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Abstract Spatial metaphors abound in feminist theory. The modest goal of this paper is to reassert the importance of temporal dimensions in thought for feminist thinking. In order to establish this general claim, several kinds of current thinking about time that are problematic for feminists are explored. First, the postmodern compression of time and space is considered from the standpoint of the changes it brings in the nature of care. Second, the privileging of the future over the past is considered in light of the problems it creates for thinking about justice for historical wrongdoing. Forgiveness and remembrance require an attention to the past.

keywords *care, feminist theory, forgiveness, justice, reconciliation, time*

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. (Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls New York, 1848)

'But we have learned that you cannot live from history. Americans have no history and they live wonderfully well.' Radovan Delibasic, a Serb, after the Kosovo defeat, 1999. (Cohen, 1999: 1)

Introduction

Spatial metaphors abound in feminist theory. Virginia Woolf expressed her desire spatially in wishing for 'a room of one's own.' Standpoint theories and epistemologies begin from a spatial, positional metaphor. Feminist theorists rely heavily upon the conceptualizations of 'public' and 'private' as separate, if mutually constructed, realms. Rosi Braidotti's nomad travels through space, as Haraway's cyborgs travel through cyberspace (Braidotti, 1994; Haraway, 1991). Lorraine Code writes about 'rhetorical spaces', Joan Tronto about 'moral boundaries' (Code, 1995; Tronto, 1993). Wendy Brown's solution to our current *States of Injury* is to call for new forms of feminist 'political spaces' (Brown, 1995); Melissa Orlie believes that 'forgiveness and promises' can only be sustained in 'political space' as well (Orlie, 1995). Carol Gilligan hopes that she has succeeded in *Mapping the Moral Domain*. In Iris Marion Young's important book, *Justice and the*

Politics of Difference (1990), her last chapter evokes a place, the city, as pointing towards her ideal. Claudia Card has adopted the metaphor of 'gray zones' for her work on evil done in complicity (Card, 2000). Margaret Urban Walker, more sensitive to *Mother Time* than most, nonetheless described her ideal in this manner: 'An "ethics of responsibility" as a normative moral view would try to put people and responsibilities in the right places with respect to each other' (Walker, 1998: 78).

Julia Kristeva summarized the point this way: ' " Father's time, mother's species," as Joyce put it: and, indeed, when evoking the name and destiny of women, one thinks more of the *space* generating and forming the human species than of *time*, becoming, or history' (Kristeva, 1982: 33).

This trend in feminist theory is to some extent paralleled throughout contemporary political theory. Democratic theorists often refer to the need for groups to have 'a place at the table'; Rawls's 'original position' and Habermas's early 'ideal speech situation' demarcated *places* in which a certain kind of discourse and, indeed, discursive ethics, were possible. One of the markers of postmodernity, understood sociologically, is the way in which spatial metaphors have displaced temporal metaphors (Harvey, 1990).¹

My observation is, of course, a bit tendentious: many feminist scholars and theorists are still writing about issues that are deeply embedded in temporal modes² and one need only look back a generation or so to find time to be a central category in political theory.³ But if the reader can admit that there is some validity to my observation, it raises the serious meta-theoretical question: why have spatial metaphors become so dominant? Can we ascribe any significance to these abundant spatial metaphors? What do we lose in using spatial metaphors and in not paying more attention to time in our theorizing?

That time is a complex subject becomes obvious if we reflect for a moment on the multiple dimensions of time that inform our lives. Time is both circular (there are repeating daily rhythms) and linear (past, present and future proceed in that order). On one level, time is a paradigm of human social construction. Anthropologists have long explored how various cultures have different senses of time. Some of our familiar senses of time are fairly recent (clock time) while the calendars of many peoples stretch back for thousands of years. Each of us has had a subjective sense of time fleeting or dragging. Yet on another level, time is stubbornly resistant to human control. Human bodies are subject to various life cycles which, though they have widely divergent cultural meanings, also have some constants: human infants mature slowly; at some point bodies begin to break down and people die.⁴

As a field of study that aims at change, feminist theory has a political bias toward the future. This political program matches current ways of thinking about time: taking the future more seriously than the past is part of contemporary thinking about time.⁵ Elizabeth Grosz exemplifies this aspect of feminist thinking:

Unless we develop concepts of time and duration that welcome and privilege the future, that openly accept the rich virtualities and divergent resonances of the

present, we will remain closed to understanding the complex processes of becoming that engender and constitute both life and matter. (Grosz, 1999: 15)

In this essay, my modest goal is to argue that feminist thinkers need always to keep the temporal dimension in mind in their work. In order to suggest the significance of the general question of the place of time in feminist ethical and political theory, I shall present several ruminations about how using time will enrich our theorizing. Thus, I explore two problematic aspects of contemporary time that warrant our closer attention: that space and time are becoming compressed and that the present serves now as a prelude to the future rather than as an extension of the past. Although I hope to convince readers about the specific arguments I make, I hope that, at the least, they convince the reader that feminist theory must be more attentive to time's place.

Engendered time: commodities, control and care

Time becomes the unstable instant

Most contemporary accounts of time emphasize how time plays out the logic of an advanced capitalist order. This means, not only that time is commodified, but that it has come to be commodified in a new way. David Harvey argues, for example, that the distinction between modern and post-modern modes of life is their different accounts of how time and space are controlled by the requirements of capitalism. Modern capitalism requires the exploitation of labor's time through strict adherence to 'clock time' and to fordist models of controlling space in order to exploit time more efficiently (for example, in an assembly line). In the classical marxian model of capitalism, time becomes the central motif of capitalism: if and only if the workers' labor time can be exploited can surplus value be reliably extracted. In the new mode of economic exploitation, flexible accumulation, volatility rather than predictability and control provide the margin for profit. Thus:

This trend to privilege the spatialization of time (Being) over the annihilation of space by time (Becoming) is consistent with much of what postmodernism now articulates; with Lyotard's 'local determinisms,' Fish's 'interpretive communities,' Frampton's 'regional resistances,' and Foucault's 'heterotopias.' It evidently offers multiple possibilities within which a spatialized 'otherness' can flourish. (Harvey, 1990: 273)

Harvey believes that the spatialization of time results in a profound *time-space compression*. On a simple level, such a compression is exhibited in our notion of the shrinking globe: capitalism is now organized globally and 'globalization' must also be understood as transforming our notions of space and time. On a more complex level, such a change from 'fordism' to 'flexible accumulation' in capitalism requires a shift in the ways capitalists (and the rest of us, dragged along by capitalism as pebbles and boulders at the bottom of a glacier) can now think about time. Harvey observes that the 'general speed-up in the turnover times of capital' accentuates the volatility and ephemerality of commodities and capital. "The

volatility, of course, makes it extremely difficult to engage in any long-term planning. Indeed, learning to play the volatility right is now just as important as accelerating turnover time' (Harvey, 1990: 286–7).

To Harvey, then, the speed-up of contemporary capitalism makes it impossible to keep the model of what we might call *time as a control*, in which time has a constant dimension and operates as a constraint. In this framework, using time wisely and relying upon past experience and resources to exploit time more completely, spells the path to success. Instead, speed-up produces a concern with what we might call *steering time*, where time is no longer itself constant and where its constraints are more plastic. Thus, postmodern time cannot be controlled; but a clever capitalist can take advantage of its volatility by taking advantage of it.

In this regard, postmodern time becomes a form of 'instantiation' (Friedland and Boden, 1994), the temporal equivalent of what Anthony Giddens (1990) describes as 'distantiation', that is, the contemporary capacity for anything to be anywhere. Giddens's account presumes that distance as a barrier disappears in a world of instantaneous and mass communication and travel. So too, time becomes no impediment to experiencing simultaneously events anywhere in the world.⁶

'Time is money?' Caring and time

If a certain giddiness of possibility seems to open up with this alternative sense of time, it is important to recall that, unless we consider it closely, we may miss an important gender dimension in this transformation. As many other feminist scholars have noted, even in this postmodern moment time is marked by gendered categories. Historically, the modern separation of work from household and the increasingly tight control over labor time within capitalist production has resulted in a bifurcation of men's and women's experience of time. The cultural association of women with the home (using culturally biased notions of middle-class life as the norm) meant that women's lives were contained in a realm in which time was organized somewhat differently around processes of reproduction of life rather than around production. Women were expected to organize their lives around the activities of raising children and caring for the sick, aged and tired. Even if we do not assume that care is essentially linked to women, historically women have borne disproportionately the burdens of care. How does changing postmodern time affect care?

What scholars of caring have observed continuously about caring practices is how difficult it is to try and make them conform to models that control labor time (Daly, 1996; Stone, 2000). Thus, the romantic idealizations about home as a 'haven in a heartless world' (Lasch, 1977) gain their power by hearkening to a different way of organizing time in people's lives. At the risk of exaggerating some of these dimensions of gendered time, let us consider them further by thinking about how these changing notions of care fit with our capacities to care for ourselves and others.

As many scholars have noted, one of the key elements of thinking of time as money, of time as productive, is to identify the conquest of time with enhancing the human capacity to control the world. Whether through the

production of wealth, searching for the 'fountain of youth', attempts at self-improvement (along the lines of the Protestant work ethic), mastering time reflects a broader goal of mastering the world.

Time assumes a different aspect from the standpoint of care. Time spent caring is not about mastery and control but about maintenance and nurturance. Especially in cultures that view the control of nature as their central mission, caring may include learning about various forms of control, but there is nothing inherent in care that points us toward control and, indeed, much about care that suggests that we understand in fundamental ways how time limits the capacities of humans to force their wills upon the world. Consider, as an example, the nature of illness. From the standpoint of time as a control, and even steering time, we might think of periods of illness as 'downtime'. From other cultural perspectives, though, we might understand a period of illness as a period filled with meaning and significance for ourselves and for the others around us (Duff, 1993). The general point here is this: little in caring can be enhanced by being 'forced' in a time/space compression: not learning, healing, reflecting on one's experiences, dying. While the compression of time-space might make capitalists richer; it makes human lives of care poorer.

This is not to say that there are no attempts to commodify care. The processes of commodification are at work in providing humans with food, with products for their bodily needs and with 'time-saving' devices that will help mothers, spouses, dutiful daughters of aging parents and so on. Yet there remains something unchangeable about the need for care to foster relationships of care and for such relationships to grow only in their own time. The model of 'steering time' lends itself especially well to trying to change the nature of care into a commodity. Harvey himself observes that the volatility of contemporary capitalism leads to a change in the 'mix' of commodities in the direction of more services. For example, consider the popular way to describe how working parents can compensate for spending less time with their children by making certain that the time now spent would be 'quality time'. 'Quality time' is an illustration of such an attempt to spatialize caring time: if one 'makes space' to spend time with one's children to the exclusion of all other things, concerns and persons that may intrude on this space, then one can make up for spending less time with children. In practice, though, this is no real substitute.

Another dimension of care that is affected by this time-space compression is the construction of care for the self. An interesting thing happens when members of the capitalist class come to see themselves as perpetually 'on', ready at a moment to spring into action and take advantage of capitalist volatility. There is a change in the relationship of agency and control. When success is measured by the capacity to take advantage of volatility the old association between agency and control also breaks down. No amount of past preparation can be 'stored up' to make the world conform to one's current actions. Instead, there is a different form of presentism that individuals must practice best to take care of themselves. Those who are not in total control can nonetheless succeed if they are constantly at the ready. Two consequences follow from this new relationship to care.

In the first place, those who are able to become capitalist successes require and can demand much more constant care and service for themselves. There is a new competitive advantage to be gained, for example, by a having a fit body that can ignore pressures of time and space. In the second place, though, there is much greater difficulty in providing care for others who do not conform to this model of preparation for volatile and compressed time and space. One of the archaic meanings of care is 'burden': when one needs always to be ready to take advantage of time, the burden of care for others becomes more onerous.

Reasserting time's place

If these points are convincing, then feminist theorists need to think more systematically about the time/space compression. This rethinking has to avoid a common problem that emerges when we begin to look at the world in sociological terms:⁷ There is a danger of thinking of these processes of change as if they were without human control or the possibility of change. Yet it is possible to imagine a number of policies that would intervene and change the course of these temporal problems.

In Italy feminists have agitated to change the 'city's time' (*tempi della città*).⁸ That official government offices were open during the hours when women have had other responsibilities meant that women had been effectively unable to take advantage of public offices or to conduct public business. The result has been a change in the opening and closing hours of government businesses so that women's lives could be more easily arranged.

We might think about how extending the idea of 'the city's time' so that its impact on women's lives might be made less disruptive to every culture and setting. Consider, for example, the fact that in the United States, elementary and high school hours do not match work schedules. The burden of arranging for childcare when children are not in school but parents are still at work falls disproportionately on women and especially on women in the lower classes (Heymann, 2000). Surely, political force could be brought to bear to make schools, businesses, shops and other public service schedules coincide more accurately with one another.⁹ Certain configurations of time serve the interests of capitalism best, it is true. Nevertheless, as Marx argued, in describing the struggle for a shorter work week, the political power of a democratic majority can outweigh capitalism's temporal imperatives.

The example of *tempi della città* demonstrates that feminists can resist thinking of time only as the product of the productive speed-up and flux of the moment. As Kerry Daly observed,

A new paradigm of time must begin with the idea that decisions about time are decisions about values. When people experience time conflicts, not only are there competing demands placed on that time, but divergent underlying values shape how the time is spent. (Daly, 1996: 211)

Time can be reordered around people's lives in ways that make it possible to live better rather than less well. Thus, I have argued that feminists need

to make the questions about time central to their analyses of social and political structures and to explore more closely the implications of thinking of time as completely plastic.

Although I have suggested that confounding time and space raises certain problems for feminist thinkers, there are profound reasons why following this trend in contemporary thought makes good sense for feminists. When it appears that the contemporary time-space compression may diminish the controlling power of past oppressive structures, using this account of time becomes attractive for those who would end oppression. In exploring this dimension of contemporary accounts of time, however, I have tried to suggest some reasons why, despite this affinity, feminist theorists need to be more attentive to gendered aspects of time/space compression.

Past and future: resisting the lure of amnesia

The temptation of forgetting

In my cowardice, I became at once a man, and did what all we grown men do when face to face with suffering and injustice: I preferred not to see them. (Proust, 1981: 13)

A second dimension of current ways of thinking about time will illustrate another danger in leaving the category of time uninterrogated. Let us now consider this question: If time-as-control is replaced with the flux and volatility of steering time, and if 'instantiation' matches the plasticity of 'distantiation' and turns all of time into an instant, then what happens to the notion of time as divided into past, present and future?¹⁰ One effect is that the future looms larger than the past as a guide for our action and thought.

We noted at the outset of this essay that it is easier for feminists to adopt the kind of non-past orientation that is *au courant*. To dwell in the past is to carry forward large burdens. The past is a huge burden on women, if we are to take the 'repeated injuries and usurpations' mentioned in the Seneca Falls Declaration cited at the beginning of this essay seriously. To focus on this burden as a catalogue of past wrongs is to transform women into the victims of men's actions and to deny women any agency of their own. Is it not better, feminist thinkers seem to suggest, to set aside another review of these 'states of injury' (Wendy Brown's term) and to move forward instead?

It is easy to understand feminist impatience with notions of time that celebrate the past. The very ideal of feminism as a progressive political movement is to claim a basis to throw off sexist assumptions about women, gender and sexuality that were generally accepted in the past. To accept the past or tradition as *authoritative* would fundamentally undermine the capacities of feminists to advance their cause. Feminists cannot both accept Burke's or Oakeshott's claims that accumulated and traditional wisdom is inherently superior to innovate ideas and pursue change through challenging received wisdom.¹¹

Nevertheless, I want to argue that there remain many good reasons for feminist theorists to be extremely cautious in sweeping away the concerns

of the past or in, as Grosz put it, privileging the future. I shall suggest, first, that such an approach may obfuscate important intellectual issues and, second, it may make it more difficult to recognize serious moral problems.

Claudia Card, whose writings are exemplary on explaining how to live a moral life, makes an interesting error in *The Unnatural Lottery* by conflating spatial and temporal dimensions to privilege a future orientation. In trying to argue against the moral positions of Bernard Williams and Stuart Nagel, she characterizes them as 'tend[ing] to look down and back, from relatively privileged positions and toward the past, focusing on such things as praise, blame, regret, punishment, and reward – the last two, historically, prerogatives of the powerful exercised for social control'. To this account she opposes a view which is 'basically forward-looking' in its concern for acceptance, commitment, care, and concern as dimensions of responsibility (1996: 23).

What is more important than recalling past injuries, Claudia Card suggests, is that we consider the past in so far as it shapes the present. People disadvantaged by belonging to despised groups, she suggests, potentially suffer from the bad luck of the 'unnatural lottery's' draw: they are harmed in being less able to develop morally worthy characters. This present limitation on their future development, she argues, is a better way to understand the nature of collective responsibility, for it keeps us from thinking about responsibility in terms of the past and allows us to think about responsibility moving into the future, as taking responsibility. It makes responsibility the work, not of a third-party reasoning about blame, but of a first-person thinking about agency. In this shift, Card believes that she has moved beyond an account of responsibility that is something fixed in the past to something that is an aspect of perhaps preventable or avoidable injustice.¹²

Claudia Card is advocating, not that we pay no attention to the past, but that we treat the creations of the past as concerns for present action. She writes, for example:

Pasts we inherit affect who we can become. As gendered beings in a society with a history of patriarchy, women and men inherit different pasts, and consequently different social expectations, lines of communication, opportunities, barriers. If these things influence character development, they make gender part of our moral luck. (Card, 1996: 49)

There is much to recommend Card's approach. It prevents us from being stuck in the past, in figuring out 'the blame game'. Surely to avoid such exercises is one of her main reasons for conceiving of responsibility in a forward-looking, rather than a backward-looking direction. Most importantly, Card asks us to use our reflections on the past to guide our present and future action.

Nevertheless, I would argue that the real problem with Card's approach is that she conflates temporal and spatial dimensions that make her argument only a partial account of the problem she seeks to address. She objects to the views of Nagel and Williams not primarily because they are backward-looking, but because they are from a place of relative moral

privilege. What would be much more valuable, in fact, is an account of responsibility from the standpoint of the relatively less privileged that looked both forwards *and* backwards. Card's concern is to show how women, despite their injuries, can take responsibility. Card is surely right that there are serious complications in thinking about the wrongs done to 'us' in the past as a basis for leading one's life. It is complicated, on one level, simply to know what happened: people's memories can be flawed and they may well distort or minimize harms they suffered or perpetrated. In this regard, as Pierre Nora put it, 'History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it' (Sturken, 1997). It is difficult once events have passed to assign lines of responsibility into the present. It is difficult to know 'how much' is enough to make up for harms by or to those who may be dead. In light of these problems, we can see the sense of a strategy that sets the past aside and sees it only in its current effects.

The problem with this perspective is that it is too voluntaristic; it ignores the ways in which relationships of oppression continue to exercise their power even when those who would escape oppression wish to declare themselves ready to go on. There are at least two types of problem with an approach to responsibility that starts with the present and moves to the future with only a glance to the past: it limits our capacities to deal with past injustice and it may create exactly the kind of avoidance of responsibility that Card found problematic in the first place.

The first problem is that the future orientation closes off certain options to deal with past injustices. Conceiving of the past as irrelevant except in so far as it shapes our present and future options has devastating consequences for our concerns for justice in two regards. In the first place, it puts an undue burden, once again, on those who have previously suffered from injustice. Now, in addition to having endured the suffering of the past, those who have been harmed are asked to surrender their sense of outrage, of having been wronged, of harm. While it is true that the perpetrators of injustice are also being asked to surrender something, namely whatever advantages their injustice granted them, the relief of guilt and the surrender of pain are surely not commensurable. Habermas himself puts it so:

But how can we live up to the principle of discourse ethics, which postulates the consent of *all*, if we cannot make restitution for the injustice and pain suffered by previous generations or if we cannot at least promise an equivalent to the day of judgment and its power of redemption? Is it not obscene for present-day beneficiaries of past injustices to expect the posthumous consent of slain and degraded victims to norms that appear justified to us in light of our expectations regarding the future? (Habermas, 1990: 210)

This problem becomes more serious still. For there is a much greater incentive for a group of people to forget the harms that they have done to others than for the others to forget the harms done to them, or for the effects of those harms to disappear.¹³ In *The Racial Contract*, Charles Mills (1997) sees this process as 'an epistemology of ignorance'. Furthermore, Mills states, if one has already done such great harm to a group that they are

structurally unequal, simply then to make them formally 'equal' does not eliminate the structural barriers that they face, but does remove the ability of those in superior positions from recognizing their own responsibility to those beneath them in the lower positions. Mills argues that such an epistemology of ignorance best explains the 'new' racial contract, whose terms no longer include formal discrimination, but in which the structural barriers and legacies are still in place.

An unwillingness to recognize 'bad faith' in the past is not only problematic because it fails to draw lines of structural responsibility in the denial of duties owed, goods and opportunities stolen and so on. There is another consequence of such invisible bad faith: it also shifts the *moral* burden to those who now appear to be incessant whiners, purveyors of Simmelian or Nietzschean *ressentiment*. From the standpoint of those who have been privileged to benefit from past injustices (for example, from the slave trade, or the exclusion of women from clubs or professions) the continuing harping on these long-ago events by the 'wronged people' itself appears as a form of moral weakness which then continues to justify their beliefs of their moral superiority over those they previously 'wronged'.

Charles Mills' book demonstrates decisively that the great social contract tradition in Western thought was not ever intended to apply to people of color, who were treated as subhuman by generations of Europeans and their progeny in the rest of the world. The history of the European colonial expansions over the past five centuries has left indelible and deep marks not only on the living and the dead, but on every element of contemporary life. If we start from the recognition that all of contemporary capitalism grew not autarkically from European ingenuity but from the exploitation of peoples around the world, then where do we stop? Mills' argument suggests that every white person, whether a signatory to the racial contract or not, male or female, is a beneficiary of this contract. We have only begun to come to terms with the legacy of colonialism:¹⁴ what does it mean if Europeans now say, let bygones be bygones; think now about your capacity to take moral responsibility for what you can do?

While Card's argument that people now must take responsibility is persuasive, surely it does not follow that questions about reparation should be expunged. To do so would simply grant that the social control exercised by the relatively powerful in controlling the moral agenda in the past would continue. On the other hand, to raise the moral question of reparation is serious indeed. Should Americans provide reparation to all African Americans? Should Americans and Europeans provide reparation to all Africans devastated by the slave trade? To all 'First Nations' peoples? Randall Robinson's account of the need for reparation for African Americans does not even name an amount, though the devastating slave labor of the relatively short-lived Nazi regime has produced \$1.7 billion in reparation (Robinson, 2000). Yet, short of such reparation, or a serious discussion of it, what prospect is there for ever setting right the injustices that exist?

We return to Claudia Card's proposal and its second weakness. Card's solution is to suggest that we determine the problems faced by past injustices by determining whether current people have been harmed in their

capacities for moral development. Her goal is to provide people with agency, but she ends up requiring that we make judgments about others and their moral capacities. This poses the very basic question: who are we to make such judgments? In facing extraordinary conditions of past injustice, how do we expect ever to be able to find an objective party who can make some sense out of them? And if we cannot find a neutral third party, then who shall judge? Card's answer is to say that we should think about these issues of gray zones as issues to be resolved in the first person. But how does any woman know that she is living in such a gray zone? How does she know, for example, that her decision to consume in certain ways that are commended in her first world cultural milieu do not put her in a gray zone vis-à-vis women workers somewhere in the global economy? Card makes a mistake that is the opposite from assuming that there is someone, somewhere, who has sufficient distance to make an evaluation such as 'women have been injured in their ability to develop moral characters'. She assumes, on the contrary, that first person actors will recognize that they are acting in a morally unjustifiable way, that is, that their 'grays on gray' are a gray zone. If there is no neutral third party, and no neutral first party and if there is no reason to believe that all affected second parties will have a chance to voice their grievances, then where and how are we to proceed?

Indeed, in addressing questions of past injustice, it matters a great deal whether we expect a third party to negotiate disputes and to come to impartial decisions about what should happen, or whether we recognize that the parties to any such dispute have to resolve such disputes by themselves. This last possibility makes the complexity of dealing with the past all the more difficult and all the more necessary.

Attempting to resolve issues of justice without recognizing the continuing heavy weight of the past only privileges those who are already powerful enough to evade their responsibilities to the past. While it is tempting to look toward the future, every indication suggests that those who fail to learn from the past are doomed, not to repeat it, but to think that they have escaped it. Is it possible, then, not to dwell in the past; not to be blind to the past and wish only for the future; but to bring all these times together?

Enriching our moral and political vocabulary to deal with past injustice
Rejecting the past's *authority* need not be the same as rejecting *accountability* to the past. Suppose we are serious about remedying past injustices. This is so heavy a burden that we have no good way to think about it. How could 'first world' peoples repent for the crimes of centuries? Surely not everyone who has been the victim of colonialist expansion is equally entitled to recompense and have not some of them surely also exploited and perpetuated injustices of their own. Surely, had it not been for European colonization in the last five hundred years, nature, neighbors, or other wrongdoers also would have committed harms against the peoples in the colonized world. Surely, there are some benefits that have arrived with European colonization. What, then, if anything, can work to move this process of resolving injustice forward?

Many contemporary theories of justice have been 'presentist', that is, they have not situated themselves temporally. Iris Young's path-breaking critique of distributive justice hints at, but does not fully consider, the limits of the distributive paradigm along a temporal dimension (Young, 1990). Beyond our frequently used notions of justice, how might we think about the moral issues of coming to terms with the past? There is a rich moral vocabulary about our relationships to the past containing terms that are often associated with religious traditions in the West.¹⁵ Thus, we can speak of forgiveness, revenge, remembrance, memorialization, restitution, reparation and expiation. This vocabulary, though, is mainly moral, not political. Justice remains our main term for coping with wrongs in political terms. Can justice be inflected by some of the rest of this moral vocabulary?¹⁶ The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this paper, but perhaps one example will suffice to demonstrate how complicated it is to include the past into our future thinking.

Forgiveness

In the last few years, in part inspired by remarkable examples in South Africa and in some Latin American countries, philosophers have begun to follow the lead of Hannah Arendt and call upon *forgiveness* as a possible resolution for past injustice. Forgiveness has not historically been a central concept in social and political thought.¹⁷ Yet, if understood as an act in which the past is resolved toward the end of building a new future, forgiveness may make it possible to move forward.

Donald W. Shriver, Jr (1995) describes four elements that are essential to make forgiveness into a *political* virtue. They are:

'Forgiveness begins with a remembering and a moral judgment of wrong, injustice, and injury.' (p. 7)

'Forgiveness gets its real start under the double impetus of judgment and forbearance from revenge. Forbearance opens the door toward a future that will not repeat the old crimes.' (p. 8)

'empathy for the enemy's humanity.' (p. 8)

'Genuine forgiveness aims at the renewal of a human relationship.' (p. 8)

Thus, forgiveness aims at co-existence, not reconciliation.¹⁸ Such co-existence, to say nothing of reconciliation, will arrive, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu quotes Paul, only 'in the fullness of time' (Tutu, 1999: 36). But when will the fullness of time arrive? Such an image of forgiveness might be pleasing, but it confounds any answers we might try to give to the questions of justice for women.

'The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her,' wrote the women in Seneca Falls in 1848. Who among us can dispute that claim, or, on the other hand, give it any certain meaning? What would it mean to make up for all of the harms done to women? What would it look like to think about 'forgiveness' for these harms? Who would be forgiven for what? This question also forces us to face the fact that women are often deeply involved and

complicit in the continuation of patterns of domination over women (Card, 2000).

Another large part of the problem in trying to think about something as amorphous as 'forgiveness' for the harms done to women is identifying the relevant actors. When patterns of harm are broad and traditional, it is difficult to know how one would begin to apply Shriver's account of forgiveness. Shriver begins with the assumption that there is a known subject who is opposed by an equally transparently known 'enemy'. In the case of deep historical patterns of oppression and degradation, such obvious lines may be difficult to draw.

If forgiveness is not the solution, we can think through other structures, for example, of recompense or reparation. Scholars have begun to explore the ethical grounds for numerous claims for reparation or restitution, from Native peoples, heirs of slaves, Holocaust survivors, victims of government torture or government inaction in the face of mob violence (as in the Rosewood, Florida example).¹⁹ Here, too, though, it is easier to identify the problem when it concerns a national political actor; for example, a nation that has waged war upon its neighbor or has systematically deprived citizens of rights (such as the internment of Japanese Americans).

Furthermore, the issues of compensation for the past become more difficult when trying to account for ongoing rather than discrete past actions. If generations of women practiced foot-binding (Mary Daly's example) or shaped their conception of their life chances based on prevailing views of women's education, who is to provide past compensation?

If only some acts can be compensated, does that change their moral status vis-à-vis other acts? Does it change their political status? With regard to women's past lives, the separation of public and private life probably means that many wrongs done to women were done in the private sphere, not in the public sphere. Does that mean, then, that there is no basis for a political solution to these wrongs?

At the very least, even these brief thoughts suggest that we need to think about the gendered dimension of possible past harms. Unless there is a specific analysis done to recognize how gender differences affect the discussion of forgiveness, recompense, reconciliation, regaining our national glory and so on, the chances are good that there will be gender dimensions to these problems that will be ignored.

Remembrance

Let me now propose a very different course of action for feminists. Hannah Arendt suggests another possible action to take in contrast to forgiveness or reparation: remembrance (Arendt, 1968). At the outset of *Between Past and Future*, Arendt writes about how quickly members of the Resistance lost their sense of that 'thing' which made their experience so profound and that, after all revolutionary change: 'Unicorns and fairy queens seem to possess more reality than the lost treasure of the revolutions' (Arendt, 1968: 5). The names for such treasures, Arendt asserted, 'in America was "public happiness," which . . . we understand hardly better than its French

counterpart, “public freedom”; the difficulty for us is that in both instances the emphasis was on “public”’ (Arendt, 1968: 5). Arendt writes,

For remembrance, which is only one, though one of the most important, modes of thought, is helpless outside a pre-established framework of reference, and the human mind is only on the rarest occasions capable of retaining something which is altogether unconnected. (Arendt, 1968: 6)

Unless some memories of political action survive, then, no capacity to re-ignite political action is possible. Without any frame of reference, there can be no memory. One essential political task, then, remains to construct and to engage in such remembrance.

So, if feminists cannot organize forgiveness or reparation for the harms done to women, what other kinds of action should they consider? To use remembrance requires feminists to make some difficult decisions. The very least, then, that feminists need to do is to acknowledge the end of the ‘second wave’ and to admit that the politics of the new century are not the feminist politics of the last quarter of a century. That the processes set into action by feminists continue to go forward; that feminists still engage in political struggles, is surely the case. But the great political moment, the public demands for liberation, have gone past. For feminists to act as if they are still engaged in that movement is to hinder a more genuine assessment of their political place and possibilities. Failing to distinguish these moments may cause the failure of connection that Arendt describes.

To summarize some of the claims that I have made in this section of the paper, then: while it may not be the case that ‘history repeats itself’, there are moral and political dangers in assuming that we can forget the past and disconnect ourselves from it so simply. Thinking through past wrongs requires a political process in which the parties to a conflict, at the very least, sit down and try to solve their problems. The task of recognizing the past, of understanding time’s place, is a political process that requires political imagination, courage, and action. Finally, no morally decent society will try to break itself off from the past, to lose the power of remembrance, as Arendt put it, which allows us to make connections and to make life meaningful.

Conclusion

Feminist ethics is ultimately tied to whatever feminist vision of the future we can describe. That first world feminists are reluctant at the moment to try to articulate that vision is a sign of the problems that I have articulated here. Actors are always at risk of being overwhelmed by ‘their times’, of surrendering their agency to what seem to be inevitable historical forces, or to the unhappy circumstances produced by an unjust past. Yet actors who would simply ignore the effect of the past will also be ineffective, if not harmful.

Western feminists, especially, feel that their legitimacy in making future and utopian claims are undercut by their own positions of privilege. That is certainly so, if we believe the argument made by Charles Mills and others

about the epistemology of ignorance. This reluctance is only a good thing, however, if it results in genuine change and not simply in avoiding a bad fight with those who might call first world feminists to account. The only solution to systematic ignorance is to try painstakingly to construct or reconstruct knowledge. The solution to these problems, then, is not to wish for a brave new world, to recommend that we should consider only the future. Instead, we need to return to the painful, ugly and yet perhaps redeemable excesses and injustices of the past, perpetrated by women and men, on men and women, throughout the world. Only if we are willing to give the past its due will we have any firm ground to stand upon and pursue hope for the future.

This essay has considered two kinds of problems that emerge for feminist theory if feminists too quickly accept the current fashion of time that moves only forward and in a compressed way. The compression of time and space has been discussed largely in its effects on capitalist production and feminists need to insert a gendered analysis to see how reproductive spheres of life are differently and adversely affected by these changes. Other problems arise when feminists go along with the intellectually popular position that the present is best understood as the prelude to the future, rather than as an expression of the past. These two concerns are obviously related. There seems to be, at the least, an affinity between the appeal of time-space compression and the idea of eschewing the past and the wish to escape or to ignore the structures of power and privilege that have, in the past, proved oppressive.

Nonetheless, I have suggested in this essay that these two positions raise serious questions for feminist theorists. At a moment when we find ourselves in the midst of an intellectual sea change that ignores the past, it is tempting to remain in these currents. Nevertheless, there is a serious cost in such floating along: it has the effect of leaving feminist moral and political practices insufficiently grounded in the past. As difficult as it is for feminists to remain attached to such seemingly old-fashioned ideas, it is only from considering them that we will be able to move forward. I hope that these examples suffice to demonstrate the importance of time's place.

Notes

1. Of course, not all postmodern thinking is of a piece. In this essay postmodernity generally refers to the ways in which social theorists have used the term. Judith Butler sounded this caution on the assumption that the postmodern denotes the new: 'the pursuit of the "new" is the preoccupation of high modernism; if anything, postmodernism casts doubt upon the possibility of a "new" that is not in some way already implicated in the "old"' (Butler, p. 6, 1992). I am grateful to Nancy Hirschmann for this reference.
2. For example: care theorists consider time in their conceptual framework; ecofeminists argue about past and future. Arlie Hochschild's celebrated *Time Bind* (1997) is an illustration of the role of 'work/life' conflicts as important issues for feminists. One leading theorist of social time is a feminist scholar, Barbara Adam (1990, 1995). We may go so far as to say

that many feminist notions are basically temporal: experience, identity, trust and empathy depend upon time for their meaning. Further, the increasing interest in narrativity as a feminist strategy is tied as well to the temporal, though not unproblematically, as Van den Braembussche argues (1999).

3. Consider the methodological concerns of the Cambridge School (Rorty and Schneewind, 1984), the writings of Pocock (1971, 1987) and of Sheldon Wolin (1960) and their insistence on the need to situate political theory in the context of political space and political time.
4. Although these 'facts' can be saturated with cultural meaning, consider this example: In *Shikasta*, Doris Lessing (1979) depicts an age in which humans lived for scores of years longer than we now do; in so doing she follows an old Judeo-Christian story in supposing that excellent human beings in the past had significantly longer life spans. That early death may be a sign of God's displeasure is also explored in Cole (1992).
5. This future orientation is found, for example, in the writings of Barbara Adam (1995) and many contemporary postmodern writers on time. For an excellent review of the place of time in late modernist thought, see Friedland and Boden (1994). Another interesting example of this future orientation comes from an unlikely ally of postmodernism. The eschatological excesses that surrounded the arrival of the year 2000 in the Christian calendar occur in a framework of time oriented, not to the past but to the apocalyptic future. See Quinby (1999) and Wolin (1960).
6. For an extended discussion of Giddens, see Friedland and Boden (1994).
7. Herbert Marcuse (1971) expressed a similar point eloquently when he criticized the Weberian notion of 'rationalization processes'. After all, Marcuse observed, rationality and these processes had been put into motion by human action and it was possible for humans to act to control them.
8. I am indebted to Christel Eckart, Universität Gesamthochschule Kassel, for introducing me to this concept and to the work of Sandra Bonfiglioli. For the theoretical work behind the reconsideration of time in Italy, see Bonfiglioli (1990).
9. Furthermore, the brunt of such incongruities is borne by the less well off. Lower-income people are less likely to have jobs that provide them with time flexibility, paid vacation, sick-leave or personal days off. See Heymann (2000: Chs 2–3).
10. The notion that past, present and future are simply constructions might seem to be the primary postmodern response to the question, 'what of the past?' The first thinker to argue that past, present and future are really only dispositions of mind was St Augustine (1961). See also Arendt's account of 'between past and future' (1968).
11. In this regard, feminism participates in the tendency of modernism to discount the authority of the past and fits with liberalism's early impetus against 'tradition'. Peter Osborne (1995) has issued an interesting call for a new 'politics of time', arguing that the attempts to distinguish postmodernity from modernity bear a striking similarity to the logic of separating 'tradition' from 'modernity'.
12. Mary Daly and Primo Levi reflected on others' past choices. One's

- position as a potential evaluator changes as one thinks more in a forward-looking and first-person mode (rather than in an observer mode), as one who might find oneself confronting morally gray choices. In the forward-looking, first-person mode, refusal to judge is apt to seem too quick an abdication of responsibility (Card, 2000: 525).
13. For a social psychological account of this mechanism, see Baumeister and Hastings (1997).
 14. Nor, by the way, should we think of the most heinous of these crimes as restricted to ancestors long dead: see Hochschild's (1998) account of the 20th-century destruction of the Belgian Congo.
 15. My thanks for conversations with Leif Wenar on this point.
 16. Margaret Urban Walker has begun to investigate such policies, identifying them as the concern of 'moral repair'. I am grateful for conversations with Margaret Walker on this point.
 17. 'Seldom has any major political thinker considered forgiveness as an essential servant of justice or as indispensable to the initial formation of political associations' (Shriver, 1995: 6). The exception Shriver mentions is Arendt. See also Dietz (2002: 183–200) and Orlie (1995).
 18. 'Forgiveness in a political context, then, is an act that joins moral truth, forbearance, empathy, and commitment to repair a fractured human relation. Such a combination calls for a collective turning from the past that neither ignores past evil nor excuses it, that neither overlooks justice nor reduces justice to revenge, that insists on the humanity of enemies even in their commission of dehumanizing deeds, and that values the justice that restores political community above the justice that destroys it. As such a multidimensional human action, forgiveness might be compared to a twisted four-strand cable, which over time intertwines with the enemy's responses to form the double bond of new politics. So defined, political forgiveness links realism to hope' (Shriver, 1995: 9).
 19. In this burgeoning literature, see, *inter alia*, Brooks (1999) and Barkan (2000).

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