

A respect restoration theory of reconciliation with the June Fourth Incident as a case study

ABSTRACT

Evil does not accidentally wrong; it necessarily does so. With Jesus, we understand evil better through His mercilessness on Satan and its followers. Love your enemies, but not Satan, who constitutes enemy in spirituality. A genuine reconciliation is possible between enemies, if respect is understood correctly. It is so rare that the perpetrator offered the victim the satisfaction of retribution, with which the victim could have decided to forgive and not exact some earthly, mafia, justice. Christianity obligates forgiveness in this way: Christians are not Christ-like shall they be retributed. The opportunity to forgive is a Godsend. This paper explores the respect restoration theory of reconciliation with the June Fourth Incident happened in Tiananmen Square as a case study. It both demonstrates and illustrates the truth of the theory through a reconstruction of events that are the only possible past with which the killing was not evil and the perpetrator forgivable.

KEYWORDS

reconciliation; forgiveness; Satan; evil; Greatest Commandment

The 1989 June Fourth Incident, in which many protestors were murdered by the Liberation Army in Beijing, is an atrocity committed by the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is wrong both morally and politically because, even if the victims committed treason, and their death was what they deserve per judicial punishment for the corresponding crime, they did not stand trial; it is thus a politically wrong because a legal wrong. The moral wrongness is constituted by the infringement of the victims' moral right to life, which is not fictionalised at all on account of, for example, their prior infringement of others' human rights. This incident has biased people's judgment about the morality of members of the PRC government. In this paper, I attempt a reconstruction of the history that led up to the event in the morning of 4th June, 1989 in Tiananmen Square, which is the only epistemically possible history on which reconciliation is at all

metaphysically possible. I then discuss the difference between ethics and morality, and how sometimes politics obligates immoral acts. I will then attempt a Biblical reading of my theory of evil, that distinguishes some immoral acts from others. Satan and its followers do not deserve our mercy, but some trespassers are to be forgiven, on Christianity. I will then provide a theory of reconciliation that depends on the psychology of evil. This exercise will have demonstrated that, if the present government of PRC, constituted by members of the Communist Party, has been evil and thus Satan's influences on earth, there is no reconciliation. Contrapositively, if there is any reconciliation, they had better committed the immoral acts merely out of political necessity. The goal of the paper is thus to present my theory of forgiveness, through an actual potential case of reconciliation, given a theory of evil. Notably, acting out of disrespect differentiates from acting not with perfect respect, and evil acts, necessarily, out of disrespect – consider kind words that lure you into trusting them, and thus even their sweet mouth is out of disrespect. The formalisation of respect, through intention, shall have proven to be useful in this regard.

1. A pious reconstruction of the 1989 China

If the 1989 June Fourth Incident were evil, then it is most evil when, back in April 1989, when students gathered together in the name of Hu Yaobang, the government decided not to intervene so as to wait till a military resolution is politically obligated: where there is no going back but to clear the scene with extreme violence. This is to severely punish anyone who wanted anything that the present government does not want, such that, for all posterity under its rule, no citizen shall dare any more to dissent. Against this evil hypothesis, a pious one obligates understanding the political permissibility of association of large crowds.

Consider, back in 1981, when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom met the officials of the PRC government, including Chairperson Deng Xiaoping, she made the following proposal. Hong Kong had been under the colonialism of the United Kingdom, and it has a

judiciary that is constituted by a rule of law with better fairness. Chairperson Deng would have liberated the Chinese economy better and opened it up to all other nations, at least economically, if he was benefitted from the Western experience. Given the corruption that was in various municipal governments of PRC, if he wanted to better the morality of the government officials through removing corrupted ones, he need a mandate. The Western experience with mandate and public political participation is constituted by activism such as peaceful protest and demonstration. This explains the politically permissibility of the association of the crowd in Beijing and many cities since April that year. The memorial of Hu Yaobang was a good opportunity for Chairperson Deng to establish mandate to eliminate corrupted government officials, especially with the local, municipal ones.

If a corrupt government officials, while still in power, was being investigated and eventually removed from office, those under his rule, without knowing his corruption and especially without the common knowledge of everyone's wanting him without the power that he has been abusing, might be easily incited to do whatever in the name of sustenance of the presently powerful to maintain the *status quo*. Whenever there is change, uncertainty, even with some chance of getting better, some, especially those with much, might want the original, safer, yet good enough, situation. The mandate will have constituted common knowledge that reform is very probably for the better because the projection of chaos when the *status quo* is disturbed is known to be very unlikely – almost everyone wanted a change in the governance, and thus almost no one would have resisted the change and caused social instability.

Notice furthermore that, earlier on during the association of the citizens, there was no slogans in the style of 'Down with Chairperson Deng!' and 'Step down, Deng Xiaoping!'. The optimism that the actual present government then, led by Chairperson Deng, will lead China following the integrity that Hu Yaobang embodies is not to be ignored. Even if the demonstration in

various cities in various municipalities was against the government, it was not against the *Central Government* of PRC. It was not a threat to the legitimacy of the role of People's Standing Committee in PRC, but to some municipal governments in virtue of its being constituted by some corrupted government officials.

It is with this narrative that one might have easily conjectured that the protest changed its tune under the conspiracy of the corrupted officials because they wanted to destroy the mandate that Chairperson Deng would have had to remove them from office. The evolution from seeking reform led by Chairperson Deng towards wanting his resignation seeks distinguishing with evidence whether it was him who decided to not listen that the protestors turned against him, or it was the conspirators who incited them to use a different slogan. Notice that the difference is just to go up one level: from threatening the legitimacy of some government officials of the municipal government, to threatening the legitimacy of those in the Central Government. Noteworthy, that one step too many also threatened the sovereignty of the state, and that is how it politically justified military action against the protestors.¹

2. *Realpolitik*, and a situational ethic of respect

Ethics is constituted by obligations and permissions. Consider an ethic of fascism, whereas fascism is constituted by the righteousness of the powerful. Typically, it is through oppression via force that one has the most power – however illegitimate, unjustified, and immoral –, but, on fascism, that is how one is right and thus fascism obligates coercion. An ethic of humanity, on which humanity obligates respect, under a fascist regime, obligates achieving morality politically correctly.² Given that, without the corresponding political power, one will have failed to act, political correctness is

¹ One ought not neglect the newly elected President of the United States during that time and his involvement in the Middle East. The geopolitic then, given the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong being planned, makes the event susceptible to be reinterpreted as one of those 'colour revolutions', such as Arab Spring. Any claim along this line need to be substantiated.

² See Cheung (2024) for a theology of humanity, and correspondingly its ethic.

identified with political integrity, without which one shall have failed to have the corresponding political power. A way of attempt of achieving morality politically incorrectly is committing an act with the outcome of one dead and campaign extinguished correspondingly; even if it is a moral thing to, for example, assassinate a tyrant, but given the strength of his bodyguards, and the repercussion shall one's assassination attempt failed because the king would have made an example of the assassin sufficiently gross to deter any future attempt, let alone verbal dissent, one ought not have even tried. That is when a 'ruthless hothead' messes everything up, however benign and moral his motivation is.

This distinguishes the ethic of Christianity that the early Christians illustrated. Saint Paul, for example, preached even if it led to his eventual execution by the Romans. Was he just one of the hotheads that does not know when to take it easy? Even if he was acting against the legal prohibition by the actual present powerful then, he was not acting against its sovereignty – except if they are indeed Satan followers, which is the only sovereignty in competition of God's Kingdom. If any sedition, he was committing treason against Satan,³ but that is not a thing except, for those who recognised the legitimacy of the Satanic regime.

The situational ethic of respect distinguishes the following two scenarios. Consider Sophie's choice from *Sophie's Choice*. She is moral, but when faced with a loaded gun under a Nazi soldier's threat to decide between the death of her daughter, of her son, or of both, she made the utilitarian, consequential, instrumental, economic, and expedient choice. It is immoral of her to decide that her son be murdered, but that was what situation obligated her to do given her respect for both children. An ethic of fascism would have obligated her to give up kinship, and join the Nazis simply because they seem to be on the right side then in virtue of having the military power then. The best would have been her seizing the gun of the Nazi soldier and changed the situation, such that it no longer

³ See Wink (1986) for the suggestion that Satan is an earthly rule (*archai*).

obligates her to decide her son's murder. And this is where *Realpolitik* comes in: we are limited beings, and we have to work with what we have, holding fast to our morality.

Contrast now with the typical Chinese traitors under the Japanese regime. Now there is a Japanese soldier who enjoys raping Chinese women. Someone not under duress wanted to make some money, and get into better social relationship with the powerful, probably to oppress other Chinese, decided to help some Japanese get some Chinese women. This is not what situation obligated him to do, and if any ethic, he might be acting on an ethic of fascism, joining anyone that is in power however immoral it is, let alone acquiring those powers to oppress others as well. *Hanjian*⁴ might have seemed situational and without a choice, but one does have to distinguish an opportunist that acts on respect, and another that acts on expediency.

I have presented two cases of immorality, one committed by someone moral, another immoral. Now consider a case of immorality committed by someone evil. Instead of selling fellows of the same ethnicity to others for power and money, someone inflicts suffering for its own sake through, for example, torturing a prisoner of war.⁵ Notice that it is not extortion of information that the torturer is doing; it is purely in the enjoyment of the suffering of the prisoner that he does to him what he is doing. It is not expediency that drives him, for he does not gain anything tangible as money in doing so. It is only to – to use some colloquialism – have a go at the prisoner of war. A just war between two nations constituted by genuine patriotic soldiers shall have respected their opponents for the patriotism they have for their own, respective, country, and, given the rule of the game that war commits all involved to a lottery of strength through violence, torture thus is

⁴ 漢奸. *han* (漢): an ethnicity. *jian* (奸): wicked, which manifests the evil of going against people from one's ethnicity.

⁵ Inflicting of suffering for its own sake through acting out of disrespect is a description of evil developed from my theology of humanity. Humanity obligates respect, whereas respect is constituted by intending what the subject intends that you intended. Disrespect is constituted by intending what the subject intends that you intended not. Deliberately doing exactly the opposite differs from accidentally acting contrary to others' wishes. See Cheung (2024) for my theology of humanity that answers the question: but why must I respect?

irrelevant to winning the war, and thus is not an immorality that politics obligated the perpetrators to do. War, and its justice, is an excuse for the trigger-happy evil to enjoy their sadistic power over other sentient beings; they did not join the army to defend their country, or even to invade, or at least conquer, other land and people, but to indulge in their sadism. This pursuit of suffering for its own sake and not for anything else distinguishes an evil immorality from an immorality motivated merely by expediency and acted out of greed.⁶

3. Love your opponents, but not Satan and its followers

Christ commands us to love our enemies. Instead of pretending that one complied with His commandment, it is better to better understand Him. Satan and its followers are Christ's enemies, but Christ does not love them. Even if we ought to have mercy on our opponents, such as those who want to get our job at the workplace, and wish that they will have heard, understood, and even accepted Christ, it is still in Christ that fair competitions entail the possibility of competitors and thus opponents. Enemy combatants, for example, are opponents in war, who compete with us over conquest of land and people through strength with violence, and very probably to the death, but they are mere opponents in a competition nonetheless. It is a competition as fair as the law of the jungle. If you successfully predated on your prey, you won; if you won the war, you won and the land and the people's bodies are your conquests. War, in the end, is the fairest among all kinds of competition because there is no personal judge who adjudicates with the possibility of bringing in fictitious values – values that make no difference to whether one is better or not in the competition. A job recruitment is easily biased with its unfairness constituted by employing a candidate simply because he has the family name of the boss.

⁶ Note however a retributivism that obligates avenging your fallen friends by doing something atrocious to the friends of the perpetrator. This justice is legally prohibited by the Geneva Convention against Torture, but wherein its legitimacy, and correspondingly the jurisdiction of the corresponding judiciary? If the answer interacts with power, especially national boundary, then the perfection of humanity in the making is all we have.

It is against this backdrop that the morality of the Geneva Conventions against Torture is understood. How is it that one is politically permitted to murder an enemy combatant, whereas death is biologically irreversible, but torture, something putatively biologically reversible, is not? Beyond human dignity and the infringement of the corresponding human right, I distinguish them with the goal of war, and it is only evil who would have enjoyed infliction of suffering for its own sake through torture.

However, is the eternal damnation in Hell constituted by Yahweh's infliction of suffering for its own sake through torture? Notice that it is for justice. God's wrath, constituted by His justice, obligates retributive punishment on evil. If, for example, any torture is justified on justice, it has to be with evil. A prisoner of war captured simply because of his patriotic duty to fight and lost in the fight commits him merely to being murdered in combat, but not torture. What, as far as movies go, criminals do to child molesters but not anyone else in prison could have been reasonably understood with what the evil child molesters act on: they wanted to inflict lifetime sexual trauma on the victim for its own sake. If the rapist deems it justice that one's sexual life be eternally traumatised, perhaps he thinks, with Satan, that beautiful people do not deserve beautiful life, and it is only justice that beautiful people cannot lead beautiful life.⁷

An immorality that is evil, contrasted with one that is not, empowers our understanding of Satan. It is on earth to destroy, instead of creating. Is theft its way of creating goods for itself through possessing what does not morally belong to it? Notice that, if it was only greedy, its theft would have been motivated by ownership of undeserved goods, but what it does to Job does not increase its assets at all. It does not get to increase its wealth except its coercive power over Job through Yahweh's non-interference, and thus even theft is a cover-up for its destruction. Theft

⁷ Consider a malignant form of pederasty, especially practised by the less righteous in Ancient Greece. Perhaps someone having lost his virginity to a teacher wants to do the same thing to a young boy, even though he knows it to be a moral wrong. Instead of exacting justice on the teacher, he wants to be the sex predator the teacher had been. One way to understand this is the perpetrator's wish that since he lost something he once treasured, others cannot have it as well.

increases one's own welfare through decreasing others; pure destruction, as sadists do, merely decreases others' welfare – if there is any increase in welfare, it is the sadist pleasure of evil, which motivates their infliction of suffering for its own sake *and not for anything else*. Satan and its followers are what even Christ has no mercy on. It is in virtue of such evil that they are the kind of enemies that we are not to love. When patriots of their respective country fight, they are opponents in a competition for people and land through strength with violence; when good people and evil fight, we are opponents against them in a competition for people and land through strength of the goodwill. One does not have to be a Christian to be not a follower of Satan, but turning people to Christ is one easy and simple way to achieve morality through the recent believers' restoration of respect with themselves respectively through their respect for Christ, who loves them unconditionally, and thus they are politically permitted to, and even morally obligated to, give up the earthly possessions they kept.⁸

4. A respect restoration theory of reconciliation

An act committed on someone that is out of disrespect is wrong. Acting out of respect for someone is only when one acted on him what only he intended he be thus acted on. Acting out of disrespect for someone is when one acted on him what he intended not be acted on. Theft, for example, also sometimes constitutes an act on disrespect because the victim intended that he maintained the ownership of his rightful possessions, and theft is contrary to that. Consider such an immoral act out of biological necessity, such as when Jean Valjean, in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, stole a loaf of bread. It was situation that obligated him to commit that immoral act. With biological sustenance, he shall not have acted not with respect thus for the owner of the bakery. Acting without perfect

⁸ It is worthwhile to pause and consider what Satanic justice is: it is in avenging those with a goodwill and self-respectful that Satan considers justice served. Imagine its wish to legislate such that those with a perfect goodwill always get all they wanted not and never what they want. Even if what they want coincide with what it wants at a time, it would change his mind and make sure the good people do not get what they wanted. Satan's justice is other-regarding – it has the want of other people as prior to its own, except its want to maximise Satanic justice. This disrespect, almost towards a perfection, though negative, opposes Yahweh and His Creation.

respect differentiates from acting out of disrespect thus. The necessary infliction of suffering the epitomises evil emphasises the dimension of necessity: no matter what, evil intends what the subject intends that the actor intended not. Jean Valjean would not have harmed the baker's economic welfare had he had enough to eat.

Given that Christ does not forgive Satan and its followers, if Satan sets off immorality with evil, then all evil are also not to be forgiven. Mere sinners, with the possibility of repentance, deserve Christ's mercy, and we ought to have forgiven their trespasses against us upon reconciliation. However, evil go beyond mere sinners, and thus do not thus deserve it. I hypothesise that their disrespect is constitutive of their being; they act out of disrespect for the victim no matter what. Therefore, the possibility of respect restoration indicates agents who committed the corresponding immoral acts to be not evil, through actually restoring respect. Jean Valjean, once capable, shall have acted in reparation for the crimes he committed, and apologised thus.

If actual restoration of respect by the perpetrator indicates non-evil, then the following are how respect is actually restored. First, the apology, and the corresponding reparation, shall not be made under duress. If the perpetrator apologised only on coercion, then, again, it was not out of respect that he apologised to the victim, but mere political necessity. If, for example, it were a mere political obligation that one apologised, the apology would not have been purely out of respect for the victim but for some political gain. If one committed the offence only on political necessity, once that is no longer, there is no reason one does not restore respect for the victim. That the goodwill of persons entitles respect is sufficient reason, and if the perpetrator need anything extra, the apology would not have been out of respect. That the perpetrator fails to see the value of persons in themselves is exactly his evil – except if he also does not see value in himself, on equality.

Second, besides the reparation, the apology shall have included the free decision to give up any possibility of future commission of the offence. If it was committed under deception,

confession about the wrong act committed without the knowledge of the victim shall have informed the victim to the extent that he will know if the perpetrator wanted to do it again. That the perpetrator would have freely, not under duress, given up his immoral power over the victim indicates his goodwill, and thus the apology offered in good faith. A putative apology made without confession, let alone elimination of future wrong, demonstrated its fictitiousness because this is exactly how respect failed to be restored. That the perpetrator keeps it open that the victim's person be violated again is exactly how the former decided to not eliminate the possibility of acting out of disrespect.

Third, if keeping the means of wronging is the perpetrator's guarantee, that would have demonstrated exactly his failure to act on the putative knowledge about respect. If he had any insight about his offence, he would have understood the wrong of disrespect, and the whole point about respect, and mutual respect, is to enter into agreement without any threat, and not under any duress, from the agreeing parties. If the apology was offered with a threat, the putative restoration of social relation would not have been out of respect, but, again, out of political necessity. That the victim is coerced to accept the apology is exactly how that is not a genuine restoration of respect. What the victim is entitled, in virtue of his victimhood, is the freedom to decide whether to accept the apology and reconcile. If he was not empowered to act on his such moral right, but is under duress, then the restoration of social relation is not something he wanted that he wanted, but something he had to do but would not have had he been in a different, more favourable, situation. Once situation changed, he will no longer sustain that putatively restored social relation.

To demonstrate what a genuine apology looks like, consider the following example. The perpetrator, out of sheer curiosity, wanted to see what the victim would have reacted upon being harmed, and hit him with a hammer for no obvious nor particular reason. If, out of guilt and shame, he is remorseful, an effective apology is when he gives the victim, when perfectly competent, the

hammer, with his own hand tied back, and let the victim decide what to do to him. Ignoring legal consequences, the victim is thus empowered to decide what to do with the perpetrator, especially with being in the asymmetric power relation the perpetrator once was with the victim. The perpetrator fully justifiably respects the victim because he is open to whatever the victim intended on him; if the victim shall have decided to hit him in the head to exact justice, then he will accept the victim's decision. That retributive punishment shall have been committed not in reconciliation, but it is in being open to the possibility that the victim will reject the apology that an apology is what it is. An apology with the politically necessitated outcome of acceptance does not constitute reconciliation, but just yet again another act not out of respect.

In practice, there are four steps towards reconciliation. Confess the wrong, cease the wrong, apologise, offer reparation. The special case with the hammer had as reparation not the medical cost of the injury, but reconciliation through potential retribution. The victim was thus offered an opportunity to forgive.⁹ A genuine reconciliation initiated by the wrongdoer is so rare that we forgot it is in friends becoming friends again that love is maximised, as Christ commanded.

How Satan and its followers, through their evil, will never have restored respect for their victims, but merely pretend that they wanted to restore it, so they can restore the social relation to wrong again, demonstrates their unforgivability. That is how Christ has no mercy for them, and they do not at all deserve our mercy, pity, and of course forgiveness. Even with those that are not evil, we are open to exact justice, instead of accepting their apology. Forgivability entails permissibility of forgiveness, but not the obligation. This is where Christ's very difficultly complied with dictum of loving your enemy comes in. If your opponent in war shall keep on wronging you, that is one thing; if he shall have stopped without future possibility of doing so, or in virtue of restoration of mutual

⁹ See Volf (2006) for what he craves. He wants the opportunity to forgive his perpetrator, instead of revenge. Volf (1996) promotes forgiveness, but I hope to bring out the danger of doing so, with which such perfectionism might have deteriorated into hypocrisy. It is when the victim is still in an asymmetry of power that their forgiveness is worthy. It is as if they gave up their claim right on the perpetrator, the enforcement of which leaves them with their only power over the perpetrator.

respect, he will no longer do so rationally, not only is it a better thing that one had one more friend, it is a must that one does so, on love. Except with enemies in spirituality, in other words, Satan and its followers, non-evil enemies are in the end potential friends – when, for example, your enemy combatant is no longer at war with you. What situation politically obligated differs from what Satan obligates, and that disrespect that is only contingent on situation, instead of being inherent, as it is in evil, makes a whole world of difference.¹⁰

5. Conclusion

If reconciliation with the perpetrators at the 1989 June Fourth Incident is at all possible, then the atrocity was not committed out of evil, and the corresponding history that led up to the eventuality was reconstructed. Murder, except of those that deserve disrespect, is immoral, but some immoral acts were committed only out of political necessity. Immoral acts not committed thus, but out of the perpetrators' free choice, very probably indicate evil, and given Christ's treatment of Satan, such agents shall have never restored respect for the victim. A sharp example with the hammer is presented to illustrate what it is that a perpetrator genuinely restored respect for the victim, and how the victim has the freedom to decide whether to accept any apology and to reconcile through forgiving the perpetrator.¹¹ However free to reject, it is on Christianity that, if possible at all, reconciliation is a goal, and forgiveness obligation. Shall the perpetrators of the 1989 June Fourth Incident set up the situation for reconciliation to be possible, such as, when politically permitted, the real reasons that factored into the decision, which shall have obligated revealing what led up to the event, be made public with supporting evidence, such as government documents, then the victims shall, given their understanding of the perpetrators' decision in their situation, even want to forgive

¹⁰ This brings out a hypothesis about the Greek language with a *πονέω* (*ponéō*) reading of *ἐχθρός* (*ekhthros*), with regard to the text on loving your enemy. Consider the relation between work and slavery, and the potential power abuse by the master that is evil. Notice, when Yahweh sentenced Adam to plough the land, he could have considered it an evil given his priorly leisure. See Matthew 5:43-45.

¹¹ Consider, in the Books of Samuel, David's refraining from using his power to murder Saul, who has been hunting him, although that vulnerability was not Saul's own offer.

them and reconcile. If such exposure shall have put the perpetrators at risk of being prosecuted in some international court, then indeed this is an eventuality, and however much the corresponding judge might in the end sentence leniently because of the remorse demonstrated by the perpetrators' cooperation with the investigation, especially with providing the evidence that only they had access to, it will still have been the legal consequences that they are committed to. Christ would have wanted of us respect for all who deserve it, and in virtue of owning up to our past wrong, we would have restored respect not only for the victims, but ourselves. Although fully justifiably respecting Jesus as Christ suffices for restoration of self-respect, it is not necessary. The kind of repentance Christ wanted of us, in the end, is restoring the righteous relation with ourselves through restoring the righteous relation with Him.¹² Justification through faith, and the corresponding trust and obedience once one completely submitted oneself to Christ, indeed go a long way. Becoming righteous again, on my theology of humanity, includes restoring fully justified self-respect. One no longer slaves for what politics obligates, but one strives to modify one's situation. Not everyone could have beaten a Nazi soldier, but, instead of being a silent victim in Lu Xun's story of Japanese execution of Chinese citizens, one ought to have strived to empower oneself to get the Nazi's gun to refuse choosing the death between one's son and one's daughter. Achieving morality politically shall thus be what Christ wanted of us. "I am sending you out like sheep surrounded by wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves," Jesus says.¹³

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¹² My theology of humanity justifies this with humanity being designed in the image of God.

¹³ Matthew 10:16, NET.

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