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A MORAL THEORY OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION

Following extended periods of conflict or repression, political reconciliation is indispensable to the establishment or restoration of democratic relationships and critical to the pursuit of peacemaking globally. In this important new book, Colleen Murphy offers an innovative analysis of the moral problems plaguing political relationships under the strain of civil conflict and repression. Focusing on the unique moral damage that attends the deterioration of political relationships, Murphy identifies the precise kinds of repair and transformation that processes of political reconciliation ought to promote. Building on this analysis, she proposes a normative model of political relationships. *A Moral Theory of Political Reconciliation* delivers an original account of the failure and restoration of political relationships, which will be of interest to philosophers, social scientists, legal scholars, policy analysts, and all those who are interested in transitional justice, global politics, and democracy.

COLLEEN MURPHY is an associate professor of philosophy at Texas A&M University. She has published widely on topics pertaining to political philosophy, philosophy of law, and risk analysis.

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Acknowledgements

Fifteen years ago, while an undergraduate student at the University of Notre Dame, I spent a semester studying abroad in London and took a course on the conflict in Northern Ireland taught by Brendan O'Duffy. This course was of special interest given my Irish-American ethnic background and a childhood spent primarily among the large Irish-American community in Chicago. Going into this course I considered the solution to resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland in a just manner quite simple and straightforward: reunify Ireland. This course showed me how profoundly misguided I was to think that the resolution of the conflict was either simple or straightforward. Ongoing discussions with Alasdair MacIntyre over the years, beginning during my time at Notre Dame, have further deepened and enriched my grasp of different aspects of the situation in Northern Ireland. Because of that class, these discussions, and extensive examination of other conflicts around the world, I developed an enduring interest in understanding how it becomes possible for human beings, who live in the same society and who have suffered and inflicted suffering on one another in a systematic and widespread manner, to live peacefully and justly with each other again. This book represents my attempt to answer this question.

My efforts to develop a theory of political reconciliation began while a graduate student at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. My dissertation, and subsequently this book, would not have been possible without the support of my advisor and mentor Gerald J. Postema. When I began my dissertation, political reconciliation was not a subject of philosophical reflection. Philosophers had begun to consider the moral justifiability of truth commissions, but were not concerned with the meaning of political reconciliation itself. I am deeply indebted to Jerry for his confidence in my ability to tackle new intellectual terrain, for maintaining that confidence as my dissertation progressed, and for continually pushing me to further refine and better articulate my ideas.

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