldwin, 1965:47).

Remembering the past is not just recalling what happened in the past. Instead, as Shakespeare writes: “What’s past is prologue”, because it is the past that provides the contexts within which the present emerges. Baldwin takes this argument a step forward by suggesting that the ‘great force’ of the past is always in the present because it is *embodied* by all of us. Insofar as we carry the past within us, our collective lived experience and action, including our commitments, responsibilities and caring, are already shaped by our remembering (Mahr and Csibra, 2020). Accordingly, community of memory can be defined by how they remember and embody the histories in the everyday ways of being and acting. Remembering is not only central to sustaining human values and continuity, remembering further allows us to reflect on our lived realities. What is more, such reflection can enable us to interrogate socioeconomic and political conditions within which each community can flourish, or not.

Alongside the embodied nature of remembering, and equally significant, is the constituted emotional dimensions of collective memory. As George Orwell writes: “The energy that actually shapes the world springs from emotions.” (Orwell, 1941). Indeed, when the community remember the past violence, it is often the emotional that is brought forward more vividly. For instance, Orwell himself recognises the emotions of “racial pride, leader-worship, religious belief, love of war” as the destructive energies that perpetuated violence. The interconnection between collective memory and the emotional serves as an entry point to understanding how people might self-identify through the emotional, and what roles the emotional can play in how we respond to remembering. Likewise, in remembering, the emotional and the sensational associated with brutality can prompt further anger, hatred and vengeance. Hence, it has been observed that

> emotions are not only involved in the face-to face and more spontaneous forms of killing; emotions also help shape the very structures and ideologies of genocide and other gross human rights violations (Brudholm, and Lang 2018:3).

In contrast, the emotional can also evoke a shared sense of vulnerability, enabling others,

including those who have perpetrated violence, to step into the feelings and experiences of the communities. Partaking in the emotional offers the opportunity to empathise and resonate with each other as humans, and strengthens social bonds and collective healing.

As this article is more concerned with remembering directed at past atrocities, a normative conception of remembering is important for our understanding of what ought to constitute remembering in the light of turbulent past. The ideas that remembering should be directed at what is valuable in human life, that remembering should avoid instrumentalising persons and groups, and that remembering should clarify the value-pillars underpinning our common life can provide evaluative framework for the community to partake in collective and collaborative remembering. When held in congenial public spaces, facilitated with care, and engaged with good will, remembering can have the transformative and healing potential No wonder James Baldwin wrote: "It is the past that makes the present coherent", to which we may add, the future possible. This requires defining the ethics of remembering to which I shall turn later in this article.

B. Remembering Past Atrocities

Harrowing events in history often left a deep wound in our collective psyche. For instance, for many societies in Eastern Europe, the period following the WWII and the fall of the Berlin Wall has been remembered as history of oppression and brutality; for other groups in the world, the 20th century is remembered for the significant unimaginable human tragedies, such as the holocaust, the genocides in Armenia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, and Darfur, as well as the intercommunal wars, and violent displacements of people. Our collective memories of past atrocities also extend to even more distant bloody and appalling histories, such as, the elimination of original inhabitants to loot and occupy indigenous lands, the enslavement of peoples of African, indigenous and Asian descent, and colonising peoples and lands in different parts of the world. There are also tragedies in even earlier histories that we remember by referring to them in stories, books, artefacts, artistic expressions, songs, and other forms of remembering. Indeed, historians, oral storytellers, archivists and ordinary people themselves in these communities have gone a great length to ensure that no mass atrocity and violent persecution are forgotten. Past violence have their particular place in human life.

Remembering as embodied response

Remembering being dehumanised and having our dignity violated, however, is not a straight forward exercise. From a normative perspective, we have understood that memory is not merely being stored in the brain nor being the perception and recollection by an isolated object, i.e. the brain. (Bergson, 2004). Memory is active, embodied. In the context of the lived body, our perception is fundamentally vital (animated, en-spirited), rather than mere speculative. Memory is felt, touched, and moved through our body, as described by Baldwin. Accordingly, remembering enacts the relationship between our past and present which is non-linear, non-successive; but is linked in a circuit, co-existing and co-current, (Al-Saji, 2004) precisely through the embodied.

In the context of remembering large scale dehumanisation, our collective memory of the traumatic event can be embodied in our (unconscious) physical responses, in feelings, senses, movements, actions. (Damasio, 1999). It is not the original event nor our experience of it that is remembered, but rather it is the bodily sensations that are retained and transmitted. This is because such memory tends to be intrinsic to the body. (Casey, 1987). Collective trauma is transmitted through epigenetic mediation, involving developmentally programmed effects, early environmental exposures, and epigenetic changes. (Yehuda, and Lehrner 2018) The embodied serves as an anchor for memory, ensuring that the impact of the trauma is not forgotten or diluted over time.

Beyond words

For people living in communities torn by historical mass atrocities, such as slavery, genocide, colonialism, and suffering the continued structural discrimination, silence is a common symptom of intergenerational trauma (Richter, 2017). However, breaking the silence about the past wounds and ongoing discrimination can be complex. Indeed, to end the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next requires both a teller remembers the experiences of wounding, and a witness who attends to the effects of trauma. This involves potential risks for both parties as consciously and unconsciously remembering and witnessing the harms of dehumanisation and their damaging effects can be retraumatising. Without well-held spaces for caring listening, deep dialogue and mutual inquiry, voices about past brutality, intergenerational trauma and present alienation might be re-silenced.

Remembering can give voice to the community of memory, and at the same time and paradoxically,

silence them. Although liberating, remembering indescribable pains and sufferings that are deeply embodied can sometime s be met with a wall of silence because "suffering, like pain … exists in part beyond language" (Morris, 1996:27) The traumatic effect of past atrocity means that the remembering is often accompanied by not just silence, but also denial due to its disturbing and painful nature.

Certain kinds of remembering, such as those carried out during the TRC process aimed at documenting the truths of human rights violations through words, requires an understanding of the importance of embodied 'knowing' in meaning-making and truths-seeking. This is epistemology beyond words. It is not about de-silencing the community of memory, nor about balancing between the silencing and voicing. Instead, it is about recognising the limit of our capacity to verbalise our traumatic experience, and the embodied nature of voice, subjectivity and agency.

Just like too much emphasis on the victimhood can take away our agency, and too much dependence on spoken words can take away our voice. Hence, we need

> a new language of social suffering, one that permits the expression of the full range of experience, admits the integrity of silence, recognises the fragmented and unfinished nature of social recovery, and does not presume closure. (Ross, 2003:165)

Chosen trauma

For some groups, in these events of remembering historical brutality, they can identify with the roots of what might be termed 'cultural trauma' and begin to define themselves with the marks laid upon their group consciousness by horrendous past events (Alexander, et al. 2004). Such remembering persists across the generations beyond the lives of the victims and survivors of the violent event (Volkan, 2006). The embodied trauma will be maintained by the subsequent generations who have never witnessed the actual events, especially when the successive generations continue to live the legacies of the brutality.(Gill, 2020).

Similarly, collective memory of past atrocity may also sustain our large group identity through 'chosen trauma'. Vamik Volkan explains 'chosen trauma' to be the shared mental representation of a massive trauma suffered by the ancestors of a particular group, in the hands of an enemy. The 'chosen trauma' can be reactivated when the large group's identity is threatened. (Volkan, 2001). The reactivation of the 'chosen trauma' accordingly can have destructive consequences. In this case, remembering past inhumanity does only not serve to formulate the group's self-identification, it can also cultivate their common attitudes towards 'friends' and 'foes'. In other words, the ways a group remember the past may determine the ways they forge alliances or draw boundaries. This can happen between neighbouring countries and societies; it can also happen within the bound of national and communal spaces. Memories of tragic brutalities can even become the impetus for fresh violence, as in the example of the Serbs using the memory of losing the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 to incite violence in the atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the current conflict in Kosovo. (Volkan, 2021). Likewise, the political failures in both established and nascent democracies in the 20th century, and the rise of autocracies and Populist governments in the 21st century are too such examples whereby the memories of past trauma fuelled xenophobic and antagonistic tendencies towards the other communities. In such cases, the community of memory not just self-identify with the 'chosen trauma', they further identify with the divisive, polarising and antagonistic ways to remember.

Competing victimhood

People are compelled to remember these collective experiences of brutality, woundedness and trauma. Recognising the suffering and loss is particularly important for the memory community. On this, Judith Butler writes:

> Precisely because a living being may die, it is necessary to care for that being so that it may live. Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear. Thus, grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters. (Butler, 2009:14)

As community of memory, people grieve, mourn, and remember because the lost life itself is grievable and those who are part of the collective life are grievable. In remembering the shared pains and humiliation, people bond further as a community of memory and partake in continued remembering.

However, some communities feel that they have to insist on the grievability, especially when they feel that their losses and experiences are less readily recognised and mourned and they continue to embody the trauma by marginalisation, stigmatisation and alienation. This is because structural conditions,

power dynamics, social hierarchies, and political forces seem to decide which lives are deemed to be privileged and worthy of grief, empathy, and caring. When compounded with their victim-identity, there is the risk of the group self-identify solely with victimisation. Indeed, in a post-atrocity society, there may be many groups who likewise demand to be recognised as the victim and who similarly define their identity based on victimisation. The result is competing victimhood when each group believe their own suffering is greater or more grieveable, and deserving more attention and empathy in comparison with other groups. This involves a contest and even a hierarchy of victimhood, as each group stress their own grievances and undermine and dismissing the suffering of others. (Young, and Sullivan 2016).

Although a direct reflection of each community's present discontent, such competition plays directly into the politics of victimhood by reinforcing victim identity, deepening polarisation, perpetuating a cycle of grievances, and further entrenching the group in their embodied victimisation.

Remembering as an emotional response

A major task of community of memory is remembering the emotional responses to the tragic past. (Margalit, 2002). In contrast to the cognitive response, the emotional response can remain stable in that people tend to respond to the atrocious events with the same emotions. Remembering in this way is almost cathartic because it allows us to relive the sentiments associated with those particular memories. (Margalit, 2002).

A common response to past atrocity is negative emotions, such as anger, anguish, stress, as well as hatred, animosity and antagonism. Negative emotions in human life are particularly potent. Since happy feelings are very similar, as Tolstoy reminds us, it becomes our moral obligation to remember the experiences of miseries and sufferings, which can differ from one group to another. One reason that we relive the same negative emotions every time we remember our losses in the past atrocities is because we are filled with moral indignations at having the most important and most precious taken away from us. As Judith Butler points out, and we discussed earlier, what matters to us most is our intrinsic non-instrumental value as human being, our dignity. This dignified nature of being human is shared by all persons, regardless who we are, where we are from, nor what we have done, or not have done. This primary value of being a person determines that we all partake a 'sacred' core. We respond with strong negative emotions when we are treated as less than human. Violence and injustice of any kind violates precisely our dignity. (Gill, S. and Thomson 2020) Intergenerational trauma means that many of us continue to live those same emotional responses experienced by our ancestors when they were being treated inhumanely and unjustly.

The ways we remember shape the ways we relive the emotions, and where there is negative and violent emotions, there is a risk of violence begetting violence. Because instrumentalisation denigrates human beings by denying our dignity, subjectivity and agency, thus when we remember such humiliation, we may have a violent emotional response – violence against ourselves or violence against others. In fact, remembering dehumanisation can invade our self-consciousness so that we no longer experience ourselves as subjects, but rather as objects. With this kind of self-consciousness, one perceives oneself as a being without self-value or dignity. Remembering the Battle of Kosovo invited such violent emotional responses that when manipulated, had become a driver for violence.

Remembering can bring about a further emotional response – numbness and indifference. As the past atrocities tend to take away of what we care most, and in remembering, we cease to feel the emotions that are a necessary part of non-instrumental human relationships, e.g. love, and care for others. Caring is an emotional sensitivity to what is most meaningful in one's life, such as other people and those activities that constitute life itself. Being insensitive to what matters to us most, and feeling numb and indifferent towards what is most valuable that gives meaning to life is a form of *emotional death*. As we remember, we feel least caring towards those who have been part of the group who acted in ways that violated us. Whilst one response is to treat members of the other group with resentment, hatred, and vengeance, as described above, in the latter case, remembering serves to turn us into uncaring and indifferent to what matters. Active enemy-making is bad, but at least it maintains contact; whereas active distancing is alienation, both play into instrumentalisation and dehumanisation.

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In Deleuze's interpretation of Bergsonism, he suggests that

the 'present' that endures divides at each 'instant'

> into two directions, one oriented and dilated toward the past, the other contracted, contracting toward the future. (Deleuze, 1988:46)

Remembering past atrocities must a process of value/dignity-affirming, transforming, and aiming at the well-being of all, thus truly liberating us from the present embodied trauma and negative emotions, towards a future-making path. Otherwise, humanity will remain in the traumatic state, or worse, polarisation and antagonism. This understanding has bearings on the ethics of remembering and the way our collective future is imagined and created. (Bernet, 2005).

Indeed, today, hopeful and inspirational approaches to remembering past atrocities are on the rise. These take remembering towards the direction whereby collective memory is constituted in a flourishing life. Collective memory of historical brutality, formerly considered to be the unique entitlement of the victim groups, can now be shared more widely to allow other groups, communities, societies, and even the entire humanity to participate in the remembering. In this sense, all are part of the community of memory. Some people might be members of multiple communities of memory, but everyone can have the opportunity to take part in acknowledging the suffering, condemning the dehumanising acts, and assuming responsibility for addressing the wounds of history and ending the perpetuation of their legacies.

Gandhian non-violent resistance, the Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. in the US, the TRCs inspired by Nelson Mandela, and Desmond Tutu in South Africa, the Australian Sorry Movement, the global Black Lives Matter movement, are just a few such instances of remembering collective trauma in more congenial ways. In these movements, the victim communities, the descendants of the perpetrators, and those who seemingly were not directly involved in the past atrocities have all been part of the collective remembering. In doing so, humanity is informed by history, rather than defined by history. We engage the embodied memories and transcend our negative emotional responses towards optimism through empathy, forgiveness and mutual belonging, and take active responsibility for political apologies, and systemic transformation.

So what we remember and how we remember the past violence can have profound implications for how we live our common life now and how we may pursue co-flourishing with each other. Whether we remember to blame, polarise, fear, hate and even revenge, or we remember by acknowledging historical truths and people's lived experiences of trauma, becoming aware of roots of violence, and taking shared actions for a better future, remembering requires ethics. That is to say, remembering that infuses violence and antagonism, or remembering that nourishes relational resilience and relational enrichment is not a random act. It is our ethical choice. With such a choice, achieving emancipation from the imprisonment of past memories is not an illusion - it involves intentional effort to turn the process into catharsis and transformation. (Whigham, 2017)

Ethics here is not the same as morality. Ethics is rooted more deeply in the social and emotional aspects of human relationships than in the cognitive grasp of moral principles and in reasoning from these principles. Such reasoning will not awaken the need nor enliven the ability to appreciate that others. Moreover, a moral theory specifies what one ought to do in terms of what is right. It concerns doing the right thing when this is understood either in terms of promoting the general good or in terms of complying to a set of duties. In this regard, it is juxtaposed with self-interest. For this reason, morality involves the enforcement by social institutions of morally right actions and the prohibition of wrong actions. Because of this, it is concerned with public and private enforcement through praise, blame and guilt. In contrast, ethics is concerned with the quality of a life for the person living it, that is with our well-being and flourishing together. In this sense, ethics invites us to care for people, near and far, friends and strangers, even our enemies. Ethics is not obligation, but ethics suggests that our life would be better if we were to do so. As such, an ethical 'ought' does not involve any enforcement, e.g. praise, or blame. Morality commands; ethics recommends.

So how might we engage in collective remembering appropriately and meaningfully so that remembering is in part healing? The word 'appropriately' is important here because no approach to remembering should be imposed to a group of people, but rather it must be suited to its traditional practices, cultural norms, and narrative tendencies. The word 'meaningfully' adds another layer to the cultural relevance in that remembering should not be zero-sum game, and be treated as a means to an end, however noble that end might be, such as reparation and reconciliation. Instead, remembering ought to be meaningful and valuable in and of itself. People will want to remember for the sake of remembering, as much as remembering with a view to shift our attitudes towards the other group(s), cultivate awareness of

the structural dimension of violence, and transform our collective ways of acting in pursuit of peace.

Below, I refer to three vignettes of my research, in the context of UNESCO Collective Healing Initiative which I coordinate, to develop and illustrate the ethics of remembering.

1. Valuing

Despite the prevalent perception of Africville as a "slum" populated by "squatters" in Halifax, Nova Scotia, residents of African descent who lived there from the early 1800s to 1960s had meaningful employment, paid taxes, tended their gardens, raised their children and took a great care of their homes, however modest. The AfricVille museum today houses the memorabilia of the community, documenting and remembering its vibrant life in films, interviews, archives, objects, photos. When I visited museum, the two elderly women, both volunteer curators and amongst last AfricVille residents, proudly presented to me the vibrancy of their community - brightly painted houses, fresh clothes dancing on the washing lines, children playing happily in the school garden, church bells calling for mass, and residents laughing together. "What would you like the visitors to remember about AfricVille?" I asked. "Faith, dignity and love.", they answered almost at the same time.

As already discussed, the ethics of remembering starts with valuing. We remember what matters most to us, including people, activities, experiences, relationships that constitute our dignity and well-being. The names of those who perished, and their lives fall upon us to remember. In remembering, we stress our primary non-instrumental value as persons, subjects and agents, as well as the significance of community and its multitude of relations that consist in our flourishing.

As an ethical act, remembering what matters to us does not require an accuracy of memory. Lebanese people tend to cherish their home, Levant, as an idyllic land 'flowing with milk and honey'. An biblical image, one would say, and pure nostalgia, but we may also see it as a form of valuing – what is remembered is a place of beauty, prosperity and peacefulness, and these are the qualities that people value most about themselves as a community. Similarly, the descendants of AfricVille cherish the human bond and the spiritual strengths of their ancestors. Valuing what matters also includes valuing ourselves as dignified beings, as the AfriVille residents self-claimed.

Likewise, for a community of memory to embrace the ethics of remembering, they can intentionally engage in processes that all them to transcend negative emotions into feelings of care and caring. The ethics of remembering determines that valuable aspects of ourselves and our life are significant to us and must be retained in our memories, sanctified in the embodied and the emotional, and passed on from one generation to the next.

In remembering, we become aware of the insights embedded in our experience, such as a recognition of the systems that perpetuated the brutality. We remember it because we are concerned that unless we do so, the same might befall onto future generations Hence the ethics of remembering consists in valuing and caring. As the AfricVille elders have done, in remembering what is most important to them, e.g. home, community and belonging, they also highlight the system conditions that must be transformed for the community to flourish. In this way, as we shall see, ethics of remembering will demand political responsibility and political action.

2. Humanising

The 'Book of Life' is a collection of letters to the dead from three groups of people in post-genocide Rwanda – the widows, the orphans, and the genociders who participated in the killing. These letters are not just words, but rather, they are like artefacts in a museum, brought to life by sensations and emotions. For the creator of the project, Kiki Katese, remembering offers the possibility to undo the genocide in some small ways, by stitching the holes left open by the departed, not with the bones or the clothes they wore when they died – but with memories of their lives, e.g. the warmth in mother's embrace; the echo of the songs while the father working in the field, the joy of chattering over a banana beer amongst friends; the conviviality of gathering after church … Remembering is essential for the project. The participants sat together, in a public space, lamenting their respective losses, feeling each other's embodied grief, promising 'never again'.

Mass atrocities, through violence, victimisation, exploitation, oppression and alienation, treat persons and groups as less than human. Therefore remembering is an antidote to dehumanisation – as depicted in the *Book of Life*, remembering returns life to those who were dehumanised, and our memories

bear witness to their humanity.

Acknowledging and bearing witness to each other's humanity has to be a central ethical feature of remembering. In the *isiXhosa*, an African language spoken in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape regions of South Africa, there is a phrase: "Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu", which is translated to mean: "A person is a person through being witnessed by, and engaging in reciprocal witnessing of other persons," or "A person becomes a human being through the multiplicity of relationships with others."(Gobodo-Madikizela, 2016:116). Accordingly, a person's beingness depends on being witnessed by others in the community, through the reciprocal caring and complementarity of human relationships. It is a call for us to be and to become ethical agents through mutual recognition of our humanness - fundamental to being a fellow human being, a relational subject in the context of community. A person with ubuntu "is open and available to others, is affirming to others. … My humanity is inextricably bound up, in yours". (Tutu, D.1999:31).

For remembering to NOT damage relationships between groups, for example, by reinforcing an antagonistic us-versus-them, or a hard and fast division between the victim and perpetrator, it is important that it involves mutual humanising. This is particularly important communities, such as in Rwanda, and in South Africa, where after the violent atrocities, families of the victims and those of the perpetrators continue to share common living spaces. When remembering together, it requires mutual witnessing of each other's humanity, and healing the soul wounds inflicted to all by the dehumanising act of violence. In their own process of remembering and mourning, including mourning the loss of their own humanity, those who participated in the perpetuation of violence can reflect on their deeds and the destruction they have caused the victim community. This enables perpetrators genuinely to confront their guilt, and for their remorse to emerge.

Therefore, the ethics of remembering will invite us to transcend the negative emotional response in such ways that remembering can also humanise the perpetrators group and their descendants. Alongside of condemning brutality, remembering our shared humanity can offer a safe space for those who transgressed to realise the wrongdoing, offer apologies, seek forgiveness, and take responsibility to right the wrong.

3. Well-being

Young adults (aged 18-29) from diverse backgrounds have participated in a UNESCO Intergenerational Dialogue project in communities in five countries, including the UK, Colombia, the USA, Nigeria and Kenya. The aim is to inspire youth-led inquiries about the relationship between historical atrocities and our current experiences of the continued legacies, e.g. structural racism and discrimination. More importantly, in remembering the past, and in the process of sharing, listening and dialogue, the programme seeks to recover and integrate cultural wisdom and spiritual practices of resilience, healing and well-being. These are essential for restoring our wholeness and regenerating solidarity and community. For both the youth and the elders, intergenerational dialogue has been meaningful and transformative. Stories were invited into the dialogue circle and they moved across the generations. One African American elder recalled a conversation amongst three generations: a young woman, the mother, and the grandmother. On this occasion, the grandmother talked about the brutality of enslavement that she had experienced physically, emotionally and spiritually. The vicious cruelty was so unimaginable that the young woman felt compelled to asked her grandmother: "But what made you endure such horror?" The grandmother took a long looked at the granddaughter, and smiled: "I lived through it because I knew YOU were coming!" At hearing this, one young African American woman, who was disillusioned by the continued systemic failures, said that remembering is a key to her well-being. She was particularly moved by the fact that her life has been the fruit of many sacrifices and that she owes to her ancestors her well-being: "In the circles, and in listening to your stories, I feel loved, valued, affirmed. I feel amazing, I am happy."

Research and practices have long stressed the importance of remembering and integrating past trauma as part of collective healing (Hübl, 2020). Traditional wisdom, such as that illustrated by the African Akan people's metaphor 'Sankofa', and in the indigenous 'medicine wheel', also suggests that remembering the past is a path to help recover and restore knowledge of resilience and healing from the previous generations. This process will not only benefit the present, it can also guide our collective journeys into a better future for all generations involved. A shift from silently living out the family pains and sufferings to remembering, sharing and bearing witness to these scars and condemning their causes can mean that the deeply tragic personal and

communal stories and tales of survival and triumph are no longer dissociated from the continuity of our collective memory. This can be a healing process not only for the younger generations who are listening and inquiring, but also for older generations who have much to reflect upon.

Remembering must be a process that enriches people's and community's well-being. If human beings have primary value, and such value is expressed in our living a flourishing life, then the ethics of remembering must involve the dimension of caring for our collective well-being. Remembering in this way is also to recognise that historical atrocities tend to have traumatic effects, and some can have traumatic effects on whole communities and societies. Traumatic effects as symptoms can be experienced differently, such as mental ill-being, substance abuse, poverty, racism, addiction, family breakdown, unemployment, welfare dependency, or continued violence. To acknowledge traumatic effects is also the starting point to explore the nature of various social institutions, such as the instrumentalising economic system, and other political processes that necessarily perpetuated the legacies of dehumanisation. It also allows the community to examine the institutional practices that tend to aggravate the transgenerational transmission of trauma.

The ethics of remembering would enable us to discern different types of trauma and adopt a trauma-informed lens and healing-sensitive perspective in our remembering. Engaging with the embodied and the emotional dimensions of trauma can help break the silence and challenge the associated stigma. By openly acknowledging and expressing the emotional and physical aspects of trauma, societies can create spaces for dialogue, support, and healing.

As illustrated, intergenerational dialogue seeks to restore our (spiritual) wholeness as well as to renew the temporal continuity of our collective being. It recognises that young adults must lead this process. (Fromm,2022). When the elders and the youth remember and listen, narratives are invited, created, (re)narrated, curated, and transformed. Remembering and listening can engender a better understanding of roots of dehumanisation. Through deep dialogue and inquiry, young adults, the elders, and other stakeholders of the community can become consciously aware of the spiritual harm inflicted through acts of dehumanisation. Such an awareness can be felt as a light that enlightens and permeates the layers of scars and transcends grievance and humiliation. New consciousness of the equal value of all persons reconnects us to our dignity, recognising that we are all souls and beings of non-instrumental value. (Gill, 2022b). It can inspire innovative ways to pursue collective well-being.

Well-being sensitive approaches to remembering can further revive wisdom, practices and other resources that may have sustained successive generations' resilience, revealing 'treasures' long hidden but now rediscovered and recollected. When shared, communal *gems* can enable the community of memory to reconnect with resiliency and caring. This naming, claiming and reclaiming of communal *gems* may also serve as an opportunity to reflect upon the structural conditions necessary to enhance healing, enrich well-being, and enable community regeneration.

Conclusion

In the contexts of historical atrocities, intergenerational trauma and continued legacies, ethics of remembering are key to activating the embedded healing potential, and allowing the possibility of restoring our dignity and regenerating new narratives for the community to live by. For events that are ongoing now, their value and meaningfulness in history can only be remembered in the future. This anticipated aspect of remembering can inspire us to live our lives in the here and now in ways that will be remembered fondly in the future. That is why Jonas Salk, the American biologist, famously reminded us: "Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors."

To become good ancestors, ethics of remembering is essential as it inspires resilience. Rather than seeing resilience as a way to bounce back from adversity, ethics of remembering can help us reconceptualise resilience in three major ways. First, at a personal level, resilience is rooted in the self-awareness of ourselves as beings of intrinsic non-instrumental value. This consciousness of our dignity determines that we will resist any emotional force or drive, attitude or act aimed at treating ourselves as less than human. This can involve, for instance, our capacity to reject any forms of self-denigration, and refuse to internalise oppression and discrimination. Resilience is in part our personal qualities, such as courage, creativity, integrity, and self-respect. Secondly, relationally, resilience is located in the strengths of the human bond with others, arising from our loving and caring relationships with family, community, an organisation or a society. Resilience resides in the multiple relational resources that each of us is part of and is participating in, and it is an emergent quality and way of being in the community,

engendered and harmonised by our commitment to each other and caring for each other as we navigate collective trauma's challenging terrains. Overtime, resilience can be instilled as a characteristic of our culture. Thirdly, resilience is an expression of our deepest connection with the transcendent, which is the source of our true strengths. Although dignity and relationships are central to our resilience, the greatest care is ultimately the love of the spirit or the sacred. In other words, resilience is simultaneously embodied, emotional, and en-spirited. It is our capacity to heal, to be and become whole, to live well, and to flourish. Resilience might be intrinsic for some, and for others, resilience can be learned, cultivated and strengthened, both at personal and communal levels. Resilience is the process and the fruit of loving, caring and connecting to the sacred, and therefore it involves our living the physical, emotional, relational and spiritual dimensions of life.

With increased resilience, ethics of remembering can inspire the community of memory to take collective responsibility and action. This could mean that the community intentionally create public spaces for conscious listening and deep dialogue where narratives and stories of traumas, pains, loss and griefs are acknowledged, shared and attended to with respect. These spaces may be national museums, public sites for commemorations, trails of enslaved peoples, and so forth. Public spaces can enable the encounters between former enemies and provide points of mutual recognition. Listening and dialogue in public spaces may encourage national leaders to offer public apologies and seek political forgiveness. These can better facilitate healing when accompanied by reflection on structural dehumanisation.

On structural change, the community of memory may begin to recognise and evaluate how our lives have been defined and shaped by the socio-economic political systems that we find ourselves. Ethics of remembering can provide such an evaluative framework, e.g. whether such systems are designed to value and respect all persons equally and justly, whether the institutional processes are humanising and caring, and whether there are structural conditions in place to ensure the well-being of all. These are the evaluative criteria which can provide an ethical framework to instil dignity and well-being as the core aim of economy and politics. Community groups can enter into dialogue with the local government and review its policies concerning community housing, access to education, apprenticeship and employment opportunities, policing practices, public health service, immigration, penal justice and taxation. By focusing the conversations around well-being, community can demand local government's policies to prioritise human dignity and well-being over monetary gains.

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