

## Review Article

# Bioethics of Reconciliation

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**Received:** August 05, 2019; **Accepted:** August 23,  
2019; **Published:** August 30, 2019

## Introduction

Countless tragedies of human kind had occurred in history with a tremendous loss of innocent lives. Many reasons of these tragedies can be derived from and attributed to personal clash, family feud, class struggle, tribal hostility, racial discrimination or national conflict... etc. In 20<sup>th</sup> century, we witnessed two World Wars that senselessly took thousands of lives. Can we solve the problems of the tension, hatred and bigotry within human society so that peace and harmony can prevail on earth? Can bioethics, a discipline that focuses on human relationship, help?. Bioethics studies the arts of upholding the good over evil, right over wrong, goodwill over ill-intended harm among human kind. One thing that has not been emphasized enough in bioethics is the act of reconciliation to patch up the wound caused from the clash, feud, hostility and conflict among human kind.

To solve human resentments and fights, an effort for reconciliation must be stressed in the midst of all other discussion of respecting one another and advocating justice. To positively emphasize the principles of bioethics is one way to promote good human relationship, but we must also accentuate the importance of reconciliation to pave the way for future mutual acceptance and harmonious relationship among estranged. Family feud, personal clash, tribal hostility, racial discrimination and national conflict have been there since the beginning of human history. Despite the teachings of many great minds of the world to respect one another, human kinds have not learned yet and countless tragedies continued to take place without any sight of mitigation. In bioethical discourse, reconciliation must be a theme that we have to give more attention and deliberation so that human kind can learn and be willing to live together in harmony.

## Bioethics is a Science of Relationship

Ethics is a philosophical concern centered upon the discussion of good and bad, right and wrong of human behavior. The most famous arguments are Kant's theory of the end cannot justify the mean and John Mill's principle of utility that the actions are right or wrong depending on whether or not it promote human happiness. Ethics has become a multidiscipline in 20<sup>th</sup> century to apply ethical deliberation to the field of medicine and healthcare by integrating philosophy, theology, sociology, history and law with medicine, nursing, health policy, and the medical humanities into a new discipline called bioethics. It concern, however is still with the relationships of the person with others and with society. In other words, bioethics as a branch of applied ethics studies the philosophical, social, and legal

issues arising in medicine and the life sciences in social settings. It is chiefly concerned with human life and well-being, and gradually extended to the nonhuman biological environment. We can say that bioethics is a science of relationship, not only between man and man but also among man's interactions with his outside world. Its central concern is always about human relationship.

In Asian understanding, especially in Confucianism, the first concern of bioethics has to be with human family, essentially speaking, the relationship among family members such as father and son, husband and children, siblings and siblings. In addition, the good familial relationship should be extended to community, state and then to the whole world. Confucius taught that one must cultivate his own character first and extend the loving care to his family and people surrounding him. The core teaching of Confucianism is on Five Relationships referring to ruler and his ministers, father and son, husband and wife, sibling to sibling and then to others. Good relationship must begin from oneself and the circle closest to the person himself.

Van Rensselaer Potter defined the term "bioethics" in 1970 as a new philosophy that sought to integrate biology, ecology, medicine, and human values [1,2]. According to Fritz Jahr, the first scholar who used the word bioethics in 1926, bioethics must have a wider spectrum to include the interactions of all beings including human to human, human to other species for a peaceful and harmonious co-existence on earth. We can say bioethics is about human relationship for people to accept one another in spite of the fact that differences exist. Any past tension, misunderstanding and wrongdoing inflicted upon one another must be amended so that new relationship can begin. This is exactly what bioethics of reconciliation calls for that we should be at peace with our fellowmen and with the environment/nature in which we live.

## The Nature of Bioethics

Bioethics must not be singularly oriented focusing only on human's interpersonal relation striving for morally justifiable and conscientiously motivated acts. Besides good and rightful interpersonal relations, Fritz Jahr calls for our attention of our moral obligations to include all beings by giving his bioethical imperative: "respective every living being, including animal, as an end in itself, and treat it, if possible as such" [3]. Thus, bioethics must not only be social but also biological, biomedical, psychological, ecological and spiritual and has to stress the importance of harmony to all forms of life through mutual respect. Thus, bioethics has to be holistic, integrative and cosmologically oriented and the center of it is a love of life.

Since bioethics is a science of relationship, it must emphasize the importance of harmony and mutual acceptance. The environmental disasters such as air pollution, deforestation, indiscriminating cultivation of land resulted in imbalance of ecosystem reminds us we have to mend our relationship to nature too. However, before we

can do that, as the ancient sage of Confucianism taught that we have to do a deep self-retrospective inner researching and cultivating an amiable character willing to improve the relationships of our dealings with outside world. This mending process has to start from each individual. Confucius says: in order to bring peace to the world, one has to first cultivate his own character, love and regulate his family, pacify the nation in which he lives and then the universal harmony can be achieved [4]. In other words, for a harmonious relationship among man to man, nation to nation, man to nature, one must start from himself through self-cultivating of character and adopting of a new value of respecting others and restoring the broken relationship with others. Only then can the world peace be expected. This is a reconciliatory process, first within oneself and his family, the social fabrics, the world nations and eventually the whole universe. As the result, the cosmic harmony will be realized. Without this reconciliatory process, the peace of the world and the harmony of the universe may be hard to achieve. This is the foundation of a bioethics of reconciliation that all relationships should be mended, pacified, restored and harmonized.

Here, we see there are at least three relationships that we must try to patch and restore, the first is with our fellow human, then with our environment and eventually the cosmic harmony. Therefore, bioethics has to be integrative to include all things in nature beginning with repairing the relationship among human kind.

Reconciliation is the most important task for realizing smooth and harmonious relationships in personal, social, political and ecological interactions. Besides Asian Confucianism, Jesus also taught similar thing: if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that you have wronged your brother, leave your gift there before the altar and go first to reconcile with your brother and then return to offer your gift [5]. Bioethics of reconciliation aims at achieving harmonious relationship and attempts to promote good, moral and harmonious relationships among all. Henry Kissinger in his diplomatic endeavor to bring the world together said: a stable structure thrives not on triumphs but on reconciliations [6].

## What is Reconciliation?

The root meaning of the Greek origin of the word Reconciliation, *katalassen* or *allasso*, refers to a change of attitude from hostility to amity, more precisely, a change in the relationship between God and human, and human and human. It assumes there has been a breakdown in the relationship, but a new awareness and endeavor have motivated us to repair the relationship and change from a state of enmity and fragmentation to harmony and fellowship. It has something to do with a process and an outcome. Reconciliation, as an outcome, is an improvement in the relations among parties formerly at odds with one another. To say two people have been reconciled means they have satisfactorily dealt with the emotional, epistemic, and/or material dispute of the past. Any bad feelings, suspicions, or harms that were created by the conflicts and injustices of the past have been relinquished so that a new relationship can develop.

Martin Buber has a very inspiring theory in his book *Ich und Du* (I and Thou) in regard to interpersonal relationship. His main theme is the relationship of "I and you, I and Thou and I and It". When you despise a person, that person has been downgraded by you to an It, a nonbeing so to speak. When you respect a person

and treat him accordingly, he can be a Thou, an adorable existence. When you regard others as dignified as you are, that person is in the equal status as you and his relationship with you is in "I and you" state. In bioethics of reconciliation, we must not treat anyone as it but as you as on equal position to be mutually respectful. When there is any past hatred or resentment toward one another, within the I-You relation, that should be forsaken and ceased to be. The alienated relationship must be patched and amended through reconciliation. Thus a bioethics of reconciliation must set the goal for all to be equally positioned as dignified person and treated each other as such [7].

## Reconciliation Needs to be a Concern of Bioethics

Human beings have been fighting one another since the beginning of history. Every world sage teaches that humans should live in peace with each other rather than at war against one another. The Psalmist voices: how wonderful it is when brothers live in harmony (Psalms 133:1). The Leagues of Nations created after War I and the United Nations after WWII all aimed at world peace. Disagreement and disputes among people and nations are inevitable but reconciliation should always be sought. Bioethics of reconciliation emphasizes the importance of peace and mutual respect among men and nations, also calls for human kind to take care of the earth to ensure the balance of ecosystem.

In the past, human used to regard himself as the crown of creation standing at the center of earth with right to do whatever he likes to do to his fellow creatures. Racism is similar in thinking that certain race is superior to the other thus with right to rule and enslave. In feudal society, father may think he is the master of the family with duty to set order and discipline. However, all these old views are the things of the past yet somehow still influence the social formation in traditional society. As some species disappearing from the earth and nature's fighting back such as global warming in response to human's indiscriminating developmental exploitation of nature, human being in middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century started waking up that we are but one of the creatures on earth and must respect all other living beings in a harmonious way [2].

## Reconciliation in Literature

The Bible and Shakespeare are two most read books of the world in history. Both books talked about reconciliation. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* described the reconciliation of the two inimical families only after the loss of innocent lives. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet awoke the Montagues and Capulet families to bury the family hatred and let the hostility go. Unfortunately, the awakening of these families came a little too late, the beloved Romeo and Juliet had already died without any sense of knowing that their families had finally patched up the wound and reconciled. The parable of Prodigal Son delivered by Jesus gave a touching story of the love of a father to welcome back a disrespectful son to restore their relationship. Fortunately, in this parable both father and son had experienced the new beginning of their renewed happy relationship.

### Romeo and Juliet summary

An age-old feud between two powerful families erupted into violence in history. A group of masked Montagues crashed the gate and broke into a Capulet party. A young lovesick Romeo Montague

fell instantly in love with Juliet Capulet who also responded with the blaze affection. Juliet however was due to marry her father's choice, the County Paris. In a desperate attempt to be reunited with Romeo, Juliet followed the Friar's plot and faked her death. The message, however failed to reach Romeo who, believing Juliet's death as real, took his life upon seeing the dead body of his believed Juliet in her tomb. Shortly thereafter, Juliet woke to find Romeo's corpse beside her and in great affectionate sorrow, killed herself. The grieving families eventually agreed to end their feud and reconciled.

### The parable of the prodigal son

"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'give me my share of the estate. He got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. Therefore, he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he set out and go back to his father and asked for his forgivingness. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son'.

"But the father said to his servants, let's have a feast and celebrate. For a son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'. Therefore, they began to celebrate.

The parable of the prodigal son is one of the most well-known stories told by Jesus. The parable of the prodigal son indicates the love of God who is ready to forgive and receive back anyone willing to make a change. People do not have to stay in hopeless state but can restore the original loving relationship with heavenly Father and also anyone else on earth. Through a willing heart to reconcile, a new relation can begin.

## Religious Tradition of Reconciliation

All religions teach love, compassion, forgiveness...and all state the importance of reconciliation to God and to fellowmen. Four religions, two minor ethnic ones and two major global ones are selected here to illustrate their views on reconciliation.

### Shintoism and harmony

Shintoism is a Japanese religion and its Records of Ancient Matters, the oldest classic of Japan, *Kojiki*, contains fascinating mythology of Japan. The goddess of Japan, Amaterasu had a wicked brother, Susannoo who always played tricks on others, Amaterasu was greatly troubled, and the relationship between the two was ruined. Eventually Amaterasu decided to expel Susannoo from heavenly court to the mundane world. Susannoo once touched the earth was confronted by an evil power of eight-headed dragon who kept disturbing a poor farmer. Susannoo at this moment found his original good nature and determined to help this poor farmer by slaying this evil dragon. A treasured sword missing from the heaven court was found with this dragon. Susannoo decided to return this treasure back to Amaterasu

[8,9]. Through this act of goodwill, the two eventually were reconciled and they restored their good relationship.

Reconciliation is not only a thought but must also take action to facilitate a harmony so that a broken relationship can be patched and amended. Susannoo's action resulted in a restoration of relationship and the treasure of the sword has been regarded as one of three ancient treasures in Japanese tradition that are the jewel (pearl), mirror and sword each symbolizing benevolence, wisdom and courage. Thus, the return of this sword signified the restoration of a broken rapport from repugnance to harmony. Every time when the new emperor is inaugurated in Japan, these three treasures will be brought out to show the world that harmony is to be treasured as the goal of imperial rule.

### Judaism and restoration of relationship

One of the most touching stories of reconciliation in the Hebrew Bible is about the dispute and hostility between Abraham's grandchildren Esau and Jacob. Jacob, a second born, had cheated to inherit the first born right. Esau, the first born, in his anger attempted to get rid of his younger brother. Jacob had to flee and after spending 22 years of exile in escaping from his brother Esau, decided to return home but he was afraid that his brother would still hold bitterness against him.

The time had come for Jacob to confront his past. The last time they saw each other Esau was filled with murderous rage, vowing to kill Jacob. Jacob naturally felt anxiety at the prospect of seeing Esau again, especially upon learning that his brother was headed his way with 400 men. Positioning his family behind him, Jacob "went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother".

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept" [10]. (*Genesis 33:3-4*) and the two reconciled. Jacob was the father of Jewish people and Esau, the father of native residents of Palestine. These two brothers patched their past mistrust and hatred against each other and made up. This story of reconciliation can be a great example that although two parties have been at odd for so long can still make up and be friends again.

The Torah talks about the importance of redemption as well as the restoration of the redeemed. Besides righting relationship with God, men should also set the relation with fellow men right. It is all about reconciliation of relationship.

### Muslim's reflection during Ramada

Ramadam is one of the pillars in Muslim faith. Prof. Sohaib N Sultan of Princeton University offered a thought about the meaning of observing the holy month of Ramadan. He said it is a time for deep reflections on the tradition of forgiveness in Islam and from this reflection it is a step toward reconciliation [11].

He quoted from the Koran that offers insights on how to actually make reconciliation happen:

1) "God may still bring about affection between you and your [present foes] - God is all powerful, God is most forgiving and merciful" (Koran 60:7). In other words, no matter how bad things get,

never close the door on the possibility of reconciliation.

2) "...Repel wrong with goodness and your foe will become as close [to you] as an old and valued friend, but only those who are steadfast in patience, only those who are blessed with great righteousness, will attain to such goodness..." (Koran 41:34-35). The offering of kind words, gifts, and so on in the midst of enmity can soften the hearts toward a more peaceful future.

3) "O you who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives... refrain from following your own desire, so that you act justly - if you distort or neglect justice, God is fully aware of what you do" (4:135). Usually when there is a falling out and enmity between two people or between communities, there is a need to rectify a past wrong. By the end of a conflict, there are probably wrongs on both sides that need to be rectified.

Prof. Sultan concluded with the words of Prophet Muhammed, "Shall I tell you of something that is better than fasting, prayer, and charity? [It is] reconciling between two people". (4:114).

The tradition of reconciliation within Muslim seems have been neglected by many but actually Mohammed has taught this great faith of accepting one another.

### Christianity and reconciliation

Christian faith has been because God and humankind are reconciled through the sacrificial act of His Son, Jesus on the cross. Reconciliation is a central theological concept of Christianity that God reconciles himself with humanity through the atonement of Christ and the followers of Christ are called to become peacemakers and reconcile with one another. Therefore reconciliation has two folds meaning, the first is to reconcile 'to God', and secondly reconciled among human kinds. The reconciliation to God is fulfilled on the cross, which put hostility to death and then restored a good relationship between God and man and then man and man.

Reconciliation between people cannot happen without reconciliation with God first who in the cross has destroyed the things that cause enmity both with God and between people. Reconciliation with God must lead to reconciliation between people, since God 'is a God of peace' (1 Cor 14.33).

The Christian concept of reconciliation has been applied to political conflict zones of the world by John W de Gruchy, a professor at University of Cape Town, South Africa and others and it is called a "reconciliation theology". De Gruchy demonstrates interrelated ways of reconciliation:

- Reconciliation between God and humanity, and what it brings to mean in terms of social relations.
- Interpersonal ways of reconciliation between individuals.
- The meaning of reconciliation between alienated communities and groups at a local level [12].

## Historical Demonstrations of Reconciliation

### TRC of South Africa

Africa's dramatic transition from apartheid to democracy [13] in 1990s has become as a good example and proof that reconciliation

in political sense is possible. Nelson Mandela said: the term "Reconciliation means to restore peaceful relationship as between and among ethnic, religious and political communities that have been in conflict" [14].

This courageous act of Mandela gave South Africa a new future and somehow healed the wounds it suffered during the apartheid.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a court-like body assembly. Anybody who felt they had been a victim of violence could come forward and be heard at the TRC proceedings. Culprit of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from prosecution.

The formal hearings began on 15 April 1996. The TRC was a crucial component of the transition to full and free democracy in South Africa and, despite some flaws; it is generally regarded as very successful.

As for its goal, De Gruchy observed that "TRC did contribute to that goal in becoming a catalyst for the healing of the past and enabling at least some people to experience forgiveness and reconciliation in the present" [12].

### Martin Luther King and civil rights movement

The Civil Rights Movement of USA in the 50's led by Martin Luther King paved the way for the first black American to be elected the President of United States. None could believe that it could happen in the New Continent at least not yet but it became a reality that President Barack Obama was elected as the President of the most powerful nation on earth in 2009. This movement targeted at the racial inequality and aimed for a free society for all regardless of color, race or creed. This movement was not a military revolution but a non-violent struggle against injustice for equal rights for all. The famous words of Martin Luther King had inspired the world that "hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness" .... "We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love" ... "Our aim must never be to defeat or humiliate the white man, but to win his friendship and understanding" [15]. Although Dr. King could not see the fruit of this movement personally, history has confirmed that it had overcome the barrier between the black and the white.

Dr. King advocated "Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that" [16].

Violence begets violence is a concept described in the Gospel of Matthew, verse 26:52. The passage depicts Jesus' disciple Peter drew a sword to defend against the arrest of Jesus but being told to sheath his weapon:

"Put your sword back in its place", Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword".

Dr. King's belief and movement reflected the bioethics of reconciliation that calls for love and goodwill toward one another and for mutual respect for all in a harmonious way. He said: "As you press on for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the weapon of love. Let no man pull you so low as to hate him. Always avoid violence. If you succumb to the temptation of using violence in your struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients

of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and your chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos. (Dr. King's speech given in 1956).

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction ... The chain reaction of evil - hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars - must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation (1963).

His acceptance speech of Nobel Peace Prize has this to say: Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time: the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Man must evolve for all human conflict a method, which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. (Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Stockholm, Sweden, 1964)

Dr. King advocated a bioethics of reconciliation. To him, "all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be." This dream spelled out by Dr. King is the true spirit of bioethics of reconciliation.

## The Steps of Reconciliation

The South African's reconciliation process took a restorative approach that was different from Nuremberg Trial's retributive approach. Restorative approach aims at reconciliation, which can be characterized as an improvement in the relationship between two or more parties who were previously in conflict. The processes of South African method included apologies, truth telling, lustration, reparation, amnesties, forgiveness,... etc. Since its aim was at reconciliation, forgiveness had to be the central emphasis. There were criticism against the restorative method of the Truth and Reconciliation Movement for its leniency but if the aim was to restore a broken relationship, it should be a right approach. If the purpose is for reconciliation, after a formal apology, amnesty should be granted by leaving the past mistakes behind to match for a new future of harmony and amiability. Generally, the process of reconciliation needs to include the following four steps and we could see that the reconciliation endeavor led by Archbishop Tutu reflected them all:

- a. Changes in external behaviors: examples include a cessation of aggressive or insulting behaviors, increased ability to function in close proximity and to cooperate with the each other.
- b. Changes in belief: for example, getting rid of the belief that the other party is evil nor posing an unreasonable danger to oneself.
- c. Resolving negative emotions and attitudes: overcoming resentment, fear, hate or anger toward the party.
- d. Adopting or resuming positive emotions and attitudes: e.g., mutual respect, compassion, love, a shared sense of identity (Hirsch 2011b) or solidarity, mutual commitment to a shared set of moral or communal norms, or mutual trust [17].

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created

by Nelson Mandela's Government of National Unity in 1995 to help South Africans come to terms with their extremely troubled pasts. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was named to be the chairman of this tough task. Dr. Tutu insisted that forgiveness is a right way to go although he also pointed out that it required contrition and forgiveness on a personal level. Without these, reconciliation might not be authentic and possible. He said: "personal reconciliation has to address feelings of resentment, fear, and distrust first so that a new and more just social order could be established. It involves with a willingness and drastic change of heart to go across the boundary and extend the hand of friendship to one another [18].

He explained "when I talk of forgiveness I mean the belief that you can come out the other side a better person, a better person than the one being consumed by anger and hatred. Remaining in that state locks you in a state of victimhood, making you almost dependent on the perpetrator." ... "If you can find it in yourself to forgive, then you are no longer chained to the perpetrator." "You can move on, and you can even help the perpetrator to become a better person too" [18].

## Conclusion

What is a bioethics of reconciliation? It is a pursuit for peace and harmony between man and man, race and race, creed and creed and between man and nature through acknowledging the past wrongdoing and a total change in attitude and behavior toward one another for a friendly and amiable relationship. The core emphasis of this is for people to live in harmony and respect each other. The past deep, hatred and dispute among people and nations may look impossible for any reconciliation, but with determination and goodwill, mutual acceptance is possible. It takes only determination for men to be willing to accept one another and treat one another as dignified beings. All bygone hostility and resentment must be forgone to be replaced by a willing heart to call each other friend. The example of the reconciliation that was regarded as impossible actually had happened when the peace treaty was signed by Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on September 17, 1978 that laid the groundwork for a permanent peace agreement between Egypt and Israel after decades of hostilities. That peace still holds today. This tells us that if we are willing to set aside the long distrust, hostility and differences to begin a new relationship, reconciliation is possible. The good result may not be seen immediately as reconciliation can be a long process and it requires patience and willingness to walk extra miles for the sake of peace and new relationship.

"Love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence" - Erich Fromm.

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