Reconciliation as practice of universality

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Abstract

A new concept of reconciliation practices is developed by using the liberal theory of justice by John Rawls. In this perspective, reconciliation appears as a prerequisite of justice, denoting and rearraging the limits of any given community of justice. By drawing on examples in the fields of the restitution of looted art, the inclusion of handicapped people, religions in urban contexts and environmental ethics, practices of reconciliation are shown to be ambigous and incomplete in time, extent, depth and unconditionality. This observation leads to a theological interpretation of reconciliation as an eschatological concept that is proposed to interpret current major issues of justice and reconciliation.

Keywords

Reconciliation; decolonization; inclusion; interreligiosity; ecology

I. Reconciliation overdone?

When I first visited South Africa in the beginning of this millennium, I was deeply impressed by the attempts to reconcile a society that had experienced apartheid for so long. Back then, I found myself in a country full of narratives: victims' narratives, narratives of injustice, narratives of reconciliation. I was fascinated by the practices of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: promising to give the victims a voice, or more precisely: promising to provide ears to listen to their voices. Since then, I am interested in the concept of reconciliation as a political concept.

What I want to offer in my paper is a contextual European theological perspective on the notion of reconciliation in its relation to justice in the context of social and political ethics. I try to connect the idea of

reconciliation to my own, liberal and Lutheran tradition and to use it to understand European political problems of today. In this context, I aim at understanding reconciliation as a practice of universality. It is important to note that I do not at all claim the concept I propose to be in itself universal. On the contrary, it is deeply contextual and provincial (Chakrabarty 2000). But of course contextual ideas of universality can (and should) be brought into discussion.

I start with some critique against reconciliation as a political concept (Tombs 2017, 122–26; De Gruchy 2002, 31–38). Firstly, some point at the fact that reconciliation is connected to peace as an eschatological idea. "Healing of the past" appears too harmonious and naïve if it comes to politics. The political idea of reconciliation is thus based on an unclear relationship between religion and politics. Secondly, it has been stated that political processes (especially in the European context) become more and more antagonistic. Hence, the idea of reconciliation seems even more counterfactual. Thirdly, reconciliation in theological contexts is often linked to the idea that the church or Christianity will be able to transcend the antagonisms (Albrecht and Anselm 2017, 11; 51f.). Again, at least for Europe, that appears to overestimate the role of the church and Christianity in society. Taking this three critical issues seriously, it seems necessary to ask for a more down-to-earth, 'realistic' concept of reconciliation that is nonetheless open for theological interpretation.

The most relevant strand of critique is the fourth. Sibusiso Moyo said in her introductory greetings to this conference: "Today, we talk about restitution, not about reconciliation." Reconciliation is under suspicion to forfeit justice. Justice has to be promoted first of all, even at the cost of conflict and disunity, as the authors of the famous Kairos document were convinced (*Challenge to the Church* 1987). From this discussion it can be learned that the relationship between reconciliation and justice is crucial. According to the critique, justice is the presupposition of reconciliation. A conflict can never be overcome until justice has been done to the victims, at least to a certain extent.

In my contribution, I want to explore the relationship of justice and reconciliation from the reverse angle: I do not ask whether reconciliation requires justice, but in how far justice needs reconciliation. The thesis is

the following. Justice as a social reality presupposes a community of those who owe justice against each other. Justice needs a "we", an "everyone": a community of justice that is, to a certain extent, represented in the minds of those who belong to that community. But every community of justice has its limits; and each community of justice has its limiting practices. It includes some, it excludes others. I suggest that reconciliation, at least in some cases, should be understood as a practice of rearranging and extending the limits of communities of justice.

This is a European perspective since in the last years intense discussions and conflicts have taken place about the question how far the communities of justice should extend in European welfare states. Of course, *everyone* should have the possibility and the resources to live in dignity. But who is included in this "everyone"? Do, for example, refugees belong to it? And if so in principle, do they still belong to this "everyone", when their reason to migrate is not only political persecution or war but the economic interest to have their basic needs fulfilled or to live a better life? In how far are those who stand at the borders considered a threat to the wealth of those inside the borders, in how far can they contribute to sustain the actual living conditions that are challenged by demographic changes, and in how far are they simply fellow humans "we" owe solidarity or even justice? There are hard negotiations in many European countries and also in European religious communities (Schmiedel and Smith 2018; Rehrmann 2022; Tacchini 2022).

At first sight, it might be surprising to connect these discussions to the problems of reconciliation in post-conflict societies like South Africa. Nonetheless, I suggest that this is a fruitful connection since it might open a channel for mutual learning. To show that, I will proceed in five steps. First, I will lay some theoretical grounds for my notion of reconciliation (II.). Then I will discuss very briefly four paradigms (III.), since each of them contributes in its own way to the theological problem of reconciliation (IV.). I conclude with some remarks (V.).

II. Reconciliation as practice and the context of justice theory

Before developing any theoretical account of reconciliation, it is helpful to sketch a meta-theoretical pre-concept. Usually, reconciliation is defined as follows: "The word 'reconciliation' is now commonly used […] as a secular term to describe a key challenge in post-conflict societies if communities divided by violence and enmity are to live together in a shared society." (Tombs 2017, 120) From this definition, reconciliation is considered to have certain characteristics. With respect to its form, "reconciliation itself is most often a process rather than a finished condition." (Tombs 2017, 120) Its aim is "creating or re-building positive social relationships" (Tombs 2017, 120): mutual recognition, trust etc. Moreover, reconciliation also has systemic aspects: "To sustain social reconciliation, it is not just individuals who must change, but also the social structures and organisations that govern social life." (Tombs 2017, 121) Finally, reconciliation is related to group identities: "reconciliation normally has both an individual and a collective dimension. It strives for both a social and a personal transformation." (Tombs 2017, 121)

Starting with these rather broad characteristics, my proposal is to derive a notion of reconciliation using the liberal theory of justice as fairness by John Rawls. This might seem surprising at first-hand, since in the context of reconciliation studies it has frequently been stated that in order to achieve reconciliation it is necessary to transcend the liberal anthropology of self-interest and rational calculation of isolated subjects. According to John de Gruchy, one has to go "beyond the individualism of liberal democracy to affirm solidarity and sociality" (De Gruchy 2002, 186) and to make a "shift from a social contract based on [utilitarian] compromise to a more covenantal form of democracy" (De Gruchy 2002, 187). Nonetheless, I am convinced that in the light of the critique against the concept of reconciliation as a political concept, we can learn from John Rawls. This will be elaborated in what follows.

In Rawls famous discussion of the concept of justice, he addresses the basic institutions of society (the state, the law, the allocation of goods and positions). The wider context is contract theory as established by Thomas Hobbes and his successors: If institutions are called just, all must be able to at least virtually agree. If not, it is not fair (Rawls 1999, 10–15).

But what is fair? The basic heuristic for justice is the idea of the original state. To agree on just institutions, we imagine to negotiate in an original state before we enter society. This state is located behind the *veil of ignorance*. In this virtual state, individuals do not know much about their individuality: neither their respective place in society (class position, social status), nor their natural assets and abilities, moral convictions and special features of personal psyche, the circumstances of one's society or their generation. Since individuals are ignorant about all that, they are able to discuss fairly how to establish societal institutions (Rawls 1999, 118–23).

Inspired by this framework, reconciliation can be understood as practice, or to be more precise: as a bundle of practices. The point in Rawls account is that the concept of the veil of ignorance addresses social differences that are relevant for injustice: race, class, gender, age, abilities, morality etc. We can call 'just' what we could agree upon if that did not separate us. Thus, the concept of justice in itself implies an idea of reconciliation: It is about a process, it is about positive social relations, it is about structures, it is about group identities. Thus, maybe surprisingly, the liberal theory of justice relies at its core on a concept of reconciliation: the idea of virtually and temporarily undoing difference-based separations. We must be able to see the other as if she or he were not separated by specific differences. This ability is a prerequisite of justice-related reform of institutions.[1]

Now, for Rawls, the veil of ignorance is a thought experiment: a virtual heuristics. I want to take it more seriously. What if the veil of ignorance did not only denote a virtual state but real social practices in the sense of practice theory (Reckwitz 2003; Alkemeyer 2013; for theology: Johansen and Schmidt 2022)? Of course, we never completely abstain from seeing each other in the social differences we live in. But maybe, in some decisive

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1   Interestingly enough, Rawls quite frequently uses the term "reconciliation" in his book. It is never used as a technical term. But this may serve as another hint at the possible role for reconciliation for justice in the Rawlsian sense. Rawls himself speaks about reconciliation with regard to interests (Rawls 1999, 122), opinions (Rawls 1999, 171) and beliefs (Rawls 1999, 194), ideas (Rawls 1999, 179) and concepts (Rawls 1999, 447) or points of view (Rawls 1999, 424). This can be interpreted in the sense that contract theories traditionally settle on the semantic field of war (Hobbes' war of all against all, or the struggle of each against all) and thus aim at reconciliation: "The political problem is to reconcile the good of each with the good of all. Social contract theory offers such a reconciliation." (Weale 2020, 22).

situations, we might do what I call *excursions behind the veil of ignorance*. We might, for a short while, keep a relative distance each from oneself. Here, we are able to meet each other as equals, undo differences (this is why I call them practices of universality), and take this experience with us when we later return to life with all its differences. During this excursions, we negotiate and search for consensus in order to arrange settings for future living. In these negotiations, a community of justice is formed, potentially including people and/ or concerns that have not played a role in former excursions. The fluid limits of the justice community are rearranged and in this case, extended. I claim that such *excursions behind the veil of ignorance*, concrete practices of reconciliation, are possible and do sometimes happen in the reality of our societies. And I see them as prerequisites of societal reforms to bring about more justice in the sense of John Rawls. Yet, they have profound ambiguities, as will be shown in the following examples.

III. Examples

I take four examples referring to grand challenges of our time. All of them are located amidst quite complicated constellations. I will only sketch one specific point, respectively.

III.1 Decolonization: The return of the Benin Bronzes

The Benin bronzes are widely admired works of art: metal panels and sculptures from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin, created from the 16th century onwards. Robbed during the era of colonisation of Africa by the United Kingdom in the end of the 19th century, thousands of them were sold as looted art to Europe and the USA. Demands for restitution have been put forward by the Nigerian government since the 1970s. Since 2021, restitutions were made from British collections, since 2022 from Germany (Phillips 2022).

Restitution and repatriation are typical postcolonial justice issues (Scott 2020). Here, justice of restitution is embedded in a wider spectrum of reconciliation activities. The former colonized are now – at least at first sight – treated as cooperation partners. According to a German-Nigerian agreement from 2021, this includes help with the establishment of a museum of West African Art, professional museum cooperations,

the training of future curators and museum managers as well as the development of cultural infrastructures (Grütters 2021). As stated by a museum professional: "It is not only about restitution, but also about partnership and exchange."[2] Justice is embedded in, one could say, reconciliation practices.

So, people come together to re-negotiate on an equal level. Friendly pictures of these veil of ignorance practices are distributed (see the signing of an agreement of restitution in Cologne, picture 1). The message is: We are equals, negotiating for a better future.

Picture 1: Signing of the agreement on the transfer of ownership of the Benin bronzes from the Cologne Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum to Nigeria on 15 December 2022. © Raimond Spekking, CC BY-SA 4.0.[3]

But looking closer, the idea of cultural partnership has a colonial overtone. Obviously, there is suspicion: Are "they" really capable of handling this wonderful artwork? Probably not without "our" help. So the practices of reconciliation are characterized by a certain logic of preservation of art. The rationality of preserving objects is present in and under the rationality of restoring relations The colonizing difference of exploiting Europeans

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2   Hermann Parzinger, President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, cited after https://www.zeit.de/news/2021-10/14/deutschland-will-saemtliche-benin-bronzen-uebereignen?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fde.wikipedia.org%2F, 13.1.2023, translation mine).

3   https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=127503209, 29.06.2023.

and exploited Africans is to a certain extent undone by practices of partnership, but with the colonial overtone of culturalization of Africans via infrastructural and educational cultural transfer.

This is my first example. Justice of restitution is here embedded in practices of reconciliation that are decolonizing and recolonizing at the same time. Reconciliation is at least incomplete.
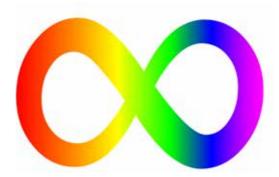
III.2 Social welfare: The politics of inclusion

The second example is taken from a different context. Inclusion is one of the most important concepts in social politics in recent decades. The term denotes the ideal of a society in which everyone participates in the full sense of civil rights, is equally integrated into social networks and has equal opportunities to participate economically. The aim is not the integration of marginalized people into the normality of a majority society, but the participation of different individuals in a common society (Liedke et al. 2016). This objective is based on the negative experiences of people with disabilities as well as people in poverty, who experience many forms of exclusion: from the labour market, from the education system, from political, cultural and media communication as well as from socio-spatial networks. "Inclusion" is the inversion of these negative experiences (Moos 2019, 106–7). The society has to do justice to the marginalized, especially by means of the welfare state.

This is the ideal. But who is, in a given situation, included? In principle, inclusion targets "everyone", but concrete inclusion measures will only be targeted at and effective for certain groups. Who belongs to that groups? This is a task of reconciliation practices. To perform inclusion, a society has to reconcile with groups who were outside their community of justice before; and these groups – and the individuals that belong to them – have to reconcile with the society that previously excluded them.

From the viewpoint of the dominant/ majority society, the core problem of inclusion is the legitimation of difference. We are allowed to be different. This legitimation is done by several concepts, among which the concept of diversity has become dominant. Diversity is considered by its supporters as legitimate and as a good in itself: It is good to be different, and it is even better to be different than uniform.

With this in mind, I want to refer to the sign of infinity in rainbow colours (picture 2). It is a symbol of the so-called neurodiversity movement that was started in the 1990s especially by people with autism. Later, it was extended to other mental disorders like dyscalculia, attention deficiency disorder, intellectual disabilities etc. (Thornton Savarese and Savarese 2010). The symbol is intended to denote the infinite variety of neuronal functional variants. All of them are considered legitimate and sometimes advantageous (Austin and Pisano 2017).

Picture 2: A symbol of the so-called neurodiversity movement, © Eric, http://fyeahautismspectrum-blog.tumblr.com/post/5852385279, public domain.[4]

In the neurodiversity discourse, the old differentiation between the normal and the pathological is replaced by the differentiation between neurotypicals and the neurominority. Both of them are included in the concept of neurodiversity, which means all of us. Here, diversity is first of all a concept not of doing difference but of undoing difference; it is a *veil of ignorance concept*. The idea is to take people together to negotiate living conditions; to have a voice on their own. For example in the inclusion of handicapped people, such negotiation practices have been installed by German legislation: all support has in principle to be negotiated with the one who gets this support (Boecker and Weber 2023).

Nonetheless, inclusion as a justice project and the reconciliation practices connected to it are again highly ambivalent. This too can be seen from

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4   https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24542802, 29.06.2023.

this symbol. The colours of the rainbow – not accidentally alluding to the Gender diversity symbol or the Rainbow Nation idea – connect a symbol of universality (all colours) with a symbol of reconciliation: the biblical rainbow, God's sign of His reconciliation with humankind. But looking closer, you see: the colours represented in this picture are in fact not the colours of the rainbow. Purple is added which is missing among the rainbow colours. It is only part of the *colour circle*. Here, it provides the missing link between deep red and deep blue. Purple is an artefact of the human visual system that does not correspond to any physical wavelength. Obviously, it was added to show *all* colours. This little observation again illustrates the core problem of universality practices: Who is all? We know from inclusion debates that every successful inclusion erects even higher borders against others that are still on the outside. Concrete reconciliation practices are in fact connected with conditions that some do not fulfil; they are at the same time practices of exclusion (Becker 2016). If you aim at dialogue, you presume the ability to speak etc. There is always a *maximum difference* that reconciliation is able to bear. Again, reconciliation proves to be incomplete.

III.3 Religions: Normative interreligiosity

Again shifting the context, I now consider new urban neighbourhoods and their religious topographies in Germany that have been subject to a recent study (Kanitz, Moos, and Zarnow 2023). One of the study's results is that there is an interreligious imperative in urban contexts. If religion appears in the urban context, it is often expected, if not demanded, to appear in the form of visibly reconciled interreligiosity. An example how religions fulfil this imperative is shown in the following picture of an interreligious peace prayer on the *Altonale* 2018, a big neighbourhood festival in Hamburg (picture 3).

Picture 3: Altonale 2018, © Juliane Kanitz (with kind permission from the photographer)

In this specific reconciliation practice, a triple demonstration is made: Firstly, religious diversity is demonstrated in the gathering of representatives of different religious communities, clothed their respective official costumes. Secondly, equality is staged by having all representatives stand next to each other in a row and at the same height. And thirdly, unity is demonstrated: in the orientation towards the common goal of peace, but conspicuously in the use of a common symbol, a white (!) balloon, which undoes difference and holds the otherwise displayed textile differentiated group of religious representatives together. In this way, religious diversity is staged as a *contained variety*, as a supportive and cooperative community of equally diverse people who pursue the common goal of peace. Potential conflicts between the religions are, if ever, only present backstage.

This is, as could be shown from interviews, the social expectation of city officials, urban planning professionals, neighbourhood activists and the like towards religions. This is the form in which religion can be tolerated in the city: colourful, diverse, peaceful, non-segregating, dedicated to the common good and the betterment of the world. By this, interreligiosity serves as a double model: a model of society that the representatives of the

religious communities propose to the general public (social diversity can be lived peacefully), and a model of legitimate public religion that is set up by the urban society for "its" religions (Kanitz, Moos, and Zarnow 2023, 175–203).

The most important context of these initiatives is the idea of integrating heterogeneous population groups into a societal general. In Germany this especially holds in relation to Islam, which is still broadly considered and treated as a migration religion. So, many interreligious initiatives are implicitly focused on the legitimacy of the presence of Muslims in Germany – and on the question in how far they belong to the national community of justice (Kanitz, Moos, and Zarnow 2023, 196–97). This has many aspects: from the relation between church and state (e.g., the right to give religion lessons at school), the presence in the local social spaces (are mosques, minarets and the call for prayer tolerable?) up to economic questions (how can Muslim congregations afford the space they need for prayer and gathering?).

In the background lurks a normatively impregnated concept of legitimate difference. It includes a fundamental affirmation of diversity ("It is normal to be different"), but also the delegitimization of unreconciled difference. As one Muslim interview partner said, Muslims feel themselves somehow *forced to reconciliation*: It is all right if you are different, but do not be too different, don't insist too much on Religion, Allah and all that; don't be dogmatic or even polemic. Show yourself spiritual; open for a common transcendent balloon. Be friendly and silent. Of course, this expectation can come into conflict with the self-image of religious actors (Kanitz, Moos, and Zarnow 2023, 248–49).

So, there are again implicit conditions of reconciliation: be a good Christian, be a good Muslim, and in the case of immigrant religions: be a good immigrant. These conditions are put up by the majority society; unlike the symmetry performed on the *Altonale's* stage, reconciliation is characterized by power asymmetry.

III.4 Environment: Doing political ontology

The final example gives a very brief outlook on environmental issues. Under the impression of the ecological crisis, the idea came up in environmental

ethics that non-human organisms or ecosystems are not just goods and means to be exploited by humans but entities in their own right. This idea legitimates the postulate that justice has to be done towards them (Gorke 2018). In theological environmental ethics, the concept was born that humans have – maybe, in line with Paul[5] – to reconcile with nature in order to prevent the destruction of the ecosphere (Moltmann and Link 1986). Thus, the terms justice and reconciliation entered the environmental discourse.

But would reconciliation with nature really mean to gather behind the veil of ignorance not only with other humans but also with other natural entities, with animate beings or even with things? Exactly this is the claim of the recently deceased philosopher Bruno Latour in his famous book "The parliament of things" (Latour 2001). The war between humans and things, subjects of politics, entitled with freedom and rights on their own, and objects of the sciences, with no rights and status, has to be overcome. We have to think of a "collective" made from humans and things, each with "propositions" that have to be articulated in a common "parliament": this is the fundamental idea of Latour's political ecology (Simons 2017).

Again, the imagined parliament of things is a concept of undoing difference. Of course it has to be asked whether the concept of negotiations is overstretched here: these are virtual negotiations, and the question of transfer to factual practices is open. I cannot do justice to that concept, but it gives another hint that the idea of justice (here: of the own rights of non-human entities) presupposes reconciliation (here: another practical attitude towards these entities).

One problem of this idea is, that justice among humans might be devaluated, if the community of justice gets as large as this. Will reconciliation, leading to an extended collective of former subjects and former objects, lead to minor standards in the respect for human dignity?

IV. Theological interpretation

To arrive at a theological interpretation, the results of the examples shall be systematized. They show different reconciliation practices in the

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5   See the contribution by Jeremy Punt in this volume.

preparation of justice. In the decolonization case of the Benin bronzes, cultural partnership among equals is intended to lead to justice of restitution. In the social welfare case, the undoing of difference in the name of diversity appears as a prerequisite to inclusion of, for example, people with handicaps. In the case of urban religions, interreligiosity can be understood as a symbol of reconciled plurality, aiming at justice for immigrants. And finally, in the environment case, reconciliation in the sense of overcoming the subject-object "war" is intended to lead to a political ecology that does not only justice to humans.

Nonetheless, in every case, aspects of an imperfect or ambigue reconciliation appeared. Recolonization overtones could still be heard in decolonized relationships. Inclusion measures were shown to lead to the exclusion of others from the new "everyone". In practices of interreligiosity, implicit conditions of reconciliation, led by implicit images of the "good immigrant", turned up. Finally, the inclusion of non-human beings into a political ecology is suspect to potentially devaluate justice to humans.

This leads to the theological interpretation. Due to its imperfectness and ambiguity, reconciliation has to be considered as an in reality always finite, but in principle infinite practice. If recolonization is still be present in decolonized relationships, reconciliation appears to be an infinite practice in *time*. Remains of the old relationship are yet to be overcome. If inclusion of some leads to the exclusion of others, reconciliation appears to be an infinite practice in *extent*. The totality of „everyone" is yet unrealized. If normative images of the "good immigrant" appear as conditions of full immigrants' rights, reconciliation appears to be an infinite practice in *unconditionality*. There are still residual conditions for reconciliation, defined by asymmetries of power. Finally, if the inclusion of non-humans into a political ecology threatens to devaluate justice to humans, reconciliation appears to be an infinite practice in *depth*. The social reality of dignity is never fully realized. In every case, reconciliation as a practice proves to be incomplete compared to the idea of reconciliation that is embodied in the practice itself. Reconciliation drives beyond every achieved state. Hence, we have to consider reconciliation as a practice that embodies transcendence.

Thus, it is helpful though to understand reconciliation by means of theological figures, since their internal rationality is especially apt to cope with phenomena of transcendence. Reconciliation transcends not only every possible state of a society but also every concrete imagination of an inclusive, just, diverse society. In this respect, reconciliation bears the character of the Reign of God, as has been pointed out by John de Gruchy and others (De Gruchy 2002, 17; 28; 55f.; 75). This insight might on one hand legitimize and guide the ongoing strive for reconciliation. It might allow for paying attention to adverse effects and the need for corrections. It might acknowledge limits and remove the load of trying to achieve complete reconciliation. On the other hand, it might explain the impatience and the frustration involved in every strive for reconciliation. In sum, the notion of reconciliation has an inevitably eschatological structure.

V. Conclusion

There are tree implications of the proposed concept of reconciliation that shall finally be mentioned. First, as has been shown, it is a justice-related concept. Reconciliation as developed above is the first step to justice, rearranging the borders of the community of justice that gathers in excursions behind the veil of ignorance in order to negotiate. Thus, in concordance with the liberal idea that justice legitimately is a limited concept, there will also be legitimate limits of reconciliation. More precisely, two types of limits of reconciliation can be distinguished. On one hand, there are limits corresponding to different ranges of justice, depending on the respective set of institutions: Do we talk about justice in societal groups, in national welfare, in international relationships or even in regard to ecosystems? We do not have to follow the same idea of reconciliation in all of these cases. On the other hand, there are limits of reconciliation depending on what kind of justice is aimed at with respect to the level of obligations. Do we talk about international treaties, about individual rights, about societal recognition or about non-human interests? Since justice in all of these cases implies different levels of obligation, again it is not necessary to follow the same idea of reconciliation in every case. Thus, even if reconciliation, as shown above, has a transcendent structure, it is nonetheless open to specification – it does not always aim at the Reign of God *in toto*.

The second implication is this: If considered as prerequisite of justice, reconciliation is a transformative concept. Reconciliation transforms justice: it is the transition of one (more or less just) state of society to another (hopefully more just) state of society. This transition is not completely covered and legitimized by the current state of justice. Whereas justice considerations refer to a given "everyone", reconciliation questions exactly this "everyone". Reconciliation is a transforming idea; else it would be merely part of the "old" justice regime.

Third and finally: Reconciliation is a practice of universality. Reconciliation denotes a bundle of social practices in which new concerns and new subjects (in historical order: slaves, females, underdogs, people of different ethnic origins, animals, ecosystems) show up. If finally acknowledged, the new subjects or new concerns appear as always having been entitled. This is why it is legitimate to use the term re-conciliation even if it is targeted at a state of society that has never been there before.

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