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Working Title:

Apology and Moral Injury: Soul Repair and the Apologetic Act in the Aftermath of War

Abstract:

In the preface to Emmanuel Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas says, “Not only modern war but every war employs arms that turn against those who wield them. It establishes an order from which no one can keep his distance; nothing henceforth is exterior. War does not manifest exteriority and the other as other; it destroys the identity of the same” (p. 21).

I (Eva) was present at the Standing Rock Lakota Sioux Ceremony on December 6, 2016, during which U.S. Army General (Ret) Wes Clark Jr. knelt and asked forgiveness of Chief Leonard Crow Dog for injustices inflicted on Native American people by the U.S. Military. With him were some of the over 4,000 Military Veterans who had answered the call to stand with the Native water protectors. It was a move towards the Other, toward an Other who had been an enemy, with a promise of listening and learning and embracing rather than annihilating the Other.

We have a generation of war veterans seeking the repair of the soul wounds that Levinas describes in the quote above, and we have noted that not only acceptance of guilt, but also acts of restitution help to heal the morally injured soul. Apology that faces outward, for the war veteran, involves acts of restitution that honor the connection between the “sins” of the past and an open future wherein a way of being that recognizes and honors the “who,” the humanity, of the former enemy perpetually displaces self-justification.