

**Enlarging Boundaries of Compassion: Opportunities and
Challenges for Peace Research in the 21st Century.**

Inaugural Professorial Lecture

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E nga mana, E nga reo, E nga hau e wha, tena kotou, tena kotu, tena kotu
katoa

Acknowledgements

It is lovely to be back in New Zealand after 17 years in the overseas
wilderness.

As T. S Eliot said in “Little Gidding”
“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

Thanks to Majella and the Vice Chancellor for their kind introduction to
this lecture. A special thanks to David for his bold decision to develop
the Leading Thinkers Programme and for seeing that the Trust’s desire
and his strategic vision coincided.

It is indeed a great pleasure and privilege being introduced as the
Foundation Chair of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of

Otago and indeed the first such Chair in New Zealand. To have a National Centre in Peace and Conflict Studies is an aspiration that many have nurtured and I am humbled to have been chosen to take on this Foundation position. I hope that I can in some small way help realise the dreams of many for the success of the Centre.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to pay a special thanks to my wife Valerie and all our children and grandchildren. They embody the spirit of love and compassion that this lecture is all about and it is for our grandchildren and their children that Centres such as this exist.

Most of all though I want to pay a special acknowledgment to the Aotearoa-New Zealand Peace and Conflict Studies Trust, especially Dorothy Brown, Chris Barfoot, Margaret Bedggood, Dame Joan Metge, Sir Paul Reeves and Maui Solomon. They and others on the original steering committee imagined what this Centre might be and willed it into existence I would not be here and there would be no Centre were it not for their imagination and philanthropy.

I would also like to pay tribute to all our ancestors who understood peace and were practicing non violence well before there was a field of peace and conflict studies. In particular because we are in Aotearoa/NZ I want to acknowledge those Moriori and Maori who, long before Gandhi and Martin Luther King, were working out ways of resolving conflicts non violently. The Moriori living on Rekohu, for example, were settling conflicts with a variety of non lethal rituals well before peace had been brought to Europe. Similarly at Parihaka in the Taranaki, Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi and their people

demonstrated how powerful colonists with guns could be humbled (for a time) by non violence even if they paid a terrible price for their beliefs in the short to medium term. Many of Te Whiti's supporters, for example, were forced to build the stone walls around Otago harbour as punishment for their non violent resistance to the alien state that had encroached on their land. Those of us working in peace and conflict studies in New Zealand today stand in their footsteps. In any event these Moriori and Maori peace traditions – and efforts to work our just bicultural relations according to the Treaty of Waitangi are at the heart of the Centre's peace research and practice agenda.

I also want to acknowledge all those women, through the ages, who have understood the folly of masculinist rivalries and have kept families, communities and nations together in the face of violence and war. At International Alert, my gender and conflict department directed a lot of energy towards expressing the distinctive roles of women in peacebuilding and along with UNIFEM and others successfully advocated for Security Council Resolution 1325 aimed at bringing more women into peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping processes. We still have a long way to go, but feminist politics and perspectives on violence and peace are essential to the formation of cultures and structures of peace.

Aotearoa-New Zealand, has to embody its Maori and Pakeha, warrior and pacifist, feminist and masculinist, outsider-insider, young and old, rural-urban, perspectives on violence, war and peace if it is to generate lively community and healthy debate about the best ways of working for and guaranteeing stable and peaceful relationships between all peoples living in this land.

A little of my Intellectual and Human Journey

Inaugural Lectures are wonderful opportunities, to try and discern the threads that link one's life research, thinking and practice together so thank you all for the chance for reflecting on some of my own work.

I should say at the outset that I am not an academics' academic. I have not spent a lifetime focusing on one area of scholarship to the exclusion of all others. My theory, research and practice has been informed by a strong desire to make sense of the world in order to change it. This has meant that I have been absorbed by a range of changing ethical and political dilemmas and tried to make academic sense of them. When I think of work that I have done over the past 40 years, however, I can see a number of coherent and interlocking threads. In terms of my life, my father was a conscientious objector, who spent most of the second world war in prison for his beliefs, **(Show slide of Cos in detention)** I know something, therefore, of what it is to be marginalised and somewhat outside the main stream. I was born in 1946 in Opotiki in the Bay of Plenty. My father was the Methodist Minister. The RSA, however, decided that they did not wish to have a CO in their midst and each shop in the town was instructed not to serve my parents. It was an effective town boycott intended to drive my family out of town. . One of my father's parionshioners, a farmer who had fought in the RNZAF in Britain told everyone in the town,however that he did not fight the war to support bigotry and supplied my parents with food and milk...an act of courage and compassion. The experience of community rejection, however, was etched into family memory and has always given me a strong insight into the power of orthodoxy, the challenge of being an outsider and the difficulties of dissent. The second memory that I recall

comes from Invercargill. My best friend –who lived next door- was the son of an alcoholic. While we were having harmonious meals we could hear the noise of broken glass, fearful shouts and would periodically provide protection to the children while the man of the house next door went on drunken violent rampages. This experience bewildered me and engendered a strong concern with what theologians call theodicy problems— why was I born into a privileged well integrated family and my friend into the family of an alcoholic?. Theodicy problems can be summed up in the aphorism. “The rain falls on the just and unjust fellow but mainly upon the just because the unjust’s got the just’s umbrella.”

The third major influence on my life was having to determine whether I wished to be balloted for military service and the Vietnam war (**show slide 2**) . This was the war that forced my generation to raise some fundamental questions about power, right, empire, and coercive diplomacy. Responding to diverse wars since and threats from weapons of mass destruction **Show slide of Nuclear Bomb (3)** have been fairly constant preoccupations for me . I did research later in life on the costs benefits, and effectiveness of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral approaches to disarmament. These adult preoccupations flowed from thinking begun in the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at the age of 13. I mention these things to demonstrate some of the external influences on who I am.

Academically, I have worked on a range of different research areas. I started my career by focusing attention on the relationship between religious values and socio-political change during times of crisis. [This was very good preparation for thinking about how to respond to the current economic collapse !]. This was followed by work on the socio-political consequences of different models of development. Here again

there were threads with my Invercargill concerns. My guiding questions during this time had to do with who was included and who excluded from different types of economic and social systems and what were the short and long term impacts of such processes on levels of integration and community well being? I explored these questions primarily in Sth East Asia and New Zealand.

Since then I have worked on topics such as reform of the United Nations , and the development of regional organisations dedicated to confidence building conflict management and the building of positive security architecture for maintaining stable peace.

When I was heading up International Alert in the late 90s I was able to test the strengths and weakness of my peace and conflict theories in places such as Burundi, and Liberia, Georgia and Abkhazia, Nepal and the Philippines.

I learned a lot in all these places about the sources of violence and the difficulties of dealing with its traumatic consequences . There is nothing quite as sobering, for example, as being in a house in Bujumbura, Burundi with mortars popping all around wondering which of my academic theories of conflict might be of some use to me!

It was equally challenging being told by Georgian Parliamentarians in Tblisi that my Eurasia Project Director was in fact a Russian spy and would be arrested next time he entered the country! My mind was well and truly focused on this issue when I returned to my hotel room to find a dodgy looking character with a gun poking out of his shoulder holster outside my front door. These were important experiences for reminding

me about sources of fear, insecurity, and the intractability of cycles of violence.

In the past five years I have been working in the Sth Pacific on post colonial states and violence and what I call grounded legitimacy, namely, the legitimacy that flows from locality and the values, traditions and beliefs of people at this level. Here again my concern is with the needs of peoples and how these needs are often unmet because external actors often impose and undermines local capacities for development and peace. In the last three years I have also been working in a separate project on global peace indicators and the internal and external drivers of peacefulness.

So what are some of the unifying themes that have emerged out of my work over the last 40 years and what might they contribute to the development of a centre of research, teaching and practice excellence in peace and conflict studies here at Otago?.

The first has to do with how we understand suffering and ensure that the suffering of all is heard and wherever possible attended to. I suppose this question can be summed up more broadly in terms of how we individually and collectively realise a single humanity within which we human beings acknowledge and positively celebrate ethnic, cultural, religious and political differences while building national, regional and global institutions that enhance and advance our commonalities?

The second theme, has to do with what sort of contribution the social sciences and humanities might make to ensuring that justice, peace, truth and compassion are at the heart of this quest for a single new

humanity? In particular how do we ensure that we treat others with respect and dignity and that they in turn return the favour? This theme raises all sorts of deep philosophical issues about individual and collective interests and how to get the balance right between them. But it is at the heart of this discipline called peace and conflict studies. Related to this are the wider questions of the role of state and society in generating order and how we replace cultures of violence with cultures of peace?

The third theme has to do with questions of sustainability. How do we ensure that everyone is able to satisfy their basic human needs through time? This is by no means a simple academic question. How do we human beings deal with greed, hyper consumption and coercive military defence of power and privilege?

The fourth theme, has to do with understanding how to build trust, confidence and respect between peoples. These qualities are fairly essential to all the rest. How do we generate effective communication, cooperation, confidence and transparency between peoples and how do we avoid categorising, stereotyping and simplistic dualisms?

The world of the 21st century is going to be particularly challenging in terms of population pressures, climate change, resource constraints, water and food shortages, urbanisation and militarism. It will be a much more radically divided and unequal world and one in which the powerful and privileged will be confronted by much global suffering and misfortune. Those of us in the affluent West are going to be profoundly tested about what sort of response we might wish to make to the cries of the

dispossessed; the marginalised, the excluded, and those caught up in deep and protracted violent conflicts.

These challenges will be both trans national and intra national in scope. If those of us living in Aotearoa-New Zealand, for example, do not bridge the economic, social and political gaps between Maori and Pakeha, or worse makes no progress on bridging the respect gap between Maori and Pakeha there will be a high probability of frustration generating direct violence—even in this the most peaceful country of the world (according to our Global Peace Index) **Show slide of GPI (4)**. Equally if we have not got the relationships right with our neighbours in Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia that will generate its own negative dynamics.

So as we think about these things we need to make some hard choices about how we might respond to them. We can say, somewhat ostrich like, that they are not our concerns or more positively we can develop collaborative diagnostic and collaborative solutions. These will require sound analysis, collaborative processes and a problem solving dispositions. If we choose this last option, and I do, then it is absolutely vital that we have the theory skills and knowledge for doing this.

The central problematique of Peace and Conflict Studies

At its most basic Peace and Conflict Studies is concerned with ensuring that the four horsemen of the apocalypse- conquest, war, famine and death- are replaced by something approximating the Heavenly Kingdom—**slides of both (5 6 and 7)**.

The fundamental theoretical and research problematique, of peace and conflict studies, therefore is understanding the diverse physiological, psychological, sociological, economic and political sources of spontaneous and organised violence at the interpersonal, community, intra-national, transnational, regional and global levels . In this endeavour we are interested in understanding the sources of direct and indirect violence between peoples. The normative challenge is how to achieve both negative peace-i.e the conditions critical to a cessation of direct violence and positive peace- namely the economic, social and political conditions that make violence of either the direct or indirect kind less likely. **Slide of Definition of Positive and Negative Peace (8)**

Peace Research focuses a lot of attention on identifying webs of interdependence and in understanding how different social, economic, political and natural systems are interconnected and integrated. We are interested in synthesis and unity. What sorts of processes are likely to deliver harmonious relationships and which are not ? Conflict is ubiquitous and normal to all social life the challenge is to discover what sorts of processes will enable the non violent management, resolution or transformation of conflict?

My old friend and mentor, first Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University Adam Curle, **Slide of Adam Curle (9)**. used to say that peacebuilding was the art of seeing that things which seem apart are in fact one. Peace researchers, therefore, spend a considerable amount of time “web watching” identifying the diverse ways in which we are all interconnected and who is playing negative or positive roles for peace within specific systems. This sort of work is aimed at enabling us to know something about the indigenous sources of peace, strength, and

resilience and which individuals, groups and organisations play unifying or divisive roles within specific communities. Identifying specific individuals, groups, organisations and states who operate primarily as connectors or dividers will help us understand something about violent conflict dynamics and why certain individual and collective actors are demonised and dehumanised.

In all of this work we make the bold assumption that if we can understand and theorise the sources of violence and sources of peace we will be able to understand what it is that links “Rage in the Cage” in Dunedin **Show slide; (10)** violent drunken behaviour at the Undie 500 **Show slide (11)** polarisation and marginalisation **Show slide of Israeli Wall; (12)** civil wars in Darfur **Show slide of Darfur (13)** and closer to home **Honiara (14)** and weapons of mass destruction? **Show slide (15).**

Addressing all of these problems and developing adequate theoretical and empirical explanations for violent conflict is a lifetime’s work in itself. Ensuring that such work generates useful evidence and policy advice for policy makers and those wanting to move from conditions of unpeacefulness to peacefulness probably requires another lifetime

In fact designing processes that will generate and maintain stable peace and development through time requires as much if not more intelligence and imagination as that which goes into designing the latest weapon systems or preparing war plans in Wellington or the Pentagon.

Unless this intelligence and imagination is harnessed to compassion it will not generate more just and equitable relationships and will not address the conditions that create high levels of frustration, despair

and both structural and direct violence. It was Adam Curle again (**Show slide 16**) who wrote that one could not be a good peacemaker or a successful mediator unless we were first prepared to unclench the fists around our own hearts. Adam meant by fists the impediments that flow from insisting on our own status, importance, power, privilege and prestige. To be a successful peacebuilder demands that we humbly acknowledge our common humanity. I posit an inverse law of ego and peacebuilding effectiveness. High ego=low effectiveness. Low ego=high effectiveness.

I want to argue in this lecture that the best driver of deep collaboration and underlying all of our work is a preoccupation with compassion. Without compassion we will lapse into moral exceptionalism, and the promotion of selfish interests while avoiding dealing with present and future challenges.

Enlarging the Boundaries of Compassion

My interest in compassion was piqued by the work of Judith Butler (**show slide 17**) who in her book **Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence** (London NY 2004 Verso Press) argues for the development of non-violent ethics based on a engagement with others in relation to a common perception of the precariousness of life. The fact is from the moment we are born we are moving remorselessly to our death. Western youth culture's celebration of itself and its interests blinds us to the recognition of our mortality. Confronting life's suffering and the mystery of mortality are the issues that I talk about as theodicy problems. Butler builds on Emmanuel Levinas' (**Show slide 18**) suggestion that ethics is a struggle to keep fear and anxiety from

turning into murderous action. Both Levinas and Butler argue that the only way in which we can do this effectively is by humanising the dehumanised face of the enemy . As she says (p xviii) “ **(Show slide 19)**

“Those who remain faceless or whose faces are presented to us as many symbols of evil , authorise us to become senseless before those lives we have eradicated and whose grievability is indefinitely postponed” .

Like many other feminist writers Butler is preoccupied with the ethical implications of recognising the other and wants us to focus attention on whether or not acknowledging a shared vulnerability or precarity for all humanity will generate a non violent response to the violence that exists around us. The question she poses is who am I or if extended who are we willing to grieve for ? The answer to this question will demonstrate something of the boundaries of our compassion. She notes (p44) “ ...that community itself requires the recognition that we are all in different ways striving for recognition”.

This is why I have chosen “enlarging boundaries of compassion” as the title of this lecture. Compassion is a word that means empathetic and altruistic concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. When one starts unpacking its deeper meanings though it becomes an extremely generative concept that can only be fully grasped from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. I want to argue that enlarging boundaries of compassion is a pre-requisite for developing a more just and peaceful world and that it is a research and practice objective that is perfectly appropriate for a new Centre of Peace and Conflict Studies.

The choice of the concept “compassion”, however, may be beginning to generate some niggles in your mind about the wisdom of appointing me. I can already feel some of you wondering whether I am a little soft in the head or worse maybe even religious in focus, perhaps even an academic front for the Dalai Llama and global Buddhism !

It was the Dalai Llama, **Show slide of Dalai Llama (20)**, after all who said that

“ If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy yourself , practice compassion “.

Incidentally his stress on equanimity and impartiality in relation to compassion towards all human beings is both religiously and practically useful in relation to a non violent ethic and preparing to enter worlds of suffering and violence. He is also funding some fascinating work at the University of Stanford on the neuropsychology of meditation and compassion.

Our concern here, however , is with the academic and practical implications of compassion; under what conditions it flourishes and when it diminishes in importance.

I have focused a lot of my own research and writing on macro level issues-over the past twenty years. E.g issues such as the role of the state in generating order and stability; the development-peacebuilding nexus and conflict sensitive development strategies etc. I am becoming more and more persuaded, however, that while the macro and meso levels are important it is equally important to focus as much if not more attention on the individual, inter personal and micro levels of peacebuilding.

Since coming to Otago, for example, I have been introduced to the new and exciting work that has been taking place in the area of neuroscience. For example, the work of Jean Decety at Chicago on mirrored emotion provides heaps of evidence that we are neurologically hard wired for empathy, responding to the suffering of others and for social being. He demonstrates very clearly how pain receptors in the brain—the anterior insula and anterior cingulate cortex—light up when individuals are presented with pictures of other people's pain. It is felt as though it is our own even if it is being experienced by others. (Lydia Lytle Gibson: Mirrored Emotion University of Chicago Magazine . <http://magazine.uchicago.edu/0604/features>) .

Closer to home, the work of Liz Franz in Psychology and Grant Gillett in Bio Ethics, is raising some fundamental questions about the neuroscientific bases of empathy, altruism and identity and the ways in which we embody different communities in our brains. In fact contrary to all the individualists who see our brains as the source of independence and autonomy the evidence is that our brains are as big as they are not primarily to generate autonomous individuals but to generate social individuals who discover themselves in sociation and in community.

If we are neurologically hard wired for empathy and connection **Show slide of Rodin Kiss (21)** then we need to figure out ways in which we can enhance these dimensions in order to satisfy our needs for recognition, welfare and security. **Show slide of John Burton (22)** This happens at the individual level—we can teach people to be more empathetic, conscious of others and trusting. But we also need to ensure

that we are developing compassionate institutions within which these needs and somewhat more formally recognised and embodied.

There is a big debate in the literature about what is called the paradox of altruism. (Robert Paul Churchill and Erin Street “Is there a Paradox of Altruism” in J Seglow, (ed)2004 *The Ethics of Altruism* pp87-105.) Briefly this paradox is that the altruistic personality who places his/her own life at risk for the sake of others compassionately identifies with the others and possesses what is called “extensivity” or an unbounded sense of self; but if they are to be effective they must also have a high capacity for critical discernment and self efficacy. So this is another whole area of interesting research. How do we generate higher levels of extensivity while also ensuring that individuals are capable of making a difference to those in need ?. As I started getting into this topic I began to realise just how complex it is.

In the first place it raises all sorts of questions about how to strike the right balance between autonomy and connectedness. Secondly, empathy and compassion pose some deep challenges about how much we wish to be responsible to and for others in their suffering. Being empathetic and compassionate is a call to connectedness and solidarity. It therefore stands in the face of dominant popular culture which peddles the illusion that we are free and autonomous. Neurologically this is a nonsense. Left to ourselves as children or adults we wither and die. The worst punishment for most people is solitary confinement. (**show slide 23**) Sociologically, economically and politically, therefore, we need to problematise theories of radical individualism . We cannot exist (for very long) as autonomous, independent, sovereign individuals. I think that this is a very good reason for revisiting some of the political and

economic philosophies which celebrate freedom while ignoring our shared vulnerabilities and the ways in which we are hardwired for connection.

So what is required for being more compassionate and for enlarging our boundaries of compassion or those that we are willing to grieve for?

1. In the first place, peace researchers and others interested in this objective need to pay close attention to the ways in which specific contexts, relationships, attachments and belonging (to family, kin and other groups) help shape compassionate, altruistic and tolerant capacities and behaviour in most human beings. We need to know something about the sources of, empathy, altruism, compassion and love if we are to have any chance of enlarging them. All human beings need to have somewhere that they call home, some place where they can feel secure and some place where they can realise themselves in community. This seems like a pre-requisite for being compassionate. When people are displaced, made into refugees, feel alienated from locality, and not welcomed they are unable to rise above their fear, anxiety and existential insecurity. Notions of “home” therefore are important elements in the satisfaction of recognition, welfare and security needs. Such notions of home, do not, however, have to be linked to fixed ideas of nationality or citizenship. People who have a strong sense of cultural or social identity do not need to cloak that in fervent patriotism. Those without such a strong sense of belonging, however, sometimes find a functional equivalent in patriotism.

2. Second, a robust self identity and the development of useful individual capacities is constituted in the process of othering. We

conceive of others in both positive and negative terms. The challenge is to ensure that we see others in mostly positive rather than negative terms. This is a critical question for the expansion of boundaries of compassion. Here again I am guided by the work of people like Emmanuel Levinas (**show slide of Levinas again (24)**) who in his 1961 book *Totality and Infinity* explored the ethics of the other and conceptualised philosophy as the wisdom of love rather than the love of wisdom. Levinas, like Martin Buber (**show slide 25**) in his book *I and Thou*, derives his ethics from the experience of encounter with another and by treating the other as a subject rather than object, as an end in him or herself rather than a means to an end . In Quaker parlance it is described as “treating each person as a holy place”. It is also captured in Albert Schweitzer’s idea of Reverence for Life. By understanding who we are and what our obligations are from encountering others we recognise the other and know ourselves. It is important, however, to acknowledge that we encounter others from a position of shared vulnerability. It is from these encounters that we build our ethics and develop expectations of how others will connect to us. Elizabeth Porter , wrote a lovely feminist article about politics and compassion in 2006. In this she stated that

“While there is inequality of suffering, compassion promotes the equality of possibility, in that cancer, death of one’s child, retrenchment or a terrorist attack could happen to anyone. As humans we are all vulnerable to suffering. Thus respect for the equal worth of every person’s humanity is crucial to compassionate co-suffering” Elisabeth Porter, “Can Politics Practice Compassion?” *Hypatia*, Volume 21 No 4 Fall 2006 :102
(Show slide 26)

Maori understand this perhaps better than Pakeha. The Hongi is an opening to the other's Wairua or spirit. **(Show slide 27)** Having a positive disposition to the other means leaving ourselves open to being surprised, challenged, affirmed, and deeply acknowledged. As Levinas puts it **(Show Slide 28)** “The Other precisely reveals himself in his alterity, not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness “ [p 150 Totality and Infinity].

If we are interested in enlarging boundaries of compassion it is absolutely vital that we do not have a narrow, parochial conception of who we might consider to be “positive others”. This is particularly important for encountering and humanising “strangers” and “foreigners”. In fact our need to enlarge boundaries of compassion comes into play precisely when we move from undifferentiated and high context cultures (where everyone knows who they are and what they have to do and why) to atomised low context cultures . Compassion and altruism are moral problems in a world of strangers the vast majority of whom we will probably never meet. These strangers need not be people of other nationalities. There are cultural gaps, and “strangeness” for example between men and women; Maori ,Pakeha and Pacific Islander; between old and young; gay and straight; people of different religious persuasion; between town and gown. When we are confronted by any of these domains of strangeness , especially where they are based on simplistic dualisms, Levinas and others suggest we need to be open to human encounter at the deepest possible level.

This is not that difficult but most people prefer to muddle through and do not wish to cross borders of difference in search of self. There are principles of homology that continue to drive people to privilege their

own, to love mourn and grieve for those they have connections with and to let the rest look after themselves. This is inimical to enlarging boundaries of compassion and restricts our capacity for self fulfilment and community enhancement.

3. Third, it is vital that we locate this compassionate caring for the other in the context of justice and love. It might seem somewhat surprising to bring justice and love together in this way. Love is not normally thought of as something worthy of academic study and combining it with justice seems somewhat oxymoronic since justice (especially in black letter law) is primarily concerned with rights and truth. Indeed, I suspect many lawyers would argue the importance of keeping love and compassion out of the equation although others are using their work in the law to bring the marginalised justice and respect. I am bringing these dimensions together because I do not want to convey the impression that enlarging boundaries of compassion means any diminution of concern for issues of justice, fairness, and truth. Nor should it mean a diminished concern for developing institutional arrangements that can deliver justice impartially and without fear or favour. Compassion has two dimensions depending on whether one is thinking about it in individual or institutional terms. From an individual perspective it is as an openness and responsiveness to the suffering of others. From an institutional perspective compassionate institutions and compassionate communities are committed to celebrating difference and being hospitable to strangers in ways which promote mutuality, inclusion and tolerance. Communities and institutions that are working to bring peace, justice and truth together with compassion are likely to be respectful of others, well integrated, reconciled places excellent prospect for harmony and co-operation to prevail.

Simone Weil **Show slide of Simone Weil (29)** has some excellent insights into this whole question of justice, rights, love and compassion. She wants to cut through the abstractions of concepts like “Justice” and “Rights” by what she calls readings that visibly impact our sensibility. She wants to understand who is being hurt and why and believes that Justice has to do with seeing that no harm is done to others . She argues, quote (**Show Slide 30**)

“ That rights language has imprisoned the concept of justice...Why has somebody else got more than I have refers to rights. We must learn to distinguish between the two cries and to do all that is possible as gently as possible, to hush the second one , with the help of a code of justice, regular tribunals and the police. Minds capable of solving problems of this kind can be formed in law school. But the cry “ Why am I being hurt?” raises quite different problems for which the spirit of truth, justice and love is indispensable” (SE30 quoted in Richard Bell :1993 p. 221).

Weil argues that justice is seeing that no harm is done to me or others and that if it is being done it must be stopped. She argues that “Justice awakens at its source the spirit of attention and love” (SE21) Richard Bell:223). I want to tease out a couple of different dimensions of this idea since they help me to conceptualise very specific ways of enlarging boundaries of compassion. Weil talks about attention in terms of a discernment of what someone is saying, a willingness to attend to their protest and an understanding of the social conditions which generate the hurt or injustice . She argues that we have to practice “That interval of hesitation, wherein lies all our consideration for our brothers

in humanity” Richard Bell 225. This is an extremely succinct assertion of what peace researchers try and do in research and practice. She argues, however, that there is no reason why we should do this unless we are impelled by some concept of love, divine or mundane. As she says “Only the absolute identification of justice and love makes the co-existence possible of compassion and gratitude on the one hand and on the other of respect for the dignity of affliction in the afflicted” (WG140: Bell 231) . Weil proposes this attentiveness, responsiveness and action for both love and justice because she believes the logic of creation is love’s reconciliation. As she put it “Love Moves-that is its nature. It is the pure, perfect, hopeful principle of radical action. Love must move through something to something.”

This statement is extraordinarily important for peace research because it stands in radical tension with the dominant logic of politics-based on self interest, sectional and national interests. It is radical precisely because it subverts dominant logic namely the logic of dominance.

4. Fourth, enlarging boundaries of compassion suggests that we need to be much more explicit about acknowledging the role and importance of emotions in economic, social and political life. We like to sustain the illusion that decision making in the public realm is based on a weighing of evidence, an application of theory and logic from which will come rational decisions. This flies in the face of most analyses of both public and private decision making most of which highlight the diverse ways in which so called rational decision makers incorporate emotion into decision making. In the past it was falsely assumed that men were better at rational decision making and women better at emotional which became an argument for patriarchal power politics and the allocation of women to nurturing supportive caring roles in the private sphere. Now there is a

recognition that men and women together are equally capable or incapable of being emotionally intelligent and compassionate. It is interesting, however, that it required feminist scholars like Carol Gilligan, (**Show slide 31**) Martha Nussbaum (**show slide 32**) and Judith Butler (**Show Slide 33**) to take the lead in clarifying what is meant by an ethics of care and what we might understand by a feminist politics of compassion. In doing so they created a space for men to engage in conversation about these issues and given us an opportunity to think carefully about the practical and political dimensions of their concerns

Thus in enlarging boundaries of compassion it is imperative to make deeper links across the gender divide if we are to realise its hopefulness.

5. It is a major research and practice project to work out how to mainstream a politics of compassion into the political life of nation states, regional and global organisations. This is critical for peace and conflict studies, however, as so much of our research is focused on understanding those who have experienced or are experiencing violence and the deep suffering, marginalisation and humiliation associated with that. What we have to do is figure out how to respond to that effectively. All of this is an important stimulus to enter into what I call the mystery of suffering. How do we as human beings, as strangers make loving sense of suffering? What are our responsibilities for the suffering of self and others? How do we witness it creatively and how do we embrace it so that we might be softened and transformed by it?

There is little point in doing this, however, unless we have a capacity to help. We can respond both individually and collectively. Individually we have to weigh up whether we can do anything to help the person in

need whether this be swimming to rescue a drowning victim, rescuing those under threat of persecution or death; doing what we can to relieve the burdens of starvation and famine. Story about Bill Yates in Burundi.

Collectively, I think it important that we figure out ways collectivising both altruism and compassion . In particular what sorts of institutions might we build that are capable of generating a just and compassionate response to suffering and need ? This means developing , mechanisms , institutions and norms to these ends. The Welfare State was the most complete institutional embodiment of compassion and it will be important in the 21st century to revive the principles of welfare, justice and equity and institutions that lay behind this remarkable invention. It is no accident that most of the states in the top twenty nations that are most peaceful in our Global Peace Index are Welfare states. These institutions need to be dedicated to ensuring that no citizen or sojourner suffer without access to care and professional support. There are some who would argue, of course that once you institutionalise compassion like that it ceases to be compassion because by definition compassionate action is a voluntary and non institutionalised response to the suffering or misfortune of others . I think it is important , however, that there be a commitment to the institutionalisation of compassion as most psychological studies demonstrate that there are costs to compassion and people look for excuses not to be compassionate. In any event there are many fundamental research questions in all of these statements. This is why a Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies is important. How do we ensure that our students understand some of the deeper sources of human suffering, witness and attend to it and in that process jointly discern creative possibility? How in the face of polarisation and division do we stand for the union and reunion of self with other?

6. We can only do these things if we are willing to take the time to do so. We will not be able to enlarge boundaries of compassion unless we all slow down. Slowness, or what Simone Weil described as that interval of hesitation, is absolutely key to reflective and peaceful decision making processes. There was a lovely empirical study done of this at the University of Princeton. The experimenters were trying to work out under what sorts of circumstances individuals were willing to be compassionate and altruistic. The study was by J Darley J and C Batson, "from Jerusalem to Jericho; A study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behaviour" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 27 pp100-108 (quoted in Jonathan Seglow (Ed) 2004: 111 *The Ethics of Altruism*, London Frank Cass Publishers). The experiment involved taking theological students and testing whether getting them to reflect on the story of the Good Samaritan would precipitate altruistic and compassionate behaviour. The students were sent between two buildings passing a victim on the way who was obviously in distress. The question was who would stop to help the victim. Dropping a big hint some of the students were asked to prepare a talk on the good Samaritan parable, others on a tangential subject, namely careers open to theology students. Those who had been thinking about the parable were much more likely to help 53% versus 29%. But much more strongly correlated with helping behaviour was a second variable, how much time the students had. Some were told that they were a few minutes late for the next session, others that they were on time and a third group that they had a bit of time to spare. This had a dramatic effect on their willingness to help the unfortunate victim: 63% of those with time to spare helped, 45% of the middle group but only 10% of those who had been told that they were running late. The experimenters

witnessed on several occasions the bizarre spectacle of theology students hurrying to deliver a talk on the Good Samaritan and in the process literally stepping over a man who to all appearances had fallen in the street. Changing the costs of helping –in this case the cost of being a few minutes late to give a talk, transformed the subject’s willingness to be altruistic. What does this experiment mean for the prospects for compassion in a world that is driven and over driven by speed and time shortages; a world where time is measured in nano-seconds and where we might easily overlook a victim in need and accord priority to our e mail?

The second dimension that is critical here is the importance of being open to unplanned encounters with others and following our intuition. I want to finish with a story from International Alert’s work in Burundi. Many Hutu women were displaced from homes and villages under Tutsi attack in the early 1990s. They were displaced to Tanzania and life in refugee camps. Some of these camps were just across the border from where they used to live. Over the years my women’s team made connections with women separated across the Tanzanian-Burundian border. They discovered from the women in the camps that they wanted to return but were afraid to do so. Their persecutors, the Tutsi women left behind also told our team that they missed their Hutu sisters and so they agreed on a quite remarkable event. It could be thought of as a compassionate response to separation. The women in the Burundian village agreed to provide protection and safety to their displaced sisters. The process they agreed on was as follows. The women from the Burundian village would gather and sing the first verse of a song they used to sing together before the genocide. This would signal that it was safe to return. The women in Tanzania would sing the second verse to

indicate that they were prepared to return. So at dawn one day both sides gathered across the divisions of prejudice and violence. They sang to each other, came together and embraced. This is compassion in action

As my friend John Paul Lederach says in his pocket mantra which sums up what he calls the moral imagination It goes as follows (**Show slide 34**)

- Reach out to those you fear/Touch the heart of complexity/Imagine beyond what is seen/Risk vulnerability one step at a time

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