NANCY J. RAMSAY
CARRIE DOEHRING, Editors

MILITARY MORAL INJURY AND SPIRITUAL CARE

A RESOURCE FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVERS

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Introduction

War changes lives forever. This volume offers guidance for spiritual care with those whom war forever changed through wounds of conscience or soul wounds. These wounds may not be easily seen, but they take a costly toll not only on those in or near a war zone, but also on their families, and when not addressed, extend across generations. The Department of Veterans Affairs describes these wounds of conscience as "moral injury." This term describes the consequences of "perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations…[and may also include] bearing witness to the aftermath of violence and human carnage" (Litz et al. 2009, p.700). Moral injury is a new term for an ancient recognition that war changes us. Moral injury is also identified as one of the primary contributors to a significant increase in suicide among veterans (Kelly et al. 2019). The pain of these wounds of conscience can be intense, and while helpful care can ease the burden, "innocence lost is not innocence regained, it is innocence mourned and moral integrity reestablished" (Graham 2017, p. 78).

Spiritual Care for Military Moral Injury offers resources to inform and support practices of spiritual care for persons affected by moral injury incurred in the context of military service. This book is published with the support of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. Interreligious in its focus, The Center's mission is to sponsor research and create resources to inform and support religious leaders and communities of faith as they respond to veterans and their families and others affected by military moral injury. A number of the chapters in this volume reflect research recruited and sponsored by the Center in an interreligious research "think tank" 2013–2015.

Contributors to this volume write from their personal and professional location in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. Each chapter offers theologically reflective and spiritually informed care for veterans and their families as well as others such as nurses and physicians whose service in war zones has rendered them vulnerable to moral injury. These chapters are written to be of use to spiritual care providers serving in faith communities; military chaplains; chaplains in VA hospitals; caregivers in hospice, retirement, and assisted living contexts; and spiritual directors.

The chapters range widely across more clinically informed practices to practices based on spiritual disciplines as well as more innovative practices such as witness poetry intended to facilitate lament in its confessional and ethical modes. Other articles draw explicitly on sacred texts in Jewish and Christian traditions that address moral injury and lament, care for moral injury through the frame of ambiguous loss, and the effective use of ritual practices to support healing. While most of the articles focus on agential moral injury that arises from the exercise of one's agency, several recognize the pain of receptive moral injury, including the experience of a Muslim veteran experiencing religious oppression by her Army comrades on the basis of her Muslim faith. Several articles recognize the importance of faith communities intentionally creating practices to support veterans and their families in their journey of recovery from moral injury. With the encouragement of military chaplains and veterans, several articles address strategies for helping civilians in faith communities become more reflective about how we may be implicated in moral injury when our countries wage war.

We had hoped to include a chapter by Dr. Larry Kent Graham, whose pioneering work in practical theology exploring the impact of war on families inspired many of us. Dr. Graham's untimely death prevented him from completing a contribution on lamentation—a generative aspect of recovery that many of our authors referenced in using Dr. Graham's scholarship.

Nancy J. Ramsay and Carrie Doehring

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Moral Injury and Human Relationship: A Conversation

Michael Yandell

> *Tell me everything that happened / Tell me everything you saw…Did they seem afraid of you?…Was there one you saw too clearly? Did they seem too real to you? / They were kids that I once knew / Now they're all dead hearts to you. (Millan et al. 2010)*

Introductory remarks: Moral injury and human relationship

Moral injury is about human relationship. It is not merely a wound on the inside of a person, belonging solely to an individual. There is a sense in which moral injury exists outside of the individual, belonging to many people at once.

I am a U.S. Army veteran; I was an enlisted soldier from 2002 through 2006, and I was deployed to Iraq as part of "Operation Iraqi Freedom II" for six months in 2004. Those six months in Iraq, and those four years in the army, profoundly shaped who I am and how I think about the world. I self-identify as a person living with moral injury, but this moral injury is not solely my possession. I see it as a scar within me, as well as an untended wound cut deeply into the institutions and conventions that shape social and political life in the United States.

Moral injury is about human relationship. I have never waged a war, but I have fought in one. This is the position in which many military women and men find themselves. Is to say such a thing—that I have never waged a war, but I have fought in one—to shirk responsibility for actions taken during war? One could argue as much—walking a well-trod path shaded by the comfort of binaries. Here on one hand exists the image of the soldier who "follows orders," no matter what the consequences, forfeiting any and all decision making. A comparison to Nazis will inevitably rear its head here. On the other hand, there is the image of the soldier who is free to deliberate over every action taken in war, a sort of moral paragon who can heroically stand in a morally ambiguous and dangerous situation and always do the "right" thing. These images of soldier are false abstractions; the binary ignores the reality in which actual military women and men find themselves. The binary ignores real human relationship.

Moral injury is about human relationship. One will find plenty of company while trafficking in stereotypical images of military women and men, but it will be company gained on a path to nowhere. These images work on the assumption that the only person(s) who matters is the individual warrior—that only the individual carries the meaning of morality and responsibility with her on the battlefield. The lie in this assumption is exposed when the warrior is judged, not by her own moral criteria, but by the moral measuring stick of the society which sent her to the

battlefield in the first place. What happened on the battlefield, how it affected the individual, and whether the individual exercised a kind of heroic moral virtue or simply followed orders will tend to matter very little; all that matters is what the individual's community *thinks* of what happened on the battlefield. To say "I never waged a war, but I fought in one" is an attempt to point toward the reality and the complexity of the relationships in which the war fighter finds herself. It is to say simultaneously that I am both far removed from the people and powers who made the decisions necessary to my actually going to war while also being in very close relationship with them—I was one of many who fought the war that others waged. The war is my responsibility at the same time that it is not my responsibility. I cannot absolve myself of the fighting, nor can the nation absolve itself by placing its guilt on the shoulders of military women and men. To do either would be to deny human relationship. The question I am most interested in as I write these introductory remarks is a question that will necessarily remain open: where do *you* find *yourself* in all this, Reader? Do you and I have any relationship other than that of writer and reader? Is the meaning you are looking for in this text a meaning that exists solely outside of yourself? Do you have a relationship to the wars of the twenty-first century—perhaps a first-hand experience, a relationship to those who waged it, a relationship to those who fought it, a relationship to those against whom it was fought? The purpose of this article is to explore these broad questions of moral injury and human relationship. I will explore these questions through engaging scripture, reckoning with the current widely used definitions of moral injury, borrowing some concepts from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and all while weaving in an account and reflection on personal experience.

You, me, and moral injury: Something in our eyes

Here is an ancient question: "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye?" (Matt. 7:3–4, NRSV). This passage from Christian scripture is quite germane to discourse on moral injury, but one need not be a Christian to see how. I argue that the site of moral injury is not fixed; moral injury exists at the site of human relationship, and its effects are as diverse as those relationships. I have something in my eye, left over from my war experience, and I suggest that you have something in your eye as well. Moreover, there is a collective obstruction of our vision as a nation. To illustrate this point, I will begin with my own concrete experience and "zoom out," as it were.

An event—something in *my* eye

Where does one begin to write personally about moral injury? For many veterans, there is an acute experience—for instance, profound regret over a pulled trigger—from which all sorts of emotions flow. Others speak of the war(s) generally, or a collection of events and experiences taken together that form moral injury. My own living with moral injury involves more of the latter, though there are indeed events in the war that stand out specifically.

I recall how it felt every time I watched my leader and friend walk down-range to deal with a piece of explosive ordnance or an improvised explosive device—the fear that clenched down in my chest hoping we had made the right decisions. I recall an uneasy feeling while seeing people taken from their homes at night, detained for reasons unknown to me and for lengths of time unknown to me. I remember carrying a shell-full of Sarin, breathing it in and transporting it, feeling

betrayed by my own body—and what it felt like to have that moment scrutinized, picked apart, and debated at levels high above me. I was a young explosive ordnance disposal specialist at the time. The encounter with Sarin nerve agent happened in May of 2004, during what seemed to be a routine examination of old, rusted, and obsolete ordnance. The event was anything but routine, and the dissonance between my expectations and my experience that I felt that day have come to characterize the dissonance I feel in regard to the war as a whole (for more information on the Sarin incident, see Chivers 2014).

I remember the shattered confidence in the aftermath, what it felt like to experience such a profound journey of inner personal crisis—questioning *everything*—that one day the mirror showed me a new kind of face, and I realized that I had become, in name and reality, *unfit* for duty. I know what it feels like to look at Facebook in the years after military service to discover one with whom one served has died in a place far away, doing the work one used to do. I remember what it feels like to *become bitter*, to be paradoxically both proud and ashamed of military service—to be paradoxically proud and ashamed of having the good fortune to build a life after military service.

I gesture broadly to these events and feelings, Reader, because any one of them might serve as a starting point for writing about moral injury. Maybe you know and remember these things as well. Perhaps they strike a chord with you. Perhaps you or someone close to you has experienced one or more of these, or something like it. I have no monopoly on moral injury, and I can only speak for myself. However, I hope that I am not merely addressing my keyboard and computer screen, but that I am writing *to someone*. In this way, again, my stories and experiences are not merely my own; on the contrary, they exist in relationship to others.

It will help, for the purposes of this article, to focus in on one experience, acknowledging that it is but one example toward getting at the meaning of moral injury regarding human relationship.

> It's April 2004 and I'm in Baghdad, anxiously waiting by our truck as my team leader takes a closer look at some ordnance our robot has deemed relatively safe. As I watch him, some kids approach me. They ask me for candy, as kids here often do. I don't have any candy, but we have some water bottles in the truck, and they're still cool from being in the freezer at the beginning of the morning.
>
> I think: *I'll do a good thing and give these impoverished kids some water*. So I get the water out of the truck and move to hand a couple of bottles to the kid in front. The boy, who's probably about eight, refuses—after all, what he asked for was candy. Something sparks inside of me. Here I am, risking life and limb, with my team leader downrange checking out an explosive, and this kid won't take something I'm offering out of the goodness of my heart.
>
> I rip the cap off the liter bottle in my hand, dump some of it out on the ground, and throw it at him. An old man, most likely his grandfather, rushes up, grabs the boy, and pulls him away. The old man looks at me, not with anger, hate, or even sadness. His eyes are full of fear. He's afraid of me.

> In that moment, I don't recognize that look, because I don't recognize myself. How can he be afraid of me? I'm one of the good guys, after all. (Yandell 2016, p. 52)

Moral injury is about human relationship. Human relationship is happening regardless of any mission or task; relationship exists in the background of missions and tasks. Relationship happens alongside them, above and beyond them, in the midst of them. During this event, I was focused primarily on the task at hand—to have been focused on anything else would have been dangerous. And yet, here alongside this task is a boy and his grandfather. Moreover, there is my team-leader downrange. There are the family and friends of the boy. There is something called the "United States" and something called "Iraq" hovering over us, enveloping us. There are people, powers, and institutions shaping the physical and emotional landscape in which I find myself there with the boy. In the midst of all this, lest it be obscured, there is *me*—my capacity to make choices and shape the landscape a bit myself.

This event has left a speck in my eye. As much as I may write about it, reflect on it, or reinterpret it, there it stubbornly remains. My relationship to the boy was perhaps inconsequential; what makes the event consequential for me is that I dismissed him as something inconsequential. When the stakes were high, and the effort required quite low, I treated human relationship as if it were nothing. To speak here of moral injury as if it were isolated to myself is to rob the term of meaning. *There was a boy.* The story is not about me. This is one way in which moral injury is about human relationship, and it leaves a speck lodged in my eye. Would you be the one to remove it for me, Reader? Are you equipped to do so? *Should it be removed?* Is there something in *your* eye? Beyond this speck in my eye from my own experience, is there a much bigger log which must be addressed? I will return to this question after laying some conceptual groundwork.

Moral injury and conscience

It is my hope, Reader, that I have been able to convey to you some sense of what moral injury is for me—thus far without recourse to specific definitions and research on the topic. However, moral injury is not about *me*; rather, it is about human relationship. In order to get beyond my own experience, it is necessary at this point to "zoom out" and consider broader definitions and concepts. I will explore, in this section, two widely cited definitions of moral injury, and I will reflect on those two definitions both through the gaze of personal experience as well as through theo-ethical terms borrowed from Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Two definitions of moral injury

Jonathan Shay, M.D., Ph.D., spent years working with Vietnam veterans in a Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Boston. He develops his own definition of moral injury in two books: *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1994), and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (2002). Through his years of work with veterans as well as through his own readings of Greek tragedy, Shay arrives finally at a precise, three-point definition of moral injury:

- A betrayal of what's right.
- by someone who holds legitimate authority (e.g., in the military—a leader)

- in a high stakes situation.

All three. (Shay 2014, p. 183)

The question of what constitutes "what's right" is of particular interest to me, theologically and ethically, in my own research. However, for this article that I hope is more of a conversation with you, Reader, my interest lies in the second point of Shay's definition: what constitutes "legitimate authority." In *Achilles in Vietnam*, legitimate authority resides in an officer or other superior in one's chain of command (Shay 1994). Is my personal account of my encounter with the young boy, then, outside that which is considered moral injury? Yes and no. Shay's definition gets at a very specific phenomenon—one involving the human relationship that exists between superior and subordinate within the military. In that sense, my own experience of moral injury does not fit Shay's definition; I was very fortunate that the people directly above me in my chain of command were trustworthy people of integrity. However, if authority is broadened to include those more distant from me—say in the higher echelons of U.S. government—betrayal is a feeling that comes more readily to mind. This adds a complication to the third point, however: can someone like Donald Rumsfeld, for example, be considered present to the "high stakes situations" in which military women and men were finding themselves at the time of my service?

I turn for the moment from Shay's "legitimate authority" to consider the second definition of moral injury. In a landmark 2009 article that prompted the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay closer attention to the phenomenon, Brett Litz, an expert in military trauma and professor at Boston University, along with a team of other expert scholars and clinicians, provided another working definition of moral injury: "perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (Litz et al. 2009, p. 700) The authors define morals as "the personal and shared familial, cultural, societal, and legal rules for social behavior, either tacit or explicit. Morals are fundamental assumptions about how things should work and how one should behave in the world" (Litz et al. 2009, p. 699). The authors continue to add to their basic definition of moral injury with layers of nuance:

> [Moral injury] may entail participating in or witnessing inhumane or cruel actions, failing to prevent the immoral acts of others, as well as engaging in subtle acts or experiencing reactions that, upon reflection, transgress a moral code. We also consider bearing witness to the aftermath of violence and human carnage to be potentially morally injurious. Moral injury requires an act of transgression that severely and abruptly contradicts an individual's personal or shared expectation about the rules or the code of conduct, either during the event or at some point afterwards…The individual must be (or become) aware of the discrepancy between his or her morals and the experience (i.e., moral violation), causing dissonance and inner conflict. In the case of a severe act of transgression, for most service members, the event is, by definition, incongruent and discrepant with fundamental beliefs and assumptions about how the world operates or how an individual or group should be treated (or at odds with military training and rules of engagement). (Litz et al. 2009, p. 700)

The basic distinction between Jonathan Shay's definition and the definition offered by Litz et al. is the question of who does the betraying. In Shay's own words: "In their definition the violator is the self, whereas in mine the violator is a powerholder" (2014, p. 184). If one were to flatten the two definitions, one can argue that the individual self in Litz et al.'s definition simply becomes the legitimate authority from Shay's definition. However, I argue that both of these definitions, taken together with their different emphases, get closer to the reality of moral injury than either can get on its own.

In my introduction, I warn against a binary that sets up a soldier either as an automaton merely following orders or as a paragon of virtue that has the authority and fortitude to always choose rightly in a given situation. Shay's definition, with its emphasis on the betrayal by a legitimate authority, guards against placing undue weight on the soldier's capacity to choose and act freely in a high-stakes situation. Litz et al.'s definition guards against viewing the soldier as a person who can only respond to an authority; in their definition, what the soldier herself believes to be morally right is of critical importance. Consider my own story again: there was no authority that betrayed me by ordering me to yell and curse at a young boy. I did it myself, and I am in fact aware of a discrepancy between the deed and my own morals, which "causes dissonance and inner conflict" (Litz et al. 2009, p. 700). At the same time, I was pursuing a task in a high-stakes situation. I did not encounter the boy in a vacuum; the mission (and with it, authority) permeated the atmosphere. Would a mere rejection of the water I offered him spark such an angry response in me in a "normal," lower-stakes situation? I profoundly hope not. I have never waged a war, but I have fought in one. In the midst of a war waged by others (authority), I acted poorly (self).

Larry Kent Graham (2017) offers another helpful model to dispel the moral binary I warn against that is not limited to a military/battlefield environment. In fact, Graham claims "each of us is a morally injured and morally injuring individual…" (2017, p. 79). Graham distinguishes between "*agential* moral injury brought upon ourselves by our own agency, and *receptive* moral injury caused to us by the agency of others" (2017, p. 13, italics mine). Agential moral injury, in my view, is the sort on which Litz et al. focus, while receptive moral injury more closely aligns with Shay's definition. However, Graham's approach expands the application of moral injury out of the high-stakes situations of the battlefield and military authority and places it within "the context of everyday moral living" (2017, p. 78). We are all moral agents, but we are not *just* moral agents; we also receive the moral actions of others. We give and we receive. We act and we are acted upon.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer on conscience

The importance of both definitions of moral injury cannot be overstated, in my view. These clinical definitions also invite our substantive theological engagement. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1949/2005) in his *Ethics* develops the concept of "conscience" in a manner that adds layers of theo-ethical depth to the two definitions of moral injury provided by Shay and Litz et al.

Both conscience and shame, according to Bonhoeffer, are signs of a kind of disunion: "*Shame* reminds human beings of their disunion with God and one another; *conscience* is the sign of human beings' disunion within themselves" (1949/2005, p. 307). (I will return to the concept of shame in the next section). In order to put "conscience" in dialogue with the definitions of moral injury

already provided, some further excavation of these terms from Bonhoeffer's work is needed. First, Bonhoeffer writes the following regarding conscience:

> Conscience is the call of human existence for unity with itself, voiced from a deep wellspring beyond one's own will and reason. It manifests itself as the indictment of lost unity and as the warning against losing one's self. Its primary focus is not a specific act, but a specific way of being. It protests against activity that threatens this being in unity with one's own self. According to this formal definition, conscience remains an authority the defiance of which is extremely inadvisable; disregarding the call of one's conscience, rather than leading to a meaningful surrender of oneself, must result in the destruction of one's own being, a disintegration of human existence. Acting against one's conscience is similar to suicidal action against one's own life, and it is no accident that both frequently go together. (1949/2005, pp. 276–277)

This account of conscience fits well with the thick account of moral injury given by Litz et al. in the large quote above. "Dissonance and inner conflict" (Litz et al. 2009, p. 700) in extreme form, I suggest, become inner "destruction" and "disintegration" in Bonhoeffer's language. I will leave it to you, Reader, to determine for yourself whether Bonhoeffer is right to suggest the link between a suicide of one's conscience and actual physical suicide. It is important to note that conscience, for Bonhoeffer, is focused on a way of being rather than a specific act. For Litz et al., we recall, "moral injury requires an act of transgression that severely and abruptly contradicts an individual's personal or shared expectation about the rules or the code of conduct…" (2009, p. 700). So, is it the specific act, or the specific way of being? I argue that Bonhoeffer and Litz et al. can both be interpreted in the following way: an act(s) that defies conscience disrupts, destroys, disintegrates, or creates dissonance and inner conflict in one's specific way of being. In other words, act(s) that defy my conscience disrupt or destroy my ability to continue to perceive myself as living in a certain way with myself and others. For example, my encounter with the child in Iraq eroded my perception of myself as a "good guy"—someone whose way of being was defined by helping people. The act, the encounter, disintegrated that perception. What the event revealed to me was not a profound lesson in what it means to be angry with a child; rather, it revealed to me a profound lesson about myself—that I was not who I thought I was.

Bonhoeffer goes on to say that the threatened unity of self that conscience seeks to preserve is "first of all, one's own ego in its demand to be 'like God'…in knowing good and evil…The call of conscience has its origin and goal in the *autonomy* of one's own ego" (1949/2005, p. 277). The only way one can actually find a unity with one's self, a unity that is not threatened, is to surrender one's ego. For Bonhoeffer, this surrender manifests in an explicitly Christian manner: "Jesus Christ has become my conscience. This means that from now on I can only find unity with myself by surrendering my ego to God and others" (1949/2005, p. 278). However, one can take as the foundation of one's self unity various other options, and Bonhoeffer provides an extreme counter-example from his own context:

> When the N.S. [National Socialist] says, 'my conscience is A.H. [Adolf Hitler],' then this is also the attempt to ground the unity of the ego beyond one's own self. The consequence is the surrender of the self's autonomy in favor of an

> unconditional heteronomy. This, in turn, is possible only if the other human being, in whom I seek the unity of my life, takes on the role of my redeemer. (1949/2005, p. 278)

I warned in my introduction that a comparison with Nazis would inevitably rear its head when dealing with stereotypical images of soldiers; this is certainly not what I wish to do here. What Bonhoeffer offers us here is the image of one's conscience as a type of prison. It is an impossible burden to be fully autonomous—to be the one who determines what is good and what is evil, to deliberate in every moment and try one's best to act accordingly. For Bonhoeffer, "Jesus Christ is the one who sets the conscience free for the service of God and neighbor…Unlike the conscience bound to the law, the freed conscience is not fearful. Instead, it is wide open to the neighbor and the neighbor's concrete distress" (1949/2005, p. 279).

I daresay that military service is an attempt to free the conscience. One wishes to do good, to reject evil, to be a part of something greater than the self. One perhaps even acknowledges that one is not capable oneself of deciding good and evil, and thus takes an oath of enlistment—surrendering one's ego in part to one's superiors. Maybe that is too broad, too general, a statement to make, Reader. Suffice it to say that this is how I thought of my own military service in the midst of it. I wanted to preserve the unity of myself as a "good" person, and thus was eager to join an institution that provided a host of rules, guidelines, and values for how to preserve that unity. The military, in a way, became my conscience, and "conscience divides life into permitted and prohibited" (Bonhoeffer 1949/2005, p. 307). The military's permissions and prohibitions became my justification of myself as a "good person." Bonhoeffer warns, however, that "what conscience cannot grasp is the fact that this unity itself already presupposes disunion from God and from human beings…conscience…is not concerned with a person's relationship to God and other people, but with the relationship to one's own self" (1949/2005, p. 307). I placed my conscience on the foundation of the military because I knew that I was incapable of deciding and dealing with the world's "good and evil"—though I wished to serve the good. The military in turn provided me with a knowledge of good and evil that I could carry into the battlefield, and ultimately: "bearing the knowledge of good and evil within themselves, human beings have now become the judge of God and others, just as they are their own judge." (Bonhoeffer 1949/2005, p. 308).

I cannot justify myself and my actions—I cannot find unity of self—by stereotyping myself as an automaton fulfilling a mission or as a person of conscience perfectly fulfilling the requirements of permission and prohibition. To be wide open to a young boy as a neighbor in a distressing, high-stakes situation, I needed something beyond permission and prohibition—something beyond myself that could liberate my conscience and my desire to justify myself to myself—and no nation or military can provide that. Moral injury, the speck in my eye, is a recognition that human relationship is about so much more than what we think we know about good and evil, what we think we know about permission and prohibition. The speck in my eye is the need to surrender my ego or conscience—my need for self-justification—and thus liberate it, to surrender it to someone/something capable of being my redeemer.

Litz and many of those who contributed to the 2009 article gesture toward this need in a new treatment, "adaptive disclosure," for military trauma including moral injury. In adaptive disclosure, "the service member is asked to have a conversation with a compassionate, forgiving,

and benevolent moral authority;" this imagined moral authority speaks "sometimes through the voice of the patient and other times through the voice of the therapist" (Litz et al. 2016, p. 47, 124). The authors go on to acknowledge the importance of the patient's religious beliefs, suggesting "it may be that a discussion with *an actual moral authority figure* is warranted…The hope is that faith, communion with, and empathy from others who share a faith, and messages based on 'good' theology—centered on love and forgiveness—will help heal moral injuries over time" (Litz et al. 2016, p. 126). A fuller exposition of the intersection between adaptive disclosure therapy and "good" theology is warranted but not within the scope of this article. I do argue that Bonhoeffer produced "good" theology that is relevant for discourse on moral injury, for reasons stated above. Conscience is not enough for maintaining or repairing human relationship, because its focus remains on the self. When conscience is betrayed, it becomes a prison of isolation and self-disintegration, and while "conscience claims to be the voice of God and the norm for relating to other people," it remains one's own voice trying unsuccessfully to preserve itself (Bonhoeffer 1949/2005, p. 308).

I remember the boy in Iraq, and I think about him and write about him, and I think about other faces I saw there—soldiers I worked with, civilians we met. I did not wage a war, but I fought in one. Can I be the judge and jury of those faces? Can I be my own judge and jury? I spent some time in such a court in the recesses of my mind and heart, and there is no justice, repair, or reconciliation to be found for anyone there. That mental court of conscience remains focused on the act, on right and wrong, on permission and prohibition: "It was wrong to treat the boy that way, you cannot do that" is the verdict that rings out over and over again. The verdict is necessary but not sufficient. A lesson I learned, and perhaps you have learned as well, Reader, is that war and other high-stakes situations trouble the waters of right and wrong. What I need is not a way to remove the wrong act in my past; the act is done. What I need is a *new way of being*, a way of being unified with God and neighbor.

A focus on doing the right thing, so that we can stand tall in our mental courts, can render invisible the neighbor right in front of us. To be wide open to the neighbor, especially the neighbor in distress, requires an acknowledgement that our private mental courts are insufficient—they must be surrendered to something or someone higher. For Bonhoeffer, that someone higher is Christ the redeemer. I make no prescriptions here for you, Reader. As a reader of *Pastoral Psychology*, I assume you have a human relationship to your clients, patients, those for whom you provide pastoral care. Are you wide open to them as neighbors in distress? Are they looking for something/someone higher? How might you help them go beyond their interior court and explore who or what that something is for them? I hope this conversation with me has given you some angles toward those questions, but I leave the real work to the experts.

One expert that may be of help to you, Reader, is Larry Kent Graham (2017), who insists that the caregiver must "share the risks" of the care-seeker and embark on a journey of "co-creative discovery," achieved through "attunement and mutual active listening (p. 11). Graham writes from years of experience as a chaplain, pastoral counselor, parish minister, and professor of pastoral theology. In the chapter Graham identifies as the "heart" of his new book, he offers many practical examples of "collaborative conversation" that can be employed in providing care for those suffering from moral wounds (Graham 2017, pp. 109–134).

The National Mall and the log in our eyes

We started with a speck in my eye, but we have left a log unaddressed. Having explored some concepts and definitions, I make a turn now, better equipped to describe what—in my view—constitutes the log in our eyes at a national level.

I first got the chance to visit Washington, D.C., in 2006. I had spent a few days at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (now the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center), dealing with some acute psychiatric problems that would ultimately lead to my medical discharge from the army later that same year. I share that information with you, Reader, because I consider myself in conversation with you. I hope that insight into my mental health does not make it easier to treat my narrative as something objectively distant from you, but rather that you see me more clearly as a person instead of words on a page. Perhaps my narrative gains more credibility in your eyes if I acknowledge that my stay at Walter Reed also involved follow-up examination regarding my exposure to Sarin gas in 2004 (see Chivers 2014). At any rate, I am vulnerable on the page to you now, Reader; all of this is deeply personal to me.

After my stay in the psychiatric ward at Walter Reed, I got the opportunity to spend a day visiting the National Mall with a close friend. I saw all the beautiful monuments that tell a certain story. I remember the pride I felt at being a part of that national story, and I remember the heartache I felt considering the profound *sacrifice* of all those memorialized there.

I stood there proud, and I stood there ashamed. Shame, because I knew the story told of victory through sacrifice leaves out many unattractive details. Shame, because at the time I was given the opportunity to remake for myself a good life, while others had none at all. Shame, because I knew there was a *different* story to tell, or at least a more complete story, and I was afraid to tell it. Shame, most of all, because I knew that what was expected of me in that place was to feel pride and gratitude. This is the worst shame—to feel ashamed for feeling shame.

How can I describe this shame multiplied by itself? I loved (and still love) the people I served with during my deployment to Iraq. I respected (and still respect) the non-commissioned officers and officers who were the superiors I interacted with on a regular basis. Here is the authority and the high-stakes situation: if I begin to feel dissonance about the war in general, and then dissonance with specific leaders who waged that war, at which point in the chain of command does this dissonance separate me from those human beings whom I love and respect? When I stood there at the National Mall, I raged in my heart at Donald Rumsfeld and others who continued to defend the logic of the war. Yet I knew that rage could only partially be directed at Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld was part of a chain—a chain of command that must be taken quite seriously. I was a link in that chain, and so were those people I love and respect. If I feel betrayed by Rumsfeld, do I feel betrayed by them as well? Or, the question really at the heart of this shame over shame, if I stand there at the National Mall hating the war and hating those in authority who waged it, do I by extension hate those whom I love?

Bonhoeffer again provides me with some theo-ethical scaffolding. For Bonhoeffer, shame is a precursor to conscience: "*Shame* reminds human beings of their disunion with God and one another; *conscience* is the sign of human beings' disunion with themselves" (1949/2005, p. 307).

Bonhoeffer (re)tells a story to define shame:

> Instead of seeing God, human beings see themselves. 'Then their eyes were opened' (Gen. 3:7). Human beings recognize themselves in their disunion from God and one another. They recognize themselves as naked. With God and others no longer serving as a protection and covering for them, human beings find themselves exposed. Shame appears. Shame is the irrepressible memory of disunion from their origin. It is the pain of this disunion, and the helpless desire to reverse it…Human beings feel remorse when they have done something wrong, shame when they are missing something…There is something forced about enduring the gaze of another, as is required when making a personal vow, for example; there is something longing in the love that seeks the gaze of the other. Shame seeks a cover to the estrangement. But at the same time the covering implies an affirmation of the estrangement that has taken place, and is thus unable to repair the damage. Human beings seek cover, they hide from other human beings and from God. (1949/2005, pp. 303-4)

Here conscience and shame come together. I stated above that act(s) that defy my conscience disrupt or destroy my ability to continue to perceive myself as living in a certain way with myself and others. These act(s) reveal to myself my way of being—they leave my disunion with myself uncovered and unveiled, and they expose a deeper disunion between myself, others, and God.

When I put on my first military uniform, I connected with a community and an authority. As I think back to the look of fear in an old man's eyes in Iraq, I wonder now whether he was more afraid of the uniform or the weapon—or what those represented—than he was afraid of me; however, there was a 'me' under the draping of uniform and weapon. There were things germinating within me that a uniform had allowed me to ignore, but I could not continue to hide. I was ultimately hiding from myself: from the "irrepressible memory of disunion from [my] origin" that Bonhoeffer (1949/2005, pp. 303–4) describes using the mythic story of Adam and Eve and the fall.

> 'Then…they…made loincloths for themselves.' Shame seeks a cover to overcome estrangement…human beings also preserve an ultimate concealment with respect to themselves, they protect their own secret from themselves, by refusing, for example, to become consciously aware of everything that is germinating within them. (Bonhoeffer 1949/2005, pp. 304–5)

With the realization of what my uniform hid, I also began to wonder about other military symbols, like the monuments and memorials at the National Mall: what they represent and what they might conceal. These monuments and memorials are wide open for interpretation. On the one hand, I am glad they stand there so that we do not forget death in our midst. On the other hand, I have heard rhetoric drip from the lips of those in power, imposing meaning on lives and sacrifices that *are not their own*. There is a way in which meaning can be stolen from memorial, to place a grand narrative on top of something like war, forcing it to make sense in its senselessness. This grand narrative is the log in our eyes. The log is a structure of shame that rests heavily on the shoulders of individuals. It is a shame-structure that compels those who feel dissonance with

themselves, with others, and with God to remain hidden—to not cast away the clothing of the grand narrative, lest they be cast away.

Deep down I still feel the pull of that national story, that grand narrative, and I know that I *should* feel proud—but I have seen and heard different stories, and perhaps you have as well, Reader.

Consider those events I mentioned, my own individual recollections of war, both broad and specific; these constitute the speck in my eye that allows me to see the log. The speck is aggravating and painful; the speck is the knowledge that war does not really make any damn sense at all. Then there is a log in this nation's eye. There is a log of forced meaning that is being used to bludgeon those who would serve this country and it is used to shame those who have served and feel dissonance over that service. The log is a story we keep telling ourselves that makes a whole lot of sense, a story about threat and defense and necessity and service and sacrifice, a story about glory and pride and honor and gratitude and respect.

We shape that story, and we refine, polish, and admire it. We memorialize it. We tell it over and over; we take it and beat the hell out of the people who have lived a different story. Their memories are bleeding out, wept from eyes that see clearly now the senselessness of war. We let them fall apart, fall through the cracks, fade and slip away, because we cannot bring ourselves to see it! We cannot even see our own wound—our collective moral injury—that is right in our face, in our eyes, the way we have surrendered to a logic of violence. If we cannot see our own woundedness, how can we hope to see a young boy in Iraq as a neighbor in distress?

The nation has a kind of conscience, a way of trying to preserve its self-unity. The meaning of those memorials can be co-opted. I once described moral injury as "the winds that blow when all the laws, all the understood ways of relating to other human beings have been laid flat" (Yandell 2015, p. 12). I was writing about what happens in war, when the enemy is pursued at all costs. A nation cannot exist with this laying flat of morality. Some would take those monuments at the National Mall as a buttress against such winds, a grand patriotic narrative that serves as a *justification* that preserves unity. The greatest memorial cannot restore what has been lost.

A grand patriotic narrative forgets so much. It is a log of insidious necessity that demands all these war memories, all these sacrifices, mean a certain thing. Have you ever heard someone say something like "our women and men in the armed forces are dying for" (fill in the blank)? I invite you to ask the dead what they died for, and to encounter the silence that greets you. I will keep my speck of moral injury, but the log that perpetuates more death by putting words in the mouths of the dead—that log I would have out forever.

Where do *you* find yourself in all this, Reader?

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