

Violence as Historical Time

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Preface

Taking the events of 11 September 2001 as a starting point, Timothy Brook poses several important questions in this short essay. What is the role of the historian in illuminating events or moments in time like this one? What notions of time might a historian use in pursuing this task? What is the place of violence in such notions of time? Is it possible to write history without giving primacy to or celebrating violence?

These questions are difficult ones and lead Professor Brook into some intricate philosophical discussions. He begins by noting that historians are best equipped for helping us understand the *contexts* in which the event-experienced took place as well as the contexts in which our experience has become "indexed to particular meanings." He moves on from this point to note that time and violence are intricately linked in many historical accounts. As he writes, "Violence is time-worthy; non-violence is not." The linkage is sufficiently strong that it is difficult to imagine history in the absence of violence. He argues that this linkage derives, in part, from seeing historical time as a linear sequence of causes and effects, a kind of "chain reaction" in which violence successfully reproduces itself.

At this point in the essay, he asks the question: what if we look at a different view of time, one where such sequencing does not occur? Drawing from the philosophy of Huayan Buddhism, he suggests the idea of "interdependent origination," summarized in the simple proposition: "nothing exists independently of anything else... everything that exists does so because of the existence of everything else." After working through the implications of this position, he returns to 9/11 and suggests a different way for beginning to understand the event. He also argues that this way of thinking about historical time imposes moral responsibilities, particularly that of showing compassion toward those others on whom we depend. He finishes the essay by considering the question of whether it is possible to write history without celebrating violence.

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Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind.
— John Donne, *Meditations XVII*

There is continuity, there is no break.
—Crane to Birch *Ojibway Tales* (Johnson 1993, 117)

September 11th is a date that has become fixed in the calendar of public memory. For one side in the conflict between the United States and the Islamic network opposed to its power in the Middle East, the shocking display of destruction is remembered as a day of infamy; for the other side, as a day of

martyrdom. Which of these claims is true — indeed, whether either is true — depends on the identity and political imagination of the person doing the remembering. But regardless of which meaning the day is now made to bear, the leadership on both sides of the conflict agrees on one thing: this was a moment in time that cannot and should not be forgotten. For some, on both sides, 9/11 deserves to be seen as a genuine turning point in history, changing the global political order in a way that allows no going back. For others, again on both sides, it might more usefully be seen as a moment of illumination, when the sudden flash of violence lit a political landscape whose contours theretofore had been difficult to see (Desai 2002). Whether as a turning point or a moment of illumination, whether as infamy or martyrdom, 9/11 has become a point in time signifying more than the events that took place on that day.

Rather than pursue either interpretation down the path it points to, the historian is better equipped, and of more use, to explore the contexts of 9/11: the contexts in which the event we all experienced took place, and as well the contexts through which our experience has become indexed to certain meanings. The work of contextualization is essential if we are to set our understanding of 9/11 within the broadest possible perspective, rather than steer it into the political categories that the combatants themselves have offered.

This essay is not, however, an attempt to do the necessary work of contextualization. That I leave to those more knowledgeable in the histories implicated in this event. Instead, I will step well back from the event itself and consider the epistemological operations that make it possible for us to understand significant moments in time in the way we do. My approach will be philosophical rather than historical. My goal, though, is not purely theoretical, nor is it to satisfy myself or the reader with an elegant argument. It is to propose a practical alternative to the current framework both sides in the conflict want us to use to understand 9/11. There is nothing we can do, several years removed from the events of that day, to change what happened. What can be changed are the conclusions that the event is enlisted to support.

Every act is followed in time by consequences, yet every consequence is contingent on more than one event, however terrible, and contingent most of all on how we think time matters and what we believe consequence to be. To situate an event in time is to declare its capacity to carry consequences; it is also to commit oneself to certain consequences over others. This essay asks how, why, and whether this is necessary. Such questions require, further, that we think about the relationship between time and violence.

Violence alone is time-worthy; non-violence is not. Violence marks what we accept as a fully historical moment, a meeting point of conflicting forces that have been waiting in suspension and then are forced by violence to precipitate and resolve themselves into something new. Indeed, historical time and historical violence seem so powerfully linked that it is difficult to imagine history in the absence of violence. My challenge is to consider what might happen when that link is denied. Is it then possible to think about 9/11 in relation to a philosophy that removes it from its dominant readings as, from one side, a legitimate strike against the United States for its Middle East policies and, from the other, a criminal act of violence justifying American military intervention in that region? Is it possible to take this violent *lieu de mémoire*, to adapt Pierre Nora's spatial concept to a temporal usage, and set this event into an alternative philosophy of time that foregoes the temptation to violence on both sides?

The most powerful time location in any philosophy of time is the dimension of time for which there is no evidence: the future. In a recent documentary, Jacques Derrida offers a distinction between *le future* and *l'avenir* that resonates with my concern that explanation not interfere too early or too

abruptly with our ability to reflect critically on time-experience:

The future is that which — tomorrow, later, next century — will be. There's a future [*le futur*] which is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable. But there is a future — *l'avenir*, to come — which refers to someone who comes whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me, that is the real future: that which is totally unpredictable, the Other who comes without my being able to anticipate their arrival. So if there is a real future beyond this other known future, it's *l'avenir*, in that it's the coming of the Other when I am completely unable to foresee their arrival.¹

To apply Derrida's binary literally, the bombing of the World Trade Center was an event of *l'avenir*, the coming of the Other at a moment in time and in a fashion when the Other's arrival could not be foreseen. However much Derrida's language cleaves to metaphor, his observation is not purely metaphorical. The Other is always imagined in abstract opposition to the Self; at the same time it is experienced bodily every time someone comes into our presence. Pure time-experience has this unpredictability, the unpredictability that is innate to being-in-time, the source of all that unsettles us by virtue of taking away our guarantees that the future will simply replicate the present, but the source as well of the consciousness that makes consciousness of time, which is the consciousness of self and other, possible.

The bombing of the World Trade Center was a unique time-experience: the first event in world history to be witnessed by almost everyone in the world *in real time*. Television's capacity to produce simultaneous shared witness, hitherto never as fully exploited, made 9/11 the most globally experienced and globally remembered event in history. The sharing of witness is one of the bases on which cultures replicate themselves. This sharing did not produce a shared community of interpretation, however. Many interpretations quickly formed, freeze-framing the ambiguous vitality of the pure moment by inserting it into different narratives, each supported by a different subcommunity.

Embedding 9/11 in a larger story in this way serves to sublimate the violence by positioning it in a particular sequence of causes and consequences, which are in turn consistent with other understandings about how the world works, thereby neutralizing the capacity of this shock to induce breakthroughs in standing assumptions. For despite the scale of devastation, almost everyone was confirmed in what he or she already thought before the violence was done. Culturally comfortable modes of understanding were ready at hand to downscale what might have looked like a turning point or produced a new illumination into something safely repetitive and required no effort of imagination to assimilate. Through this pre-emptive conceptual strike, the completely unanticipated arrival of 9/11 became part of a familiar history, positioned within a flow of time that moves toward it, and then away, without a change in the flow. The effect of this narrative normalization has not been to condemn the use of violence, but to authorize its return.

As long as we think of time as a linear channel of causes and effects, linked one to the next as atoms in a chain reaction, violence successfully reproduces itself. What I would like to do instead is to turn this picture ninety degrees and try thinking of time in another way: not as a line of flow but as something more like a simultaneous array of reference and connection. To do this, I will draw on a philosophical tradition that stands outside either of the traditions of eastern Mediterranean monotheism that have dominated popular perceptions of 9/11. The alternative tradition I propose to use is Buddhism, in particular the Huayan school.

The Huayan school takes its name from the *Huayan jing*, the Chinese translation of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, its founding text. Huayan teachings are in fact a Sogdian elaboration of the Mādhyamika or Middle Way school of Indian Buddhism, the basic tenets of which Nāgārjuna developed in the second century in India and Kumārajīva introduced to China in the fourth. (Sogdiana lay within the area now divided between Tadzhikistan and Afghanistan.) Although the sutra was translated into Chinese in 420, it attracted little doctrinal attention until the seventh century, when the brilliant Sogdian Buddhist master Fazang (643-712) took it up and enlarged its insights. Huayan is not distinguished as a separate school of practice today, yet its elaborations of Mādhyamika philosophy are widely embraced by Buddhists today, perhaps most energetically by Tibetan Buddhists.

The core contribution of Huayan teachings to Buddhism is its explication of the notion of "dependent origination" (*dharmadhātu pratitya-samutpāda* in Sanskrit, *fajie yuanqi* in Chinese), also translated as "interdependent origination" or "conditional existence." The proposition is a simple one: nothing exists independently of anything else. By extension, everything that exists does so because of the existence of everything else. Everything else causes it, and it by the same token causes everything else. Every thing is still different from every other thing, but that difference is only possible because everything shares a common identity with everything else.²

Fazang was particularly skilled at communicating this challenging idea through vivid, concrete images. In his commentary on the *Daśabhūmika Sutra*, he analogizes the relationship between the universal and the particular, and between identity and difference, as the relationship of a rafter to the building whose roof it supports. Fazang argues that the rafter is more than a part of the building. Rather, the rafter is coexistent with the building, since "if you get rid of the rafter, the building is not formed." At the same time, the whole is not simply made up of its parts; it creates the parts of which it is made. A piece of wood that had the size and thickness of a rafter could not become a rafter were the other elements of the building non-existent. As Fazang puts it, "when there are no tiles and such things, the rafter is not a rafter, so it does not create the building." It becomes what Fazang calls a non-rafter, which he defines as "a rafter which does not create a building."³ In the absence of everything that creates the building, no part of the building can exist. All the parts of a building are therefore dependent on all the other parts; they share what Fazang terms "identity." The inconceivability of any one of the parts makes the existence of the building inconceivable, as it does all the other parts of the non-existent building. Nothing can be taken away, nor can the sense of any one thing be sustained without bringing into sense all other things.

From this logic follows a conception of causality: that everything that comes into being does so because of the existence of everything else, and conversely that nothing comes into being without everything coming into being. Whole and part create each other and are inconceivable and unproducible without each other. To say that everything causes everything is not, however, to say that every thing is the same. Simultaneity is not sameness. The rafter causes the building without being the same as the building. Their difference is essential, for without it there could be no identity between them; a stack of rafters does not make a building.

My motive for introducing Huayan philosophy in the context of 9/11 is to broach an alternative philosophy of time.⁴ Just as every datum of existence exists in a continuous field of interdependence with every other datum of existence, so too every moment in time depends on and produces every other moment of time. Nothing originates apart from or before anything else. This proposition is not the same as predestiny or necessity. Huayan Buddhism does not argue that all that happened had to happen; it asserts only that what happened did happen along with everything else that has happened. Accordingly, the only way to achieve a full understanding of why an event happened at the moment it

did is to recognize its coincidence or simultaneous existence with every other moment in time. This is actually quite commonsensical when applied to the past: once something has happened in the past, nothing about it can be changed, nothing else can happen. All past events, to the extent that they can be said to exist, exist conditionally on, and simultaneously with, everything else that has ever happened. We can always discover new information about what did happen which we did not know before, and so our knowledge of the past continually grows, but we cannot add anything to the ontological sum of time past.

This is what conventional history does, after all. For example, to know the old fact that Christopher Columbus set sail on 3 August 1492, has become conditional on knowing that 2 August 1492 was the final deadline for the expulsion of all Jews from Aragon, that the official who signed the expulsion decree and the official who authorized Columbus' order was one and the same man, and that the windfalls of the expulsion helped to finance the voyage (Sale 1991). The one now contributes to our understanding of the other, and is inseparable from it. Given that the royal expropriation of Jewish property in Spain appears to have helped cover the costs of Columbus' expedition, each can be thought of as conditioning the other, at least in a dependent if not a chronological sense. Reversing the gaze, we accumulate understanding of that expropriation not just by relating it to Columbus' departure but by situating it as well in relation to subsequent expropriations of Jewish property, notably Hitler's. None of these events caused the other independently, but our understanding of each is enriched and deepened by accepting its epistemological dependence on knowledge of the others, and each is now conceivable only in relationship to the others. Everything we know exists, not just in the context of everything else we know, but because of what we know.

The Huayan emphasis on the simultaneous existence of all things does not make cause and effect disappear. In fact, the core issue that Buddhist philosophy has been developed to deal with is precisely the production of consequences from actions taken, or what Buddhists call karma. What Huayan philosophy does not do is imagine causality as a single chain of temporally sequenced events. This leads to looking too narrowly for the effects of a cause and to isolating something as a cause without fully taking into account that it in turn is powerfully active as an effect of other causes, and indeed is only causing to the extent that it itself is caused, just as the rafter and the building cause each other.

Mādhyamika Buddhism concocted this metaphysics of causality not as an exercise in logic but as a means to achieve particular ontological effects. What follows ontologically from the proposition of dependent origination is the conditionality of existence, including human existence. If what exists depends entirely on what else exists, then nothing exists of itself. An individual, for instance, has no self-existence but exists only insofar as he or she is "involved with mankind," as John Donne put it. To return to Fazang, an assertion that the building or the rafter exists independently of everything else is what he calls "attachment." The same condition applies to the assertion that the self exists independently of others. This too is an attachment that denies the interdependence of all things — the condition that Buddhism terms "emptiness." The typical example used to illustrate this thinking is the multiplicity of reference within which every person continually comes into existence: in my case, I am a son, a brother, a cousin, a spouse, a father, a friend, a teacher, to mention just a few of the relationships that determine who I am. Dependent origination tells me first of all that I am all these things; more than that, it shows me that I am inconceivable in their absence. At the same time, I am not exclusively any one of these things: I mark the place at which their significations converge. To declare that I am one or some of these to the exclusion of the others is to become attached to a partial, unrealistic, and unsustainable image of myself. Each time I produce that attachment, each time I refuse to be implied by all that implies me, I suffer and cause suffering, according to a Buddhist

understanding.

What might a Huayan interpretation of 9/11 look like? I am not a philosopher, nor am I a scholar of Buddhist philosophy. What follows is an attempt by someone willing to use whatever means that lie to hand to come to terms with the distressing situation we face in the world today. It may not seem particularly helpful to suggest that we should regard 9/11 as conditioned by the existence of all that exists or has ever existed. It is not my intention to make 9/11 disappear into some Oriental haze. Fazang himself was careful to argue against the notion that dependent origination mystically dissolves all differences and reduces all the things making up the world to a single identity. Fazang was an imaginative thinker, but not a mystical one, I think. He was simply analyzing the puzzle of reality as logically as he could, which led him to argue that every event is "simultaneously completed by and mutually correspondent with" every other event (Chan 1963, 411).

What do we discover when we locate 9/11 in this way? To begin with, 9/11 cannot be regarded as an "isolated incident," as the phrase goes. Nothing occurs in isolation; nothing comes out of the blue. Even an event as terrible and as focused as 9/11 comes into being through a complex process of mutual production. It involves everything from US foreign policy in the Middle East, to the Israeli bulldozing of Palestinian homes, to the CIA's guerrilla training operations in Afghanistan, to Ronald Reagan's representation of the USSR as an "evil empire," down to the design and construction of flight simulators, the operation and regulation of flying schools and, beyond that, to the invention of airplanes, electricity, glass, and steel. The web is almost infinite, and each point at which our explanations cut that web limits our capacity to see the dense interconnections among a myriad of mutually causative factors. The men who flew the airplanes and the men who ordered them to do so were points on a much larger field, as were the people caught inside the World Trade Center. Those who died that day — and who died randomly, simply for being in the wrong buildings or the wrong airplanes at the wrong time, utterly ignorant of the crimes for which they were being executed — did so because of all these things.⁵ So too did those who killed. But we must widen the field even further and recognize that the extraordinary imbalance in global wealth and power sustaining the privileged world we inhabit implicates us as well. There can be no "them" and "us" in this understanding.

Huayan philosophy helps further by showing that the causation converging on the event has little to do with, or at least is not efficiently explained by referring the issue to, cultures or civilizations or religions. It asks that we look at what real people do in real time in relation to all that they have experienced. The strands of connection certainly go back to those who have mobilized race, religion, or any other mode of community identity to create and fuel animosity, but animosity cannot be "explained" by features internal to the philosophical predispositions of Islam or Christendom. It arises from attachments generated by oneself and others in real time. Only when such attachments are formed do the justifying ideologies that philosophers, priests, and historians write into a culture's canon get traction. This is the point at which they — we — become dangerous, for narratives that insist on difference carve up the globe between national or confessional selves and others. As the curators of the evidence of difference, historians are part of this process of world-making, colluding in the fabrication of stories that claim goodness for those who suffer and evil for those who cause suffering. The threads in the skein of 9/11 go back a long way, but they need to be untangled, not rewoven into another tapestry of good and evil. Neither is absolute.

Seeing ourselves as existing conditionally, in interdependence with all others, imposes the responsibility of acting in accord with that understanding: to show compassion toward all those others on whom we depend: compassion toward those who suffered, certainly, but compassion as well toward those who caused that suffering, and toward those who caused the suffering that led to their

violence. This is a difficult task, given that the natural reaction to being struck is to strike back. But striking back, though psychologically satisfying, continues the cycle of revenge and perpetuates the violence that set the cycle going. Confirming our mutual interdependence does not mean that justice should not be done. Rather, it reminds us that justice must be even rather than retributive.⁶ Revenge begets revenge; justice invites the cycle of violence to halt.

This exploration of time consciousness in Huayan thought has led me to offer a series of propositions in favour of non-violence, allochronicity, and compassion toward which European traditions of thought are ill-disposed. Let me review the objections to all three before concluding.

Is it possible for historians to write a history of 9/11 that declines to celebrate violence? Is it possible to write it as a compassionate history, as an episode in the history of non-violence? Deeper thinkers than I have been stumped by this challenge. In a meditation on the problem of violence first published in 1949, Paul Ricoeur reflected on the difficulty of presenting non-violence as something having historical status. Non-violence, he observed, is a negative, the decision not to do something. It is "of the order of discontinuity: circumstantial acts of refusal, campaigns of non-compliance; it is of the order of the *gesture*" (Ricoeur 1949, 232). It is not what anything is *about*. Violence on the other hand is more than a gesture; it is an act. It takes its place naturally within historical narratives by virtue of its capacity to perform narrative functions and bear the burden of meaning. Violence gets treated "as the very mainspring of history, the 'crisis' — the 'critical moment' and the 'judgment' — which suddenly changes the configuration of history" (ibid. 224). It is difficult to construct a narrative around non-crises, non-critical moments, points at which history is not handing down the judgments we expect it to dispense. When we do — take for example how the history of modern India uses Gandhi's march in 1930 to protest the salt tax — it can only be told in relation to violence, suppressed at that moment but always potential, always on the verge of being unleashed. Gandhi's salt march would have attracted no attention were violence not present as a real threat. Violence gives non-violence its power, a borrowed power.

When "violence appears as the driving force of history," as Ricoeur (1965, 241) phrases it in an essay he published eight years later, it seems impossible to construct a history in which violence is not at least implied.⁷ Non-violence exists only "on the level of the abstract, the customary, the institutional, on the level of anonymous 'mediations' between man and man," not in the unfolding rush of day-to-day events (ibid., 223). How then can the advocate of non-violence be anything but a "purist on the fringes of history?", Ricoeur asks (ibid., 229). If violence alone is deemed record-worthy, how can history be anything other than the discipline that naturalizes violence? From Ricoeur's perspective, the most we can hope for is that non-violence enter "a history which remains to be made," which in turn depends on issuing "prophetic non-violence" as a challenge to "the harsh laws of the present" — which means permanently deferring non-violence as a historical principle (ibid, 232). There is no escape. Ricoeur's predicament reflects his historical situation, following the most violent war in history and living through the early phase of the Cold War. Under such world conditions, the efficacy of non-violence as a mode of historical action seemed to be approaching zero.

Ricoeur's predicament derives from more than that. It draws from Christian eschatology, which sees time as finite, locates redemption outside time, and expects the passage to redemption to lie through apocalyptic violence. The burden of this teleology, and the philosophy of diachronic but finite time that sustains it, weighs heavily on what I need to historicize as eastern Mediterranean explanations of the world. These seem unable to imagine non-violence as a form of agency. This profound philosophical lack has inspired some European thinkers to delve into other traditions that imagined time in other ways. Early in the nineteenth century, for instance, the English Romantic poet Samuel Coleridge

modeled human time-consciousness by contrasting Europe's post-Edenic "historical time" with what he called the "ethnographic rites and charms" of the non-European world. The former was diachronic, bound to sequence; the latter was allochronic, capable of arranging all times so that they may coexist in the present (Hughes 1995).⁸ Coleridge's "ethnography" can be dismissed as yet another instance of Europeans using Europe's other to turn their own world topsy-turvy in their search for new ways of making sense of thing. But it was also an opening for imagining alternatives.

Coleridge's fascination with non-sequential time-consciousness is still with us. Peter Hughes (1995) has noted that the poet's interest in ethnographic time resonates with our contemporary skepticism about sequence, our alienation from time as the ineluctable context of human existence, our fascination with the synchronic and the syncopated over the diachronic and the regular. I raise this bit of Coleridgean Orientalism to caution myself and the reader about the awkward exercise I have undertaken in this essay. My desire to escape the violence of historical time leaves me as vulnerable as Coleridge is to the critique that I have reduced Huayan Buddhism to an "ethnographic rite" that will banish Mediterranean teleologies of Armageddon, and have offered compassion as nothing more than an "ethnographic charm" to summon up something better. Have I, in the face of terrible violence, simply produced another dehistoricized Eurocentric construction of the Other?

Jean Baudrillard would think so. According to the argument he has advanced in the trenchant essays he has written on the subject, I can be dismissed as one of those "Americans" (for Baudrillard, a category, not a nationality) for whom compassion is "the national passion of a people that wants to be alone with God," the twin sister of whose compassion is "(as much a twin as the two towers) is arrogance" (2003, 60-61). Baudrillard directs his contempt at those who feel sorry for themselves about 9/11. In his view they have no right to do so, the terrorist attack being the natural product of the global system from which they benefit more than anyone. Only those who attack the global system are permitted to earn transcendence through sacrifice; for "Americans," "all the paths of sacrifice have been neutralized and defused (there remains only a parody of sacrifice that can be seen in all the current forms of victimhood)" (ibid., 102). God has left room for those who attack to give their lives as a sacrifice; "the privileged beneficiaries of globalization" who receive but cannot give are condemned to "terminal despair" (ibid., 104).

Under the weight of such potent jeremiads, Derrida's *avenir* of the unanticipated closes. Baudrillard condemns us to nothing but a predictable, programmable *futur* of global dominance, global discipline, and global counter-violence. He may be right. Our "historical time" may have vaulted us toward an Armageddon from which we can never escape until, he says, we "get beyond the moral imperative of unconditional respect for human life" (Baudrillard 2003, 68). With this bold declaration, Baudrillard enters a Faustian bargain with violence, renouncing the mundane conditionality of existence for the fetish of absolute submission to power.

Conceiving of moral authenticity in this way, as the transformation of the master into the slave, belongs to a particular strain within European philosophy going back through Georges Bataille to Friedrich Nietzsche. This strain has a genealogy that, from a historian's point of view, rests unambiguously on the history of export of European violence outside Europe into its colonies, particularly during the nineteenth century (think of European colonies in Africa or the Middle East). Baudrillard's argument has the appearance of being political, yet once set in its intellectual context and seen as the delayed counter-effect of French colonialism, it begins to look as aesthetic, even theological, in its enthusiasm for redemptive violence and pleasurable destruction. Rather than step forward and see what lies beneath the gestures of terrorism, Baudrillard surrenders himself to the play of violence, in effect retreating to the "ethnographic rites and charms" of apocalyptic Christianity.

This is not to say that Baudrillard may not be right about globalization: we may have passed the point of escape. Perhaps all is simulacra and nothing can ever occur again in real time; perhaps there is no endgame in the contests that now arise against the fantastic power of the one superpower, only endless sabotage and endless retaliation. But this analysis robs me of agency even more fiercely than does the usual "clash of civilizations" hypothesis, and I decline to accede to it. I prefer to look for another way to write the history of 9/11, which is why I venture to suggest that the Huayan concept of dependent origination gives us far more to work with than the hegemonic discourses of our age. If one goal of such working-through is the realization of compassion, then the task in its fullest sense is not the subjective exercise of gaining maximum room in which one's own agency can manoeuvre, which seems to be how Baudrillard understands compassion. It means the more demanding task of accepting the agency of others. Violence precludes such an acceptance; non-violence opens its possibility.

This argument is unlikely to rescue non-violence from being an awkward principle of justice, an even more unworkable mode of international diplomacy, and an absence in historical time. My purpose, which I stated at the beginning, is both more modest and more ambitious: it is to find the roots for a new practice. Confirm the time-worthiness of violence and you get it; provide compassion and something else might happen. Given that historical writing has been moving from teleologies to narratives of contingency, from structures to conjunctural, path-dependent explanations, I suspect that I am not the only person with an impulse to reformulate the practices of history in the hope of encouraging a reformulation of the practices of politics.⁹ By situating events that turn the world upside down within synchronic fields of interdependence, by showing them as continuities rather than breaks, the historian can contribute to the work of acknowledging the responsibility of all for all. 9/11 did not turn the world upside down. It still has the capacity to do so. But it will not until the parties in the present conflict abandon their convictions, secular or sacred, that the future can be guaranteed. It will not happen until we are able to greet the Other as it arrives and prepare for *l'avenir* as an always opening future into which we carry the Huayan vow "always to benefit other beings."¹⁰

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Notes

1. Interview with Jacques Derrida, in Derrida, produced and co-directed by Amy Ziering Kofman (Jane Doe Films, 2003). Quoted with the permission of Amy Ziering Kofman.
2. Tenzin Gyatso (the 14th Dalai Lama) gives a readable account of dependent origination in his *Ethics for the New Millenium* (Gyatso 1999). Specially, see pages s36-42.
3. Translated and lucidly explained by Francis Cook (1977, 78-79).
4. As Leonard Priestley observed to me in a personal communication, "the Huayan treatment of time is simply an application of the general principles of their philosophy." I am grateful to Leonard for sharing his insights and providing bibliographic references.
5. Bertrand Russell famously suggested that it was impossible to construct the entire causality of anything, as that would require taking into account everything that has ever happened.
6. I borrow the concept of "even justice" from Radhabinod Pal, the Indian judge at the Tokyo trial. See (Brook 2001, 696).
7. Ricoeur narrows his focus in this essay on the state as the power source for violence. As he puts it, "The political existence of man is watched over and guided by violence, the violence of the State which has the characteristics of legitimate violence" (1965, 234).
8. I understand diachronicity as the conceptualization of all moments of time as existing in sequential separation, and allochronicity as the conceptualization of all moments of time as simultaneously present.
9. One example of this shift is Immanuel Wallerstein's (1999) "conjunctural explanation" for the rise of capitalism, which he too relates to a call for a change in global political practice. The status of contingency in Ricoeur's philosophy of history is ambiguous. See, for example, (Ricoeur 1984).

10. This is the ninth of the ten vows of Samanthabhadra, which express the core commitments of the Huayan Buddhist monk. See (Cook 1977, 78).

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