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On Being Human

How Islam addresses Othering, Dehumanisation and Empathy

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1.1 Introduction

As humans, we are capable of a lot. We are able to display dizzying acts of love towards one another, to exemplify kindness and friendship, mercy and compassion. Humans are witness to motherly love, to parental care, to voluntary sacrifice, and in beautifying their relationships humans can foster feelings of warmth, protection and goodwill. But just as the human is capable of such goodness so too can he inflict unimaginable cruelty. When it comes to the dark side of human potential, one of the most devastating things we can do is to dehumanise others. To dehumanise someone is to decide they do not have, nor do they deserve, the basic rights and dues we give to ourselves and anybody we favour. It is to render them sub-human, unworthy, alien and as a result, completely expendable.

The one we dehumanise, we now count as the Other. The Other consists of incomplete parts, insufficiently human and thus inadequate for a place in the world, our world. For the dehumanised, principles of morality no longer apply and any moral restraints against abuse, torture or killing are readily overcome. Dehumanisation is effacing, it is to contort another's image and ascribe to it all the qualities one would find repugnant to have within oneselves. All hatred, and that which is vile and callous is often imputed upon that Other. The self feels secure knowing he is not like that Other. The dehumanised Other is irrational, savage and threatening. On mental canvases the dehumanised Other is painted with broad strokes and wide brushes. There are no identifications, no fine lines, no nuances, no greys and no subtle outlines. The dehumanised is feared, mistrusted and generalised. In rallying calls against the Other, images and narratives of how alien, barbaric and inhuman the Other is are propped up. These ideas are then repeated continuously and relentlessly until believing anything different about that Other becomes incongruous. Any sympathisers with the Other are better placed with that Other, rather than with 'us'.

According to the Islamic paradigm, man can be inspired to perform wondrous displays of kindness, but so too can he sink into moral depravity and betray his own better sense of self.

The Qur'an in Surah al-Shams (91) draws our attention to the dichotomies which exist within the human condition:

91:7 - by the soul and how He formed it
91:8 - and inspired it [to know] its own rebellion and piety!
91:9 - The one who purifies his soul succeeds
91:10 - and the one who corrupts it fails.

The Muslim must always remember that in every interaction one has with another person, the heart can either find a replenishing of belief or the insidious risk of a corrupted intention and pride. It is not the purpose of the Muslim to throw out quotes, facts, verses and traditions and speak them as if it is an exercise in rhetoric or eloquence. The purpose is not to feel armed with a set of mentally prepared responses to be regurgitated under pressure. The Muslim is not a participant in a battle of wits, nor are they in a contest, or competitor for 'hits', 'views' and 'likes'. The Muslim is not to be judged for oratory prowess. The Muslim is to remember that he or she does not stand before an automated machine, but a human being, just like him. Every human is made up of the same myriad of emotions, senses, life experiences, hopes, dreams, interests, anticipations, responsibilities and beliefs as anyone else. No human exists in an empty space, void of important details but has, like the Muslim, traversed many paths, transitioned in age, landscape and experience and by the decree of Allāh[1] now stands before the Muslim on what is another meaningful life encounter. If the Muslim genuinely hopes their interaction with the person will be transformative, it must begin with the Muslim seeing the individual as a complex person made up of many parts, a human, just like you.

The Muslim therefore needs to convey the message of Islam with close consideration of how complex the human being is. It is the communicationbetween the inner core of the Muslim and their addressee which is most fundamental. In the memoirs of the English writer and political commentator Harry Leslie Smith, he describes his early morning routine of going

[1] The word Allāh has been used throughout this book. In the Islamic tradition the name of God is Allāh. Arab linguists note that the name Allāh comes from the word Al-Ilāh which means The Deity. The name Allāh has no plural and is genderless.

downstairs in his home and preparing himself a cup of coffee. In his brewing and stirring of the coffee, he conveys a nostalgic memory stimulated by the "clinking" of his spoon with his cup. What might seem mundane is in fact exceptional, a moment of experiential magnitude that shapes the sentiments connected to space, place and life of this 95-year-old elderly gentleman. In the "clinking" of the spoon with the cup, Smith is taken back to his childhood days as a young boy standing on a London street.

As the spoon meets the cup, it is the "clinking" of the hooves of horses on a cobblestoned road that Smith remembers, and his memory is alerted to a recollection of his parents rummaging through outdoor litter in search of food. This single sound is able to awaken such a distant memory, spanning back eight or so decades is incredibly powerful.[2] The latter alerts us to the reality that man is a composite of so many intricate strands that can be provoked by any one thing at any one instance. Man, as the example of Smith illustrates, is not a simple shell, but a multi-layered creation made up of a conscious self, senses of see, hear, smell, taste and touch, a spirit, and a heart that feels and understands. Islamic character is to recognise the nature of man in all his entirety.

1.2 The Humanness that Speaks from within Us

There is much we can see of ourselves in others. We all hope for basic survival, at the least, in a world of hostilities. Sometimes our primary focus in life can relate merely to the pressures of simply surviving. This could be in the form of paying the rent, bills, financial burdens, family and/or work stresses. The Muslim should understand that this can take its toll on any person and may affect their perspective when engaging in ideas around God, life and purpose.

[2] Harry Leslie Smith, Harry's Last Stand: How the World My Generation Built is Falling Down, and What We Can Do to Save it (London, ICON Books: 2014), p. 19.

A look at the Prophets: Mūsa and Hārūn (peace upon them)

We reflect on Mūsa and Hārūn in their mission to call Pharoah to Allāh. The information Allāh provides us is astonishing for how it describes that the initial theatre of struggle between the tyrant and the Prophet (peace be upon him), actually is first, an internal one. Though the apparatus of propagation in Mūsa's case is staged with spectacle since Pharaoh had assembled his people, ("gathering his people, proclaiming" [79:23]) with the presence of magicians on a day of festival, the objective and preparation was entirely intended for spiritual renewal and reformation. It is in the overcoming of one's inner self that sincerity can take root. The latter can be seen when Allāh first instructs Mūsa to go unto Pharaoh who had transgressed. Allāh directed Mūsa to say:

79:17 - 'Go to Pharaoh, for he has exceeded all bounds,
79:18 - and ask him, "Do you want to purify yourself [of sin]?
79:19 - Do you want me to guide you to your Lord, so that you may hold Him in awe?"

These verses emphasise the great need for spiritual purification as a remedy for human wrongs. Pharaoh of course had been active in the murder and persecution of a great multitude of people but Allāh's instruction to Mūsa was to allow Pharaoh to consider his own human disposition and his need to believe and revere the One who created and sustains all beings.

The Muslim is not aloof, but is understanding of his social environment and realities. He does not erect walls of superiority, but can instead connect with the common man. He does not seek out only the influential so as to create a spectacle around his presence and communication, but sees in everyone a potential and purpose. We are reminded as our Prophet (peace be upon him) was reminded in Sūrah 'Abasa that all men, of all ranking, need spiritual purification. We should reflect deeply in this light that the same word (zakkā – to grow in purity) is used to describe Mūsa's mission to Pharaoh and furthermore used in the

opening verse of Sūrah ‘Abasa (80) for a blind man, Ibn Umm Maktūm. Both tyrants and the socially vulnerable are in need of Allāh.

80:3 - for all you know, he might have grown in spirit
80:4 - or taken note of something useful to him.

To sum, Allāh informs us that there is a conscience at work in every man. Even in the midst of a prevailing negative status quo, such a conscience can be awakened. The following three examples, (two from the Qur’ān and one from a Companion of the Prophet (Allāh be pleased with him) can aid the Muslim in understanding how a changed state of mind and heart can have a bearing on beliefs and attitudes.

An Insightful Lesson from Ibrāhīm (upon him be peace)

The first example concerns the Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him) at the point wherein he, as a young boy, smashed the idols his people were worshipping. When the townsfolk left for the day, Ibrāhīm tore down the statues and placed an axe around the neck of the most prominent of the idols. As the townspeople returned and saw the shattered remnants of their carvings, they pointed blame at Ibrāhīm (upon him be peace), and so he was called. The Qur’ān describes in Surah al-Anbiyā’ (27):

57 - By God I shall certainly plot against your idols as soon as you have turned your backs!’
58 - He broke them all into pieces, but left the biggest one for them to return to.
59 - They said, ‘Who has done this to our gods? How wicked he must be!’
60 - Some said, ‘We heard a youth called Abraham talking about them.’
61 - They said, ‘Bring him before the eyes of the people, so that they may witness [his trial].’
62 - They asked, ‘Was it you, Abraham, who did this to our gods?’

63 - He said, ‘No, it was done by the biggest of them– this one. Ask them, if they can talk.’
64 - They turned to one another, saying, ‘It is you who are in the wrong,
65 - but then they lapsed again and said, ‘You know very well these gods cannot speak.’
66 - Abraham said, ‘How can you worship what can neither benefit nor harm you, instead of God?
67 - Shame on you and on the things you worship instead of God. Have you no sense?’

Verses 64 and 65 are of particular interest, as they highlight that the people with whom Ibrāhīm was contending had a sudden lapse. Turning against their own people, they exclaimed, “Behold, it is you who are doing wrong.” The argument put forward by Ibrāhīm – to question the surviving idol – was overwhelming and aroused within them some reasoning. The question was to ask the shattered idols if they might have seen who caused them such harm and whether it was the surviving largest idol. Confounded, they turned on one another, comprehending for that small moment the error of their ways. The brief moment of clarity was short-lived as “they relapsed into their former way of thinking” and confronted Ibrāhīm for suggesting what they too knew, about the futility of idol-worship. This moment is an interesting one, as it reveals an agitated self that momentarily recognises a previously disregarded truth. The implications of this narrative demonstrate the power of facilitating a reawakening and then holding onto the reawakening to trigger a deeper understanding than before.

This is crucial in the Muslim’s role since it reminds him that the self can at any moment be re-awakened. Hence, the Muslim must never lose hope and remember that all conviction is a matter of the heart and mind, which are susceptible to the subtlest and greatest of changes.

A momentary conviction in the cohorts of Pharaoh

The second example concerns the Prophet Mūsa (upon him be peace) and the people to whom he was sent. The focal verse here is verse 14 from Surah al-Naml (27):

12 - Put your hand inside your cloak and it will come out white, but unharmed. These are among the nine signs that you will show Pharaoh and his people; they have really gone too far.'

13 - But when Our enlightening signs came to them, they said, 'This is clearly [just] sorcery!'

14 - They denied them, in their wickedness and their pride, even though their souls acknowledged them as true. See how those who spread corruption met their end!

We are told that the clansmen of Pharaoh to whom Prophet Mūsa was sent, rejected the signs given unto Mūsa, though "in their minds were convinced of their truth". Ibn 'Abbas said it means they had "certainty in their hearts."[3] Al-Sa'di says that "they did not reject the signs due to any doubts and uncertainties but rejected them out of pride and arrogance despite having full certainty in the truth of the signs they witnessed."[4] This reflects that in certain instances what is expressed outwardly in speech and actions is not what is truly and fully felt and understood in the heart and mind of the one being addressed.

The dynamics of confrontation can oftentimes obscure what is happening at the inner level of each person, such as inner feelings of guilt, sympathy, and remorse. They might be contained for hours or even 8 years or expressed immediately. Once, some of the Makkan leaders stood outside of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) home in the night and listened to the Prophet (peace be upon him) reciting the Qur'ān. Unaware of one another's presence, they were absorbed in the recitation and remained until dawn. When the men noticed one another, they castigated each other for listening to the Qur'ān and promised not to repeat their action. The next day and the third day, the men made their clandestine way back to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) house. The example reveals how even the Prophet's (peace be upon him) enemies were moved by the Qur'ān although personal vengeance, tribal loyalties, jealousy and hatred prevented their acceptance of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) message.

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[3] http://Qur'ān.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura27-aya14.html.

[4] http://Qur'ān.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/saadi/sura27-aya14.html#saadi.

Sa´īd ibn ʻĀmir's Conscience

The final example, which is applicable in light of understanding the human cost of atrocity and suffering, concerns the case of an early companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Sa´īd ibn ʻĀmir (Allāh be pleased with him). Sa´īd ibn ʻĀmir, before his embracing of Islam, was one of the spectators who had gathered in Makkah to witness the execution of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) companion Khubayb bin ʻAdiyy (Allāh be pleased with him). Prone to fits and fainting later on in his life, Sa´īd ibn ʻĀmir once reluctantly confessed to the caliph ʻUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (Allāh be pleased with him) that the mental image of Khubayb's pain, tears, shrieks and the stripping away of human dignity as swords and spears cut through Khubayb's body left its invisible, yet indelible mark on his own conscience. It shows how witnessing human suffering can take a severe toll on a human and how the fanfare of excitement among the Makkans came to be transformed to a horrific spectacle for Sa´īd ibn ʻĀmir. It was nothing more than the sadistic killing of a fellow Muslim whose unswerving love for the Prophet (peace be upon him) impressed even his enemies.[5]

Seeing past stereotypes

As humans, we are fully capable of seeing people in ways which differ from common stereotyping and one example of this can be found in new media examples of blogs, websites and online communities. It is essential for the Muslim to remain mindful that opinions routinely formulated for TV talk shows or on radio broadcasts are not the sum total or the majority of opinions on any matter. Though the media might cloud or darken perceptions about Muslims, (often even stereotype and vilify), it does not mean that the general public necessarily hold to those same views or are in agreement with them. It might, in fact, be the very opposite. People can be alert and sensitive to mistreatment and unfair representation.

[5] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya 4/55.

This is shown in an example concerning the tragedy of 14-year old Abeer Hamza Qasim al-Janabi, a young girl raped and murdered by American soldiers. The crime undoubtedly received grossly skewed coverage in the U.S mainstream media, however the reception of the story within online communities differed drastically from this. The response to Abeer's killing reflected a repositioning of the narrative to draw on the human suffering of a child-victim and the murder of her parents and younger sister.

The Othering of Abeer

On March 12th 2006, five U.S. Army soldiers of the 502nd Infantry Regiment, SGT Paul E. Cortez, SPC James P. Barker, PFC Jesse V. Spielman, PFC Brian L. Howard and PFC Steven D. Green left their checkpoint for the Janabi farmhouse to the southwest of the village of Yusufiyya, in the town of Mahmudiyah, Iraq. As Howard acted as a lookout, the other four entered the family home. This was subsequent to a plan devised by the assailants of raping a 'Hajji' girl. After noon that day, the soldiers entered the home where Barker, Cortez and Green took turns to rape Abeer. The remaining members of the family were shot dead. The men then shot dead Abeer, set her body on fire and left the house. Green, also an ex-drone operator, stated that he raped the 14-year old Abeer and killed her alongside her family because 'he didn't view Iraqis as human.'[6]

The Daily Kos blog, founded by Markos Moulitsas in 2002 is one of the most popular political blogs to date.[7] The blog is a discussion-oriented alternative to mainstream media enabling bloggers to critique and draw on existing reports in mainstream media. Interestingly, it hosts more than 25 articles/posts that contain some information pertaining to Abeer and the Mahmudiyah killings from 2006 to the present. The Daily Kos posts draw on the muted media response and seek to emphasise her age and the differential media attention to the case. One of the posts, 'It's her 15th birthday! With a poll!' comments 'This Saturday August 19th

[6] Mail Foreign Service, ''I didn't think of Iraqis as humans,' says U.S. soldier who raped 14-year-old girl before killing her and her family' - dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1340207/I-didnt-think-Iraqis-humanssays-U-S-soldier-raped-14-year-old-girl-killing-her-family.html.

[7] J.W, Rettberg, Blogging (Polity Press, Malden, MA: 2008), pp. 15-17.

would have been the 15th birthday of Abeer Qassim Hamza. I am one of some folks who are going to fast and a vigil in memory of Abeer, and symbolically all the innocents who have suffered in the Iraq War'. Other posts include: 'Never sixteen and so sorely missed' (19/08/07); 'Happy Birthday Abeer Qassim Hamza. R.I.P' (19/08/10). In the report, we also find this speculative storying:

"Abeer must have died knowing what was happening to her family. While Cortez and Barker raped her, she probably heard screams and may have noted a sharp silence after the last gunshots were fired. After Green entered the room, presumably with her family's blood on him, there can have been little doubt. We can hope that her terror prevented her from focusing on these details, or from feeling, however wrongly, that it was her fault that her parents and her sister had been killed so the soldiers might get to her. Perhaps she had a moment to thank Allāh that her two younger brothers were away at school. They were later found crying by the burning house, where they could look inside and see the bodies. We can't be sure, of course. Key witnesses are dead. But this is what a war crime looks like."[8]

The same humanising act of storying is taken by the "abeermemorial" blog which advertises a series of vigils held in the U.S and U.K, sponsored by the Abeer Qassim Hamza Memorial Committee:[9] "Imagine where her and other Iraqi women would have been today if they weren't murdered. I could imagine Abeer in school (if the schools were still or are still functioning, of course), preparing perhaps to attend college in the hopes of bettering her society. Or maybe she would be at home, eating with her family or reading a poem. She would be a living, breathing, human being. But she was murdered."

Kaplan (2011) explains that "Witnessing has to do with an image producing a deliberate ethical consciousness through empathic affect not related only to a specific person or character."[10] The empathic concern also entails that the witness would seek that justice is

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[8] 'Never Sixteen, and so Sorely Missed' - https://m.dailykos.com/stories/373559.

[9] http://abeermemorial.blogspot.com.

[10] Kaplan, E.A., 'Empathy and Trauma Culture: Imaging Catastrophe', in Coplan A., Goldie P. (2011), Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 275.

done. The responses of popular media outlets such as The Daily Kos reflect witnessing empathy and though the injustice is largely focused on child victim Abeer more than the other members of her family, it was a response to media reticence that spoke of alerting the consciousness of larger, global communities about her rape and killing and the failure of the media to adequately draw attention and empathic concern for the tragedy. The Daily Kos' attention to the Abeer story and recurrent 'envisioning' of her plight and the tragedy formed by and around the atrocity is in line with Nussbaum's idea of compassion as "a painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person's undeserved misfortune."[11] Essential to challenging self/other binaries, the storying does not appropriate a Westernised space to highlight the tragedy, but accentuates an ethical awareness around understanding the meanings of the event.[12]

The differential media responses to the killing of Abeer at a heightened point in U.S media wherein pro-war attitudes were very high, shows that people are not the same even in the face of relentless mainstream media bias. The Muslim must bear in mind that the common man has access to a range of media and that even media output should not be characterised as being entirely the same. There is a vast diversity of media organisations, as well as narratives and images, web blogs, songs, poems, visual displays, media – both mainstream, popular and new media. These can produce counter-hegemonic meaning and open spaces and facilitate greater empathic bearing. The Muslim must not interact with another on the assumption that he or she is predisposed to othering or dehumanising of Muslims (or other groups), but instead approach and engage with another without prejudice. We must be conscious of that person's innate nature - that it can be awakened by the will of Allah (upon whom all praise is forever due) irrespective of the time or climate in which he lives.

It should be noted that the distinctions that Allāh makes between believers, unbelievers, hypocrites, sinners, truthful etc. are clear, but each of these people still have a human self.

[11] M. C. Nussbaum, Upheavals of thought: The intelligence of emotions (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2001), p. 301.

[12] See: Matthew J. Newcomb, 'Totalized Compassion: The (Im)Possibilities for Acting out of Compassion in the Rhetoric of Hannah Arendt', JAC, Vol. 27, No. 1/2 (2007), pp. 105-133.

This inner being can be overcome with the negative traits of denial, rejection, arrogance and indifference, but can also, even simultaneously, exhibit the lofty emotions of care and displays of mercy. The lowly and lofty parts of the human self are mentioned in Surah al-Shams:

91:7 - by the soul and how He formed it
91:8 - and inspired it [to know] its own rebellion and piety!

Learning from Vultures and Concentration Camps

A poem by the Nigerian novelist, poet and social critic Chinua Achebe entitled "Vultures" draws on such a conflicting nature of man. It challenges us to imagine the juxtaposing features of a vulture's life. The vulture rests its "bashed in head" on a "broken bone of a dead tree". A scavenger, it keeps a watch on its "hollowed remnants in easy range of cold telescopic eyes" having "picked the eyes" of its "swollen corpse in a water-logged trench and ate the things in its bowel." The scene is bleak and repulsive - until we see another, contrasting, side to the vulture. For example, Achebe describes how strange it is that the same vulture demonstrates "love" by tidying and cleaning its site of blood and gore. The vulture will even sleep with "her face turned to the wall!" and not looking upon the bleakness that surrounds her. It will even "nestle close to his mate". It is with this duality in mind that Achebe then turns our focus towards human beings. They too can exist with such dualities, and be perceived as such.

A further example of this rests in the example of the Belsen Camp and the commandment issued therein. The Bergen-Belsen camp, situated in northern Germany was a concentration camp used in the execution of Jews in the Holocaust. Approximately 50,000 Jews met their death at the camp including well-known child diarist Anne Frank, Achebe describes the commandment:

"…Thus the Commandant at Belsen

Camp going home for

the day with fumes of

human roast clinging

rebelliously to his hairy

nostrils will stop

at the wayside sweet-shop

and pick up a chocolate

for his tender offspring

waiting at home for Daddy's return …

Praise bounteous

providence if you will

that grants even an ogre

a tiny glow-worm

tenderness encapsulated

in icy caverns of a cruel

heart or else despair

for in every germ

of that kindred love is

lodged the perpetuity

of evil."[13]

What the poem emphasises is that man can be inspired by positive displays of kindness and care and plunged into the abyss of depravity. This is made all the more true today with the means of mechanical dehumanisation. Nazi guards would feel better knowing that it was not they, but the fans, that were killing human beings in the gas chambers of the extermination camps.

In contrast to Achebe's Nazi commandant having "fumes" in his nostrils of victims he had gassed to death, in drone strikes "there's no flesh on your monitor, just coordinates."[14] A

[13] Chinua Achebe, 'Vultures' - https://www.mahmag.org/english/worldpoetry.php?itemid=456.

[14] William Saletan, 'Joystick vs. Jihad: The Temptation of Remote-Controlled Killing,' Slate, February 12, 2006.

former CIA officer describes: “You could see these little figures scurrying and the explosion going off and when the smoke cleared, there was just rubble and charred stuff.”[15] Like the commandant stopping to buy a chocolate for his child, Colonel Michael Lenahan, a Predator pilot and operations director for the 196th Reconnaissance Squadron, says, “It’s bizarre, I guess. It is quite different – going from potentially shooting a missile, then going to your kid’s soccer game”: a killer in the morning and a father in the evening.”[16] As Allāh had informed us, the human self is imbued with moral failings as well as with consciousness of God! (91:8).

In an interview with former Israeli Army combat soldier Eran Efrati who served as a soldier in the occupied city of Hebron, he describes how the systematic oppression against Palestinians is underscored by layers of dehumanising that began from when he was very young and become more pronounced during his drafting into the occupied territories. Children, he explained, are taught that Palestinian life is not to be accorded the same value as an Israeli life, that an Israeli soldier cannot intervene if a Jewish settler is abusing a Palestinian, even to the point of carrying out the murder of a Palestinian. He explains how Palestinians are not considered fully human, but sub-human. The latter is reflected in that there is no differentiating between man, woman, child, disabled, mother, or orphan in Israel’s shoot-to-kill policy during curfews in the occupied territories. Efrati describes:

“How can a Nazi soldier get up in the morning, give his wife a hug and kiss and go out to the camp and do his job? I just couldn’t understand it. And when I got into the Occupied Territories for the first time, I understood how there can be a contradiction inside yourself. As a human being you can do your job and be one person at home – be a loving, caring boyfriend, or son, or brother and at the same time hold people under a regime so oppressed that people are dying not only from your bullets but from the amount of calories entered into

[15] Quoted in Jane Mayer, “The Predator War,” New Yorker, October 26, 2009.
[16] Matt J. Martin, Predator: The Remote-Control Air War over Iraq and Afghanistan: A Pilot’s Story (Minneapolis, Zenith Press: 2010), p. 85.

their territories like in Gaza, from oppression or sickness. This realisation during my time as a soldier… put me on the right side of history."[17]

People are not all the same, and nor is one single person the same throughout. The Muslim must therefore bear in mind the complex nature of a person. Perceptions of another at one given time is not the complete picture of anything. Similarly, a negative idea about another community which proliferates on the media should not require a Muslim to change his outlook on others nor radically change his method of calling others to Allah. Remember that everyone is born with an innate disposition in being able to recognise Allāh and it is in realigning the human spirit with one's real human potential that lies at the root of the Islamic call. Sometimes people tire of hearing the same negative stories about others; other times they navigate from mainstream to forms of new media; other times their relationship with that community member inhibits the formulating of negative opinions.

1.3 Who and What Do We See?

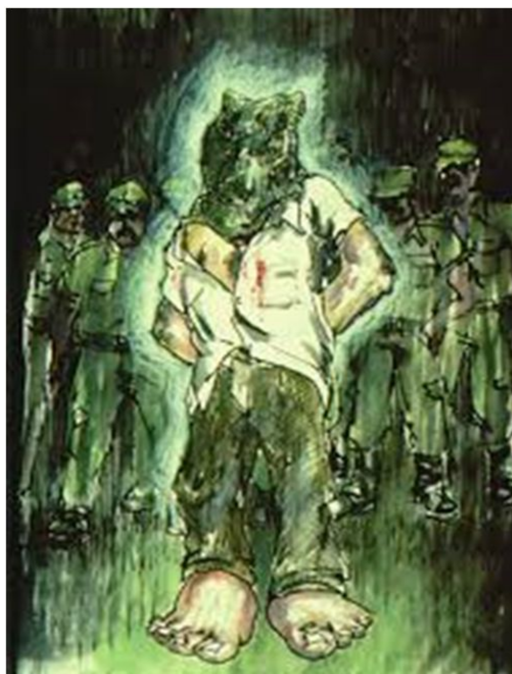
The power of an image

How we see ourselves and how we imagine ourselves being seen has a bearing on our self-identity and on the relationship between 'self' and 'other'. This is reflected visually here in an evocative image entitled 'The Fear Is Still Me' (see below). The image suggests a bestial persona of a tortured prisoner donning a hood that conceals his bear-like identity.[18] Though "he cannot see" he is very much to be seen as a centre-piece as if heralded by the prison guards. In the image, there appears a halo. We wonder whether the halo etched around him is the beam of a torch from behind him, a floodlight shining onto him or whether the artist challenges us to consider binary oppositions wherein symbols of humanised and dehumanised life become juxtaposed. The togetherness of the guards behind him is set

[17] Empire Files: Israeli Army Vet's Exposé - "I Was the Terrorist", - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Rk1dAIhiVc&t=1390s.
[18] Kahleen McCullough-Zander and Sharyn Larson, 'The Fear Is Still Me' - http://www.nursingcenter.com/upload/static/230543/fear.pdf.

against the isolation of the prisoner though the pack-like formation of the guards and the lone bear-like prisoner is strikingly ironic. It is the wounded bear-like prisoner who has been hunted and the prison guards herald him.

There is much to be seen. The cartoon suggests a larger-than-life individual though his protruding feet perhaps reflect limbs swollen by beating, and in this the prisoner appears imbalanced. Since however his feet bear no injuries might they instead or simultaneously suggest his stamped presence? We cannot see his hands however and imagine what injuries they might bear.



Surrounded by Torturers He Cannot See, Anonymous, watercolour on paper, 8.27” 11.69”, early 1980s. Image courtesy of the Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims, Copenhagen, Denmark

The scruffy clothes of the prisoner with shirt buttons and trouser zip undone are a further contrast to the ‘civilised’ and neat attire of the prison guards. The fact that the prisoner is hooded reveals a lack of self-identity. Though, in place of his assumed fear, worry and pain, the bear-like hood projects defiance and strength.

Undoubtedly, Muslims face a constant barrage of press reports that vilify their faith or other Muslims. This constant othering heightens anxieties and comes to shape the way we see ourselves as a people largely defined through violence. Motifs of barbarity, backwardness,

images of women in hijab or burqa framed around narratives of fear and the unknown are commonplace. Butler notes that ‘the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated. They are themselves operations of power. They do not unilaterally decide the conditions of appearance, but their aim is nevertheless to delimit the sphere of appearance itself.’[19]

Tudor (2011) strikes the following example to reflect how attitudes and perceptions of others have a strong bearing on sympathetic or empathic outlooks. Though cautioning against generalisations, he writes:

“When a torturer looks upon his victim he can certainly directly see agony in his face and humiliation in his posture. The problem, though, is the light in which he sees it. It is not a matter of the torturer needing to infer a little further to another, ‘more inner’ realm in which the ‘moral properties’ of the Other’s situation will be revealed. It is a matter of how he sees the Other’s condition. The torturer has the reality of the Other’s suffering squarely in front of him, under a clear light – but that light is somehow wrong. It is a peculiarly cold and harsh light, one that flattens and exposes the Other, cuts and holds him open, all the better to probe and toy with him. What is needed is a different light.”[20]

Tudor points out that the different ‘light’ will not reveal any new information about the Other, it is about how we perceive that Other. We are required, he reminds us, to “come to the place or attitude from which that direct perception can be had.” Srikanth writes of a ‘post-concentration-camp world’ and questions the extent to which we had learned about the fuller implications of dehumanised life and whether we can conceive of any correlation between the space of Holocaust concentration camps and the space of Guantanamo Bay. Since there is, she surmises, a hypervisibiity and immediate availability of Holocaust representations through visual representations, films, testimony of Holocaust survivors and written accounts, as well as a preserving of a rescuing role of Western liberators, “We cannot

[19] Judith Butler (2010) ‘Performative Agency’ in Journal of Cultural Economy, 3:2, p. 1.
[20] K. Tudor (2011). Understanding Empathy. Transactional Analysis Journal, 41(1), 39–57. Garber: 2004, p. 83.

engage in the type of introspection that might lead us to acknowledge the eerie similarity between the national sentiment that led to the establishment of Guantanamo Bay and that which resulted in the concentration camps. The externalization of the Holocaust and the abundance of materials that are at hand to evoke analysis and discussion about it allow us to feel complacent that we will not cross that boundary into antipathy and inhumanity."[21]

Former Army Reserve Spc. Kayla Williams describes her experience whilst stationed at Tal-Afar air base in 2003 wherein she was exposed to interrogation methods used on Iraqi prisoners in a unit named 'The Cage'. Williams stated how the experience had an emotionally debilitating effect on her, forcing her to question what it means of our own humanness if we strip others of their humanity. Though at parts in her memoir she struggles with the pressures of understanding native attitudes, suggesting a larger disconnect between American aspirations and Iraqi attitudes of culture, self-determination and occupation, her thoughts are often juxtaposed by an empathic imagined storying, "It also made me think," Williams says, "what are we as humans, that we do this to each other? It made me question my humanity and the humanity of all Americans." Williams attempts to place someone else, someone familiar to her to pursue a mode of human recognisability with someone else, lost in the frame of a collectivised (in)humanity. The prisoner in his isolated appearance does much to allow Williams' empathic outlook. Un-stereotyped – through association, the Iraqi prisoner can exist in a human-ised frame. She imagines: "While I am watching them do these things to the prisoner, I think a lot about Rick. I imagine what it would be like for him in a situation like this. Especially with a woman here to watch. How much it would distress him. The face is not the same, but the prisoner's eyes look a lot like Rick's. The same shape of eyes, the same eye colour. The same lashes…What would it be like for him? As I watch, I imagine Rick. I imagine Rick in this room."[22] Williams has the ability of constructing Self/Other identities through place-making. She imagines Rick in the same room. One's perceiving of another's joy or sorrow lies at the root of empathy.

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[21] R. Srikanth, Constructing the Enemy: Empathy/Antipathy in U.S. Literature and Law (Philadelphia, Temple University Press: 2012), p. 158.
[22] Kayla Williams, Love My Rifle More Than You (W.W. Norton, 2006), p. 249.

Herbert Kelman reminds us that to humanise someone is to "perceive him as an individual, independent and distinguishable from others, capable of making choices…"[23] This focus on individualising is a crucial component of empathy. Away from reliance on a stereotype about a group, empathy mandates a seeing in another the individual components that make up one's self. The same way one's predispositions to err or one's likes and dislikes are a necessary part of one's self then so too must they exist in the Other. This would mean an acceptance of being disagreed with or even in being disliked. The idea is to see the Other as a complex human being. To be genuinely curious about another person and to realise that experiences affect different people in different ways. It is to not to be presumptuous about one person's attitude and viewpoints due to an attitude formed about the group to which the Other belongs, or because of views his 'in-group' has formed about one's self that is a requirement of empathy.[24] This latter consideration is the third component of empathy which Halpern describes: 'cognitive openness, and tolerating the ambivalence this might arouse.' Since dehumanising others can be caused by one stereotyping of an entire group, the process of rehumanising others by individualising them through empathy requires far more effort.[25]

Reel Bad Arabs

Lendenman's (1983) research has revealed successive negative portrayals of Arabs in political cartoons in American newspapers such as The Washington Post, The Washington Star, The Miami News, The Baltimore Sun and others. Palmer's (1995) analysis of political cartoons in The Washington Post following Israel's wars of 1956, 1957 and 1973, the Palestinian Intifida. Even prior to the first Gulf War, there was reflected the same tendency of negative and dehumanising portrayals of Arabs, and oftentimes specifically Palestinian Arabs. Such negative images are often used to promote American wars, or in the case of Palmer's (1995) analysis, to promote Israel's campaigns against Palestinians.[26]

[23] Herbert Kelman, "Violence Without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization of Victims and Victimizers", Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 29, No.4, (1973), p. 48.
[24] Jodi Halpern and Harvey M. Weinstein, Rehumanizing the Other: Empathy and Reconciliation, Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Aug., 2004), pp. 568-9.
[25] Jodi Halpern, From Detached Concern to Empathy: Humanizing Medical Practice 1 7-18 (2001), pp. 130-133;143.
[26] A. Palmer, (1995). The Arab image in newspaper cartoon. In Y. R. Kamalipour (Ed.), The U.S. media and the Middle East: Image and perception (pp. 139-150). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Nasir's (1979) study of the portrayal of Arabs in American movies between 1894 and 1960 revealed a predominant image of Arabs as backwards, evil and inhumane.[27] In Shaheen's comprehensive study of over 900 Hollywood movies released between 1896 and 2001, a dominant trend of media presentations of Arabs as the dehumanised villain is evident.[28] Similarly, Kamalipour (2000) assessed the negative portrayal of Arabs in radio, television, and movies, revealing how Arabs are prone to committing acts of terrorism against Americans.[29] Further works by Ayish (1994) and Qazzaz (1975) showed how such mythical images of Arabs as inherently evil, violent, uncultured and threatening are prominent in social science textbooks in elementary school, junior high and high school, which perpetuated negative stereotypes about Arabs.[30]

There needs to be an unmasking, a successive peeling away of an imagination disfigured by hostility. Edward Said has written:

"The Arab appears as an oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low…In news reels and or newspapers, the Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures."[31]

Said states that "these contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization".[32] What is suggested is a metaphysical distinction between 'good' and 'evil' as Butler has outlined in relation to the

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[27] S. Nasir, (1979). The Arabs and the English. New York: Longman.
[28] J. Shaheen (2001). Reel bad Arabs: How Hollywood vilifies a people. New York: Olive Branch Press.
[29] Y. R. Kamalipour (2000). Media images of the Middle East in the U.S. In L. A. Gher & H. Y. Amin (Eds.), Civic discourse and digital age communication in the Middle East (pp. 55-70). Stamford, CT: Ablex.
[30] M. Ayish (1994). Arab image in American mass media. (In Arabic). Research Series, no 2. United Arab Emirates: United Arab Emirates University; A. Al-Qazzaz (1975). Images of the Arab in American social science textbooks. In B. Abu-Laban & F. Zeadey (Eds.), Arabs in America myths and realities (pp. 113-132). Wilmette, IL: The Medina University Press.
[31] Edward W. Said, Orientalism (Vintage,1979): 278-279.
[32] Ibid, p. 108.

Iraq War and the 2004 Abu Ghraib prison abuse photos. This "demonizes non-western Others and justifies the imperialist logic of 'new humanitarian wars' against those 'Others' (2006). The very conception of the human is brought into question; it is not simply "that some humans are treated as humans, and others are dehumanized; it is rather that dehumanization becomes the condition for the production of the human to the extent that a "western" civilization defines itself over and against a population understood as definitionally illegitimate, if not dubiously human."[33]

Edward Said makes reference to Lebanese writer Sania Hamady's work Temperament and Character, in which she homogenises Arab peoples and their societies and thus eradicates their plurality and differences. The only difference he notes about Arab people is that they are set apart from everyone else in their negative characterisation.

"The Arabs so far have demonstrated an incapacity for disciplined and abiding unity. They experience collective outbursts of enthusiasm but do not pursue patiently collective endeavours, which are usually embraced half-heartedly. They show lack of coordination and harmony in organization and function, nor have they revealed an ability for cooperation. Any collective action for common benefit or mutual profit is alien to them."[34]

Such simplistic broad brushing of an entire race is not only puerile, it also puts into play an Othering of Arabs akin to that of Jews in Nazi Germany. There is no mention of what the "enthusiasm" might be or the "collective endeavours", or the "coordination", or the "cooperation", or the type of "collective action", or the type of "common benefit". In its vagueness, Arabs too appear vague and without purpose. Said comments on the Othering the above excerpt posits of the Arab peoples:

"The style of this prose tells more perhaps than Hamady intends. Verbs like "demonstrate," "reveal," "show," are used without an indirect object: to whom are the Arabs revealing, demonstrating, showing? To no one in particular, obviously, but to everyone in general. This

[33] J. Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (London, 2006), p. 278.
[34] Sania Hamady, Temperament and Character of the Arabs (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960), p. 100.

is another way of saying that these truths are self-evident only to a privileged or initiated observer. since nowhere does Hamady cite generally available evidence for her observations. Besides, given the inanity of the observations, what sort of evidence could there be? As her prose moves along, her tone increases in confidence-: “Any collective action ... is alien to them.” The categories harden, the assertions are more unyielding, and the Arabs have been totally transformed from people into no more than the putative subject of Hamady’s style.”[35]

Humans seek dignity in being respected and this is something Allāh affords man in his core, human state. This is crucial in our own understanding of ourselves and of others. The way we seek to protect our own dignity gives us an insight into the way others too value themselves and the mode of respect that needs to exist between people. This attitude of living with the bearing of dignity is even more essential in times of conflict and when people are at their most vulnerable. This sense of promoting and respecting a person’s dignity is pivotal in calling others to Allah since it challenges any attitudes of superiority that can easily act as a barrier to the Muslim’s sincerity. This approach from the Muslim prevents his interactions with others disintegrating into a battle of egos. Any attempt at informing them of Islam at that point is simply lost in translation. Sometimes even ‘retreating’, or holding back can be so much more worthwhile than feeling a need to say something at every junction. For this end, it is said that knowledge is knowing what to say, wisdom is knowing when to say it, and that good character is knowing how to say it.

1.4 Society as a Complex Mesh

Prejudice and ostracising others is one of the greatest impediments to social cohesion. Researchers have found that during their first hours of life, babies will cry if they hear other babies crying. They call this mimicry, the act of mimicking emotional expressions of others - in this case, the patterns of grieving. It is a rudimentary form of empathy. According to the

[35] Edward Said, Orientalism (Vintage,1979), p. 310.

theory of primitive emotional contagion, one unconsciously and spontaneously mimics the emotional bodily, facial or vocal expressions of another. For the audience it suggests an acknowledgement of the other's distress. This example of mimicry in babies appears to suggest that humans are not born with a disposition towards prejudice; it is instead something they learn. If we were predisposed to show prejudice to one another, to ostracise, bully, victimise, hate and kill, our world would simply cease to function, we would readily have destroyed each other. Prejudice is something we learn, and it is therefore something we can also unlearn. Harry Bridges said, "No one has ever been born a Negro hater, a Jew hater, or any other kind of hater. Nature refuses to be involved in such suicidal practices."[36]

Islam's interaction with existing belief systems

The relationship between Islam and other faith and belief systems has always been intricate and multifaceted. From the advent of Islam, Muslims established meaningful contact with non-Muslims and their cultures. Jacques Waardenburg describes: "Since its inception the Muslim civilization has been in continuous relationship with other cultures and civilizations. It extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans and through regions which have long been carriers of culture. As a consequence, Muslims have come into contact with many religions. One may think not only of various forms of Christianity and Judaism inside and outside the Middle East but also of Zoroastrianism and Manicheism, Hinduism, and even Buddhism, not to speak of non-literate religions in many parts of Asia and Africa."[37]

Though the Qur'ān is very clear in stressing the truth value of Islam, of its Prophet (peace be upon him), and of the path servitude to God, it also informs us that there are others with differing views, lives, faiths, race, languages and civilisation. The human community is a single community but mankind continues to have differences – "except those on whom your

[36] Sherman A. Jackson, 'Muslims, Islam(s), Race, and American Islamophobia' in Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century, eds. John L. Esposito, Ibrahim Kalin (New York, Oxford University Press: 2011), p. 93.
[37] Jacques Waardenburg (ed.), Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. xi.

Lord has mercy – for He created them to be this way" (11:118-119). Some commentators relate this to man's ability to differ intellectually from one another.[38]

The Qur'ān contains categories of righteous people and unrighteous people and also contains categories of neutral people. These include groupings like the Banī Isrā'īl (Children of Israel (Jacob) - made up of both the righteous and unrighteous; Bedouins, beggars, captives, children, destitute, homeless, refugees, shepherds, mothers and wives. These, amongst others, emerge as neutral categories.

3:113- But they are not all alike. There are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite God's revelations during the night, who bow down in worship.
3:114 - who believe in God and the Last Day, who order what is right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good deeds. These people are among the righteous.

Ibn Kathīr, a foremost exegete of the Qur'an, notes that the two preceding verses were revealed concerning the priests of the People of the Book who accepted Islam, like 'Abd-Allāh ibn Salām and Asad bin 'Ubayd.[39] Ibn Kathīr states that not all of them are alike, but from them are believers and from them are criminals. Others posited that the verses are distinguishing unbelievers from the believers in the nation of Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Many of the commentators believe that verse 3:113 treats believers as the People of the Book who had embraced Islam and those who had not differently. Furthermore, Ṭabarī mentions that the verse specifies two groups; believers and disbelievers, those who adhere to righteousness and those who do not.[40]

The Qur'ān also questions rhetorically in relation to other dissimilarities in people, the emphasis on man's sense of or lack of perception, insight and righteous conduct, as revealed in the verses that follow.

[38] Muḥammad Asad, The Message of the Qur'ān (Gibraltar: Dar al- Andalus), 335.
[39] http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura3-aya113.html#katheer.
[40] http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura3-aya113.html#tabary.

39:9 - What about someone who worships devoutly during the night, bowing down, standing in prayer, ever mindful of the life to come, hoping for his Lord's mercy? Say, 'How can those who know be equal to those who do not know?' Only those who have understanding will take heed.

6:50 - Say, 'I do not have the treasures of God, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.' Say, 'Is a blind person like one who can see? Why will you not reflect?'

13:16 - Say, 'Are the blind equal to those who can see? And are the depths of darkness equal to the light?' Have the partners they assign to God created anything like His creation so that their creation is indistinguishable from His? Say, 'God is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the All Compelling.'

40:58 - The blind and the sighted are not equal, just as those who believe and do good works and those who do evil are not equal: how seldom you reflect!

There might be some who question the Qur'ān's apparent castigating of disbelievers as 'creatures' or 'beasts' - dawāb. It must be remembered at the outset that the Qur'ān distinguishes between people, based on belief and character. At points it is the corruption of belief that is stressed, and at other times the Qur'ān draws attention to terrible crimes committed by people, often a reflection of their lack of belief or misguided belief. In the verse we are told:

8:55 - The worst creatures in the sight of God are those who reject Him and will not believe.

The word used in the verse, dawāb, literally means "animals that walk or crawl", including man as well. The singular word for dawāb is dabbah, which could mean "to move slowly pulling the body along the ground" and "to move slowly on the hands and knees".

It must also be noted that dehumanisation is man's inhumanity to man, and perhaps also in dehumanising others we earn the title of a dābbah - becoming inhuman, 'crawling, animal-like' - ourselves.

Allāh informs us that human beings can indeed be the best of His creation and yet are capable of descending into faithlessness and immorality to become the worst of His creation (95: 4-5). The starting point, however, for all creation is one stipulated by an honouring. Allāh ennobled man in the presence of his angels and accorded him a position of responsibility. Man exists somewhere on the scale between the angelic and bestial. His free will to choose servitude to God is a placing of reason over mere fulfilment of desire. For example, Ibn al-Qayyim said:

"Allāh created angels with reason and without desires; animals with desires and without reason; man, with both desires and reason. If a man's reason is stronger than his desire then he becomes 'angelic' in nature, and if his desires are stronger than his reason then he is animal-like in his nature."[41]

Imam al-Sa´dī remarks in his commentary on the aforementioned verses of 95:4-5 that "the verse concerns those who have gathered these three qualities: disbelief, loss of faith, betrayal, in that they did not keep their oaths. They become worse than animals because goodness is absent from them and evil is expected of them." One of the things that separates us human beings from cattle and other beings is our use of reason (7:179, 25:44). However, this lack of use of reason does not mean that those referred to in these verses are physically less (because, again, all children of Adam are honoured).

Allāh, the creator of humans and animals highlights both man's depravity and moral consciousness in the Qur'ān. He can refer to His creation as He pleases since whatever is in the heavens and earth belongs to Him, was created by Him and is understood best by Him.

[41] 'Uddat al-Ṣābirīn.

(2:284, 4:131). The language and description belong to the Creator and are His right to best describe His creation. It will not however warrant us, the creation, to describe others with belittling descriptions since the first addressee of the Qur'ān is the reader himself. He is the first to be warned, and even if another person or peoples are specified, the warning still extends to the initial reader. This is supported by narrations in which some heretical Muslims are referred to as the "worst among the creation and the creatures":

"Verily there would arise from my Ummah after me or soon after me a group (of people) who would recite the Qur'ān, but it would not go beyond their throats, and they would pass clean through their religion just as the arrow passes through the prey, and they would never come back to it. They would be the worst among the creation and the creatures."[42]

Anas ibn Mālik reported: The Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessings be upon him, said,

"There will be division and sectarianism in my nation and a people (the Kharijites) will come with beautiful words and evil deeds. They will recite the Qur'ān but it will not pass beyond their throats. They will leave the religion as an arrow leaves its target and they will not return to it as the arrow does not return to its bow. They are the worst of the creation. Blessed are those who fight them and are killed by them. They call to the Book of Allāh but they have nothing to do with it. Whoever fights them is better to Allāh than them."[43]

The Qur'ān teaches that all humans are honourable, that each person has an innate recognition of Allāh, and in the course of his or her life a chance at finding closeness to Him. Every human is capable of acknowledging the many favours he or she witnesses in life; even through hardships and tests. Even in the darkest of times, a person's conscience can be awakened to their own vulnerability and understanding divine control is at play. Any human is able to change states through forgiveness, remedial actions and repentance. There is never a license for us to dehumanise the other. Instead, it is a Muslim's role to create awakenings within people and elevate them.

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[42] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1067.
[43] Sunan Abū Dāwūd 4765.

Nothing is consistent, except change

Personalities in the Qur'ān, from prophets and messengers; those endowed with positive qualities of uprightness and piety; the arrogant and obstinately rejecting; men and women; children and elderly; healthy and infirm - form a myriad of life experiences. The lessons we find in the biographies of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as well as the disbelievers of the Quraysh actually provide endless examples of how different people's life experiences interact with one another. Sometimes complimenting and other times colliding.

The Qur'ān teaches that life itself is in flux, that changes occur at every level of a person's existence, and in our observable world. The night and day alternate, planets swim in orbit, from nothingness we pass through stages of life, of infancy, and man transitions in his physical being, his mental aptitude and in his consciousness. The most significant transitioning of any person relates to his or her faith and belief. The simple fact that people do transition is a proof enough that the most obstinate can have a turn of heart and so too can the forbearing and mild become obstinate. People can change faith, embrace faith and leave faith altogether. It is essential that the Muslim thus never assume that anybody is beyond guidance. To relegate anybody in such a way may be dehumanising of them since it suggests that they are void of a heart, however corrupt, that can alter and turn, just as our own can do.

Examples of prominent personalities like 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, once hostile to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, eventually found guidance as a loyal supporter of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his mission. Others also lent support though they remained unchanged in faith. They could not all be the same if among them were conscientious objectors, humanitarians, sympathisers and supporters. Among them were the disinterested and aloof, shepherds and nomads, and their earthly concerns kept them distracted and away from theological discussions and concerns. One notable individual, chief of the Banū Nawfal clan of Quraysh, Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī was very influential in attempting to end the Makkan boycott of Banū Hāshim. Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī supported the Prophet (peace be

upon him) and ensured his return to Ṭā'if despite Abu Lahab's ban on the Prophet's return. Muṭ'im died before the Battle of Badr and had never embraced Islam, despite his support. In recognition of his important presence and contribution in the Prophet's life, the Prophet (peace be upon him) made specific mention of him in the aftermath of the Battle of Badr. What had ensued was the taking as war prisoners of around seventy hostile Makkan disbelievers. On seeing the prisoners, the Prophet (peace be upon him) remembered Muṭ'im:

"Were Al-Muṭ'im bin 'Adī alive and interceded with me for these filthy people, I would definitely forgive them for his sake."[44]

Dehumanisation is the excluding of others from a moral order of being a human being in which the dehumanised lose their human status in the eyes of the dehumanisers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was cognisant of past favours, of appreciating the integrity in man and of the reciprocating of good conduct. The Prophet's character towards others, those disconnected by faith, but united in common goodness was an example of challenging simple binaries and a disallowing of Othering. Since Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī's posthumous remembrance emerges at a moment of success and victory for the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, it further roots into the Muslim consciousness and makes essential for the Muslim to observe his or her world with an eye of compassion, appreciation and understanding.

In Islam, no human being (non-Muslims included) is seen to be part of an entirely homogenous entity. The Qur'ān makes clear that human beings ascribe to different nations and tribes and have differing behaviours. The Prophet (peace be upon him), in his interactions and dealings underwent a range of experiences with those who had not initially embraced Islam. Many of them were not hostile to him and his companions and he reciprocated with an exemplary compassion and empathy. He saw in each a potential for the acceptance of Islam - a potential for change. The Qur'ān instructs man to behave in the manner of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as can be seen in the following two verses:

[44] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 4023.

“Allāh forbids you not, with regards to those who fight you not for (your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allāh loves those who are just.” (60:8)

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allāh, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allāh. For Allāh is well-acquainted with all that you do.” (5:8)

We also have the following tradition which draws on some positive traits of the Romans (Western Europeans) in a discussion between Mustaurid al-Qurashi (Allāh be pleased with him) and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aaṣ (Allāh be pleased with him):

“Mustaurid al-Qurashi reported: I heard Allāh’s Messenger (peace be upon him) as saying: The Last Hour would come (when) the Romans would form a majority amongst people. ‘Amr said to him (Mustaurid Qurashi): See what you are saying? He said: I say what I heard from Allāh’s Messenger (peace be upon him). Thereupon he said: If you say that, it is a fact for they have four qualities. They have the patience to undergo a trial and immediately restore themselves to sanity after trouble and attack again after flight. They (have the quality) of being good to the destitute and the orphans, to the weak and, fifthly, the good quality in them is that they put resistance against the oppression of kings.”[45]

The tradition is insightful in what it reveals of early Muslim perception of non-Muslims. In spite of their disbelief, the Romans were noted for some positive human qualities. The Qur’ān of course is very clear on the nature of misguided beliefs, but the tradition here lends weight to some positive traits including their charity giving and perseverance.

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[45] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2898a.

2.1 On the fringes: A Prophetic model of acceptance – working with the mentally ill, handicapped and those considered social outcasts

Dehumanisation stigmatises others with a "spoiled identity". The elderly, infirm and mentally challenged can each become targets of Otherness since they can be viewed as socially inadequate and inept. The Othered group is devalued, depersonalised and susceptible to discrimination. Though what is seen as having lesser social status is sometimes relative to demographics and culture, the disabled, insane, elderly, and unattractive or disfigured often comprise of society's neglected and Othered.

A society is a complex mesh, a myriad of people with distinct life experiences and shaped by different circumstances. In a society where health, status and privilege are the main factors denoting success, those who do not enjoy these traits fall by the way side. That is, those who are not healthy, who are poor and socially marginalised can often bear the brunt of other's unjust treatment, whether explicit or implicit. Many of the Prophet's companions belonged to this latter group.

A look to Julaybīb (Allāh be pleased with him)

One such companion, Julaybīb was so named due to his small growth, Julaybīb a derivative of the word jalbab (very small grown). Dwarf-like in appearance, Julaybīb was also described as damim, which is ugly and hideous in his physical appearance. What made Julaybīb even more the outcast is that his familial roots were unknown. For a society which prided itself on lineage and social status, Julaybīb's lack of position, information about his lineage, his parents or tribe was a grave disability. And this was made worse with his physical appearance. Ostracised and feared, Julaybīb spent much of his time alone and isolated from

others. The Prophet (peace be upon him), however, demonstrated remarkable care for his companion and taught a model of learning which offset the entrenching of an Othering of those deemed as different and/or as a social outcast. The Prophetic model stressed upon genuine comradeship with all, despite differences in physical appearance or social positioning. It stressed upon the development of a broad(er) insight into the needs of the ostracised.

The following narration is exemplary for the way it juxtaposes the frames of worthiness and unworthiness. The Prophet (peace be upon him) showed that true leadership looks beyond group loyalties and cliques, but instead positions man in light of his or her internal qualities. Since the Prophet (peace be upon him) enquired about Julaybīb, even though others did not, shows how open acknowledgement of others tilts the imbalance that Othering can create. Julaybīb's story fits well into a discourse on Othering, dehumanisation, compassion and Prophetic character – a neat way to complement a relaying of the Islamic message. Often the Muslim finds himself conveying the spirit of Islamic compassion and the way Islam promotes a remarkable sense of togetherness with the human spirit. The Muslim must not forget the undercurrents of life which tug at every human being and how the Qur'ānic narrative interweaves instructions and intellectual reasoning with an appeal to heart and emotions. We should be mindful of the epidemic of loneliness in our societies. It may very well be that the person with whom you are communicating values the communication time more than the content of your communication, or values a non-judgmental exchange void of abuse, mockery or intimidation and thus remains in your company. The Prophet's words, spoken about an individual who was not well-regarded and was known only for his obscurity and oddness, offset the tendencies to Otherise and dehumanise the socially isolated: "This man is from me, and I am from him". What ensues in the narration is something further remarkable in that Julaybīb was physically held by the Prophet (peace be upon him) reflecting an actualising of his closeness, the narrator mentioned "Julaybīb had no pillow on that day except the arms of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

“Is anyone missing amongst you? They said: So and so and so. He again said: Is there anyone missing amongst you? They said: So and so and so. He then said: Is there anyone missing amongst you? They said: No. Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: But I am missing Julaybib. They (his Companions) searched him amongst those who had been killed and they found him by the side of seven (dead bodies) whom he had killed and he had been killed (by the opponents). Allāh’s Apostle (peace be upon him) came there and stood (by his side) and said: He killed seven (persons). Then (his opponents) killed him. He is mine and I am his. He then placed him upon his hands and there was no one else to lift but Allāh’s Apostle (peace be upon him). Then the grave was dug for him and he was placed in the grave and no mention is made of a bath.”[46]

We see how the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought Julaybīb back into the conversation when others had excluded him:

“Yā Umm Fulān! (O mother of so and so)”

Making the individual feel worthy

It is narrated on the authority of Anas (Allāh be pleased with him) that a woman, somewhat mentally defected, said, “O Messenger of Allāh! I have a need that I want you to meet. He responded, “Yā Umm Fulān (O mother of so and so), choose the way you like to walk in so that I may know your need and meet it.” He walked with her in some route until she had her need fulfilled.[47]

This narration is profound in many ways and provides us with much to think about in relation to our dealing with others, such as men and women we might encounter who have suffered with some mental illness or who know others who have. The woman who came and approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) came with a request that the Prophet

[46] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2472.
[47] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2326.

(peace be upon him) tend to one of her needs. What stands out at the beginning is the way the Prophet (peace be upon him) addressed that woman. There is something ennobling in the Prophet's opening address. He addressed her, "Yā umm fulān". What this seems to connote is a positioning of the woman in a frame of worthiness and respectability. The woman was already someone important, someone to be dependent on, valued and who had already gained importance. She was a mother and a mother before she might have been considered less or different because of her mental disability. Addressing others with titles of respect is an essential feature of politeness and etiquette in conversation.

Using words such as "sir", "madam" or "ma'am", or to politely ask the addressee their name, and to call them by their name followed by "if I may" opens up an air of politeness and respect between you. This allows us to humanise one another and personalise our interaction.

Even if the conversation at times becomes impassioned on either side, repeated use of "sir" or "madam" or "ma'am" can help to calm any tension because it asserts that respect and dignity stand at the footing of any human encounter.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then asked the women to choose which way she liked to walk. Again to offset any sense of Othering of the mentally challenged, the Prophet (peace be upon him) accorded the woman a power of choice, granted her an opportunity to make her own decision about going where she felt most comfortable. It is this spirit of understanding and compassion that should prevail between us. Dehumanisation is moral disengagement and this can quite easily take place when we create our own in-groups of the healthy bodied, mentally fit, intelligent, and beautiful. Oftenly, the perceived "lesser" groups, such as the disabled, crippled and deformed are devalued in our societies and are prejudiced against due to the negative evaluation or judgment ascribed to them based on their group membership. The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us a remarkable lesson about what true disability means in a metaphysical sense namely, judgement belongs solely to Allāh. Once, when arranging to visit a blind man in Medina, he told his companions that the man instead was not in fact altogether blind:

“Jabir bin ‘Abd-Allāh (Allāh be pleased with him) said, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Take us to the man with vision who lives in Banū Wāqif so that we can visit him.’ And that man was blind.”[48]

The tradition is insightful for what it reveals of the way the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not recognise the man through his disability, but instead inverted our understanding of what the disability means in the first place. The vision referred to is the man’s accurate spiritual vision; his spiritual eyes were unclouded though his physical eyes were blind.

Though the man was indeed blind, he was not to be castigated as such or looked down upon because of it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) showed that not only are differences we observe in this life temporal in relation to how things will fare in the next life, but that there is a more profound way by which we can recognise and make sense of our differences. Allāh in the Qur’ān says:

“Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth, letting their hearts gain wisdom, and causing their ears to hear? Yet, verily, it is not their eyes that have become blind – but blind have become the hearts that are in their chests!” (22:46)

Abdullah ibn Mas´ud (Allāh be pleased with him) was once ridiculed by others because of the thinness of his shin. The Prophet (peace be upon him) reminded them that they ought not to measure physical appearance merely by the standard of the present world:

Umm Mūsa said, “I heard ‘Alī (Allāh be pleased with him) say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas´ud to climb a tree and bring him something from it. His Companions looked at ‘Abdullāh’s shin and laughed at its thinness. The Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘Why are you laughing? ‘Abdullāh ‘s foot is heavier in the balance than the mountain of Uḥud.’”[49]

[48] Al-Bayḥaqī, as-Sunan al-Kubra 21372.
[49] Adab al-Mufrad 237.

Humans speak different languages of emotion. These emotions can be simultaneously felt, exhibited and witnessed. How these different strands manifest themselves are relative to time and place and in turn make each experience entirely unique. It is not, however, the displays that are altogether unique, but the emotions of the giver and recipient that are entirely bound up by distinctive experiences, senses, fears, hopes and anticipation.

In the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), a bedouin named Zāhir bin Hizām (Allāh be pleased with him) would bring gifts for the Prophet (peace be upon him) from the desert where he resided to the city of Madinah where the Prophet (peace be upon him) resided. The interchange of people and space between desert and city is greatly reflective of the way a spirit of belonging, compassion and community is embraced irrespective of small differences between us. Zāhir could not compete with the gifts of the city dwellers who would bring clothing and food for the Prophet (peace be upon him). He instead would oftentimes bring small inexpensive presents like food items such as cottage cheese or butter - gifts from his home in the desert. Zāhir held a deep-seated place in the collective memory of the inhabitants of Madinah and most importantly, in the heart and mind of the Prophet (peace be upon him). As he was leaving, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also gave him presents, and told him: "Zahir represents us living in the desert and we represent him living in the city." Although he, like Julaybīb, was perceived physically an unattractive man, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) loved him dearly and taught others, as he did when noticing the deceased body of Julaybīb, that each man has his place and such a construct of 'place' is not identified solely through the 'self' lens, but through a profound cognisance of true worth found in and through another. Any boundaries of Self and Other come to coalesce in the desert dwellers and city folk.

Once, while Zāhir was trading, the Prophet (peace be upon him) hid himself behind him and covered his eyes with his blessed hands. Zāhir recognized the Prophet (peace be upon him) from his beautiful scent and the softness of his skin. Thereupon the Prophet, in a moment of merriment asked, "Who is going to buy this slave?" Zāhir replied:

"O Messenger of Allah, then I would be cheap merchandise!"

The Prophet replied: "But with Allah you are not a cheap merchandise. With Allāh you are precious."[50]

Zāhir, irrespective of his physical appearance, of his poverty, of his peculiarities, was a man of worth and inner beauty like the others. He too was comforted and embraced by the Prophet (peace be upon him), who taught us through this desert dweller, that no-one in his immediate or distant societies should ever be devalued and prejudiced against.

The attitude of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a testament to the fact that true worth and human greatness transcends smaller physical and geographical differences between people. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once asked his companions what they thought of an individual who was passing before them. They said, such a person was privileged; he was from the noble class of people; if he spoke, people would listen to him; if he sought marriage, he would easily marry and if he interceded on behalf of someone, it would be readily accepted of him. A man from the poor inhabitants of Medina then passed through and the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the same question: "What do you think of such a person?" They said that if such a person addressed the community none would listen to him; if he sought marriage no-one would marry him and if he interceded on behalf of someone, it would not be accepted of him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "This (poor) person is better than such a large number of the first type as to fill the earth."[51]

The narration emphasises that we cannot judge an individual based purely on what is perceived of them from their appearance. In our world, there are those who might relish in their successes and those successes will be outwardly shown. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) showed in this narration that a person's external condition or social position does not equal success, and a man's true worth is not based on the extent to which he or she is

[50] Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, 1176.
[51] Sahih al-Bukhari 6447.

recognised or held in high esteem by others. It might well be that the one held in low esteem (or even belittled and disparaged by others) is the one who lives by a higher value system, or is the most humble, grateful, and therefore more honoured with Allāh. Allāh mentions that after Prophet Yūsuf's betrayal by his brothers he was found in the well they cast him in and sold for a worthless amount, as revealed in the following verse:

12:20 - and then sold him for a small price, for a few pieces of silver: so little did they value him.

The travellers looked upon Prophet Yūsuf's external, perhaps dishevelled state, his clothing perhaps soaked in water and dirt and clearly not realising the true worth of his very being he was sold for an insignificant amount. In drawing a lesson from this, sometimes we might turn away immediately upon seeing someone who does not conform to our social standards though we might not be aware of his or her true worth.

In R. Loydell's poem 'Tramp', the poet describes the attitudes and perceptions of a wealthy family towards a homeless man. The man is peculiar in his behaviours and not in keeping with the family's social expectations. For that reason, the man is ostracised and Othered. It is not on account of his character or personality that the family stay away from him, but only on account of his appearance. The poet describes:

"Our uneven stares dissuade approach.
We fear him, his matted hair, patched coat, grey look from sleeping out.
We mutter amongst ourselves and hope he keeps away.
No place for him in our heaven, there it's clean and empty."

Distance between the 'tramp' and the family is extended. There is no place for bridging and belonging between them since the man does not belong in their 'heaven'. The Muslim must always remember that he or she is not the gatekeeper of heaven. Allāh brings into His Mercy whoever He chooses and such choosing is not dependent on social status, wealth,

demographics or physical appearance. Islam instead is a call to the hearts of mankind. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once asked his companions:

"May I tell you of the people of Paradise? Every weak and poor obscure person whom the people look down upon but his oath is fulfilled by Allah when he takes an oath to do something. And may I inform you of the people of the Hell-Fire? They are all those violent, arrogant and stubborn people."[52]

"I Know I'm a Human First"

In our relationships, we must show the beauty of Islamic compassion, humility and concern and consider the Prophet's instruction to embody a "general mercy" for all. 'Umar's admonition to Abū 'Ubayda ibn al- Jarrāḥ is instructive here for what it relays of purity of heart in relation to social presence – and particularly among a new community. When Abū 'Ubayda rebuked 'Umar for his lack of concern for his clothing, hoping 'Umar would have presented himself in a more fitting manner and particularly in light of the occasion (his first entry into Jerusalem), 'Umar replied: "Allāh honoured us with Islam. If we now seek honour in anything Allāh had not honoured us with, He will disgrace us."[53]

Clothing and dressing well is important, but is not an indicator of our worth. In a world of insecurities and competitive grandiosities, the Muslim should be mindful of his own self-image and never judge others on account of their image. Each person is valuable in and of themselves as the children of Ādam and Islam holds each human in an esteemed position, worthy of hearing the call of a most liberating message.

In 2012, a team of Media Ethics students at DePaul University took a video of a homeless man from Chicago named Ron (Ronald) Davis. The video, uploaded in 2013, quickly went

[52] Saḥīh al-Bukhārī 4918.
[53] Al-Mustadrak 'ala aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn 214.

viral and has since been viewed by millions. Ron Davis died on November 30th 2019. It is important for us to consider Ronald's words; simple yet so powerful. He spoke in heart-wrenching detail how he was often mocked by passers-by on the street, ignored and insulted as he panhandled. People would often say to him, "Get a job, bum!" and he would often reply, "Wait a minute, I'm not a bum. I'm a human being." Holding back tears, Ron explained "No matter what people think of me, I know I'm a human first."[54] Ronald knew he was homeless, but he also knew he was human, and also knew that it was his right to be afforded his humanity, to be respected, even if others were unable to or did not feel the need to help him financially. Ronald knew and felt at the very core of his being that humans deserve dignity. Ronald was not a nobody. We must, as Muslims, do our part to reflect a higher ideal wherein each person we communicate with is given the most heartfelt attention. It was the Prophet's nature to make people feel relaxed and special in his company, so much so that each attendee in his gatherings would think he was the most important person in that gathering. We need to remember that everyone has come from somewhere. The individual who meets you has come from somewhere. Perhaps his or her mind upon encountering you is thinking about a myriad of things, an illness, a stress, a heartache, a fear and/or a genuine concern. The words the Muslim uses and his demeanour, should reflect an air of positivity, genuine care and concern for the individual's welfare.

2.2 Transitioning Landscapes: Noticing our 'here', 'there' and 'elsewhere'

As we learn to move and tread lightly through our spaces and foster a better understanding and appreciation of other people, it is important to remain mindful of cultural codes in the contexts we inhabit. Each "landscape" speaks volumes of tradition, art, religion, experiences, histories and celebrations. While 'landscape' of any land is made up of the same societal processes, 'landscaping' understood as a verb is about the way in which land is transformed

[54] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3l0r2tgms0Y.

by human agency, creating unique spaces upon which sites are located. For each individual, each moment can mean something different in relation to that space. New sites of meaning can emerge at any given time and social meaning too can become contorted in relation to that space.

A very insightful set of verses that enable us to consider navigating through spaces with an alert mind, a heart of understanding, faith, empathy and gratitude is found in Surah al-Naml (27) pertaining to Prophet Sulaymān (upon him be peace):

27:17 - Solomon's hosts of jinn, men, and birds were marshalled in ordered ranks before him.

The first of the discussed verses describes a battle scene arrangement.

The verse invokes images of might, order, kingdom and strength. To begin, we realise that Prophet Sulaymān is the passive beneficiary of such a marvellous spectacle of power. The Muslim is alerted to creations of space and boundaries, to landscapes and settings. What follows is an arrival into a new space, a different space, but nonetheless worthy:

27:18 - and when they came to the Valley of the Ants, one ant said, 'Ants! Go into your homes, in case Solomon and his hosts unwittingly crush you.'

Prophet Sulaymān and his army of humans, jinn and birds reach a valley of ants. The transitioning from a site of temporal power, large in scope, into a valley, low in landscape and inhabited by ants, miniature in size, juxtaposes well. We reflect on movements through space, from familiarity to foreignness, from space of 'here' into spaces of 'there'. We are told in the verse that an ant warned the other ants that Prophet Sulaymān's army was approaching. They must retreat into their 'dwellings' (masākin). The word derives from sakan, from which we get maskan (home) and sakīna (tranquility). It reinforced that the ants, too, in their lowly setting, also have homes, places of belonging and security. They have a place of tranquillity.

They too are also able to take perspective and feel an impending harm on others. The empathy bearing is a salient feature of the appeal. The verse is striking too for what it reveals of the quality of forming a good opinion in that the ant acknowledges that Prophet Sulaymān and his army would be undiscerning of the feared destruction.

Verse 19 is a beautiful verse and contains a supplication profound in meaning and suggestive of a heartfelt sense of humility and gratitude in Prophet Sulaymān:

27:19 - Solomon smiled broadly at her words and said, 'Lord, inspire me to be thankful for the blessings You have granted me and my parents, and to do good deeds that please You; admit me by Your grace into the ranks of Your righteous servants.'

At the outset we learn that he "smiled, laughing at her speech". This reflects the good-willed nature of the king-prophet. Finding joy at the small moment of "intermeshing" between 'worlds', landscapes, creation, Prophet Sulaymān supplicates. The opening of his prayer, "Lord, inspire me to be thankful for the blessings You have granted me and my parents" is reflective of servitude, a prayer every Muslim should learn. A Muslim's transitioning through landscapes or in the encountering of others - smaller, perhaps weaker, disenfranchised, poorer – is a reflective moment to express his utmost dependence on Allāh, gratitude and earnestness. It is thus essential that the Muslim's heart remains ever present in the remembrance of Allāh.

Prophet Sulaymān's inclusion of his parents in his supplication adds further interest into the breadth of such humility and gratitude. The temporal spaces of 'here' and 'there' now find an 'elsewhere'. Prophet Sulaymān's prayer and focus transcends the earthly and he can find comfort in communing with His Lord. The Muslim, despite what he self-witnesses of success and ability returns his affairs to Allāh. Though he was a Prophet, Prophet Sulaymān felt the need to ask Allāh for guidance to perform those actions which were the most pleasing unto Allāh, not any action with which he might have already been familiar with. Nor did He ask Allāh to enter him into heaven with only other prophets, but instead with "Your righteous

slaves". Furthermore, he asked Allāh to enter him therein not because of his own doings, his obedience, servitude, worship, effort or anything else, but only by "Your Mercy". Such a transitioning, a moving through space and reflection of self in relation to an Otherness becomes beautifully harmonised when the goal and focus is upon He who exists outside of time and space. It can also enable us to consider a personality as one shaped by parental influences. In this instance, we note that Prophet Sulaymān was the son of Prophet Dāwūd, and father and son are altogether described as *awwāb* (to always return one's affairs unto Allāh) in the Qur'ān. On account of the father's devotion so too did the mountains and birds join Dawūd in remembrance of Allāh. They too are thus described as *awwāb*. Tendencies of depravity – dehumanisation and othering – as well as tendencies of uprightness, are well informed by parental and social influences.

We exist as attached entities in life, attached by cords of relationships of all kinds. Negative stereotypes about others are sometimes formed from a person's formative years, and these can become entrenched.

2.3 Structural Otherness In poetry, Auschwitz, Hebron, Brian Haw, Rachel Corrie

There are many types of Otherness which advance 'structural' expressions of "Othering". The distances between us, like the "high gulf" in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem in which "Two Scavengers In A Truck" come into close proximity with "Two Beautiful People In A Mercedes":

"And the younger of the two/Also with sunglasses and long hair/About the same age as the Mercedes driver/And both scavengers gazing down/As from a great distance/At the cool couple/As if they were watching some odorless TV ad/In which everything is possible/And

the very red light for an instant/Holding all four close together/As if anything at all were possible/Between them".

The poem describes a "bright garbage truck with two garbage men in red plastic blazers", the men look down into "an elegant open Mercedes with an elegant couple in it." The men are "hunched back/Looking like some/Gargoyle Quasimodo", while the wealthy man in the Mercedes has "shoulder-length blond hair & sunglasses". His apparent opposite, Othered by our perceptions of those who exist on the margins of social class yards, is afforded a more plain description. Structural otherness, the separating and designating to that Other a substandard living space, an erecting of physical barriers to keep out the 'untamed' is vivid in the landscape of Hebron in Palestine. There are two roads leading to Masjid al-Khalil (Abraham Mosque) separated by a fence and barbed wire. One of the roads is clean and asphalt-paved, easily accessible for the elderly and children, guarded and pleasant. This road is for Jewish settlers. The other road is an uneven dirt path, littered and narrow and unsuitable for walking particularly for the disabled and elderly. The contrast is glaring. Roads designated for Palestinians are restricted by dozens of checkpoints and barriers, severely delaying access. The entrances to the checkpoints resemble the front of a maximum-security prison.

Apartheid in South Africa which forced segregation of Blacks in North America in the twentieth century, the Israel's separation wall, the "Apartheid roads" in Hebron are all designed to remove others from the circle of human concern. This is to relay the message that those Others are not part of the society, not a part of who "we are". Each is a structural expression of saying "you don't belong", creating an Otherised structural position within society.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that greatness does not lie necessarily in the extent of a person's wealth, particularly if that wealth is not used in a responsible way, but that greatness lies in the richness of a person's heart. The Muslim must never judge a person he comes into contact with by his clothing, by his physical appearance or any seeming

abnormality he might exhibit. Each of these is superficial in contrast to the workings of that individual's heart. It was the practice of many of the Prophet's companions to exhibit a simplicity in their appearances despite their lofty social standings. The Qur'ān in fact teaches that:

17:37 "Do not strut arrogantly about the earth: you cannot break it open, nor match the mountains in height."

And

25:63 "The servants of the Lord of Mercy are those who walk humbly on the earth, and who, when the foolish address them, reply, 'Peace'".

It is befitting one to not carry himself in an exalted way nor to adopt a spirit of arrogance which would inhibit his approaching, communicating with or keeping company with those who exist on the margins of society. The Prophet (peace be upon him) in fact was described beautifully by Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī in the following way:

"He was the most forbearing of people, the most courageous of people, the most just of people, the most chaste of people. His hand never touched the hand of any woman unless he owned her as a slave or was married to her or was closely related to her by blood (mahram). He was the most generous of people, who never kept a dinar or a dirham with him overnight. If he had anything left over and he could not find someone to give it to before night came, he would not go home until he had donated it to someone who needed it. He did not take anything from that which Allāh had bestowed upon him except one year's supply of the simplest provisions, dates and barley, giving all of that for the sake of Allāh. He was never asked for anything but he gave it, then he would go back to his annual supplies and donate from them to those who needed it more, then he might run out before the year ended. He used to repair his own sandals and mend his own clothes, and he would help his family in the home and cut meat for them. He was the most modest of people and would not look anyone

straight in the eye. He would respond to the invitations of slave and free alike, and accept a gift even if it was a cup of milk, and he would reward a person for it. He did not eat food that had been given in charity, and he would respond to slave women and the poor when they asked him for something. He got angry for the sake of his Lord but he did not get angry for his own sake. He would adhere to the truth even if that resulted in harm for himself or his companions. He found one of the best of his companions slain in an area where Jews lived, but he did not treat them harshly or do more than what which is prescribed by sharīʿah. Rather he paid a diyah for him of one hundred camels even though some of his companions were in desperate need of just one camel. He would tie a rock to his stomach to ward off hunger pangs, and he did not refuse halal food or and he would not eat reclining or at a table. He never ate his fill of bread for three days in a row until he met Allāh, may He be exalted, as he would prefer to give away what he had rather than eat his fill, not because of poverty or miserliness. He would accept invitations to meals, visit the sick, and attend funerals. He walked alone among his enemies without a guard. He was the most humble and quiet of people without being arrogant, the most eloquent without being long-winded, the most cheerful of countenance. He did not worry about worldly matters. He wore whatever he found, and let his slave or others ride behind him on his mount. He rode whatever was available, sometimes a horse, sometimes a camel, sometimes a mule and sometimes a donkey. Sometimes he walked barefoot, with no cloak, turban or cap, visiting the sick in the furthest parts of Madina. He loved perfume and hated foul smells. He would sit with the poor and offer food to and eat with the needy, honouring the virtuous and softening the hearts of people of status by treating them kindly. He upheld ties of kinship without favouring his relatives over those who were better than them, and he did not treat anyone harshly. He accepted the excuses of those who apologized to him; he would joke but he only spoke the truth, and he would smile without laughing out loud.

If he saw permissible play he did not denounce it, and he raced with his wife. When voices were raised against him, he bore that with patience. He had slaves, male and female, but he did not eat or dress any better than they did. He did not waste time without striving for the sake of Allāh or doing that which was essential to better himself. He did not look down on

any poor person because of his poverty or chronic sickness, and he did not fear any king because of his power. He called both of them to Allāh on equal terms."[55]

So, in the viewing of a different world, a world in which spaces and boundaries can assert a self-identity, a sense of belonging, we must appreciate these also exist for the Other and not in spite of the Other. Doing this, involves an empathy founded on acknowledging the privilege that 'space' accords. Where war and conflict have to do with space and locations of space, those who resist also situate themselves within space defined by what they perceive about the conflicts they challenge. Brian Haw in 2003 chose to make the scene of his anti-war protest a site on the paved floor outside Parliament Square. The reason for his encampment was to protest against the war in Iraq and in particular how the war gave birth to many orphans in Iraq. We see in his self-confinement an actualising of the Other he identified with; the empathy he stimulated is discernible not only in 'space' restrictions, but in its way of 'taking the place' of the Other. In his protest, we appreciate how he sought to 'show' his spectators not only his act of protest, but also the broadened demarcations of self and Otherness in which the disparity in size between Parliament and his tent, between structure and cloth might connect to what he viewed as the disparity between victim and aggressor.

In a similar sentiment, at the holocaust memorial in Auschwitz, photographic testimony is positioned in a way that symbolises individuality and togetherness and offsets Nazi depersonalisation of its victims. Individualised entries can exist in a space arranged to reflect the scale of collective suffering, the collectivised experience of Jewish prisoners, as well as to emphasise their individual names and occupations. The space thus meshes an imagined collective past for the museum visitors with an individualised visual connection with single prisoners. One is confronted with an undoing of what had dehumanised those prisoners. Their clothes, shoes, suitcases, physical features of hair, handwriting, all serve to bring into proximity what was denied, abstracted and distanced. The site and space of the museum is of course altogether present in accentuating the memory of the holocaust though Auschwitz itself was anything but an isotropic space. It was instead fragmented with the endless

[55] Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn 2/430-442.

movement of prisoners from sub-camps. Each displayed a photographic portrait of the prisoner including his or her name, under which is the prison number and details of ethnicity, date of birth, occupation before imprisonment, date of deportation and date of death. The arrangement of the portraits suggests solidarity, as well as an equalising in victimhood and the finality of death at Auschwitz. They serve as a testimony to a 'present' life, sullied though still complete and not yet physically, emotionally and mentally decimated by camp life. The wall of portraits offsets other photographs and drawings which do graphically portray the latter. Rachel Aliene Corrie who was an American peace activist working with the Palestinian-led human rights and non-violent resistance group International Solidarity Movement (ISM henceforth) challenged a structural otherness in her work to defend the homes of Palestinian farmers. She travelled to Israel in January 2003 and then to the West Bank where she received training from the ISM. She would frequently gather with several American and British activists resisting the demolition of Palestinian homes. On March 16, 2003 during the Second Intifada she gathered with other activists outside the home of a Palestinian pharmacist when she was crushed to death under an armoured IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) bulldozer. Her statements which shed very important light on 'self' and 'other' considerations and the way they relate to space, identity and identification are taken from Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie, made up of journal entries and emails later selected for publication by her parents.

On January 29, 2003 whilst Corrie was stationed in Gaza she observed and commented on how limitations of space, restrictions of movement, of sensory relationship with land and the way children are affected by violence come to have an important bearing on landscape and landscaping for the Palestinians. This is a jail that the jailkeepers decided was too big, so now they are squeezing it smaller. The people here live within the smell of the ocean but they can't go see it anymore. "What is there beautiful? We could go see the ocean. One thing beautiful. Now I cannot see the ocean. What is for the children that is beautiful? An eight-year old named Ali died the day before I came. He just wanted to look at the tank – see the tank – and they explode his head."[56]

[56] R. Corrie, Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie (Granta Books, London: 2008), p. 233.

The expanse of the ocean is set against the constricted land of Gaza. The suffering of its people is exacerbated through their denial of vision of a landscape that they believe is inherently theirs. While 'landscape' of any land is made up of the same societal processes, 'landscaping' understood as a verb is about the way in which land is transformed by human agency, creating unique spaces upon which sites are located.[57]

For the residents of Gaza, this means that though they can 'smell' the ocean they cannot 'see' it and it is this inability of natives to enjoy 'what is' beautiful for their children that informs her empathetic outlook.[58] Demarcations of Self and Otherness for Rachel here are receptive; she does not espouse mutuality in relations between her and the Palestinians, it is instead unilateral. Rachel's inclusion of child victim Ali in her account serves to juxtapose the failing to see the ocean with seeing 'the tank – and they explode his head.' She uses her letter to accentuate destruction in what she observes by juxtaposing the natural with the mechanical. The impression is that nothing is 'seen', both beauty and cruelty are meshed together into a domain in which things are only felt. Rachel reflects on her privilege as a 'white-skinned' person who can see and witness, and whose feelings mandate a transcending of Self/Other boundaries. The Gaza City that Corrie describes is actually 'lost' 'in the field of vision', dislocated in vision and memory. Since the Gazan children know the ocean is there, but cannot see it, they have a dislocated visual attachment but still retain the city through sensory attachment of smell, and points of landscaping they believe are inherently Palestinian. We question whether we can know if Corrie mirrors Ali's vantage point? What is Ali's smell of the ocean in comparison to Corrie's?

Corrie again juxtaposes the way space and its temporalities are considered by the Palestinians she observes whilst they play: "Children play behind us and we yell, "La! La!" when they try

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[57] G. Fields, 'Landscaping Palestine: reflections of enclosure in a historical mirror', Int. J. Middle East Stud. 42 (2010), p. 64.

[58] O. Latiff: 'Landscaping otherness and challenging frames of 'nothingness' in contemporary Palestine', Space and Polity, 20:3 (2016), pp. 249-262.

to wander out into the rubble to play with us – because somehow even though you are born in a cage and you have never lived without shooting all night, you are still able to play."[59]

Her description of a 'cage' denotes restriction; in the physical confinement that she witnesses she is able to juxtapose 'cage' and 'shooting' with 'play', drawing on the mutual iconic codes by which her audience can relate to children. Corrie's description of children who have a sensory relationship to a land that has become 'imagined' and cagelike is insightful for what it tells us about Self/Other perceptions. Both descriptive accounts are her own perceptions, and an adult perception, of what children in Gaza are experiencing.

In a letter to her mother dated January 19, 2003, Corrie is able to further transcend the dominant discourse of suffering and victimisation by inverting 'self' and 'other' boundaries:

"I think white people sometimes suffer in the United States from a system that still privileges us over people of color; men suffer from the system that privileges them over women; and Jewish Israelis suffer (much more than white people and men in the U.S.) from a system in Israel that privileges them over Palestinian-Israelis and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Nevertheless, the system remains a racist one."[60]

Corrie's words, a representation of unipolarity between dominant and subordinate, seem to stem from empathetic considerations informed in her 5th grade school speech in which she instructed: "They are us, we are them."[61] She sees this normalising of Self and Other as prerequisite to empathetic considerations. The togetherness that Corrie describes is a salient motif in the work of activists who realise the need to transcend geo-political temporalities to reshape 'self' and 'other' perceptions. In the following comment, Corrie constructs Self/Other identity through place-making wherein the destruction of 'orchards and greenhouses and fruit trees' allows for an empathic consideration at a particularly personal level; by drawing on 'Uncle Craig' and 'Grandma'

[59] R. Corrie, Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie (Granta Books, London: 2008), p. 234.
[60] Ibid, p. 226.
[61] 'Rachel Corrie 5th Grade Speech - I'm here because I care' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDq32EgMxb8.

"I think about this especially when I see orchards and greenhouses and fruit trees destroyed - just years of care and cultivation. I think about you and how long it takes to make things grow and what a labour of love it is. I really think, in a similar situation, most people would defend themselves as best they could. I think Uncle Craig would. I think probably Grandma would. I think I would."[62]

Corrie seeks to convince her mother by merging conflict responses of Self/Other binaries. Corrie's drawing together mental landscapes from Palestinian and American settings disallow an embracing of an idealised system as a mere cultural fashion. By aligning herself with both landscapes, we do not sense a 'distance' from the causes of the environmental destruction she describes. Corrie describes how any consideration of the sacred landscape of Gaza would necessitate a reflection of the ecological responsibilities of those who live there. Corrie's references to her grandfather reflect the necessity of experience as a determinant of empathy. She submits that 'Grandma' could well understand the plight of the Palestinians since she has experience of what they might feel at the loss of their olive trees.

In her letter, she also engages the theoretical and practical reality of bodies moving through areas, locations and obstacles by situating native residents of Gaza, herself and her relatives as present and absent actors. The language Corrie uses to describe feelings of injustice and the right of the Palestinians to resist draws extensively on her own or what she considers universal responses to rights of belonging. Corrie therefore intimates that for both Palestinians and Americans, there is an emotional sense of belonging to agricultural landscapes, 'care', 'cultivation' and 'grow' becoming keywords that shape the political form of her solidarity. The 'labour of love' she describes required to 'make things grow' is an interesting description in light of how it correlates with the maternal symbolism used by Palestinian farmers.[63]

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[62] R. Corrie, Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie (Granta Books, London: 2008), pp. 272-273.
[63] O. Latiff: 'Landscaping otherness and challenging frames of 'nothingness' in contemporary Palestine', Space and Polity, 20:3 (2016), pp. 250-253.

2.4 The rise of Nazi Germany: “A Jewish problem” - From citizens to Othered outcasts

Alfred Rosenberg was an important character in the formation of Nazi ideology and within the Nazi leadership. Though he was not so politically relevant, it was his seminal work, Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts (The Myth of the 20th Century), which came to present a thorough and far-ranging strategy of dehumanisation for which he earned his disrepute. At the root of the worldview of National Socialism is a historical vision of a new world, a worldview that positioned human self-understanding as characterised by race and struggle for ethnic domination. The book describes:

“Present and past are suddenly appearing in a new light, and as a result we have a new misson for the future. The actions of history and the future no longer signify class struggle or warfare between Church dogmas, but rather the conflict between blood and blood, race and race, people and people. And this means combat between spiritual values.”[64]

Rosenberg’s work formed an image of the Jewish person as a “parasite”, defining them as an ‘anti-race’ who were not fully human and could not be part of a German or even global social identity. Jews were furthermore devoid, he argued, of a metaphysical and cultural dimension and could not be prescribed to a human race, rendering them instead animal-like. Jews were henceforth often compared to rats in Nazi propaganda - including art pieces, posters, speeches and films. The same kinds of animalistic imagery were prevalent in Rwanda when Tutsis were called “cockroaches” and so too were black slaves in the Americas, viewed as subhuman animals. Interestingly, in all the aforementioned instances, we observe a pattern of referencing animals that are mostly feared, such as snakes, rats and lizards. It was this Othering, such a castigating of others as disposable and less-than-human entities that both made possible and accelerated the development of genocidal tendencies. The untermenschen

[64] A. Rosenberg, Race and Race History, op. cit., 33 f. Mythus, op. cit., 1 f.

for the Nazis was not a description to describe those who were like subhuman entities, but to describe those who were subhuman. Principal prosecutor Telford Taylor of the 1946 Nuremburg doctors' trial opened with this statement:

"The defendants in this case are charged with murders, tortures and other atrocities committed in the name of medical science. The victims of these crimes are numbered in the hundreds of thousands. A handful only are still alive; a few of the survivors will appear in this courtroom. But most of these miserable victims were slaughtered outright or died in the course of the tortures to which they were subjected ... To their murderers, these wretched people were not individuals at all. They came in wholesale lots and were treated worse than animals."[65]

The last two sentences strike at the horrific policy of Nazi dehumanisation of Jews in the Holocaust. Such a sophisticated program of extermination cannot however be adequately explained in a few words or with reference to a single architect. It is a changed thinking on an industrial scale that sets the agenda for action, and the thinking of humans as less than human that paved the way for the unspeakable atrocities that Taylor described. Once the Jews and Gypsies became, in the public mind, the untermenschen, and thus excluded from the normal system of moral rights that bind humans together. People had been conditioned to think that Jews and Gypsies were no longer human but infected rats whose disposal was a social necessity.

In light of the above, it is very important for the Muslim to have a good historical understanding of the peoples with who he or she engages. Knowing of events that have immense socio-historical importance for people can open avenues for empathy and better understanding. Our historical contexts have an obvious bearing on our attitudes towards the world and towards others; they form part of our characters and personalities. Understanding the pain that others have endured can better facilitate perspective taking and harness appreciation.

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[65] https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/special-focus/doctors-trial/opening-statement.

Much was learnt from the Nuremburg Trials about the psychology of Othering and dehumanising of the Holocaust victims, as well as the psychology of the perpetrators. The gross abuse of power is reflected in the testimonies of Nazi perpetrators who had insisted on a policy of debasing Jews as a matter of social policy. Their degrading was a fundamental component of eliciting what began as intolerance and abuse into a widespread othering, culminating in their mass murder.

In the trials, Gitta Sereny asked Stangl, "if they were going to kill them anyway, what was the point of all the humiliation, why the cruelty?" Stangl replied, "To condition those who actually had to carry out the policies. To make it possible for them to do what they did."[66] What the Nazi guards revealed was that the human identity of their victims needed to be effaced. They needed to become 'unhuman', 'animal-like' and their behaviour needed to fit the caricature they had promulgated in their social environment – in the media, in schools and among the lay population. What the policy further reveals is the natural, innate abhorrence to murder. It was not so easy to commit murder on such an industrial scale and so the mind had to be programmed, conditioned to believe that the barrel points only at a rodent, a pest and not at an equal human being.

It is essential for the Muslim to be aware of the broader contexts of human history, to know when and where to be sensitive and how to understand a specific context in light of its broader resonances. It is quite easy, in any relational context, including one between Muslims, to sometimes go beyond what is required and to overstep the boundaries of what is decent and acceptable. In our failing to make distinctions between people, we can run the risk of caricaturing them completely and in very general terms to the point where we see others as inherently and permanently Othered despite belonging to the same faith. With such a frame of mind, engaging with others is problematised since we fall into the same problem that others have of Muslims - of seeing others as they have been indoctrinated and conditioned to see us.

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[66] Gitta Sereny, Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killings to Mass Murder (Pimlico, London: 1974), p. 101.

The story of the two sons of Adam is revealing not only for what it describes of the impulse that might drive a person to murder, but also about what that murderer can feel, what the conscience speaks as the crime is committed. Milgram's study and work Obedience to Authority provides us with a good understanding of the relationship between committing acts of evil and of obedience, as well as the relationship between the committing of acts of cruelty and of indifference. One of the participants in Milgram's obedience studies recalled: "It's funny how you really begin to forget that there's a guy out there, even though you can hear him. For a long time, I just concentrated on pressing the switches and reading the words."[67] The cognitive field between the perpetrator and his victim is narrowed and so feelings of detachment and indifference enable the act to appear less heinous and more acceptable. Contrastingly, when there is proximity between victim and perpetrator the latter is more conscious of human codes of recognisability – pain, blood, unease, and feelings of fear. He can see and observe his victim and in him he can begin to relate to some of himself – the breeding ground of empathy. This is echoed by Colonel Barry Bridges in the following statement:

"I would draw one distinction between being a combat aviator and being someone who is fighting the enemy face-to-face on the ground. In the air environment, it's very clinical, very clean, and it's not so personalized. You see an aircraft; you see a target on the ground – you're not eyeball to eyeball with the sweat and the emotions of combat, and so it doesn't become so emotional for you and so personalised. And I think it is easier to do in that sense – you're not affected."[68] (Colonel Barry Bridges of the U.S. Air Force)

In relation to what a perpetrator might feel when such crimes are committed from proximity and the bearing this has on a human conscience, Christopher Browning explores in his very revealing study about what changed in the ordinary Germans who made the Holocaust happen, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*

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[67] S. Milgram, Obedience to Authority (London, Printer & Martin Ltd: 2013), p. 39.
[68] D. Grossman, On Killing: The Psychological Costs of Learning to Kill in War and Society (New York, Back Bay Books: 2009), p 110.

(London, 1992). What changed in the hearts of tens of thousands of ordinary soldiers and policemen, businessmen, truck drivers, writers and teachers, only a minority of who were members of the Nazi party? These people who rounded up and methodically executed millions of Jews? Browning describes the rounding up of 1,800 Jews in the village of Józefów, east-central Poland. In the operation, Jews of working age were to be sent to a camp in Lublin whilst the women, children and elderly were to be shot on the spot. Many refused the order that day. Lieutenant Heinz Buchmann was one of them. He had joined the Nazis in 1937 and by 1942 was commander of the First Platoon of First Company. When hearing of the impending massacre of civilians, Buchmann protested that he "would in no case participate in such an action, in which defenceless women and children are shot."[69]

Some ten to twelve other men also turned in their rifles, a dozen men out of 500. The orders that day were to shoot those too frail to walk to the marketplace and anyone trying to hide, though in many cases men shied from shooting infants during the operation. Alert to the ghastliness of the scene and emotional guilt, one policeman said that "…among the Jews shot in our section of town there were no infants or small children. I would like to say that almost tacitly everyone refrained from shooting infants and small children." Another policeman likewise noted that "…tacitly the shooting of infants and small children was avoided by almost all the men involved. During the entire morning I was able to observe that when being taken away many women carried infants in their arms and led small children by the hand."[70] One policeman confessed to finding that none of the victims – women, elderly, sick, infants, would return home alive that day. The men did not intervene. Some however regretted not having refused earlier, describing the killings as "repugnant."[71] Some pleaded they too were fathers with children and were unable to continue. There were others still who sought evasion on that day. Non-commissioned officers armed with submachine guns were known to have "shot past" their victims.[72]

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[69] Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland (London, 1992), p. 56.
[70] Ibid, p. 59.
[71] Ibid, p. 69.
[72] Ibid, p. 62.

During the operation, other men hid in a Catholic priest's garden, others hung around a marketplace, because of their reluctance to round up Jews; others delayed their participation by spending additional time in the searching of houses so they could avoid the marketplaces in which they would participate in the firing squads. A driver assigned to take Jews to the forest made only one trip before he asked to be relieved. Many men complained that day that they could not shoot at women and children, and consequently many were relieved from the operation. One soldier, Walter Niehaus was instructed to shoot an elderly woman and was unable to continue after her murder, "my nerves were totally finished from this one shooting." Others decried, "I had become so sick that I simply couldn't anymore"; "the entire business was now so repugnant to me that I returned to my platoon leader and told him that I was sick and asked for my release."[73]

One of the most evocative accounts cited by Browning describes Franz Kastenbaum who confessed later to his damning participation with Reserve Police Batallion 101:

"The shooting of the men was so repugnant to me that I missed the fourth man. It was simply no longer possible for me to aim accurately. I suddenly felt nauseous and ran away from the shooting site. I have expressed myself incorrectly just now. It was not that I could no longer aim accurately, rather that the fourth time I intentionally missed. I then ran into the woods, vomited, and sat down against a tree. To make sure that no one was nearby, I called loudly into the woods, because I wanted to be alone. Today I can say that my nerves were totally finished. I think that I remained alone in the woods for some two or three hours."[74]

3.1 The Psychology of Dehumanisation

Distance is not simply a physical space; it is a moral and psychological construct as well. In this way, range also is defined by the perpetrators' perception of the victims. Face-to-face

[73] Ibid, p. 67.
[74] Ibid, pp. 68-69.

killing is enabled when the victims have been through a lethal rite of passage in which they have already died a “social death” in the eyes of the perpetrators.

Col. Dave Grossman in his popular work, ‘On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society’ details what makes it easy (or easier) for a person to kill. He considers the distance spectrum as a vital indicator, seeing it as a defining range - from maximum range to hand-to-hand combat. Distance from a victim disallows individual identification with that victim. Firing a weapon or dropping a bomb from a range converts the victims into ‘unknown’ targets, a mesh of nothingness easily ‘obliterated’. The aircraft pilot relies on mechanical assistance; a projected image showing silhouetted victims spotted on a screen. The physical distance facilitates the killing and therefore responsibility and guilt are stemmed. What distance creates is an emotional disassociating with the target, and thus disallowing feelings of empathy. Grossman found that with physical distance in killing, there is no “…one single instance of individuals who have refused to kill the enemy under these circumstances” and nor “a single instance of psychiatric trauma associated with this type of killing.”[75]

As this range between perpetrator and victim decreases, the killing becomes far more difficult. What a perpetrator would be exposed to is human codes of recognisability wherein much of ourselves is observable and felt in others. The Qur’ān informs us that at the base level we are similar in so many ways:

49:13 - People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.

The closer a perpetrator perceives his victim the more difficult a killing becomes, unless and until those victims have already experienced a ‘social death’ wherein victims are pushed to the margins of what is socially acceptable, excommunicated from the norms of what is moral

[75] D. Grossman, On Killing: The Psychological Costs of Learning to Kill in War and Society (New York: Back Bay Books: 2009), p. 108.

in society, relegated to a state of dishonour into which their descendants will also be born. These factors, Patterson argues, mean that their subsequent generations will be prevented from building on the traditions of their forefathers. Social death therefore necessitates the burgeoning of genocidal tendencies, because the lives of victims of genocide have already been rendered meaningless. This dehumanisation targets group identity. Primo Levi lamented that with the Nazis stripping everything of Jewish self-identity and even their names. The only thing which they can retain is the meaning of themselves from the names they once had:

"Nothing belongs to us anymore; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they will not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand. They will even take away our name: and if we want to keep it, we will have to find in ourselves the strength to do so, to manage somehow so that behind the name something of us, of us as we were, still remains."[76]

Dehumanisation begins with a stripping away of the moral human code which bonds us as human beings. The social vitality behind a person or group is stripped away and this defacing precedes any physical injury or death inflicted on that victim. It is important for the Muslim to always afford a customary privilege to the one with whom he is engaged. The Prophet (peace be upon him) would refer to people with their titles, recognise their social standing and bear testimony to their achievements. These factors are essential not only for the progression of effective relationship building, but also as a preventative in the social emerging of genocidal tendencies, providing a positive social backdrop if any community or ethnicity is targeted. In less-than-rare situations, this, in a broad context, is a fulfilment of a coming out "for the good of mankind" since it maintains a social cohesiveness and disallows the saplings of social death from being planted or spread. In Germany, long before the physical deaths of Jews began, ordinary German men and women made Jews suffer a social death every day. This is felt evocatively in Filip Müller's description of the Family Camp taken to Auschwitz. In his description, we are alerted to a decimation of what Müller views as a social order in which Jews were once protected. In his words, he describes a communal

[76] Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz: If This Is A Man (BN Publishing, New York: 2007), p. 16.

social death in which his familiar landscape had been disfigured and a sense of place and belonging denied:

"Now, when I watched my fellow countrymen walk into the gas chamber, brave, proud and determined, I asked myself what sort exemplary of life it would be for me in the unlikely event of my getting out of the camp alive. What would await me if I returned to my native town? It was not so much a matter of material possessions, they were replaceable. But who could replace my parents, my brother, or the rest of my family, of whom I was the sole survivor? And what of friends, teachers, and the many members of our Jewish community? For was it not they who reminded me of my childhood and youth? Without them would it not all be soulless and dead, that familiar outline of my home town with its pretty river, its much loved landscape and its honest and upright citizens? And what would happen if I ran across the Hlinka guardsmen and Jew tormentors, or the FS men*, leeches all of them who had sucked their Jewish fellow citizens dry before their deportation and stolen their worldly belongings? Coming face to face with them would take me back to the darkest past. It would simply not be possible to pick up the threads of my former happy and carefree life. In our house, once the centre of my existence, there would be strangers. In the Jewish school where I knew every nook and cranny there would be silence."[77]

S. Yizhar describes in his novella Khirbet Khizeh, the violent expulsion of Palestinians from the village of Khirbet Khizeh in 1948 and considers the struggle in conscience of a perpetrator. At once challenged by self-reflection and temporalities of space, this serves as a medium for consideration of human boundaries related to suffering, victimhood and belonging. Yizhar shows in Khirbet Khizeh how those sites are in flux, as the villagers are pushed out and the young occupiers imagine a new home. It is in the frame of collective indifference of the soldiers that the narrator can see the mental 'unabandoning' of the home. He sees:

[77] Filip Müller, Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee: 1979), p. 111.

“walls attentively decorated…little ornaments that hung on the walls, testifying to a loving care whose foundation had been eradicated; traces of female-wisdom-hath-builded-her-house, paying close attention to myriad details whose time now had passed; an order intelligible to someone and a disorder in which somebody at his convenience had found his way; remnants of pots and pans that had been collected in a haphazard fashion, as need arose, touched by very private joys and woes that a stranger could not understand; tatters that made sense to someone who was used to them – a way of life whose meaning was lost, diligence that had reached its negation, and a great, very deep muteness had settled upon the love, the bustle, the bother, the hopes, and the good and less-good times, so many unburied corpses.”[78]

As we navigate through life, we see in the distress of another that there may be a potential for similar imagined distress in one’s own life. Yizhar describes:

“The people who would live in this village – wouldn’t the walls cry out in their ears? Those sights, screams that were screamed and that were not screamed, the confused innocence of dazed sheep, the submissiveness of the weak, and their heroism, that unique heroism of the weak who didn’t know what to do and were unable to do anything, the silenced weak – would the new settlers not sense that the air here was heavy with shades, voices, and stares?”[79]

It is the patent presence of another in a space made up of “screams that were…not screamed”, as well as having been screamed, juxtaposed with the sounds of the “silenced weak” that makes the account so harrowing and yet so instructive:

“I felt a terrifying collapse inside me. I had a single, set idea, like a hammered nail, that I could never be reconciled to anything, so long as the tears of a weeping child still glistened as he walked along with his mother, who furiously fought back her soundless tears, on his way into exile, bearing with him a roar of injustice and such scream that – it was impossible that no one in his world would gather that scream in when the moment came – and then I said to

[78] S. Yizhar, Khirbet Khizeh (London, Granta Publications: 2011), p. 41.
[79] Ibid, pp. 109-110.

Moshe: "We have no right, Moishe, to kick them out of here!" I didn't want my voice to tremble."[80]

And so, various techniques of depersonalization are put into action, aimed at helping perpetrators forget the humanity of their victims. One such technique is a transformation before being killed. In the Holocaust for example, Jews were forced to congregate naked and to be herded together. An impression of Otherness was created around the naked mass of bodies moving along the camp in abject terror and bewilderment. Being stripped of their clothing was akin to being stripped of their humanity since the dissimilarity between what was normal and abnormal was too striking. The visual display of otherness was then extended to ensuring that the behaviour of such victims was too remote and unhuman. The Nazis did this by subjecting them to a starvation. In the extremity of such situations where inmates were forced to live in their own filth, they were reduced to a nothingness.

Similarly, Russian prisoners of war, Höss who was ironically responsible for creating such conditions, said, "They were no longer men…They'd turned into beasts who thought only about eating."[81] Wolters surmises that the sexual humiliation of Iraqi men depicted in the Abu Ghraib pictures implies audience identification with the American soldiers and thus incorporates viewers as participants in a neo-colonial narrative in which an inferior Arab Other is dominated by his Western invader.

Their creating of an iconic spectacle of torture and the staging of human trauma renders them comparable to photographs of black lynching victims which contrast the projection of black suffering with the mode of bystanding in white spectators.[82] This conditioning of victims and Othering was a necessary step to ensure that guards carried out their policies without the emotional burden of guilt. The natural way is to humanise, to place onto another what one sees in oneself. The example of Hābīl, having murdered his brother is important here in that he transitioned from pathological envy to entrenched regret over his actions. In observing a

[80] Ibid, p. 10.
[81] Tzvetan Todorov, Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps (Phoenix, London: 2000), p. 160.
[82] Wendy Wolters, 'Without Sanctuary: Bearing Witness, Bearing Whiteness' JAC, Vol. 24, No. 2, Special Issue, Part 1: Trauma and Rhetoric (2004), pp. 399-425.

raven scratching away at the earth, he realises that the disfigurement of his brother and of the earth upon which he rests require a hiding away, so as to normalise and repair what had been lost:

5:30 - But his soul prompted him to kill his brother: he killed him and became one of the losers.

5:31 - God sent a raven to scratch up the ground and show him how to cover his brother's corpse and he said, 'Woe is me! Could I not have been like this raven and covered up my brother's body?' He became remorseful.

The choice Allāh makes of a crow is also remarkable:

"Take the magpie. Applying the same sham-mark design as used with dolphins and elephants, a recent study has shown mirror self-recognition in magpies. Now, mind you, the magpie isn't just any bird: It is a corvid, a family that includes crows, ravens, and jays, endowed with exceptionally large brains. Put in front of a mirror, magpies will try to remove a tiny colored sticker attached to their throat feathers. They will keep scratching with their foot until the mark is gone, but will leave a black mark alone probably because it doesn't stand out against their black throat. They also won't do any frantic scratching if there's no mirror to see themselves in."[83]

It is very interesting that the magpie was unable to tolerate a foreign substance on its body. It was able to detect an abnormality and sought to remove it. Similarly, the raven that began to scratch the earth taught Hābīl that his brother needed to be buried, that a deceased body belongs under the earth. The vileness of murder defiles both the earth and the human conscience, and this realisation produced a self-awakening of remorse within him. It is far easier for a person to disconnect from one he cannot associate with, and the differences heralded by a process of Othering deny the human codes of recognisability that enter us into a

[83] Frans De Waal, The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society (London, Souvenir Press: 2009), p. 149.

collective frame of what we call 'humanity'. In Phillip Caputo 1977 memoir, A Rumor Of War, about his service in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) in the early years of the Vietnam War, he describes the graphic death of a Viet Cong boy and writes lucidly about the way accessing another's 'humanity' by considering the human codes of recognisability that connect us all would necessitate a re-framing of that Other:

"There was nothing on him, no photographs, no letters, or identification. That would disappoint the intelligence, but it was fine with me. I wanted this boy to remain anonymous. I wanted to think of him not human being with a name, age, and family, but as a dead enemy. That made everything easier."[84]

3.2 The Scourge of Dehumanising Language

In the Qur'ān, Allāh instructs the believers to address one another in fair terms, not to ridicule and insult one another and consider one's self better than others. The verse in Sūrah al-Ḥujarāt cautions the faithful:

49:11 - Believers, no one group of men should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; no one group of women should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; do not speak ill of one another; do not use offensive nicknames for one another. How bad it is to be called a mischief-maker a after accepting faith! Those who do not repent of this behaviour are evildoers.

'Aṭā ibn Abī Rabāh said the warning is with respect to saying to your brother, "O dog, O donkey, O pig."[85]

[84] Phillip Caputo, A Rumor of War (Pimlico, London: 1999), p. 120.
[85] http://Qur'ān.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/waseet-baghawy/sura49-aya11.html#baghawy.

Dehumanisation always starts with language, often followed by images. We see this throughout history. During the Holocaust, Nazis described Jews as Untermenschen—subhuman. They called Jews rats and depicted them as disease-carrying rodents in everything from military pamphlets to children's books. Hutus involved in the Rwanda genocide called Tutsis "cockroaches". Indigenous people are often referred to as "savages". Serbs called Bosnians "aliens". Slave owners throughout history considered slaves subhuman animals.

Stereotypes are what skew a person's perception of a group. People's perceptions of others can sometimes confirm existing cultural stereotypes disseminated in the media, in school textbooks, films, religious centres and among people. Abdo highlights the deep-seated ignorance Americans have of the Muslim presence in the Americas. The distant Otherness they might look on Muslims with is not all too distant if they had known that Muslims have been in the United States from colonial times, since many slaves that were brought to America from West Africa were Muslim. The author points to names like Bullaly (Bilali), Mahomet (Muḥammad), Walley (Wali)…to unpeel the syncretised landscapes to which those Muslims were bound.[86]

In Sūrah Yūsuf, there is a very touching point that requires our reflection. When the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf gather together, motivated by a pathological envy, to do harm to Yūsuf, they say:

12:9 - [One of them said], 'Kill Joseph or banish him to another land, and your father's attention will be free to turn to you. After that you can be righteous.'

12:10 - [Another of them] said, 'Do not kill Joseph, but, if you must, throw him into the hidden depths of a well where some caravan may pick him up.'

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[86] Abdo. G, Mecca and Main Street: Muslim life in America after 9/11 (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2006), p. 66.

We notice in the first instance that Prophet Yūsuf is introduced with respect to his name. In the subsequent verse when the older brother takes the lead, conscientiously objecting to the initial proposal, he too mentions Yūsuf by his name. What he also proposes is less severe than the first proposition. Where the pronoun "him" as in "Do not kill him" could have conveyed the same point, Allāh instead describes the brother saying "Do not kill Yūsuf". Some scholars suggest that this may be to reinforce the familial bond, and that the sanctity of human life is still present in the encounter.

Naming is personalising, the attributing to another a sense of belonging. The name is something chosen and selected and thereafter conferred onto someone. It evokes a sense of the sentimental, conjuring up thoughts of birth and ceremony, of family and happiness. Naming is akin to bestowing of an identity through the connotations of the name itself, of an ideal, a characteristic, a persona. The Muslim might begin his conversations by introducing himself and asking another what his or her name is. One can sometimes find that the name itself can open up an entire conversation.

In the Holocaust when speaking of prisoners, Nazi guards avoided using names or even words like 'people' or 'individuals' or even 'men', referring to them instead as "pieces" or "items". The purpose was to strip victims of all importance and render their lives meaningless. Using words such as "corpse" or "victim" were forbidden; the dead were instead akin to blocks of wood, completely irrelevant. In a secret memorandum, dated June 5, 1942, the human beings marked for death in mobile gas chambers at Chelmno are always referred to as "the cargo" or "the items." Perpetrators of genocide rarely see their victims as individuals, seeing them instead as a mass of bodies and corpses. When we hear of the deaths of thousands of victims, the number disallows a personalising with each life. The atrocity indeed stands out, but the sorrow of a personal tragedy often escapes us. Nazi guards had to ensure that identity cards were removed from their victims, that gas chambers took the place of summary executions, that victims were never addressed by their names or even in terms that denoted human presence.

Using the media framing of a national outpouring of compassion which emerged from the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut on December 14th 2012, George Monbiot sought to correlate humanitarian compassion between American children murdered in the gun attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut on December 14th 2012 and children murdered in Pakistan from American drone strikes. In Monbiot's example, it is the outcome of the Iraq War, in line with the newspaper's critical position on the war, and its effect on children that is highlighted. However, the empathic outlook, the merging together of both types of victims is intended to show how we situate disparate lives lost in our cognitive schemas. Monbiot brings to light the dozens of children killed in drone strikes authorised by Presidents Bush and Obama, 64 in the first three years of Obama's time in office and 69 children killed in one of Bush's earlier strikes. He comments on the indifference to the child victims of the American drone attacks as being part of a process of depersonalisation, 'they belong to the other: to the non-human world of bugs and grass and tissue.'[87]

A 2018 BBC One documentary 'Killer in Our Classroom: Never Again'[88] was based on the February 2018 Parkland, Florida school shooting. This was a shooting in which 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and killed fourteen pupils and three members of staff. He followed students from the school who had organised a mass youth-led campaign calling for stricter gun laws in America. Part of the emotive thrust of the documentary centres on the stories of some of the students affected by the shooting. On being shown a graphic of Building 12-First Floor with scattering of dots in different classrooms indicating where people died during the shooting, one of the students stated that "Every time a dot would turn blue, or a dot would turn yellow, like I knew who that was, and it was just really upsetting." A second said that "I know every single dot, and I know who every single one of those dots are, like every single one. And I felt as if I just like experienced it all over again". Another stated that "The worst thing is that when you do give names to the dots, it hurts". The students were able to place an entire life, experience and memory behind the

[87] George Monbiot, 'In the US, mass child killings are tragedies. In Pakistan, mere bug splats', https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/17/us-killings-tragedies-pakistan-bug-splats.
[88] 'Killer in Our Classroom: Never Again', https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06hym5p.

'dot', and thus enabling the framing of those lives as worthy and treasured to articulate different temporalities, values and priorities.

For Kristoffer Goldsmith, Sergeant in the United States Army deployed between January-December 2005 in Sadr City, it was the diffusion of images of suffering into his self-consciousness that brought him to a point of contesting the dehumanisation of Iraqi people. Goldsmith describes a photograph of a man 'missing his face, there is no skin left on his head'. The photograph was in its 'incompleteness' representative of a grievable victim. It led to Goldsmith recognising the humanness of the Iraqi man: "this is somebody's brother, this is somebody's husband, this is somebody's son, and this is somebody's cousin. The only reason that we're desensitized to it is because they're not white, they're not American soldiers."[89] In the Iraq War the Iraqi Other undergoes a derealisation and becomes 'spectral' and we see how dehumanisation functions as a precursor to violence and results in abuse and violence through omission of a frame for the life lost.

In the Shakespeare play, The Tempest, the character Trinculo's first thought upon coming across Caliban is that he could be put on exhibit in England: 'not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver…When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian.' The exhibition in photographs of cruelties inflicted on those with darker complexions in exotic countries continues this offering, oblivious to the considerations that deter such displays of our own victims of violence; the Other, even when not an enemy, is regarded only as someone to be seen, not someone (like us) who also sees. Sontag calls on us to consider the wounded Taliban soldier begging for his life, whose fate was pictured prominently in The New York Times and who also had a wife, children, parents, sisters and brothers, some of whom may one day come across the three colour photographs of their husband, father, son, brother being slaughtered – if they have not already seen them.[90]

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[89] Iraq Veterans Against the War and Aaron Glantz, Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan: Eyewitness Accounts of the Occupations (Haymarket Books: Chicago, IL: 2008), p. 188.
[90] Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others (London, Penguin: 2004), p. 65.

3.3 A Historical Othering: Pope Urban II, the Crusades and the Othered Moor

European perception of Arab, Muslims and Turks as dark and devilish Others emanated from Ottoman military engagements in the Balkans and played a most significant role in creating the Other, as well as in self-image making: "These attitudes thread through much of church history, emerging notions of sovereignty, and European culture and self-image, and to some degree were handed on to Americans."[91]

The vilification of a people carries with it a train of propaganda. The accounts of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem reveal that before the twelfth century, a grand narrative of Muslims as enemies, as 'despoilers of Jerusalem' and as 'heathens', did not exist. The stage had not yet been set. The political circumstances involving the Seljuqs' encroaching into Constantinople and Byzantine requesting assistance from Pope Urban II in France, set in motion a mental imagining or re-imagining of Muslims as the enemies of God who had to be fought. The four surviving accounts of Urban's speech each present a distinctly different version of what his speech entailed, but the build-up of anti-Muslim rhetoric is unmistakable. He presented a city of Jerusalem under threat of a 'wicked' race who partake in 'abominable' practices. Crusade propagandists from Pope Urban II's speech in Clermont in 1095 to further crusades in subsequent decades produced the image of the Muslim as a godless defiler of Christian sanctities, as a barbaric torturer of Christians, as an idol worshipper. The Othering of the Muslims had begun and became more pronounced when Muslims were outside the bounds of normative civilised society, as animals, which is illustrated in "who cut open the navels of those whom they choose to torment...", taken from the following account of Urban's speech:

"A grave report has come from the lands around Jerusalem ...that a race absolutely alien to God...has invaded the land of the Christians...They have either razed the churches of God to

[91] John Tirman, The Death of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America's Wars (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.345.

the ground or enslaved them to their own rites...They cut open the navels of those whom they choose to torment...them as they lie on the ground with all their entrails out.... What can I say of the appalling violation of women? On whom does the task lie of avenging this, if not on you?...Take the road to the Holy Sepulchre, rescue that land and rule over it yourselves, for that land, as scripture says, floweth with milk and honey...Take this road for the remission of your sins, assured of the unfading glory of the kingdom of heaven.' When Pope Urban had said these things...everyone shouted in unison: Deus vult! Deus vult!, 'God wills it! God wills it!'"[92]

Propaganda therefore played an essential part in the build-up to the crusades. Pope Urban II's speech used highly inflammatory imagery to provoke moral outrage and what was most prominent in his address was the Otherising of Muslims and he connected that to the idea of despoiling of Christian sites. It was what he preached of the barbarity towards other Christians that came to inform his audience about who the Muslims were. Though there had been no systematic persecution of Christians by the Muslims of the Holy Land, Pope Urban II's speech did enough to generate a mass passionate response to the appeal.

The savagery later unleashed in the siege of Antioch and the capture of Jerusalem was a combination of factors including the three-year march, religious fervour and an uncompromising Othering levelled against the Muslims. The Crusaders unleashed an unspeakable savagery and sought to purge the Holy City of unbelievers – Muslims and Jews. The inhabitants of the city were beheaded, pierced by arrows, plunged from towers, tortured and burned to death. Groups who had surrendered were also put to death, and women and children were not spared. The Crusaders "seized infants by the soles of their feet from their mothers' laps or their cradles and dashed them against walls or broke their necks". The brutal orgy of destruction was a result, in part, of the very negative though untrue stories told about Muslims in the Holy Land. One eyewitness said, "No one has ever seen or heard of such a slaughter of the pagans, for they were burned on pyres like pyramids."[93] The process of

[92] Robert of Rheims, account of Urban II's speech at Clermont, taken from L. and J.S.C. Riley-Smith, The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274 (London, 1981), pp. 42-45. For the full text of Robert of Rheims's chronicle, see Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade, tr, C. Sweetenham (Aldershot, 2005).
[93] August. C. Krey, The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants, (Princeton: 1921), p. 262.

dehumanisation goes a long way in explaining the savage cruelty unleashed onto unarmed Muslim civilians. The Crusaders had not been exposed to Muslims prior to the appeal of Pope Urban II and the void of human interactions would in any situation disallow effective perspective taking. Muslims emerged in Crusade propaganda as every stereotype of an Othered enemy.

In the Spanish Inquisition during the sixteenth century, Muslims were depicted as 'Saracens', 'Hagarenes' and 'Hagarene beasts'. In the sixteenth-century Hapsburg Empire, Muslim Turks were portrayed as "terrible Turk" and as a subhuman enemy. Spaniards described the Moors as greedy and sadistic. In official documents, the Moriscos were routinely referred to as a "pestilence," a "plague," a "fever," a "pestilential horde," or "beasts" or "vipers" within the "bosom of Spain." This was the kind of language used in polemic texts, in texts written in support of the expulsion of Muslims. One of them, a former preacher in Valencia, Fonseca wrote how the "treason and bad customs" of the Moriscos were inherited in their "corrupted blood and their mother's milk."[94]

The concept of Othering and dehumanisation is central to understanding the ideology behind the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia (1992-95). This concept is critical in understanding the mindset of the New Zealand mosque gunman Brenton Tarrant, who carried out the Christchurch terror attack which claimed the lives of 50 Muslims praying at the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in 2019. There existed an entrenched sense of othering of Muslims in Tarrant's manifesto. There is much that connects the mastermind of the Bosnian genocide, Radovan Karadžić and Tarrant. Radovan Karadžić was infamous in describing Bosnian Muslims as filth, as traitors and vermin that needed to be annihilated. In the words of Biljana Plavsić, Karadžić's deputy, "It was [Serb] genetically deformed material that embraced Islam."[95]

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[94] Matthew Carr, Blood and Faith: The Purging of Muslim Spain (The New Press, New York: 2009), p. 34.
[95] Patrick Bishop, 'Genocide charges expected today for Serbs' Iron Lady' - https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/bosnia/1314344/Genocide-charges-expected-today-for-Serbs-Iron-Lady.html.

The parallels with the dehumanising of Jews in the Holocaust are all too similar. Muslims were stripped of all human value and rendered alien, inferior and hideous. This attitude towards their Muslim neighbours slowly transformed. Any innocent neighbourly pleasantries were now suspect, the Muslim in the frame underwent a metamorphosis in the mind of Bosnian Serb perpetrators. The process of dehumanisation was implemented through a concerted effort of Othering the Bosnian Muslims by political, religious and intellectual strands of the Serb elite, and then normalised in the media. Polarising propaganda became the flavour of the day for Serbian and Bosnian Serb media to Otherise their victims.

In one horrifying case which reflects the extent of Othering as a process to legitimise violence is the siege of Sarajevo. The state-run Belgrade TV aired a false story intended to fuel hatred and justify the siege, including the line: "Muslim extremists have come up with the most horrifying way in the world of torturing people. Last night they fed the Serb children to the lions in the city's 'Pionirska Dolina' zoo."[96]

This was reported on the evening news and was watched by several million viewers. The perpetrators were led to think that the annihilation of the Muslim people was necessary work demanded of the State and that their own freedom and security was compromised by the presence of Muslim "invaders". The process of Othering was complete.

In an intercepted conversation with a close associate from October 1991, Karadžić made clear:

"Muslims will disappear, that people will disappear from the face of the earth if they start now. Our offer was their only chance. They will be up to their necks in blood and the Muslim people [in BiH] would disappear. In just a couple of days, Sarajevo will be gone and there will be five hundred thousand dead, in one month Muslims will be annihilated in BiH."[97]

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[96] Al Jazeera News, 'What are the 10 stages of genocide?' - https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2019/07/10-stages-genocide-190710112516344.html.
[97] Refik Hodžić, 'Dehumanisation of Muslims made Karadzic an icon of far-right extremism' - https://justicehub.org/article/dehumanisationmuslims-made-karadzic-icon-far-right-extremism.

Karadžić spoke against an ideology of "brotherhood and unity" and the mixing of communities, and instead allowed a discourse of victimhood to frame the Serbian response. He picked out examples of Serb suffering at the hands of the Ottomans and wove a narrative of traumatisation of his own people. He played on generating a fear of the Muslims, a fear of the Other, which connected the Bosnia Serb perpetrators in their genocide. In Biljana Plavsić's guilty plea before the ICTY, she explained:

"At the time, I easily convinced myself that this was a matter of survival and self-defence. In fact, it was more. Our leadership, of which I was a necessary part, led an effort which victimised countless innocent people. Explanations of self-defence and survival offer no justification. By the end, it was said, even among our own people, that in this war we had lost our nobility of character. The obvious questions become: if this truth is now self-evident, why did I not see it earlier? And how could our leaders and those who followed have committed such acts? The answer to both questions is, I believe, fear, a blinding fear that led to an obsession, especially for those of us for whom the Second World War was a living memory, that Serbs would never again allow themselves to become victims. In this, we in the leadership violated the most basic duty of every human being, the duty to restrain oneself and to respect the human dignity of others. We were committed to do whatever was necessary to prevail."[98]

To achieve the goals of a Serb state west of Drina, Bosnian Serbs deemed it necessary to separate themselves from the Muslim population and they believed this meant the extermination of those Muslims. Such an undertaking could not be possible without first dehumanising the Muslim population to such an extent that perpetrators would no longer see them as human beings, but as rodents that needed to be killed. Karadžić is responsible for putting in place a state-run program of dehumanisation that serves as inspiration for far-right nationalists today.

[98] Ibid.

Christchurch gunman Brenton Tarrant drew much inspiration from the convicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić. En route to his killing spree, Tarrant played a Serbian nationalist song in which Radovan Karadzic is glorified and called on to lead Serbs. The song further glorifies Serbian fighters and calls for the killing of Turks who hard-line Serb nationalists use to refer to Bosnian Muslims. Tarrant's manifesto 'The Great Replacement' describes that the motive for his attack was to create fear and calls for the killing of Muslims in Europe. It threatens Turks, referring to them with the dehumanising "roaches": "But if you attempt to live in European lands, anywhere west of the Bosphorus. We will kill you and drive you roaches from our lands."[99]

Tarrant cited Pope Urban II's First Crusade speech in which Muslims are presented as barbarians, heathen, and despoilers of the sanctities of God. The Othering of Muslims as presented in Pope Urban II's speech struck a chord with his audience. Not only were the allegations false, but the image of a Turkish Other who belonged to a different faith, spoke a different language and who prayed to a different God spurred the carnage of the First Crusade. The Othering of the Muslims had begun, and returns here with Tarrant's address "To Christians":

"The people worthy of glory, the people blessed by God Our Lord, moan and fall under the weight of these outrages and most shameful humiliations. The race of the elect suffers outrageous persecutions, and the impious race of the Saracens respects neither the virgins of the Lord nor the colleges of priests. They run over the weak and the elderly, they seize the children from their mothers so that they might forget, among the barbarians, the name of God. That perverse nation profanes the hospices … The temple of the Lord is treated like a criminal and the ornaments of the sanctuary are robbed. ASK YOURSELF, WHAT WOULD POPE URBAN II DO?"

Tarrant further proposed a "Europe for Europeans":

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[99] 'The Great Replacement' - https://www.ilfoglio.it/userUpload/The_Great_Replacementconvertito.pdf.

“The invaders must be removed from European soil, regardless from where they came or when they came. Roma, African, Indian, Turkish, Semitic or other. If they are not of our people, but live in our lands, they must be removed. Where they are removed to is not our concern, or responsibility. Our lands are not their home, they can return to their own lands or found their homelands elsewhere. But they will not occupy our soil. How they are removed is irrelevant, peacefully, forcefully, happily, violently or diplomatically. They must be removed. Until these interlopers are repatriated to their people’s lands, then Europe has no true sovereignty, and anyone, no matter their ethnicity or beliefs can call Europe their own. REMOVE THE INVADERS, RETAKE EUROPE”[100]

The ‘Spectre’ of Islam: Islamophobia, White supremacy, colonialism and imperialism

W. E. Dubois questions us in the opening lines of Souls of Black Folk, ‘How does it feel to be a problem?’[101] His question challenges an emotional disengagement whereby one who is not and has not been a ‘problem’ could not understand the ‘problematic’ self-description of the many whom Dubois was intending. On July 17 2014, 43-year-old Eric Garner was killed in a chokehold by a New York City Police Department officer, whilst having repeated “I can’t breathe” at least eleven times. Garner was not physically still when he held up his hands, protesting his innocence to the NY police officers who encountered him. His positioning was one of trying to create space between him and the officers. He felt threatened within his space and violated. Activists sought to ‘metonymise’ the 43-year-old’s killing, using the symbolic code of holding up of hands as a declaration of innocence, as a way of placing themselves in the frame of Garner and thus symbolically creating new space.

[100] Ibid.

[101] W.E.B Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk (Dover Publications, New York: 1994), p. 1.

The three words spoken by Garner, “I can’t breathe” topped the list of the most notable quotations of 2014 according to the Yale Book of Quotations.[102] But it is the first of his words, it is the simple but highly evocative pronoun “I” which draws us, through a consideration of a range of imagined tones to a perspective-taking with Eric Garner. As Zimmer (2014) describes, “To intone the words “I can’t breathe,” surrounded by thousands of others doing the same, is an act of intense empathy and solidarity. The empathy comes from momentarily stepping into the persona of Eric Garner at that instant the life was being choked out of him. It is a kind of rhetorical tribute to inhabit his subject position, taking on the pronoun “I” and repeating the words he helplessly repeated eleven times.”[103] Words reminisced, like the singing of popular songs of deceased artists or the chanting of words during pilgrimage rituals, or during memorials, all contain a sense of empathic solidarity through mimicry.

In a similar light, W.E.B Dubois introduces us to a double consciousness which weighs on his self-perception, seeing himself in light of his blackness and by being seen by a white world and living up to the superimposed standards of that world. He is bound by a negating of his very being in his attempt to define himself outside of the restrictions of what his skin colour has come to mean and represent in a dominant White society. We are challenged to traverse the mental landscapes with Dubois, as he seeks an explanation for the gulf between him and “the OTHER WORLD.” He is present in his enquiry, akin to Fanon’s spatial assertion – his own bodily presence – but we learn from the outset that the other world’s association with him is hesitant.

Implicitly we realise that he is not “the excellent colored man in my town” or, in the case of Fanon not the “Senegalese buddy in the army who was really clever…”[104] Dubois is compelled to navigate two worlds: a world of whiteness and a world as an African American. Fanon comes to see the obsoleteness in his corporeal schema, as the “evanescent Other” fades from his mental view. Fanon believes he is “given no chance” to challenge his Otherness, to

[102] https://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2014/12/i_cant_breathe_tops_yale_unive.html.
[103] Ben Zimmer, ‘The Linguistic Power of the Protest Phrase ‘I Can’t Breathe’ - https://www.wired.com/2014/12/ben-zimmer-on-i-cant-breathe/.
[104] Frantz Fanon, Black Skin White Masks (Pluto Press, London), p. 85.

allow him a second interpretation like the Jews he describes. His blackness is his "uniform" and he laments the inescapable 'self' denied of him through the skewed interpretation of his own self from the outlook of whites, and he struggles in finding his own self, "to be a man among other men."[105]

One way in which the body becomes the main medium that facilitates empathy for another is found through figurative expression, as in Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem The Haunted Oak. In this, the bodies of lynch victims and the tree share a vulnerability through the apprehending of a shared pain. Dunbar's poem, written and published in 1900, could have been based on one of the dozens of lynchings that occurred that year. However, it was more closely inspired by a story that Dunbar heard through an elderly black man concerning his nephew in Alabama who had been lynched on an oak tree by a gang of whites.

According to the story, the leaves on the tree used for the lynching began to wither, yellowed and fell off, and the bough shrivelled and died. The tree emerges in Dunbar's poem as a participant, a witness. The personified tree – an active, intimate spectator – is unable to withstand the memory of the horrors it witnessed and writhes in pain: "I feel the rope against my bark/And the weight of him in my grain/I feel in the throe of his final woe/The touch of my own last pain." We, like the Oak tree, feel the merging of self and other identities through modes of empathy and critical self-reflection, examined through tragedy. The 'weight', 'feel' and 'touch' the Oak tree experiences, symbolise the burdens we confront from the Othered victims of our world.[106]

The self-imaging and identifying with the other is akin to Anna Letitia Barbauld's poem on pregnancy, 'To a Little Invisible Being Who is Expected Soon to Become Visible':

She longs to fold to her maternal breast
Part of herself, yet to herself unknown;

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[105] Ibid.
[106] 'The Haunted Oak' - https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44195/the-haunted-oak.

To see and salute the stranger guest.[107]

Both poets speak from an insider's perspective – the baby is part of the mother and so too is the lynched victim part of the tree. Both mother and tree have an empathic identification with their 'others' and their emotional states become identical for that moment. The idea is provocative in its challenging us to imagine what is 'unimagined' in public consciousness, to construct an imagined scene of death, destruction, fear and outrage. Where there is an imagined 'here' and there', there needs to be an imagined place-making and storying. What we do not see is what we must 'see'.

The Qur'ān makes clear that diversity and differences will always exist. Unlike the Othering imputed on people for the colour of their skin, ethnicity, languages, beliefs instead are chosen; yet, diversity of beliefs is also an inherent characteristic of man. Without a clear understanding of human difference and the way Allāh seeks we treat one another with respect to it, the diversity of belief may lead to disputes and conflict. Though the Qur'ān invites to the belief and way of life best suited for human beings, it also acknowledges a freedom of belief and worship. Others may choose to believe differently or worship other than Allāh:

74: 36 - a warning to all mortals,
74:37 - to those of you who choose to go ahead and those who lag behind.

81:27 - This is a message for all people;
81:28 - for those who wish to take the straight path.

18:29 - Say, 'Now the truth has come from your Lord: let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so.'

It is Allāh's wisdom to create us different in shapes, languages, colours, beliefs, customs and traditions:

[107] https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43617/to-a-littleinvisible-being-who-is-expected-soon-to-become-visible.

5:48 - We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good: you will all return to God and He will make clear to you the matters you differed about.

49:13 - People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.

39:22 - Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know.

It is natural that we notice our differences in nationality, ethnicity and race. To Otherise on account of these factors is to render those different to us as "outside", "foreign" and "alien". What can often stem from this is cultural and military subordination of a dominant group over an inferior Other. In the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him)'s last sermon during his Hajj in in the tenth year of Hijra, he made clear that all people are equal irrespective of ethnicity or colour and that the only thing that differentiates them is their acknowledgement, belief, fear, trust and love of Him (taqwa). It is this that would motivate them to good actions and make them cognisant of their personal and social responsibilities. The Prophet (peace be upon him) declared "There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non-Arab over an Arab; or for white over the black or for the black over the white except in piety. Verily the noblest among you is he/she who is the most pious."[108]

Chris Weedon defines "Othering" as referring to the process of "constructing another people or group as radically different to oneself or one's own group, usually on the basis of racist and/or ethnocentric discourses."[109] Once the Prophet's companion Abu Dharr insulted Bilal

[108] Ahmad 22978.

[109] Chris Weedon, Identities and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging (Open University Press, Maidenhead: 2004), p. 166.

with reference to his mother, saying, “O son of a black woman!” Bilal went to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he told him what he said. The Prophet (peace be upon him) became angry by what he heard. Later, Abu Dharr came to visit the Prophet, but he was unaware of what Bilal told him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) turned away from him and Abu Dharr asked, “O Messenger of Allāh, have you turned away because of something you have been told?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Have you insulted Bilal by his mother? By the One who revealed the Book to Muḥammad, no one is better than another except by righteous deeds.”[110]

Contrary to the accentuating of such ‘Otherising’ differences, the Prophet’s sermon and his words to Abu Dharr emphasises that there can be no idea of a superior race or the castigating of others as inferior. Self and other are pronounced in equal terms as “Arab” and “non-Arab”, as “black” and “white”; the binaries of subordinates and dominants collapse in the Prophetic frame. People are called on to accept diversity in what we think divides us. The idea is to concentrate not on the outer and superficial, but on the inner and transcendental. It is to be remembered that the Prophetic sermon begins with a call to the greater human body, “O People”, and that the divisions noted by the Prophet (peace be upon him) are offset by a pursuit of personal and behavioural excellence in service of the One God, which can be acquired by any person irrespective of colour and ethnicity.

In the catalogue of lynching of black men and women in North America in the 19th and 20th centuries, what were initially discrete events, hidden from public view became in time, with the rise of cinematography and ‘image-making’, public and publicised events. The 1909 execution of Will Mack in Brandon, Mississippi was attended by a crowd of more than 3,000 people. They arrived on trains and buggies while vendors sold soda pop, ice cream, peanuts and watermelon. The sobriety of the occasion for Blacks was grotesquely juxtaposed with the collective indifference of attendees.

[110] Shu’ab al-Imān 4760.

The Tragedies of Ota Benga and Emmett Till

Pre-lynching and post-lynching pictures of victims sought to create a twisted pictorial narrative – dread and fear was altogether fulfilled with humiliation in death. 6,000 people attended the execution of Charles Johnston in Swainsboro, Georgia in 1893, an event which hosted shows as side attractions. Such lynchings and executions resemble modern theatrical entertainment, events of thrilling amusement. The victims of lynching were displayed like animal attractions. Frederickson (2002), Jahoda (1999) and Santa Ana (2002) show that dehumanization is a necessary precondition for culturally and/or state-sanctioned violence, noting that the dehumanising of groups is to morally exclude them, and thus approve and make permissible to treat then in a way that denies their humanity.

This was seen in the tragedy of Ota Benga. Housed at the Bronx Zoo, New York, in 1906, at times with an orangutan in the Primate House, Ota became the spectacle par excellence for a population that relished in 'seeing' their attraction. Swarms gathered to catch a sight of the pigmy boy. He was locked behind bars in a cage to be stared at, and people would laugh, though he could not fully understand that the people were laughing not with him but at him. Pamela Newkirk, author of Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga (Amistad, New York: 2015) describes in an article about her book how Ota Benga became an overnight sensation with the following headline in the New York Times "Bushman Shares a Cage with Bronx Park Apes". The floor in the zoo was scattered with bones to suggest Ota was a cannibal – though the practice of sharpening teeth was customary among Congolese men. With only an orangutan named Dohong as a companion, Benga alternated between glowering silently, shooting a bow and arrow, and angrily mimicking the crowd's jeers. While some in the mob might have felt pity or shame at the sight of a caged man, the Times reassured readers that he was "one of a race that scientists do not rate high in the human scale."[111]

[111] https://www.futurity.org/ota-benga-zoo-racism-982342/.

That month, the zoo saw nearly a quarter of a million visitors, almost twice as many as the previous September. Benga made headlines from Minneapolis to Los Angeles, and English and French newspapers clamoured for photographs. Newkirk writes, “Benga was alone among the primates—he was not with other human beings. He was captured like an animal and exhibited like an animal,” Perhaps the most poignant and reflective words came from Reverend James H. Gordon, superintendent of Howard Color Orphan Asylum in Brooklyn and leader of the group of African-American clergymen. He travelled to the Monkey House to express his utter disapproval at the way Blacks were being dehumanised through their association with monkeys:

“We are frank enough to say we do not like this exhibition of one of our own race with the monkeys. Our race, we think, is depressed enough, without exhibiting one of us with apes. We think we are worthy of being considered human beings, with souls.”[112]

The Othering of Ota Benga by many involved the denial of a full humanness to him, translating into a reduction of social consideration afforded to him by others. There were examples however of thousands of people including newspaper editors reporting outrage at his mistreatment and running editorials demanding his release. The New York Journal for example condemning the exhibition as “bad taste…a shameful disgrace to every man in any way connected with it.”[113] Others included the New York Times, the New York Sun and the New York World. These reports suggest that there were many who were able to see past the dominant narrative. On September 19 1906, the Times published a poem by M.E. Buhler in which he poured scorn on those responsible for Ota’s plight. Part of the poem read:

“Brought wee little Ota Benga,
Dwarfed, benighted, without guile,
Scarcely more than ape or monkey,

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[112] Eileen Reynolds, ‘Ota Benga, Captive: The Man the Bronx Zoo Kept in a Cage’ - https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2015/august/pamela-newkirk-on-ota-benga-at-the-bronx-zoo.html.
[113] William Hornaday to Samuel Verner, September 17, 1906, Wildlife Conservation Society Archives; Pamela Newkirk, Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga (Harper Collins Publishers, New York: 2015), p. 58.

Yet a man the while!"[114]

Though many reports voiced sympathy for Ota Benga, the language was often couched in a way that framed the young boy as less than human. The latter was even true for the Times, for example, the day following its publication of Buhler's poem, on September 20, the Times published an editorial in which it described: "Ota Benga is not a child or a slave…He is, of course, a human being, of a sort, with enough intelligence, apparently, to have a more or less effectual word as to his own disposition."[115]

In 1955 the killing of Emmett Till, a young African American boy on holiday from Chicago to Mississippi, came to change the scope and outlook of the Civil Rights Movement. Though countless blacks had been killed in the early decades of the twentieth century, lynched or beaten to death, the killing of Emmett became an icon of white racism and brutality, galvanising the support of both blacks and whites. When his mutilated body was discovered in the Tallahatchie River, the police were eager that it remained sealed.

Such a prospect was quickly rejected by his mother Maya Till who wanted to 'see' her son. Further, against police and state advice, she chose to have his funeral service in an open casket so others could also 'see'. 'This is what you did to my son. I want the world to see what you did', she said. It was the sight of the disfigured Emmett lying in his coffin that brought home the truths of racism.

"We buried Emmett. The state of Mississippi said that that was not Emmett. They said: that it was impossible for a body to deteriorate that much in that length of time. But what they didn't say, they didn't bring out that the body was badly beaten, that the river water had burst the skin and it had peeled off the body. The water was hot, the beating was brutal. Then to beat him, they didn't hear his cries. They didn't touch them whatsoever. This one little colored boy that did hear them said that he heard screams coming from that barn about an

[114] M.E. Buhler, "Ota Benga," New York Times, September 19, 1906, p. 8; Pamela Newkirk, Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga (Harper Collins Publishers, New York: 2015), pp. 62-63.
[115] "Topics of the Times: Need Not Wait for Consent," New York Times, September 20, 1906; Pamela Newkirk, Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga (HarperCollins Publishers, New York: 2015), pp. 63-64.

hour and a half. He cried for God, he cried for his mother, he pleaded with them. But they were having such a good time, so they didn't consider that he was a human being."[116]

John Howard Griffin, a white American author who temporarily altered the pigment of his skin in order to experience and understand first-hand the life of a black man in the Southern states of America described his experience in the International bestseller Black like Me (1961). The book recounts numerous incidents of the Othering of Black people, of the arousing of hatred and suspicion toward Griffin who, for the whites, was an African American. His experience is very telling of the psychology of dehumanisation prevalent in the Southern states during that time. He writes:

"I learned within a very few hours that no one was judging me by my qualities as a human individual and everyone was judging me by my pigment. As soon as white men or women saw me, they automatically assumed I possessed a whole set of false characteristics (false not only to me but to all black men). They could not see me or any other black man as a human individual because they buried us under the garbage of their stereotyped view of us. They saw us as "different" from themselves in fundamental ways: we were irresponsible; we were different in our sexual morals; we were intellectually limited; we had a God-given sense of rhythm; we were lazy and happy-go-lucky; we loved watermelon and fried chicken. How could white men ever really know black men if on every contact the white man's stereotyped view of the black man got in the way? I never knew a black man who felt this stereotyped view fit him. Always, in every encounter even with "good whites," we had the feeling that the white person was not talking with us but with his image of us."[117]

The concluding line here is very telling - "was not talking with us but with his image of us." Othering is a caricaturing of another, a false-creation. As these examples outline, it obscures, demoralises and generates an irrational fear of another, leading to hatred, abuse and savagery. The Qur'ān is clear in calling mankind to honour the deep appreciation of diversity, to

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[116] Clenora Hudson-Weems, Emmett Till: The Sacrificial Lamb of the Civil Rights Movement (AuthorHouse, Bloomington, Indiana: 2006), p. 241.
[117] John Howard Griffin, Black Like Me (Signet, New York: 1996), p. 166.

promote righteousness and to challenge the scourge of dehumanisation. It encourages us to reflect on the wonder of Allāh's distinct creation:

30:22 - Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know.

4.1 A Closer Look – 'And who is better in speech than he who calls to Allāh?'

To be forbearing is to win a war against your own ego. Forbearance is self-control and restraint. It is a hallmark of mercy and patience and reflects the beauty of Islam on many levels. Allāh of course is Al-Ḥalīm (The Forbearing One). His creation disobey Him, worship other than Him, disbelieve in Him, but He still provides for them, allowing them to make use of His provisions in His creation. Allāh, in His infinite Mercy grants respite to the sinner, assisting him to find his way back and receiving the sinner with forgiveness. That a person could sin against Allāh for the entirety of a life and find guidance back to Allāh at a final moment, and then to be met with forgiveness is reflective of Allāh's most perfect forbearance:

3:155 - As for those of you who turned away on the day the two armies met in battle, it was Satan who caused them to slip, through some of their actions. God has now pardoned them: God is most forgiving and forbearing.

2:263 - A kind word and forgiveness is better than a charitable deed followed by hurtful [words]: God is self-sufficient, forbearing. Some Prophets in the Qur'ān were noted for their observance of forbearance such as Ibrāhīm in relation to his desire that his father be forgiven.

9:114- Abraham asked forgiveness for his father because he had made a promise to him, but once he realized that his father was an enemy of God, he washed his hands of him. Abraham was tender-hearted and forbearing.

There are many things that can impede a productive engagement with another, such as, bad mannerisms, aggression, impatience and mockery. For the Muslim, it is important to remember that he or she should do his utmost to ensure that the best of character is displayed. Excellent character is the hallmark of a Muslim, and for the Muslim there is an added emphasis since he is presenting Islam with his conduct. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) dispatched Mu´ādh ibn Jabal (Allāh be pleased with him) to Yemen to call the Christians to Islam he advised him to make things easy for the people – 'Make things easy, and don't make things hard. Give them good news and don't make them run away from you." [118] Mu´ādh commented, "The last piece of advice the Prophet gave me, as I placed my foot on the saddle was "And make excellent your character O Mu´ādh ibn Jabal!" The advice is paradigmatic and lays the foundation for effective communication of the message of Islam.

A person's character can speak a much better and more vocal language than words, leaving a far lasting impression than words spoken. People tend to remember not so much what was said, but how it was said. Furthermore, a good character is the completion of a person. It is his most manifest attribute and for it he is loved or loathed. Ibn al-Qayyim said, "The entire religion is good character. Whoever therefore outdoes you in good character has outdone you in the religion."[119]

There are many Prophetic instructions pertaining to the displaying of good character. The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned that the closest people to him and the most beloved to him on the Day of Judgement will be those who had the best character. He said that there is nothing that is heavier on the scale of a believer on the Day of Judgement than a good character. If the Muslim carries within him a beautiful character, it will be the most observable reflection of the effect of Islamic guidance on him. His speaking and listening,

[118] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 7172.
[119] Madārij al-Sālikīn 2/294.

patience, forbearance and inner calm transcends his landscape and reflects the beauty of the call he is verbally presenting. Ibn Baṭṭāl said: "In line with the character of a believer is to lower the wings of humility unto mankind, to have gentle speech, and leaving off roughness in speech to them, and that is from the strongest means of sincere affection."[120]

The Muslim remembers that it is not himself that he is serving. It is not for the purpose of self-aggrandisement that he speaks about Allāh. Though the Muslim, relevant to his contextual surrounding, adapts and appreciate the protocols of his circumstance, he must not lose sight of his purpose of reflecting the beauty of Islamic teachings. This is even if he is, at any moment, faced with arrogance, disdain and mockery or is overwhelmed with another's wit and argumentative skill. The Muslim holds on to patience and remembers that it is not he who changes anyone's heart, but that it is Allāh who turns hearts.

Sometimes a display of magnanimity can be far more expressive than a sophisticated argument. At the heart of a discussion is precisely a heart, one that searches for a beautiful character. It might show that people want not only to be guided, but to find an honourable guide in their midst. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said:

"The believer is forbearing; he does not behave ignorantly even if ignorance is done unto him. He is forbearing and does not wrong others. If he is wronged then he forgives. He does not cut off from people; and if he is cut off then he reconciles. He does not show miserliness. And if he is shown miserliness, then he instead shows patience."[121]

A beautiful example of how such forbearance was demonstrated is found in the most excellent character of the Prophet (peace be upon him) when met by a disgruntled Bedouin:

"I was walking with the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) and he had put on a mantle of Najrān with a thick border. A bedouin met him and pulled the mantle so violently that I saw this violent pulling leaving marks of the border of the mantle on the skin of the neck of

[120] Fatḥ al-Bārī, 10/528.
[121] Ibn Abī Dunya, 1246/54-55.

the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him). And he (the bedouin) said: Muḥammad, issue command that I should be given out of the wealth of Allāh which is at your disposal. The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) turned his attention to him and smiled, and then ordered for him a gift (provision).”[122]

In another narration, the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) companions were prepared to physically rebuke the Bedouin for his impudence, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) stopped them and showed that a teaching based on kindness and forbearance can be far more meaningful and transformative for all than retaliating. The Prophet (peace be upon him) repelled with what was better. Wahb ibn Munabbih said,

“Knowledge is the close friend of the believer, and forbearance is his minister, and intelligence is his proof, and actions are his worth, and patience is his leader, and compassion is his father, and gentleness is his brother.”[123]

A great demonstration of the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) dealing with his enemies in a way that reflects a spirit of magnanimity and patience is seen in his conduct at the battle of Uḥud. It is reported that during the Battle of Uḥud, the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said, “O Allāh, forgive my people for they do not know,” he voiced his supplication when his enemies slashed his face.”[124]

What emerges is the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) genuine concern for the salvation even of his enemies. Such description is akin to the man described in Sūrah Yāsīn who came running from afar to deliver news to his people to follow the Messengers of Allāh. As they struck him in anger, his concern was for his people and their salvation:

36:25 - I believe in your Lord, so listen to me.

[122] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1057a.
[123] Al-Ḥāfīẓ ibn Shāhīn, Al-Targhīb fī Faḍā’il al-A´māl/251.
[124] Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān 985.

36:26 - He was told, ‘Enter the Garden,’ so he said, ‘If only my people knew’.

‘Amr ibn al-‘As (Allāh be pleased with him), said, “The truly forbearing one is not one who is forbearing to those who tolerate him but insults whoever insults him. Rather, the truly forbearing one is forbearing to both those who tolerate him and to those who insult him.”[125]

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥa reported: Ibn Abbās explained the verse, “Good and evil cannot be equal. [Prophet], repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend” (41:34) that it means, “Allah commands the believers to be patient when they feel angry, to be forbearing when confronted with ignorance, and to forgive when they are mistreated. If they do this, Allah will save them from Satan and subdue their enemies to them until they become like close friends.”[126]

4.2 The Paradigm of Mercy as Social Outlook in Calling to Allah

We often make an assumption that the average man might be naturally confrontational or hostile to Islam and Muslims. We all, of course, process media information in different ways; there are those who might be more susceptible to stereotyping than others depending on their background information, demographics and genuine concerns. When the prisoner Thumāma ibn Uthāl (Allāh be pleased with him) decided to accept Islam, he said to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that there was nothing he despised more than “your land, but now your land has become the most beloved of lands to me”. This means that his Othering of Islam and Muslims effected not only his perception of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but also of the land associated with the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet’s (peace be upon him) blessed face, his religion and city were all a point of concern for Thumāma, but the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) transformative character and forbearance opened a new space of

[125] al-Mudārāh al-Nās 6.
[126] http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura41-aya35.html#katheer.

understanding for the prisoner. Though he initially assumed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) could in fact have him killed, he also knew that his release from captivity was a possibility.

In our engagement with others, we should remember that we as humans are mostly comforted by similar things – displays of kindness and mercy. Allāh describes the Prophet (peace be upon him) as an embodiment of merciful character: "And We have not sent you (O Muḥammad) except as a mercy to the worlds." (Qur'ān 21:107) Mercy, compassion and empathy are interlinked features of the best of what all people seek. We prefer mercy over harshness, forbearance over rage, kindness over cruelty. The Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed that kindness be applied in every situation, once teaching his wife 'Ā'isha (Allāh be pleased with her): "Kindness is not found in something except that it makes it beautiful, and it is not removed from something except that it makes it tarnished." Allāh describes Himself with the most beautiful names of Al-Raḥmān, Al-Raḥīm - the Merciful, Gracious, Bestower of Mercy. Allāh commands mercy in every situation and will deal with us in relation to our dealings with others. The Prophet (peace be upon him) explained, "The merciful will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you."[127]

Ibn al-Qayyim explained the Prophet's (peace be upon him) words:

"And Allāh is merciful, and He loves the merciful ones, and He veils the sins of people and He loves those who veil the sins of others "Whoever pardons others, Allāh will pardon him; whoever forgives others, Allāh will forgive him; whoever excuses others, Allāh will excuse him; whoever shows excellence unto others, Allāh will deal excellently towards him. As you do so shall be done unto you, so be how you choose for indeed Allāh will be unto you as you are unto His servants."[128]

[127] Sunan al-Tirmidhī 1924.
[128] Ibn al-Qayyim, Al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib, pp. 53-56.

In order for the truth of empathic concern to be realised and to offset tendencies of othering and dehumanisation, it is a holistic appreciation of mercy that needs to be realised. In everything around us, among humans and animals there is a part of that mercy which Allāh bestowed upon creation. This is something the Muslim must never lose sight of.

All people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, have something of mercy – of kindness, compassion, empathy, love, and so our approaches, interactions and communication must be inspired by the same spirit of mercy. The Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed us to have a general mercy for all, to look upon creation with an eye of compassion:

"Abū Mūsa Al-Ash'arī reported: The Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'You will never have faith until you love each other. Shall I tell you what will make you love each other?

They said, 'Of course, O Messenger of Allāh.' The Prophet said: Spread peace between yourselves. By the one in whose hand is my soul, you will not enter Paradise until you are merciful.

They said, 'O Messenger of Allāh, all of us are merciful.' The Prophet said: Actually, it is not mercy between yourselves, but rather it is mercy in general, it is mercy in general."[129]

Defining Empathy and a Prophetic Empathy

"Empathy is the capacity to share the happiness or sadness, the emotions and feelings of another person. This ability leads to understanding, to compassion and to a wide range of other connections between people. There are two ways that we are able to experience empathy: one, because we have been in the situation that the other person has. We know from personal experience how it feels, and the other is because we can imagine how they feel. Our ability to imagine may come from a similar experience of our own, from a story of a friend or

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[129] Al-Mustadrak 'ala aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn 7391.

family member who has had that experience or from the observations of what happens to a stranger. And although empathy can be a way of sharing someone else's joy or happiness, the empathy that connects difficulties is the one that's most likely to move us to action. Understanding the troubles of others can bring a focused response, a focused kind of help by trying to right a wrong, by trying to fix a problem, or simply by sharing an understanding. These actions can be as simple as a smile or as complex as an international relief effort in Haiti."[130] (04:03-05:19)

What Dr. Lisa Rossbacher touches upon is the idea that human codes of behaviour exist in a universal sense, between all humans, and therefore feeling for others is reflective in both a physical and figurative way. It invokes feelings of one's own vulnerability and with a recognising that the dominant emotions prevalent in war – fear – is universal to all humans including enemy populations. It is 'in the acknowledgement of one's own vulnerability lies the beginning of empathy.'[131]

This 'overlapping' of one's self onto another's experience stems from the relationship between feelings of trust or empathy and morality. One can imagine the pain or pleasure or future bearing of a person's life through a consideration of one's own pain and pleasure, and thus prevents us from acting solely on self-interest to provide an incentive to perceive one's self from the vantage point of others.[132] Naomi Head notes that despite the philosophical richness of empathy in the discourses of Western thinkers such as Adam Smith, Rousseau, Hannah Arendt and Martha Nussbaum, focus on empathy in International Relations theories have not received much attention.[133]

[130] Lisa Rossbacher, 'Empathy: Walking in Another's Shoes': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPSFWIYoBTE.
[131] Beverly Allen, 'Women in Bosnia Today: Notes on Gender Issues for Us All' at the Stockholm International Forum 2002, available at http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Affinity/SIF/DATA/2002/page1691.html.
[132] U. Frevert, Emotions in history - Lost and found (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), p. 161; Richard Lebow, Reason, Emotion and Cooperation, International Politics 42 (2005), p. 298; N. Head, Justifying Violence: Communicative Ethics and the Use of Force in Kosovo. Series: New approaches to conflict analysis (Manchester University Press: Manchester: 2012), p. 35.
[133] R. Bleiker and E. Hutchinson, Fear no more: Emotions and world politics. Review of International Studies, 34 (S1) (2008), pp. 115-135.

It is in the imagining of the unknown who dwell in unknown spaces that makes the action of empathy a challenging, yet necessary prospect. How might we transport ourselves, our experiences, feelings and thoughts into a life and landscape of the unknown, too bare and bleak to be understood? What names might we assign the nameless, what voice unto the voiceless and what life might we render unto the buried? It is in trying to imagine, sometimes the unimaginable, that empathy begins to figure. This can be seen here in an account of Viktor Frankl in which he juxtaposes the deeply melancholic and fear-evoking with the intensity of relief expressed through joy of prisoners on a journey from Auschwitz to Dachau, Viktor Frankl is unequivocal in emphasising the remarkably unique nature of his experience:

"Take as an example something that happened on our journey from Auschwitz to the camp affiliated with Dachau. We had all been afraid that our transport was heading for the Mauthausen camp. We became more and more tense as we approached a certain bridge over the Danube which the train would have to cross to reach Mauthausen, according to the statement of experienced traveling companions. Those who have never seen anything similar cannot possibly imagine the dance of joy performed in the carriage by the prisoners when they saw that our transport was not crossing the bridge and was instead heading "only" for Dachau."[134]

Christina Twomey's analysis of a series of photographs documenting the Congo atrocity from 1904-13 are very insightful in the context of this study. A series of photographs were taken in 1904 by Christian missionaries working in Belgian King Leopold's Congo Free State. The photographs depict the brutal abuse meted out against the Congolese people, showing mutilation, flogging and chaining. During this time in Congo, villages were required to harvest a specific quantity of rubber for Belgian franchises. Failure to meet the targets could result in torture and even a massacre of the village's inhabitants. A campaign to end the brutality was organised by the British-based Congo Reform Association (1904-13) who utilised photographs as evidence of abuse collected in books written by sympathisers.

[134] Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search For Meaning (Boston, Beacon Press: 2006), pp. 44-45.

One of the photographs that would become instrumental to the aims of the Association's campaign was taken by the missionary Mrs. Alice Seeley Harris whilst working for the Congo Balolo Mission. The context of the photograph concerns a man, Nsala, who approached Mrs. Harris's missionary station carrying the hand and foot of his daughter wrapped in a parcel of leaves. The hand and foot were all that remained after sentries had eaten the girl as a punishment upon her village for failing to reach their rubber targets. The pictures were important in authenticating the experiences of victims. In this picture, together with the image of a severed hand and foot, it is the father's grief as he stares at the remains of his daughter that is evocatively unsettling. Nsala had brought the remains of his daughter to Alice and her colleague Edgar Stannard to validate the brutality. Stannard's response is one that speaks precisely of the imagined storying and the crucial role of empathy in actively pursuing change to a circumstance: "We were sickened as we looked, and thought of the innocent little child, and pictured her running about but a short time before. We tried to enter a little into the feelings of the unhappy father."[135]

Twomey considers the way Alice's own personal loss may have provided a stimulus for a heightened empathic outlook. She may have been reliving her own loss, as whilst in England in 1901 she had given birth to a daughter, Margaret. When she returned to Africa in 1902 she left her eight-month-old daughter behind.[136] Could this temporary separation with her own children act as a stimulus to her empathy? It is hard to tell, but one can surmise that the feelings of guilt for the father and gratitude for her own children are likely emotions in such a setting. That is, one can associate someone's loss with one's own personal tragedy or life experience. The latter lies at the heart of empathetic discourse.

Empathy as Perspective Taking

[135] Christina Twomey, 'Severed Hands: Authenticating Atrocity in the Congo, 1904-13' in Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis (Reaktion Books, London: 2012), p. 43.
[136] Ibid, pp. 42-44.

Though there can never be a full understanding of the context and factors that make up another person's life circumstances or what a person must have 'felt' in that circumstance, there is nonetheless a realisation, through critical self-reflection of one's own vulnerability, what one had felt (mediated by the gradients of memory) at a similar moment. It need not mimic the circumstance, setting, value of gender or time in history, but is existential in as much as 'feeling for' contributes to our very own make up of 'self'. When the Muslim speaks with others, he or she should be able to insert their own empathetic considerations onto the addressee. Mothers are able to 'feel' out of their own maternal considerations, fathers too can appreciate the challenges and joys of fatherhood. People in a society can relate to the same kinds of social concerns like street crime, rise in housing costs, university tuition fees, retirement and loneliness.

Empathy is the ability to share in the emotions of another person, in his or her happiness or sadness. This can be done through perspective taking, recalling a time wherein we had been in the same or similar situation. We knew how such an experience felt and can appreciate how that other person is feeling. Such cognitive processing can produce strong emotions of compassion, of sympathy and so many other connections between people. We might even associate with another's feelings due to what we know of them and due to the degree of closeness to them. This is shown beautifully in the following narration:

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'A man felt very thirsty while he was on the way, there he came across a well. He went down the well, quenched his thirst and came out. Meanwhile he saw a dog panting and licking mud because of excessive thirst. He said to himself, "This dog is suffering from thirst as I did.' So, he went down the well again and filled his shoe with water and watered it. Allāh thanked him for that deed and forgave him. The people said, 'O Allāh's Messenger! Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?' He replied: 'Yes, there is a reward for serving any living being.'"[137]

[137] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2466.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was concerned about people learning to have empathy for others. That is, we are able to perspective-take, to note how others feel in different situations. The tradition is edifying in so many ways. It teaches us to consider human emotions, sensitivities and boundaries in our relationship with others. It reminds us that in our human instincts and tendencies, we are similar at many levels and in particular with respect to feelings for 'our' selves. Absolute binaries of Self and Otherness are challenged in this tradition in that it places the self and others, 'people', and 'their mothers/daughters/sisters…' in a frame of togetherness. The frame of togetherness and the perspective taking is illustrative in the following narration:

"Abu Umāma reported: A young man came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and he said, "O Messenger of Allāh, give me permission to commit adultery." The people turned to rebuke him, saying,

"Quiet! Quiet!" The Prophet said, "Come here." The young man came close and he told him to sit down. The Prophet said, "Would you like that for your mother?" The man said, "No, by Allāh, may I be sacrificed for you."

The Prophet said, "Neither would people like it for their mothers. Would you like that for your daughter?" The man said, "No, by Allāh, may I be sacrificed for you." The Prophet said, "Neither would people like it for their daughters. Would you like that for your sister?" The man said, "No, by Allāh, may I be sacrificed for you." The Prophet said, "Neither would people like it for their sisters. Would you like that for your aunts?" The man said, "No, by Allāh, may I be sacrificed for you." The Prophet said,

"Neither would people like it for their aunts." Then, the Prophet placed his hand on him and he said, "O Allāh, forgive his sins, purify his heart, and guard his chastity." After that, the young man never again inclined to anything sinful."

In another narration, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him,

“Then hate what Allāh has hated, and love for your brother what you love for yourself.”[138]

When we refuse the points of connectedness among us, we are in the process of denying our own humanity and the humanity of others. Arriving at such a place makes any violation against another all the more possible.

There are other narrations which espouse the same message, communicating the importance and of the empathic practice. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said,

“None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”[139]

And,

“The servant does not attain the reality of faith until he loves for people what he loves for himself of goodness.”[140]

In the aforementioned narration, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned ‘people’ in place of ‘brother’ and there are other narrations that also read like this. Many scholars in fact interpreted “brother” in such traditions to indicate a universal type of brotherhood, including all of humanity. Imam al-Nawawī for example comments on this tradition, highlighting the greater religious love a Muslim would have to share Islam with everyone in the human brotherhood - both Muslims and non-Muslims:

“This is interpreted as brotherhood in general, such that it includes the disbeliever and the Muslim. So he should love for his brother, the disbeliever, what he loves for himself which is his entering Islam, just as he should love for his brother Muslim that he remains in Islam.”[141]

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[138] Musnad Aḥmad 21708.
[139] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 13.
[140] Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān 238.
[141] Sharḥ al-Arba’īn 13.

Imbuing the sentiments of affinity and fellow-feeling find an important place in the Islamic tradition, which are intrinsically linked to adopting a comprehensive empathy for others. Empathy is a very important Islamic attribute. Understanding the life experiences and thus motivations of another can provide us with much clarity about another's way of thinking, insecurities, fears and joys. Our empathising with another can take different strands. Sometimes due to our own fears, prejudices and apprehensions of another, we are unable to show real empathy. Other times we show 'witness empathy', an empathy wherein we are cognisant of our own vulnerability and seek to alleviate the harm and suffering of another.

"By the Morning Brightness"

This is shown beautifully in Sūrah al-Ḍuḥa in which the Prophet (peace be upon him), having undergone unease at the six-month delay in revelation was met with the revelation of this new hope-inspiring chapter. The chapter is consoling the Prophet (peace be upon him), a reminder of Allāh's favours upon him and a promise of a better future. Before we continue our discussion of this Sūrah, let us remember the great relevance of this Sūrah for a people, including ourselves, so often beset with anxieties, uncertainties and depression. Our vision as Muslims is to show the profound relevance of the Qur'ānic message with whom we engage. The Qur'ān is relevant at an intrinsically human level and speaks to us and also speaks to our addressees before we speak among ourselves.

93:1 - By the morning brightness
93:2 - and by the night when it grows still,
93:3 - your Lord has not forsaken you [Prophet], nor does He hate you

Upon reminding the Prophet (peace be upon him) that Allāh had indeed provided him succour, shelter and provision, the verses follow on to instructions about how others should be treated:

93:6 - Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you?

93:7 - Did He not find you lost and guide you?

93:8 - Did He not find you in need and make you self-sufficient?

93:9 - So do not be harsh with the orphan

93:10 - and do not chide the one who asks for help;

93:11 - talk about the blessings of your Lord.

The empathy bearing in the aforementioned verses is in relation to what the Prophet (peace be upon him) experienced as a young man. That personal circumstances of poverty and/or loneliness can be understood in relation to how others are to be perceived and treated teaches us the importance of having a field of affective and cognitive insight in our relation with others.

Ibn Kathīr explains the injunctions to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as an instruction to treat others in relation to a recalling of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own life experiences as a young man. He explains:"So do not be harsh with the orphan" by commenting "remember when you were an orphan"! "And do not chide the one who asks for help" by commenting "remember when you were poor" and "to be unto the orphan like a merciful father." Qatada said that it means "to treat the poor with mercy and softness."[142]

There are many things we can do to foster communication based on paradigms of empathy. The task is to try and see the world from another's point of view. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said that when he leads the prayer, he intends to pray a lengthy prayer, "and then I hear a child crying so I shorten my prayer as I know his crying will distress his mother."[143]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was cognisant of the needs of others and could understand the world of mother and child in relation to what could distress them at that point. The audible distress of another person actualised a kind of witness empathy in the Prophet (peace be upon him) seeking to alleviate both the mother and child's distress. The latter is similar to

[142] https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura93-aya9.html#katheer.

[143] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 678, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 470.

when someone has offered to buy you a hot drink on a cold day, or buy you food when you had been hungry, or someone embraced you on a day when you had been feeling down. As recipients of another's kindness, we are not always alert to the motivations and intentions behind another person's goodness, but we do feel a sense of his action corroborating with something we had been feeling at that precise moment. What another person sees of us is not always known to us, but the interchange of unspoken emotions at that point can be transformative. Empathy is to see another. To be empathic, one is required to be non-judgemental and look at the 'human being before him or her. Remember that each person is valuable in their own right and to afford people this recognition is crucial. Sometimes, based on a person's life experience they might have been victims of discrimination whereby their humanness was questioned or denied. If a person is judgemental and considers the other as a stereotyped 'Other', it is unlikely he or she will be able to feel for that person and attempt to understand things from that person's point of view or life experience. The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave to each person an individual consideration, to such an extent that his companions would say that they felt the most important in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) company. Even though the Prophet (peace be upon him) may be around others, he made the one he communicated with feel as though he was acknowledged the most. A beautiful example of the way the Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately responded empathically upon seeing a group of barefoot and destitute people entering into Madina is shown in this narration:

"Mundhir ibn Jarīr reported on the authority of his father: While we were in the company of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in the early hours of the morning, some people came there (who) were barefooted, naked, wearing striped woollen clothes, or cloaks, with their swords hung (around their necks). Most of them, nay, all of them, belonged to the tribe of Mudar. The colour of the face of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) underwent a change when he saw them in poverty. He then entered (his house) and came out and commanded Bilal (to pronounce Adhān). He pronounced Adhān and Iqāma, and he observed prayer (along with his Companion) and then addressed (them reciting verses of the Holy Qur'an): "O people, fear your Lord, Who created you from a single being" to the end of the

verse," Allah is ever a Watcher over you" (4:1). (He then recited) a verse of Sūrah al-Ḥashr: "Fear Allah. And let every soul consider that which it sends forth for the morrow and fear Allah" (59:18). (Then the audience began to vie with one another in giving charity.) Some donated a dinar, others a dirham, still others clothes, some donated a sa' of wheat, some a sa' of dates; till he said: (Bring) even if it is half a date. Then a person from among the Anṣār came there with a money bag which his hands could scarcely lift; in fact, they could not (lift). Then the people followed continuously, till I saw two heaps of eatables and clothes, and I saw the face of the Messenger glistening, like gold (on account of joy). The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: He who sets a good precedent in Islam, there is a reward for him for this (act of goodness) and reward of that also who acted according to it subsequently, without any deduction from their rewards; and he who sets in Islam an evil precedent, there is upon him the burden of that, and the burden of him also who acted upon it subsequently, without any deduction from their burden."[144]

The men, certainly 'Othered' by different standards and in different settings, were brought into the conversation by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and sheltered by his care. Troubled by what he saw, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) face changed, meaning his displeasure and sympathy were visible on his blessed countenance. Not only was the Prophet (peace be upon him) moved by what he saw, he called the Muslims together to remind them of the witness empathy they were required to exhibit. The Qur'ānic verse he chose to recite is further revealing – a reminder that Allāh created us from a single soul. All of us are the same in that our origin is one. On the plain of Arafat, the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained:

"All of you are from Ādam and Ādam was from dust."[145] The charitable response of the companions was reassuring and in witnessing the scene the Prophet's (peace be upon him) face "became glistening like gold" in approval.

[144] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1017a.
[145] Sunan al-Tirmidhī 3955.

Feeling for the other

Empathy is also about communicating your understanding of another person's feelings. It provides great relief when someone else identifies with your feelings and you know that your distress or concern is worthy enough to be listened to. It goes a very long way, when speaking with someone who is recounting a personal story, tragedy, or sharing a good news, to reassure them, or to acknowledge their difficulties or happiness. In such circumstances, you may express their importance by simply uttering "It sounds like you had a really difficult time. Tell me more about it/how did you cope?" The simple saying of "tell me more…" about a happy or a sad description puts the person in a place of importance. It then makes your words, guidance and instruction better received and appreciated.

Some of the most evocative accounts of empathy emerge in the most precarious situations. With realisation of a sense of finality or in the context of an act of defiance, humans can be propelled into enacting behaviours that are not typical even in the said circumstances. These might be viewed as indeed atypical in so much as the contexts to which they belong and the sense of self-sacrifice found in them. The 'sharing' in another's pain, the 'imagining' of that pain is, as Rossbacher defined, the foundation of empathy.

Tzvetan Todorov draws upon several examples of Holocaust victims who, faced with death, chose to pre-empt their own 'subsequent' deaths by dying alongside others. Todorov describes the case of J. Kosciuszkowa who describes a mother who gave birth in Auschwitz. Though she had hidden the baby for five months, when he was found and taken from her, she chose to go with him, "clutching her son to her breast, she carried him into the gas chambers."[146]

[146] Hermann Langbein, Hommes et femmes à Auschwitz (Paris, Fayard: 1975), p. 231; Tzvetan Todorov, Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps (London, Phoenix: 2000), p. 71.

Another case Todorov mentions is that of a Dutch woman who, when her husband was selected for the gas chambers, chose to go with him.[147] The way that we interpret empathy, its actualisation, significance and effect will vary depending on different situations. David Guez, a Jewish individual forced into hiding during Nazi rule of North Africa commented on the brave role played by Arab Muslims during the Holocaust. He describes an Arab gentleman who would afford him an extra loaf of bread: "sometimes it was simply an extra loaf of bread that made the greatest difference to us."[148]

Empathy, as Rossbacher commented can be as simple as a smile – though a smile in a precarious moment in which there is an absence of all that would socially abjure the symbol of a smile is a profound empathising. An illustration of the significance of something as simple a smile in the context of alienation and Othering, of even mass suffering and genocide of Others is seen in a remarkable rescuing initiative of Pastor Andre Trocme. In 1942 when deportation of Jews began in France, in the village of Le Chambon, France, Pastor Andre Trocme and his wife Magda became increasingly concerned to help in the effort to rescue Jews fleeing deportation to concentration camps. With other parishes, the Trocmes encouraged their congregations to shelter Jews and for their cities to become cities of refuge. They set up a number of "safe houses" where Jews could hide, and Jewish children under false identities were enlisted in the cities' schools. Many refugees were thereafter helped to escape to Switzerland following an underground-railroad network. The example that follows below of a refugee describing Andre Trocme helps us to identify empathy seeking in human encounters. The effect can be lasting and transformative.

"Another refugee replied, when I asked her what kind of man he was: "That smile…that smile…the smile of that man, that smile…He did not have to say anything, just 'Ça va?' and that was enough." Still another said that upon arriving at the presbytery she was greeted with immense warmth, as if he would fold her in his arms and protect her lovingly against any

[147] Isaiah Trunk, Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution (New York, Stein & Day: 1979), p. 280; Tzvetan Todorov, Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps (London, Phoenix: 2000), p. 71.
[148] Robert Satloff, Among the Righteous (New York: PublicAffairs: 2006) pp. 100-101.

harm. A few minutes after she met him, he offered to lend her money, which she did not need. A little later, she found out that he had almost no money himself."[149]

The refugee comes to imagine a consequence of compassionate display and in the description, the attachment between the pair is not a product of a complex relationship but one described through gestures and symbols. For the refugee, Trocme becomes iconic, saviour-like and embodying. It is in a smile, a statement and an imagined touch that the Other can transpose Trocme's empathy within herself. Todorov explains that 'sometimes a look sufficed'. David Rodman recalls that as a convoy of prisoners were marched to a forced-labour camp in Poland, a young man came out to see them and looked at the prisoners with a "noble face [that] expressed deep sorrow and compassion…I know exactly next to which he stood. I still can see the look of suffering on the young man's face, the exact color of his shirt…It impressed me that someone felt for me and cared because I suffered." These examples stem from an imagining of how another person feels and one cannot fully understand the complexities of each human encounter, especially in such precarious moments. No human encounter is simple and "no quantity of meaning, no matter how sincerely ascribed, can void the subjective quality of each meeting."[150]

Timothy Snyder in his chapter entitled 'The Righteous Few' considers the rescuing of Jews during the Holocaust as a social and emotional transitioning, describing the initial uncertainty and alienation to "encounters in grey", and the simple meeting with others as "encounters in black". This willingness to self-sacrifice, he maintains, is due to an imagined mental storying about what their own lives might have been like if they were in such precarious situations and further, how the victims' lives might be different if their situations were to change. This is empathy. Not simply the feeling what it means to be another, but also the feeling of one's own incompleteness, a realisation of one's own vulnerability in light of another, which Snyder makes reference to when describing: "The risk to self was compensated by a vision of

[149] Nechama Tec, When Light Pierced the Darkness (New York, Oxford University Press: 1986), p. 72; Tzvetan Todorov, Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps (London, Phoenix: 2000), p. 73.
[150] Timothy Snyder, Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning (Vintage, London: 2016), p. 309.

love, of marriage, of children, of enduring the war into peace and into some more tranquil future."[151]

Snyder further cites an example of an elderly Ukranian couple, Marko and Oksana Verbievka who came upon a Jewish girl from Nowograd-Wolyńsk in Volhynia. She had previously survived a shooting in which her parents were murdered and thereafter sought refuge with a woman who subsequently took to abusing her. Finally, the older couple took her in and upon listening to her ordeals they cried in sympathy. Oksana reassured her, "Be at peace, little child, forget all this; you will be a daughter to us, we have no children, everything will be yours." After a moment Oksana remarked "But you won't abandon us later, will you?[152] This encounter coalesces a sense of grieving in both parties, the girl and the couple. Acting to secure a safety for herself in the present, the couple's empathy emanates from the memories of a childless past and also perhaps through the juxtaposing of the girl's youthfulness with their own aging. That "you will be a daughter to us" reflects an incentive for the couple's empathising; the girl could be used for help on the couple's farm. The encounter speaks very much of the couple's imagined storying of their own vulnerability without the young girl in a sense of the present and their imagined past. They empathise with the girl when equating her with a child they never had, and thus the girl's suffering might be akin to an imagining of their 'own child's 'suffering. One need not speak of an unspoken empathy since empathy, unlike visual codes, which might deliberate on sympathetic tendencies, are not required.

Empathy as Imagined Storying

Empathy is an imagined storying and the actors can be very much one's own. The storying is told on one's own canvas. If re-humanising requires the ability to empathise then the fine points we recognise in our own physical and emotional being need to be considered in other people. The best example of the way simple gestures can have a transformative effect on the lives of others, and draw people closer to Allāh comes from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

[151] Ibid, p. 288.
[152] Ibid, pp. 304-305.

He taught that the conveying of the Islamic call is the entirety of you. Words well-spoken can have a lasting impact. It is often the ‘how’ of what is said that transcends the ‘what’ of whatever was said.

After the conquest of Makkah, one of the Makkans, Fuḍāla ibn Umayr, though having nominally accepted Islam, was keen on revenge, and had vowed to assassinate the Prophet (peace be upon him). As the Prophet (peace be upon him) was performing ṭawāf (circumambulation of the Ka‘ba), Fuḍāla had hidden his sword under his clothing and was preparing himself for the dastardly deed he was about to commit. Instantly, he found himself within reach of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet looked up at Fuḍāla and asked, “What is it that you were saying to yourself?” Fuḍāla brushed off the question by saying he was simply praising Allāh. The Prophet (peace be upon him) smiled at Fuḍāla and said, “Ask Allāh to forgive you,” placing his hand on Fuḍāla’s chest. Fuḍāla would later say, “By Allāh, from the moment he lifted his hand from my chest, there remained nothing of Allāh’s creation except that he was more beloved to me than it.”[153]

To further emphasise the great importance of leaving an impression and displaying integrity of character on others, the Prophet (peace be upon him) smiled and displayed patient forbearance when Abu Bakr (Allāh be pleased with him) abstained from responding to an individual who was insulting him. When, however, Abu Bakr resorted to meeting the man’s words with similar retorts, the Prophet (peace be upon him) became angry and left. He (peace be upon him) later explained, “An angel was with you, responding on your behalf. But when you said back to him some of what he said, a devil arrived, and it is not for me to sit with devils.”[154]

There is great learning here for the Muslims. Sometimes people react to Muslims the way the media has prepared them to react – with fear and ignorance. Images of women in burqa, sensationalist headlines, stories of immigration, war, conflict, as well as, isolated stories of misconduct, are amplified in the media and have a strong bearing on people’s perceptions of

[153] Ibn ‘Abdul-Barr, al-Durar fī Ikhtiṣār al-Maghāzī wal-Siyar, p. 235.
[154] Musnad Aḥmad 9411.

others. So too were the Makkans of Quraysh interested in exhilarating a campaign of slander against the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) was keen to show and teach that the believers should not lose sight of their focus in conveying the call to Islam in such hostile environments. There is a point about survival or even saving face in such environments, and another about leaving a beautiful message about Islam, through words or character. In the example of Abu Bakr, we are reminded that the devil is ever keen that any goodness we might have set out to achieve is derailed when a person stoops to the level of those who he is insulted by. Our actions and behaviour ought to be driven by Islamic principles of beautiful conduct.

Fitting with the way Allāh described the Prophet (peace be upon him), "you are but a mercy to the worlds" al-Anbiyā' (21:107), and "upon an exalted [standard] of character" al-Qalam (68:4). It was the standard of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to show forbearance and nobility when insulted and attacked. It was those key verses in Sūrah al-Fuṣṣilat that marked the transformation in a people who had not previously encountered a holistic message centred on belief in One God, living a life aware of a Day of divine accountability and with a strong emphasis on displaying a great standard of character towards others:

41:34 - Good and evil cannot be equal. [Prophet], repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was rigorous with his companions to ensure that they do not overburden others even in leading people in lengthy prayers and in not overloading and causing distress to their animals. He wept upon seeing a camel that was heavily weakened, he put his hand on its head and comforted it and then told his companion:

"Do you not fear Allāh about this beast that Allāh has given in your possession? It has complained to me that you keep it hungry and load it heavily which fatigues it."[155]

[155] Abu Dāwūd.

It would aggrieve him that people were stricken by poverty, lacked basic essentials and were struggling through life. Allāh describes him in the Qur'ān:

9:128 - A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him: he is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) embarked towards Ṭā'if in the hope that its people would perhaps be receptive to the Islamic call, the process of Othering in Makkah through the labelling of the Prophet (peace be upon him) a 'mad man', a 'sorcerer', 'bewitched', influenced the attitude of the people of Ṭā'if. They resorted to pelting him with stones, to ridicule and cursing him. At this junction in the Prophetic mission, we reflect on the way he exhibited a remarkable forbearance and patience. 'Ā'isha reported that she once asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), "Have you encountered a day harder than the Day of Uḥud?" To which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said the hardest day was the day he went to Ṭā'if. He related the happening:

"Your tribe has abused me much, and the worst was the day of 'Aqaba when I presented myself to 'Abd Yalayl b. 'Abd Kulāl, and he did not respond to what I sought. I departed, overwhelmed with grief, and I could not relax until I found myself at a tree where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me. I looked up and saw Gabriel in it. He called out to me, saying, 'Allāh has heard your people's saying to you and how they have replied, and Allāh has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people.' The Angel of the Mountains greeted me and said, 'O Muḥammad, order what you wish, and if you like, I will let the two mountains fall upon them.' I said, 'No; rather, I hope that Allāh will bring from their descendants people who will worship Allāh alone without associating partners with Him.'"[156]

[156] al-Bukhārī 3059 and Muslim 1795.

A most beautiful example of the way the Prophet (peace be upon him) reacted to those intent on Othering him through a caricaturing of his name is shown here:

"Arwā b. Ḥarb (also known as Um Jamīl, the wife of Abu Lahab) would follow the Prophet (peace be upon him) around to hurt and humiliate him and used to taunt him, 'Mudhammam (the dispraised) we have denied, and his religion we have loathed, and his command we have defied!' Instead of responding to her, he would simply find solace in saying to his Companions, 'Don't you see how Allāh diverts from me the curses and insults of Quraysh? They insult Mudhammam, and they curse Mudhammam, while I am Muhammad (the Praised One)!"[157]

The Prophet's (peace be upon him) name was of course 'Muḥammad' (the praised one) and the wife of Abu Lahab hoped that by inverting his name to 'Mudhammam' (the dispraised one), the Prophet (peace be upon him) would fall into disrepute among the townsfolk. Yet the Prophet (peace be upon him) showed magnanimity in his ignoring the woman's words, knowing that his words and character would far deeper penetrate the fabric of his society and our global world, as well as knowing that the name 'Muḥammad' would forever invite praise and salutations.

5.1 The Genocide of Rwanda 1994 & A Paradigm of Rescuing

"PIO: We no longer saw a human being when we turned up a Tutsi in the swamps. I mean a person like us, sharing similar thoughts and feelings. The hunt was savage, the hunters were savage, the prey was savage-savagery took over the mind."[158]

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[157] Sunan an-Nasa'i 3438.

[158] Jean Hatzfeld, A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide: The Killers Speak (Serpents Tail, London: 2008), p. 42.

In the 19th century present-day Rwanda and Burundi, predominantly Christian countries, became Germany colonies, and the new powers founded a feudal society in the countries. Made up of two dominant tribes, the Hutu and the Tutsi, the Tutsi nobility descended from cattle ranchers. After Germany lost the First World War, the League of Nations entrusted the East African mandate of Rwanda and Burundi (Ruanda-Urundi) to Belgium, and thus French became the language of the government.

From the 1930s, the Belgian government made it mandatory for all Africans to carry identity cards displaying their ethnicity, language and religion. The Rwandans were divided into three ethnic groups, 80 to 85% Hutu, 14 to 19% Tutsi and 1% Twa. As colonisers do, practising a divide and rule policy, the Belgian separated and marginalised the groups along racial lines determining that the Tutsi were a superior race who had lighter skin, were taller and had thin noses – a more European type look. The Hutu on the other hand were held to be inferior, with darker skin and shorter statures. The Belgium government thus granted more power, status, economic and educational privileges to the Tutsis.

Muslims in Rwanda only represented a very small proportion of the country's inhabitants and had long suffered the brunt of a negative propaganda, which had led to many cases of discrimination. Muslims were referred to by the disparaging terms "Umuswahili" derived from the fact that many Muslims in earlier generations had spoken Swahili. There were also attempts by teachers to convert Muslim children to Christianity, and if any resisted they faced preventions and restrictions in furthering their education. Many Muslim parents who feared such conversion attempts opted to not send their children to school and to enrol them instead into madrasas. This had long term effects since Muslims would remain as a marginal group with little influence in political life.

On April 6, 1994, a plane carrying home the late Presidents Habyarimana of Rwanda and Ntaryamira of Burundi was shot down above the Kanombe International Airport in Kigali. The crash was blamed by Hutus on Tutsi rebels and what transpired was a sporadic festering

of hate and revenge. This culminated in a savage campaign of murder and violence which spread from the capital to the rest of the country.

Due to a very intense program of dehumanisation of the Tutsi population, much of the violence was carried out between neighbour and neighbour, husband and wife, clergy and congregation, teacher and students. Hutu militia, the interhamwe, resorted to hacking to death men and women they had grown up with, who attended the same churches, the same schools, spoke the same language and even intermarried.

The campaign of Otherising the Tutsis was fermented and disseminated through schools, media and in political rhetoric, inspiring armed youth to kill openly. The murderers would force others to do the same, evoking slogans of “do or die”, meaning kill or get killed, enticing them with promises of food, money and an inheritance of land belonging to the Tutsis they kill.

Many who did not physically kill others, colluded with murderers to reveal Tutsi hiding places. Though some of the violent outbursts were sporadic events, many high-level Tutsi politicians and businessmen were also implicated in the festering of virulent anti-Hutu propaganda. The country, without national or effective community leadership, degenerated into a horrendous killing field, travel restrictions prevented free movement and insecurity was rife.

What transpired in Rwanda in 1994 was man’s inhumanity to man wherein all morality was suspended. Dehumanisation occurs when some human beings exclude other human beings from the moral order of humanity. In the eyes of perpetrators such human beings lose the status that holds them together with the human race. The Tutsi were castigated with a “spoiled identity”, a state of nothingness, as “things”, “cockroaches”, as “animals” and the country descended into a savage outbreak of murder.

This same process of dehumanisation existed in the rape of Nanking in 1937. The Holocaust began the same way – through an elaborate series of propaganda which featured in media and schools. The lynchings of black people in America was precipitated by a culture of stigmatising blacks as "niggers". Similarly, the label of "gooks" was used to Otherise the Vietnamese in the My Lai massacre in which hundreds of Vietnamese civilians were killed by American soldiers. About this, Mark Baker offers us a haunting perspective: "I enjoyed the shooting and the killing. I was literally turned on when I saw a gook get shot. When a GI got shot, even if I didn't know him…that would bother me. A GI was real. But if a gook got killed, it was like me going out here and stepping on a roach."[159] Glenn Gray recounts an incident from World War II:

"When a Japanese soldier was "flushed" from his hiding place well behind the lines of combat, "the unit, made up of relatively green troops, was resting and joking. But they seized their rifles and began using him as a live target while he dashed frantically around the clearing in search of safety. The soldiers found his movements uproariously funny and were prevented by their laughter from making early end of the unfortunate man. Finally, however, they succeeded in killing him, and the incident cheered the whole platoon, giving them something to talk and joke about for days afterward. In relating this story...the veteran emphasized the similarity of the enemy soldier to an animal. None of the American soldiers apparently ever considered that he may have had human feelings of fear and the wish to be spared."[160]

Limbardo writes that "Yesterday's "gooks" have become today's "hajis and "towel heads" in the Iraq War as a new corps of soldiers derogates these different-looking citizens and soldiers. He cites Sergeant Mejla:

[159] Sam Keen, Faces of the Enemy, (Harper & Row, San Francisco: 1986), p. 125.
[160] Ibid, p. 62.

"You just sort of try to block out the act that they're human beings and see them as enemies…You call them 'hajis. you know. You do all the things that make it easier to deal with killing them and mistreating them."[161]

The famous Stanford experiments and those conducted by Albert Bandura sought to demonstrate the power of dehumanising labels to generate a culture of Otherness which would lead to harming of others. The researchers showed that dehumanising others with caricatures and labels divested others of human qualities. Conversely, their research also showed that positive labelling had the effect of enhancing a greater respect towards people. The archetypes of terrorist or untrustworthy enemy created by visual propaganda in Nazi Germany of Jews or the media portrayals of Arabs that Shaheen and others point out generates an idea of a dangerous "them", as "outsiders" and "hostile". The repeated use of such images together with negative media narratives creates a societal paranoia about the burqa attired woman or the heavily bearded man.

"Our Arms Ruled Our Heads"

In Jean Hatzfeld's very harrowing account of the Rwandan genocide, made up largely of testimonials by perpetrators we come to read grizzly accounts of human beings who describe in graphic detail the events of the genocide in which the processes of Othering and dehumanisation are made plain:

"JOSEPH-DESIRE: The one who rushed off machete in hand, he listened to nothing anymore. He forgot everything, first of all his level of intelligence. Doing the same thing every day meant we didn't have to think about what we were doing. We went out and came back without having a single thought. We hunted because it was the order of the day, until the day was over. Our arms ruled our heads; in any case our heads no longer had their say."

[161] Philip Zimbardo, The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil (Rider Books: 2007), pp 307-308; C.J. Nemeth, "Differential Contributions to Majority and Minority Influence," Psychological Review 93 (1986), pp. 23-32.

“FULGENCE: We became more and more cruel, more and more calm, more and more bloody. But we did not see that we were becoming more and more killers. The more we cut, the more cutting became child’s play if I may say so. In the evening you might meet a colleague. For a few, it turned into a treat, would call out, “You, my friend, buy me a Primus or I’ll cut open your skull, because I have a taste for that now!” But for many, it was simply that a long day had just come to an end. We stopped thinking about obligations or advantages – we thought only about continuing what we had started. In any case, it held us so tight, we could not think about its effect on us”.

“ADALBERT: At the start of the killings, we worked fast and skimmed along because we were eager. In the middle of the killings, we killed casually. Time and triumph encouraged us to loaf around. At first, we could feel more patriotic or more deserving when we managed to catch some fugitives. Later on, those kinds of feelings deserted us. We stopped listening to fine words on the radio and from the authorities. We killed to keep the job going. Some were tired of these blood assignments.”[162]

Jean-Baptiste Munyankore, a survivor of the killings in the marshes of Rwanda describes how the ordinary man, associates, friends and colleagues each betrayed an unspoken human oath of trust between them, and moreover betrayed the human conscience that recoils at the taking of an innocent life. In the accounts of rescuers, it is remarkable that what is often said is, “I did what anybody else would do”, or we only did what seemed normal to do. Jean-Baptiste Munyankore explains:

“The principal and the inspector of schools in my district participated in the killings with nail-studded clubs. Two teachers, colleagues with whom we used to share beers and student evaluations, set their shoulders to the wheel, so to speak. A priest, the burgomaster, the sub prefect, a doctor - they all killed with their own hands... They wore pressed cotton trousers, they had no trouble sleeping, they travelled around in vehicles or on light motorcycles... These well-educated people were calm, and they rolled up their sleeves to get a good grip on

[162] Jean Hatzfeld, A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide: The Killers Speak (Serpents Tail, London: 2008), p. 45.

their machetes. For someone who has spent his life teaching the humanities, as I have, such criminals are a fearful mystery."[163]

One of the murderers, 'Ignace', explains what the prevalent campaign of dehumanising and subsequent murders had done to the human soul and to the human codes of recognisability between people. The Qur'ān highlights that differences between people are inconsequential in comparison to the greater purpose we serve - to know and love our Creator. 'Ignace' explains:

"They had become people to throw away, so to speak. They no longer were what they had been, and neither were we."[164]

In this, one of the most evocative accounts from the Rwandan genocide, the explanation of perpetrator "Pio" resonates with much of what has been intended and written in this book. The full scale of dehumanisation and its destructive effects on the human spirit, on one's consciousness is laid bare. This book has sought to understand the Muslim's role in a world of sometimes discordant relations festered by attitudes of Othering. It shows that such attitudes impinge upon the conviviality, harmony of existence and mutual understanding between peoples – as shown in the Qur'ānic paradigm. "Pio" begins by saying:

"PIO: Not only had we become criminals, we had become a ferocious species in a barbarous world. This truth is not believable to someone who has not lived it in his muscles. Our daily life was unnatural and bloody, and that suited us."[165]

The transformation that such a removal from man's pure conscience is reflected in "Pio's" words:

[163] Ibid, p. 62.
[164] Ibid, p. 42.
[165] Ibid, p. 43.

"For my part, I offer you an explanation: it is as if I had let another individual take on my own living appearance, and the habits of my heart, without a single pang in my soul. This killer was indeed me, as to the offence he committed and the blood he shed, but he is a stranger to me in his ferocity. I admit and recognize my obedience at that time, my victims, my fault, but I fail to recognize the wickedness of the one who raced through the marshes on my legs, carrying my machete. That wickedness seems to belong to another self with a heavy heart. The most serious changes in my body were my invisible parts, such as the soul or the feelings that go with it. Therefore I alone do not recognize myself in that man."[166]

He compares his state to a kind of metamorphosis that one would expect in a Gothic horror fiction. The relevance of the soul and the heart in our very being are of crucial importance here as we deliberate on man's ascent and descent, as revealed in this verse: "how it is imbued with moral failings as well as with consciousness of God!" (91:8)

The Muslim is reminded once again that it is man's inner being, his soul and heart that speak though his behaviours. Pio says that he was "a stranger to me in his ferocity". The Othering one unleashes on another and which, in the worst cases, initially generates genocidal tendencies and then acts of wanton killing stems from a process of Othering. That is, a setting apart other human beings from the frame of humanity; a castigating of those others as rodents and worthless.

The killing first broke out at Lake Mugesera, a site the Tutsis would use to dump bodies of Hutu victims. In one of the earliest acts of courage during the build-up to the genocide, Muslims took out their canoes to pull out bodies of Tutsi victims. In other places, Muslims would pay Tutsi villagers to prevent them from killing their Hutu neighbours. In Mabare, Muslims banded together to save the lives of Tutsis, locals would encourage locals to take possessions of the Tutsis and even their livestock, but to spare their lives, explaining Qur'ānic verses that offset ethnic polarities, such as:

[166] Ibid.

49:13 – "People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware."

Muslim leadership issued announcements to be read on radio telling Muslims that they had to adopt positive values and not forget their common humanity, warning their countrymen about the dangers of ethnic polarisation. They often hid their victims; when Hutus would appear seeking shelter, they would take turns sending them over back fences to other Muslim homes for protection, disguising them as Muslims by providing their women hijabs to wear and the men prayer beads to hold in mosques and in the streets.

Muslim imams taught their congregations that they should not kill other human beings, but should instead rescue others from being killed. Muslims put up road blocks to prevent people coming in in their attempt to protect Tutsis. They would purchase food, drink and medicinal items to bring for Tutsi families. In Kigali, Muslims would proclaim: 'Here, there are no Hutu, no Tutsi, we are all simply human beings." In Mabare, a group of Muslims petitioned at the office of the district officer and announced that they refuse to hand people over.

One Mabare Muslim explained, "We refused to hand people over. I told him myself, 'We want to rescue these people. If you want to take their cows, go ahead, but let us protect the people.'"[167] A study by Kristin C. Doughty and David Moussa Ntambara outlines the factors that appear to provide an explanation for the positive role played by the Muslims during the genocide. They consider the importance of communal salah five times a day; that the bond between people, irrespective of tribal associations, is strengthened when they kneel together shoulder to shoulder and heel to heel as a regular daily practice. The fact that the genocide began just days after the end of the month of Ramadan is another factor drawn upon by the authors:

[167] Kristin Doughty and David Moussa Ntambara, 'Resistance and Protection: Muslim Community Actions During the Rwandan Genocide', Collaborative Learning Projects (2005), p. 13.

"The genocide began just a few weeks after Ramadan, the holiest of Muslim periods, a one-month period that is a time for inner reflection, devotion to God, and self-control. During Ramadan, Muslims fast during the day as a means of purification and self-discipline, and as a means of identifying with those in need and developing sympathy for the less fortunate. As well, Ramadan emphasizes the strength of community, and Muslim ideals of sharing with others are amplified, as people eat the break-fast meal together, after sundown, and consistently share food with each other. People suggested that particularly during this period, the solidarity within the community as they all perform this ritual together is strong. Therefore, when the genocide began just a few weeks later, this strong cohesiveness within the Muslim community and the ideals of the Koran were still very present in people's minds."[168]

Other social practices such as the sharing of food, the practice of sadaqa (charity) and zakat are also mentioned as important ways of helping believers to sympathise with the less fortunate and build a communal solidarity. Examples of empathic outreach are a remarkable testament to the human spirit. There are, however, examples of how rancorous hatred and stereotyping can produce an entrenched Othering fed on a long process of dehumanisation, such as in the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides. In the most horrific cases even family members and close friends turned weapons on the other. Muslims then, compared to now, were a small minority in the population. Prior to 1994, Muslims were marginalized to the degree that they were not respected nor were they considered as fully Rwandan citizens in the country.

When the Mufti of Rwanda, Saleh Habimana was questioned about what had made the role of the Muslims so special and unique in the 90 days of the genocide, his answer was phenomenal. It was, for the reason that Mufti Saleh envisaged the Muslim presence in Rwanda, their purpose, the achievement, the responsibility, the underlying foundation of their initiative, to be rooted in the Qur'ānic guidelines, to be active proponents of social goodness and to be bearers of Islamic values of conciliatory change. This is what Mufti Saleh

[168] Kristin Doughty and David Moussa Ntambara, 'Resistance and Protection: Muslim Community Actions During the Rwandan Genocide', Collaborative Learning Projects (2005), p. 17.

envisioned as the heart of the Islamic call in the most hostile and barbarous environment. Mufti Saleh cited the Qur'ānic verses about repelling evil with what is better than it:

41:34 - Good and evil cannot be equal. [Prophet], repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend,

41:35 but only those who are steadfast in patience, only those who are blessed with great righteousness, will attain to such goodness.

In conveying the message of Islam, a Muslim can sometimes be confronted with bad behaviour, stereotypical responses and an attitude already conditioned by negativity and stereotypes. This can manifest in the types of stereotyped questions being asked, emotionally charged responses, vilification, abuse, degrading, mockery, insult and even physical attack. In the course of the Rwandan genocide, many if not most, Hutu perpetrators said they felt coerced to kill because if they did not then they too would be killed. Groups of Interhamwe (armed militia, often youth) terrorised neighbourhoods with a "do or die" (kill or be killed) proclamation.

What does "repel evil with something that is better" mean in such a volatile context? In a letter of instruction sent to mosques throughout the land, Imams and scholars called on Muslims to be stalwart in their rejection of any ideology not in keeping with Qur'ānic values; to remind those intent on sowing hatred and murder that Hutus and Tutsis are merely tribal designations and that we are all humans. In Kigali, Muslims were known to make public proclamations, sometimes at risk of death, announcing: "Here there are no Hutus, and no Tutsis, but here there are only human beings." Where Hutu Interham we were keen to Otherise Tutsis with a kind of animalistic dehumanisation as "cockroaches" and "vermin" Muslim scholars endeavoured to convey the Qur'ānic worldview presented in the verse:

49:13 - People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.

The verse is essential in undercutting and offsetting binary distinctions fuelled by hate. It uproots the desire to sow division and dissension, and to castigate one group as inferior and unworthy. It is these sentiments of Othering that lie at the heart of intolerance and the burgeoning of genocidal tendencies. It is a verse that the Muslim would do well to learn and understand. It places between the caller and the addressee a commonality, far removed from superficial over-coatings and any claims of self-importance. It is more in tune with the one's innate disposition, both for the caller and the addressee to be reminded that at the base human level, there is nothing that divides us. Seeking to be honoured, or being honoured, or ennobled is beautiful, since it both highlights and juxtaposes every human's internal desire. Man might seek to inflate himself and degrade another of a greater dignity, respect and self-worth. This becomes possible through the effacing of the worth of another. The verse emphasises that it is Allāh Who confers dignity upon man, even though our human framing of worth and greatness is often skewed and lacking.

Islam as a healing force following the genocide

What transpired in the weeks, months and years following the genocide, and most particularly in the initial period was a deep interest in Islam among the Christian people of Rwanda. As the stories unfolded of the integrity and bravery of the Muslims who refused to take part in the killings and instead resorted to saving the lives of Tutsi victims, many wanted to learn about the faith that inspired such conduct. A Washington Post article from September 23, 2002, entitled 'Islam Attracting Many Survivors of Rwanda Genocide' by Emily Wax describes:

“Since the genocide, Rwandans have converted to Islam in huge numbers. Muslims now make up 14 percent of the 8.2 million people here in Africa’s most Catholic nation, twice as many as before the killings began.”[169]

The article describes the experience of Rwandan Christians with the minority Muslims and the way the positive responses following the genocide opened up new spaces of understanding between the people of that country:

“Sagahutu said his father had worked at a hospital where he was friendly with a Muslim family. They took Sagahutu in, even though they were Hutus. “I watched them pray five times a day. I ate with them and I saw how they lived,” he said. “When they pray, Hutu and Tutsi are in the same mosque. There is no difference. I needed to see that.”[170]

Another article by Marc Lacey published on April 7, 2004 in the New York Post entitled ‘Since ‘94 Horror, Rwandans Turn Toward Islam’ described the responses of the people of Rwanda:

“Nobody died in a mosque,’’ said Ramadhani Rugema, executive secretaryof the Muslim Association of Rwanda. ‘’No Muslim wanted any other Muslim to die. We stood up to the militias. And we helped many non-Muslims get away.’’

Muslim leaders credit the gains to their ability during the 1994 massacres to shield most Muslims, and many other Rwandans, from certain death. ‘’The Muslims handled themselves well in ‘94, and I wanted to be like them,’’ said Alex Rutiririza, explaining why he converted to Islam last year. With killing all around, he said, the safest place to be back then was in a Muslim neighborhood.”[171]

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[169] Emily Wax, ‘Islam Attracting Many Survivors of Rwanda Genocide’- https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/09/23/islam-attracting-many-survivors-of-rwanda-genocide/58cd661cc2f3-4b24-b743-4ffc1413c647.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Marc Lacey,’Since ‘94 Horror, Rwandans Turn Toward Islam’ - https://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/07/world/since-94-horrorrwandans-turn-toward-islam.html.

The last words here should be those of the Mufti of Rwanda, Saleh Habimana. When asked about what transpired in those haunting days, and what spirit drove the Muslims to behave as they did, he began by citing the following verses:

41:35 but only those who are steadfast in patience, only those who are blessed with great righteousness, will attain to such goodness.

Citing the example of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) return to Makkah, Mufti Saleh emphasised how patience and forbearance are always the hallmark of a Muslim's character wherever he is, and that, as Allāh mentions in the Qur'ān, it is these qualities that will inspire goodwill and reconciliation between people:

41:34 - Good and evil cannot be equal. [Prophet], repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend.

The rate of conversion to Islam in Rwanda from 1994 onward was a phenomenal testament to the promotion of life propagated by the country's Mufti, countless Imams and preachers throughout the country and in the actions of the ordinary man. We might say that, as Muslims were pulling out, in their canoes, the bodies of Tutsi victims from the lakes of Kigali, they were indeed pulling out the thorn of Othering which had torn the fabric of that country. Pain and trauma indeed leave a lasting mark on a person. Ideals of forbearance, forgiveness and mercy are what foster reconciliation and what enable a relationship to regrow and endure.

An act of brutality, however, grotesque and against one's innate nature, can leave lingering unease on a person's heart. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was the most emotionally intelligent of all humans and his dealing with the Ethiopian spear-thrower who killed and then horrifically mutilated the body of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) uncle Ḥamza ibn 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, (Allāh be pleased with him) demonstrated the life-long emotional pain and unease such severe trauma wreaks on an individual.

Waḥshī's sins however had been forgiven the moment he later embraced Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him) of course gave Waḥshī his rights as a Muslim. His heart was however overcome by the everliving pain of what Waḥshī had done. Many early chroniclers report that Hamza's ears and nose were cut off and used for a necklace, and some hold that Hind bint 'Uṭba (she had promised Waḥshī freedom in exchange for killing Ḥamza) gouged out his liver and attempted to eat it. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) companion Ibn Mas'ud (Allāh be pleased with him) says when the Prophet (peace be upon him) located his uncle's body, "Never did we see the Messenger of Allāh weep as intensely as he wept for Hamza."[172] The Prophet's (peace be upon him) forbearance nonetheless was exemplary.

At the Conquest of Makkah, Waḥshī fled, fearing that the Prophet (peace be upon him) could exact revenge for his uncle's killing. He thereafter deliberated on what he had come to learn of the Prophetic character and said, "I heard that no matter how grave a person's crime against him, the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) always chose forgiveness."[173]

This encouraged him to eventually return to Makkah and embrace Islam, and witness how the Prophet (peace be upon him) forgave his enemies. And so too did Hind bint 'Uṭba, who had prepared Waḥshī for the killing, come to learn of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mercy. When she announced her identity to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he remarked, "Welcome, O Hind." Touched by his selfless magnanimity she said, "By Allāh, there was no household that I wished to destroy more than yours, but now there is no household that I wish to honour more than yours."[174]

Everything, including the human heart, is in flux. One could not have imagined that somebody like Waḥshī, or even Hind, or someone like Balbir Singh (now Muhammad Aamir), a chief architect in the destruction of Babri mosque (Ayodhya, India) in December 1992, would embrace Islam. Balbir Singh in fact would later find faith and vowed to build a

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[172] al-Sīra al-Halabīyya 1/461.
[173] al-Bukhārī 3844, 4072.
[174] al-Bukhārī 6150, 6628 and Muslim 3234.

hundred mosques as a type of penance for his role in the destruction of that one mosque.131 His human conscience speaks like that of the companion Sa´īd ibn ʻĀmir, guilt ridden for witnessing the execution of Khubayb ibn ʻAdīy (Allāh be pleased with him). Neither Balbir Singh nor Sa´īd ibn ʻĀmir (Allāh be pleased with him) were Muslims at the time of what they witnessed or took part in, but the human conscience brought them back to their natural state – a reminder - "so that [in time] God might admit to His grace whomever He wills." 48:25

5.2 Conclusion

Empathy is the building block of relationships, the determinant that enables one to see something of himself in another, or something of his expected self, or something expected in another, in himself. Since the case studies presented in this book all seek to determine a challenging of binary distinctions the examples embrace the ethos not entirely of the emotional contagion of compassion but of finding distinctness in others we interact with and are sometimes challenged by. The extent to which one can empathise with another has a causative bearing on the wellbeing of that 'Other'. It can be a matter of life and death, of injury and safety. Empathy, what might be considered an actualised emotion, does not begin as an action, a physical deterrent or assistance. It actually puts into motion what might become a substantial action of another person. It does not call for a mental shifting of identities in as much as it acts on a spatial shifting and an overlapping of human codes of distinction.

Empathy is imagining what another person is in relation to the shifting of his or her time between the past and present, between considering what once was and what can or might transpire in the life of that person, between drawing together of the strands of one's own human existence and considering the 'Other' as vulnerable to the same temporalities and thus bound in the same 'frame' of time. Sometimes the challenging of self-identity, racial or ethnic, is at times a necessary medium for generating empathy. For many Germans, Sophie

Scholl's (of the White Rose Movement) defiance in the face of Nazi intimidation was, in retrospection, a quintessentially 'German' response.[175] An early example of Sophie's consciousness of the Otherness ascribed to Jews challenges us to consider the paradox in self/other constructs and the temporalities of physical boundaries. When Jewish friends from her class, Anneliese Wallersteiner and Luise Nathaan, were refused entry into the BDM (Bund Deutscher Mädel), the League of German Girls, Scholl remarked, 'Why can't Luise, with her blonde hair and blue eyes [not] be a member, while I with my dark hair and dark eyes am a member?'[176] We also learn that when a popular young male teacher was suddenly dismissed Sophie commented: 'What did he do? Nothing…He just wasn't a Nazi, so it was impossible for him to belong. That was his crime.'[177] Both examples speak of Sophie's broader construct of identity and place. The removal of her friends and teacher suggest a presumed allocation and belonging; Nazism for her challenged the normality of space as it did the occupants of that space. Her distance is an ethical self-examination of herself, her morals, her society and her choice-making; it is a distance which activates and does not prevent emotional response.

Our world is rapidly changing. More than 300 million people live outside of their native homelands and the average person is today more alert to his world than ever before. The dichotomous relationship between Self and Other, sometimes between spectator and spectated, has become more pronounced. The crisis of refugees of the Rohingya in Myanmar or Syrians in their mass exodus out of their country to escape the ongoing conflict; terrorist attacks and indiscriminate killings committed by ISIS, by neo-Nazi white supremacists or by Hindu nationalists create anxiety in our world and sometimes the insecurity we feel generates feelings that can range from anxiety, insecurity and abhorrence. At these junctions, humans group together, we become fearful and untrusting. These feelings of fear, mistrust,

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[175] F. McDonough, Sophie Scholl: The Real Story of the Woman who Defied Hitler (The History Press, Gloucestershire: 2009), pp. 153-159.

[176] Hermann Vinke, The Short Life of Sophie Scholl (Harper and Row Publishers, New York: 1980), p. 42; Frank McDonough, Sophie Scholl: The Real Story of the Woman who Defied Hitler (The History Press, Gloucestershire: 2009), p. 27.

[177] Frank McDonough, Sophie Scholl: The Real Story of the Woman who Defied Hitler (The History Press, Gloucestershire: 2009), p. 27.

generalisations, in-group pressure to conform to prejudices of the other, feelings of betrayal and recurrent discrimination in hostile communities become potential barriers to empathy.

In Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, Maycomb County, living with the effects of the Great Depression grows in anxiety and distrust of others like the enigmatic Boo Radley and the criminalised black character, Tom Robinson.[178] The trial of Tom Robinson furthers and heightens the in-grouping between predominantly white inhabitants and exacerbates fear and insecurity of Maycomb County's black inhabitants. When big and rapid changes are experienced in society, it becomes all too easy for people to narrowly define who belongs to the in-group, who is a true member of society, a true citizen, and patriot. Simultaneously there is another current that can also operate in such societies during such times, but this one requires empathy, forbearance and understanding. This generates more normative responses, such as a sense of belonging and bridging as opposed to Othering and ostracising.

By stigmatising people, they come to emerge as society's Others, barbarians, those on the margins of humanity. Between them and the dominants, there exists a supposed marginality. For Israelis, the separation wall, cutting off hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from everyday life, work, travel, from their farmlands and making strenuous the journey to families, medical facilities and schools mean the Palestinians are bound by territorial constructions. This allows the opposition between the Self and Other to be aggravated. These distant Others are restricted, not so much in frames of landscaping, but in other codes of behaviourism by which the physically distant cannot be rendered close, culturally or otherwise. Between them and the dominants there exists a supposed marginality.

What others see of themselves and how they imagine themselves being seen have a bearing on collective self-identity and relationships between self and Other can exist in a binary, or empathic outlooks can challenge those tendencies. We look upon I. Dharker's poem, 'The Right Word'.[179] Out of a frame of a hostile aggressor emerges a vulnerable victim. We are confronted with a linear realisation in her poem concerning a boy whose description in the

[178] Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird. HarperCollins: 1960 (Perennial Classics edition: 2002).
[179] I. Dharker, The Right Word' - https://genius.com/Imtiaz-dharker-the-right-word-annotated.

poetic voice has not been fully discerned, "I see his face. No words can help me now/Just outside the door,/lost in shadows,/is a child who looks like mine." What follows is a realisation, an acceptance. Though the image of the child traverses from a terrorist, a freedom-fighter, a hostile militant to a guerrilla warrior, the child who was 'lost in shadows' is humanised through a code of recognition, a physical similarity. It is this separation from an image imputed onto the boy to an image of oneself found in the boy that enabled the speaker to reconsider her previous prejudices about the boy and the world from which he arises. The poet teaches that if we were less quick to judge perhaps people would not have to live up to the labels that we give them, "I open the door./Come in, I say./Come in and eat with us./The child steps in/and carefully, at my door,/takes off his shoes."

Dehumanisation is a blurring of distinctions, a rendering of Others as faceless, and unlike ourselves. As discussed, the rise of drone warfare in our skies today, of remote-controlled air war, has generated a new mode of depersonalised killings, of dehumanisation, distance and detachment. Chamayou in Drone Theory explained: "Thousands of miles can now be interposed between the trigger on which one's finger rests and the cannon from which the cannonball will fly."[180] The mechanism of dehumanisation and the way it betrays the trueness of human conscience in its forcible self-antagonising to 'look away' from what lies of 'itself' before itself. The latter is reflected here in a Japanese prison camp during World War II:

"The Japanese showed a sudden reluctance to meet our eyes in the course of our daily contacts. We knew that they were taking precautions to ensure that not a single glimpse of one's obvious and defenceless humanity should slip through their defences and contradict the caricature some demoniac a priori image had made of us within them. The nearer the storm came the more intense the working of this mechanism became. I had seen its most striking manifestation in the eyes of a Japanese officer who, with a condemned Ambonese soldier before him, had had to lean forward and brush the long black hair from the back of the neck over the head and eyes of the condemned man before he could draw his sword and cut off the

[180] Grégoire Chamayou, Drone Theory (trans. Janet Lloyd) (Paris, The New Press: 2015), p. 12.

man's head. Before the blow fell he had been compelled to look straight ahead over the doomed head seeing neither it nor us who stood, raggedly, in a long line in front of him."[181]

It is not clear who the Othered we are otherising are, and this paradox is precisely what sustains the Othering. An 'Other' is a result of a 'self's paranoia about someone he has been led to fear and suspect, which is usually driven by politicians and the media as opposed to personal contact. Sometimes politicians, very noticeable during President Trump's election campaigns, Otherise ethnic or religious groups in a coded way and therefore activate people's sense of anxiety and fear. Trump's 2017 travel ban on all Muslims was symptomatic of an indiscriminate caricaturing of all Muslims as potential terrorists. This did much to harness in-group attitudes and loyalties, which opened up a space where people could be more explicit in expressing anti-Muslim sentiments.

The rhetoric employed to caricature Mexicans as rapists and drug dealers furthered the normalising of Othering, making it more acceptable and even desirable to support calls for their deportation and for a building of a wall. Ironically, the wall is precisely what Othering does. It divides and separates us. Othering is thus both socially and culturally created and peaks at moments of unease. Human encounters, however, can have a remarkable effect of not only reversing stereotypes but also to bridge the distinctions between people so that our differences are viewed in light of a shared humanity and a sign of the amazing creation of Allāh.

We, us, humanity, are a collective effort. Attempts at disfiguring and erasing of others from the human frame requires us all to reach across and bridge. We are to give a voice unto others - victims of war, genocide, social outcasts, the structurally dispossessed. We are to remember that the cost of war is measured not only in terms of physical destruction of homes and state infrastructure but of lives that have been lost, of psychological and spiritual damage, of the creating of countless 'others'. We must push back against the emergence of genocidal tendencies in our world. Theodor Adorno attempted in his seminal essay 'Education After

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[181] Larens Van der Post, Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence (New York: Quill, 1983), p. 153.

Auschwitz' (1966) to stress the responsibility of education and educators to herald empathic tendencies in young people who challenge attitudes of otherness. The sequence of genocides, however, wars and mass killings, since Auschwitz are a testament that there is so much more for us to do. We must challenge global media narratives, and representations that otherise or exclude fellow humans from a collective state of worthiness, that unleash on others the stigma of devalued, dehumanised, identities. It is upon us to play important roles in building societies that connect people, that bridge. Bridging allows us to open spaces, to foster understanding, communication and an enhancing of the collective human spirit.

Let us remind ourselves that it is against our humanness to dehumanise others, it is against what Allāh created naturally within us, which is to see, admire and respect each other. The South African North Natal tribes have a beautiful greeting phrase, "Sawu bona" which literally means "I see you." Another member of the tribe would reply "Sikhona" which literally means "I am here." The implication of such a greeting is encapsulated in the idea that until you see me I do not exist. Attempting to see each other without the stereotypes, the walls, the distance both physical and cultural, that mar our perceptions of each other has been one of the goals of this book. As Muslims we are instructed to live by a higher code of conduct, one that embodies a deep consciousness about each other and the world which we collectively inhabit. And Allāh indeed said:

"Then he was among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to mercy." The Quran Chapter 'The City' 90:17