

For Whom the Bell Tolls? Salient Commemoration¹

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1. Introduction

If you could avoid it, would you accept spending time in a place where swastikas were on prominent display and Nazi officers were honored by a statue? The Master of Jesus College in Cambridge, Sonita Alleyne, who is a Black British woman, said that she would be reluctant to enter the Jesus College chapel where a man who invested in the slave trade is extravagantly honored with a memorial – a memorial that the Ecclesiastical Court refused to let the college re-house, invoking the Christian duty of forgiveness among other justifications.² I assume that all of those involved in the Court or those who enter the chapel disapprove of slavery, but many reach a different decision on whether the presence of the memorial in the chapter renders the chapel unfit for use.



Source: *Cambridge News*. Fair use: Educational.

Some people have made a mark on the world that is obviously horrific. Just as Hitler is not redeemed by his unemployment busting road building programme and Mussolini by those trains that ran on time, Rhodes is not redeemed by his scholarships and support for Oriel College, Oxford. In fact, in all these cases the good deeds were meshed with the wrongdoing. But in some cases, people achieved worthy things independently of the serious wrongdoing they also committed. Some of those figures cause greatest controversy regarding the permissibility of their commemoration. This is sometimes because we disagree about what the figures did, which of their actions were wrong and whether they carry blame. Gorbachev, for example, is seen as a visionary reformer by many in Western Europe, while in some other parts of Europe he is recognised for the person he was, who lost control over the Soviet Union and concluded that it was best not to use force to keep it together. But suppose, as I will assume here, we agree on what the figures did, whether what they did was right or wrong, and

¹ [Acknowledgements for comments at short notice and good cheer: Daniel Butt, Matthew Clayton, Rowan Cruft, Rachel Finlayson, Ben Jackson, Tom Parr, Avia Pasternak, Jonathan Quong, CSSJ, the Friday group. I am sorry that I do not reference the many relevant debates in this draft (on the plus side, there is less to read).]

² Sally Weale, “‘We can’t believe it’: Cambridge college master aghast as slave trader plaque stays”, *The Guardian*, 26 March 2022.

whether they should be blamed and praised for. It may seem that in such cases we should all agree whether commemorating such figures is permissible in a given setting.

I will argue that we should all agree but that our conclusion needs to be informed by recognising how differently we can all reasonably see those figures. As I explain later on, the right account of commemoration follows from the right conception of who would be called upon to do the commemorating³ and from the right account of what commemoration demands from them: their attention. Attending to the same object – which may take the form of simple acknowledgment or sustained keeping of the object in mind – may come with different costs attached depending on who is doing the attending. The right account of commemoration needs to recognise that commemorating the same people could be different for those who commemorate. Different people may reasonably attribute different salience to a given wrongdoing and as a result may suffer different agent-relative harms and wrongs when their attention is directed towards them by commemorations. In some cases, only some people may have rights against and for specific commemorations.

To develop the account, I will rely on the idea that some people reasonably self-identify as belonging to the group of people that was targeted in the wrongdoing and others do not. I cannot do justice to this idea here even though I invoke it. To make space for my core argument, I also won't address here, except in passing in section 6, worries that removing statues means we are 'rewriting history' or that no one in the past is blameworthy for what they did because they did not know at the time that murder, enslavement and torture are the wrong thing to do.⁴ I also put aside the issue of whether removing monuments or discontinuing some practices would be economically or aesthetically costly. For these reasons, when I say that it is impermissible to honour some figure, I do not mean that all things considered we must remove the monument. Such judgements should take into account all the relevant costs of removal (and any unreasonable reactions that may keep us hostage). But to add heft to my claim, my point will be that there is in such instances a strong presumption in favour of removing the commemoration: there are people who enjoy a pro tanto right not to be exposed in various ways to the commemoration and they may enjoy it even if a given statue has been altered or contextualised so that it no longer honours the figure. I will also argue that there are cases where people enjoy a pro-tanto right that a given figure be commemorated.⁵

I say what I mean by commemoration next. In section 3, I offer an outline of what I call the salient commemoration account. The remaining sections refine it and subject it to various tests which contrast the account with other proposals for permissible commemoration or for transforming commemorations into apologies. One answer to the difficulty raised by commemoration of serious wrongdoers is simply not to commemorate anyone who engaged in serious wrongdoing.⁶ I will argue

³ I am grateful for discussion in the context of another paper and for the phrasing to Victor Tadros.

⁴ Elsewhere, I enumerate and address all the frequent arguments advanced for keeping statues of wrongdoers in place but here I focus only on arguments that cannot easily be put aside. Zofia Stemplowska, 'The Rhodes Statue: Honour, Shame and Responsibility', *Political Quarterly* 92 (2021): 629-637.

⁵ Permissible commemoration would not violate the right against a given figure being commemorated. Such commemoration may still violate other rights (e.g. to property or decency) in a way that would render commemoration all things considered impermissible.

⁶ Helen Frowe argues that the prohibition on public statues would extend to cover morally ambiguous cases – cases where the wrongdoers committed serious wrongs, even if they also achieved significant good in their

that this is too restrictive. A different answer involves recommendations to purposefully alter what a given memorial or commemorative practice expresses. One person may mould a statue of Colston in Bristol to honour him, but another might place it horizontally, sprayed with graffiti in a museum. We can vandalise or contextualise monuments that commemorate wrongdoers in order to turn them from an instance of commemoration into something else.⁷ I will argue that simply vandalising or altering with plaques is not going to deliver permissible remembrance.

2. Commemoration

We are dealing with commemoration rather than mere remembrance when the object or practice involves honouring in the sense of display of markers of positive appraisal. It is not merely a recording and sharing of information.⁸ There is, I admit, a sense in which merely recording something is to single it out (and some may refer to it as an honour in a different sense than the thicker one I use here). If the recording is prominent, I will refer to it as highlighting. I will discuss non-commemorative remembrance in section 6. Throughout my focus will be on cases where the commemoration or the highlighting is enduring or regularly repeated as well as prominent.

Commemoration is public, as I understand it here, when it involves spaces or resources that are or should be under broader control than just by private individuals or associations. Thus a window display in a private house, a sign on a T-shirt, or a monument in a private museum would not normally qualify as public.⁹ By contrast, an association may decide on a statue to Margaret Thatcher in Grantham or in Westminster, but if it is on public land, then the decision is in some sense that of the British public or at least a given council. (If we think that all universities should be under a broader legitimacy-conferring democratic control, their decisions would qualify too.)

When we are commemorating a person rather than a deed is not always obvious. Hathersage in the Peak District has a lido that was built as a memorial for George V in 1936 and Princess Diana has a memorial playground with a pirate ship in Hyde Park. I don't offer criteria for what counts as commemorating a person rather than some actions that we can detach from the person, or when we might be able to say that a person following some transformation is a different person to who they were before, but my argument is meant to apply only to cases of commemorating persons. Unless I say otherwise, when I refer to honouring the actions of the person, I mean to suggest that the person whose actions they are is also honoured.

lives. Helen Frowe, 'The duty to remove statues of wrongdoers', *Journal of Practical Ethics* 7 (2019): 1-31. She sees serious wrongs as always salient to the assessment of the wrongdoer. I agree with her that wrongs that are salient this way disqualify figures from commemoration. I add a filter regarding what counts as salient that reflects who the audience of the commemoration is.

⁷ Johannes Schulz, 'Must Rhodes fall? The significance of commemoration in the struggle for relations of respect', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 27 (2019): 166–186; C-M. Lim, 'Vandalizing tainted commemorations', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 48 (2020): 185–216; Macalester Bell, 'Against Simple Removal: A Defence of Defacement as a Response to Racist Monuments', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2021), early view [doi.org/10.1111/japp.12525].

⁸ This means that statues in museums may or may not honour the figures they depict, depending on how they are displayed.

⁹ I would be happy to include anything that is visible or accessible to the public in the definition since the arguments I offer are relevant to such cases. I use the narrower definition here to side-step the usual arguments about individual self-expression.

Proper commemoration involves both the communication of a message and its receipt by those who are paying attention to it: that is, it includes both the events or objects and the mental states that these are meant to or are normally expected to invoke (though I will sometimes refer only to the events or the objects). In the paradigm case, the message honours the object of the commemoration and the primary audience reasonably understands that this is the message. If after enough time has passed the audience cannot decode the message as one of honouring (akin to it being difficult for us to see that blackened teeth signal wealth and beauty)¹⁰ then the person is no longer being commemorated in its full sense, at least for now, though they may still be highlighted.¹¹

The primary audience is the audience for whom the commemorative object or practice is intended or who can reasonably foreseeably witness it and whose interests should inform the decision-makers' decision. So the primary audience of a photograph in my living room is my family and also those I let into my house. Burglars who break into my house or the police that enters to investigate are not.¹²

Do public memorials still honour a person when we publicly and sincerely declare that we would not have erected such a memorial ourselves? They do if we leave the memorial in a form or place where we still normally continue to express esteem; we thereby signal that detaching the memorial from the esteem markers is not sufficiently important for us at present. Of course, depending on what else we might need to do, leaving statues in place may be justified no matter how much we disapprove of what they honour. When we are fighting pandemics, for example, we may have better things to do.¹³

What makes commemoration so powerful is that it can advance or set back people's interests (harm or benefit them) and assert or deny their moral status (show respect or disrespect to them). Although my focus here is mostly on the interests and moral status of the living, commemoration can show respect or disrespect to the dead and advance or setback their surviving preferences, that is the preference they had when alive about posthumous states of affairs.¹⁴ The dead are sometimes owed commemoration. For example, if the now dead had wished for their fair share of posthumous remembrance, and we owe it to them to advance their acceptable surviving preferences, then remembering or commemorating them may be something we must do for them.¹⁵ This is one reason

¹⁰ Alexander Radishchev, *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*, Columbia University Press 2021.

¹¹ For discussion of how the meaning may change over time see Joanna Burch-Brown, 'Is it wrong to topple statues and rename schools?', *Journal of Political Theory and Philosophy* 1: 59-88 (2017).

¹² A living room, of course, is not a site of public commemoration but looking at what honouring is permissible in the living rooms of children with criminal parents will matter below to the assessment of the salient commemoration account.

¹³ When we are fighting wars, by contrast, we often care about what messages surround us even more than before. The Ukrainians have found the time to dismantle a number of monuments since February. One of the more famous actions of the Polish Scouts, the Gray Ranks, during the German occupation of Warsaw involved commemoration of Copernicus.

¹⁴ Joel Feinberg, *Harm to Others: The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law*, Oxford University Press, 1984. Those who reject the idea of surviving preferences can still accept that we have reasons to bring about certain outcomes, such as not walking on graves or stopping posthumous slander, and that these outcomes are apt responses to the dead.

¹⁵ Zofia Stemplowska 'Duties to the Dead: Is Posthumous Mitigation of Injustice Possible?', *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy* 6 (2020): 32-58 and 'Go and Tell Spartans, Passerby: Whom to Remember Among Many', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, forthcoming.

why we cannot simply solve the problem of impermissible commemorations by denying all commemorations of persons altogether.

For the living, commemoration can advance their welfare and autonomy interests, for example when it improves their understanding of the world or brings them joy. It can also harm and disrespect them.¹⁶ For example, it can harm by motivating further wrongdoing, which is, of course, why some wrongdoers are denied graves in case those act as points for political organising. In what follows, however, I put aside such harms and focus instead on the the harmfulness (setting back of one's interests) or disrespect (disrespecting one's proper and equal moral status) by the commemoration in itself: its message. I will assume that all serious and unexcused wrongdoing denies people proper moral status. Honouring such wrongdoing can itself deny that all people have the moral status they do. Such denials can harm in themselves by generating certain reasonable states in people such as physical and psychological pain, fear, sense of inferiority, impaired decision making, etc. They also disrespect those about whom they express that their moral status is lesser than it is. I will assume that the more prominent the denial, holding all else equal, the more disrespectful it is and the more harmful it is likely to be.

3. Salient commemoration

Standard accounts of permissible commemoration focus on the reasons all members of the audience have for and against commemoration and the case is often made by pointing out what a person did or did not do. A lot of political campaigning takes this form. That someone was an SS officer or a significant donor to the Nazi party through his automobile business gives everyone a reason not to commemorate him.

But we can also understand that a child of the SS officer, when thinking about his father, may focus on the love the father showed him despite the evil he meted out to others. The offspring who keeps this paternal affection as his focus may have a special reason to commemorate the father – his reason is agent-relative. That is, even when people agree on what the relevant figures did and agree whether what they did was right or wrong, they can still sometimes reasonably find different facts about the figures salient for them. Facts are salient, in the sense I use here, not necessarily in that only those facts matter to a person or are the person's sole focus, but in that the facts do matter and are a key focus for the person (or, at least, the person tries to make them matter and be a key focus; we can be in the grip of salience but we can also take steps to direct it).

In effect, we have agent-relative and (what I will somewhat inaccurately call) agent-neutral or general reasons for or against commemoration. Those reasons reflect and direct the salience given facts about a figure reasonably have for those who commemorate. One way to think about the difference between the reasons is to see each as answering a different question when a given figure is assessed. Agent-neutral reasons invite us to ask about the figure: does the balance of your acts disqualify you from commemorative attention by those with no special relationship to you? The agent-relative reasons invite us to ask: do you qualify for *my* commemorative attention?

¹⁶ Alfred Archer and Benjamin Matheson, *Honouring and Admiring the Immoral*, Routledge 2022; Ten-Herng Lai, 'Political Vandalism as Counter-Speech', *European Journal of Philosophy* 28 (2020): 602-16.

Agent-neutral reasons matter but need not and sometimes cannot be decisive. This is in part because commemorative attention is granted for reasons that resonate with specific agents and because agent-relative reasons can silence or outweigh agent-neutral ones. To see how the agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons work consider a stylised case. Imagine a mother whose child was killed by a drunk car driver. Suppose also that the driver never engaged in any other wrongdoing and regrets his actions, had served his term in prison and is now a good father. The mother is at liberty to view the driver purely through the lens of his wrongdoing. There may be cases where she is morally required to interact with him: perhaps she has to serve him in the local shop where she works. But beyond serving him she is not required to think of him otherwise than as the person who killed her child. Typical others, by contrast, may not be at liberty, at the bar of what we owe people, to view him exclusively this way: they may need to bear in mind what else he has done with his life.¹⁷

This difference in permissible reactions between the mother and the typical strangers can be explained by the following two ideas that inform one another. First, we normally owe those of whom we think a fair assessment of who they are.¹⁸ Second, we enjoy a broad freedom, as compatible with morality, to decide on our ends and what we care about and to build a coherent narrative of our own life in light of these choices. This freedom in turn affects what salience different facts about others will have for us. The fair assessment we owe others has to fit with this freedom. Provided we are not thereby unreasonably misjudging or discriminating against people, or violating any special duties we may have towards them, we can emphasise or deemphasise facts about them in light of our own ends and lives.¹⁹

I say more about how the two ideas fit together below and in section 5.2 but I hope this outline already can explain the mother's case: Given the significance to the mother of her child, the mother can permissibly single-out the driver's role in the death of her child for her focus, even her sole focus. By contrast, a typical stranger who did not know the child nor suffered similar tragedy as the mother could not usually justify a sole focus on the driver's role in the death of the child when interacting with him.

¹⁷ Or at least they may have a duty to try not to view him exclusively this way. I see this as compatible, for example, with permitting people to be reasonably selective about the aspects of the person that move them to enter or exit optional relationships. Wrongdoing by someone is not a necessary condition for being morally free to focus on one aspect of a person's life. A mother whose child was killed by a lorry driver through no fault of his own will also normally be at liberty to see the driver through the lens of this tragedy alone even if she serves him in a shop. By contrast, typical others, again, may not have such liberty.

¹⁸ I say that we 'normally' owe it because the costs to us matter. It would be too costly to avoid all biased information about celebrities and we do not have to investigate the extent of the bias unless we are seeking such biased information ourselves. We may also owe less to those who had mistreated us in various ways.

¹⁹ Agent-relative reasons relate to what Archer and Matheson on the one hand and Dimetriou and Wingo on the other identify as reasons for continued commemoration. The former, following Cohen, single out 'personal value' of a given figure or object while the latter discuss the reasons for commemoration that might arise out of recognition of the role of a given figure in one's cultural identity. Archer and Matheson, *Honouring and Admiring the Immoral...* Dimetriou and Wingo, 'The Ethics of Racist Monuments' in D. Boonin (ed), *Palgrave Handbook of Philosophy and Public Policy* (Palgrave, 2018): 341-55. I agree that our valuing of something may give us reasons to relate to it differently than others do but the valuing must be permissible and recognise the claims others have for and against such valuing. I say more about this in section 5.2. My view fits better with Archer and Matheson's reference to the fact that 'It is unreasonable to expect victims of child abuse to have to walk past a statue to Savile whenever they want to use their local swimming pool...' (p. 98).

As a result, if we commemorate the car driver after his death (say with a bench in a park), we can recognise that the commemoration can have a radically different impact on and meaning for the mother than the others. Whatever harm it causes her will be agent-relative in the sense that the mother's reasons to view the driver one way or another are in part relative to her. The harm to her may not render the commemoration impermissible but the seriousness of it will be different for her and for others.

Consider next a case that is closer to cases that attract public commemoration debates. Imagine someone who died in the 1st half of the 20th century and who had exactly two projects in life: he worked diligently to exclude all Poles from the UK and he funded a college where, I, a Polish national, now work. Everyone should condemn the former project but, as a Pole, I may well see the Benefactor's anti-Polishness as more salient than many non-Poles might. I may reasonably focus on his anti-Polishness whenever thinking of the (xenophobic) Benefactor.²⁰

It is not my view, however, that people's reactions and what they see as salient are beyond criticism. People have some responsibility to (try to) manage their reactions – especially but not only those they express – on account of what they owe to others. I may find it upsetting that a friend once called my co-nationals by a slur, but if I dwell on it despite evidence that this action was entirely out of character for her then I am unreasonably cultivating my pain (I am building a narrative of our relationship that is unfair to her).

Still, in the Benefactor case, it is not unreasonable for me to think about how anti-Polish he was: his anti-Polishness was not a temporary and minor lapse in judgement. Should I not re-evaluate how salient the Benefactor's anti-Polishness is to me given the benefit I receive from being able to work at the college the Benefactor founded? The mere fact that I benefit from his actions does not seem to place me under duty not to focus on his anti-Polishness (I will offer cases where someone's achievements do require focusing on them in section 5.2).

That said, my account does not invoke simply what I, in fact, do see as salient in relation to the Benefactor. Perhaps I have mastered my mind and even when forced to look at his statue, I am able to turn my mind away from him or how he treated Poles. As a result, I may not feel any hurt. If my not feeling hurt is not itself harmful, I may not even be harmed by messages that he is to be honoured. If every Polish person were to genuinely react this way, there would be less reason not to commemorate him. But the risk of harm to me, given the likely salience of the wrongdoing in question, is sufficiently high to figure in our reasoning about whether to erect the commemoration. In addition, even if I am not in fact harmed, honouring the Benefactor disrespects me in so far as it honours someone who denied me proper and equal moral status.

To be clear, non-Poles may also be harmed and perhaps even disrespected by the commemoration. But given my nationality, the potential agent-relative harm to me is greater (and the actual agent-relative harm is likely). The agent-relative disrespect to me is also greater given that it is my moral status that is being questioned. This is because the agent-relative considerations make possible a wider

²⁰ Joseph Raz, *Value Respect and Attachment*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

range of reasonable positions for Polish people to adopt vis-à-vis the Benefactor's wrongdoing even as they do not dictate how to choose within this range.

But since public commemoration involves a collective decision, we need to know how to combine the different agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons for and against commemoration that will be in play. The bad news is that this is difficult. The good news is that political theory is familiar with such difficulties.

4. When commemoration harms and and disrespects

4.1. Rights against commemoration

In what follows, I will focus on two types of cases. In the first type of case (assumed in this subsection) the commemoration harms and disrespects without also communicating anyone else's equal and proper moral status. In the second type of case (4.2), commemoration can communicate such equal and proper moral status and might be called for precisely because its absence can harm and disrespect. This difference, I will argue, can explain why it is impermissible to commemorate Washington or the slave trader in the Jesus College chapel, but perhaps permissible to commemorate Lincoln.

If commemorating a serious wrongdoer harms and disrespects, and there is no harm or disrespect involved in withholding it, then the straightforward solution seems to be simply not to commemorate the figure while still allowing people to engage in other ways with whatever the figure did that was of value. After all, my account does not forbid people from reading the work of wrongdoers or learning about them and it is unclear why anyone would therefore be liable to bear serious harm and disrespect so that the figure could be honoured.

There is a variety of ways to ground the judgement that a serious enough harm or disrespect is a wrong that can block commemoration. On any of the following – a Scanlonian contractualist, a Rawlsian veil of ignorance, Dworkinian-Williamsian-Parriian fair insurance, an intuitionist appeal to the dignity of human life or the respect we owe to each other or on a Kantian universalizability view – there are instances where the serious harm or disrespect to one is not necessarily outweighed by some benefit to many.²¹ Of course, not all these accounts will accept that agent-relative measures of harm or disrespect are the right way to go. My claim is only that once we have the right account of harm and disrespect in place, it is possible to reference a variety of views for the conclusion that a serious enough harm or disrespect to one is not necessarily outweighed by the benefit to many. When there is also a duty not to impose such harms or wrongs (in the form or disrespect), the agents enjoy a right against them.²²

Such a right can be grounded with reference to agent-neutral or agent-relative harms and disrespect. A serious enough agent-neutral harm or disrespect of commemoration will make it impermissible:

²¹ In fact, only utilitarianism would likely have sufficient resources to go the opposite way and that's not a surprise. But if you are a utilitarian, you can read my account as offering utilitarian rules of thumb.

²² If the right is waivable this would explain why only the right holders 'own' the commemorative decisions: the right against commemorating X cannot be invoked on behalf of the right-holder if the right-holder genuinely wishes to waive it.

everyone will have a right against it.²³ Agent-relative reasons can also result in agent-relative harm and disrespect that is serious enough to ground rights against it. Of course, if the relevant harm is agent-relative it still needs to be genuine. For example, a Russian official is not agent-relatively harmed (or wronged) when the square at which the Russian Embassy stands is renamed for Ukrainian soldiers: there is no setback to his (morally significant) interests (or any expressions of disrespect to his moral status). But a genuine harm or disrespect to someone may be serious enough, even if we ourselves reasonably do not attach such high salience as the person who does,²⁴ provided that the salience they attach is itself not wronging anyone. And, importantly, to grasp the seriousness of the agent-relative harm or wrong we would not look to averaging out any answers here. If there is just one person for whom the harm or disrespect is sufficiently serious to judge that they have a right against it, then commemoration is impermissible.

4.2. But what of the good?

One strategy available to those who wish to commemorate serious wrongdoers is to grant that there can be rights against them being publicly commemorated in some settings but to argue that if salience is relevant then commemoration should be permissible in other settings: those where wrongdoing is not seen as salient. The general idea here is this: If commemoration can be blocked when it is too harmful or disrespectful for some, then why not permit it when those who will witness the commemoration do not find the wrongdoing particularly salient?

Suppose, for example, that the defenders of the Jesus College memorial – perhaps some of the alumni who took the college to court – would like to say: We understand that you do not wish to commemorate him and we think your decision is reasonable for you. However, we have reasons to commemorate him for the good he did for our college. Public commemoration is a matter of a collective decision and one such decision would be to keep the statue in a place that can simply be avoided by those who find the wrongdoing salient.

This could be thought of as a restricted-setting defence of commemoration. But it should be clear that the restricted-setting defence will not permit the commemoration of someone who extravagantly invested in the trade in enslaved people in the Jesus chapel, whether or not he made any financial gain on their investment (a fact the Ecclesiastical court found important). This is so for two reasons. First, everyone has an agent-neutral reason not to commemorate him and so everyone is wronged by such commemoration, even if some are disrespected and harmed more than others. Even if we cannot argue that the wrongdoing must be salient to all in the sense that they must think of it whenever visiting the chapel, they still ought not accept his honouring.

Second, the College should be a place that is appropriate for those for whom the figure's wronging is especially salient. The chapel in question is used as a space for all college members and it is reasonable for at least some of them (and perhaps even all of them) to focus entirely on what place slavery has in the narrative of their own lives when attending a place that honours an investor in it.

²³ Genocide, for example, offers everyone agent-neutral reasons not to commemorate. It also offers some special agent-relative reasons not to commemorate if they belong to the group targeted by the genocide.

²⁴ I discuss elsewhere what duties the audience might have to try to grasp the salience. [Cf. Jan T. Gross, *Neighbours*; Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, Ashwini Vasanthakumar. *The Ethics of Exile*.]

They are and would be disrespected and harmed the most by the commemoration and their right against the commemoration is the strongest. The right conception of the group that is the primary audience for the commemoration explains why the restricted-setting defence is inapplicable here.

Is the upshot of my argument that no public commemorations of serious wrongdoers will go through? Yes, if the wrongdoing gives everyone decisive reasons against commemoration. But even when it does not, the defence will be hard to pull off if the primary audience is diverse enough. That said, we can also recognise that some past denials of moral status will no longer translate into ongoing denials of moral status and so some commemorations will not express such denials to the primary audience. It is a complicated question how what an object expresses is determined by the original intent and the symbolism that can be decoded by the current audience.²⁵ But just as a forgotten language will not speak to us anymore, a medieval painting of a Saint full of symbolism that we (the primary audience) do not understand also won't – unless it's explained again – and so for the same reason some commemorative paintings may become simply pictures.

On the flip side, it may also become impermissible to commemorate a person through some previously anodyne memorial if the message is suddenly decoded for the primary audience. It may also become impermissible, of course, when we learn new facts about a given figure.

But even if public commemoration will frequently fail the restricted-setting defence, private commemoration will pass more easily. We will, of course, have decisive reasons not to honour some people even in private. Provided we avoid this, however, we have our homes and our minds to honour figures for some reasonably salient good they did for us that others will still have decisive reasons to condemn.

5. When withholding commemoration also harms and disrespects

Even if the restricted-setting defence for public commemoration of serious wrongdoers is unlikely to succeed on its own in standard cases, there is a different set of considerations that might. In the case of some figures who engaged in serious wrongdoing not commemorating them can also be harmful and disrespectful.

5.1. How harm and disrespect can arise

One way in which this can happen is due to comparative considerations. If Galileo was commemorated for his achievements to astronomy but Copernicus were not on grounds of nationality, the denial could harm and disrespect even if each scientist engaged in wrongdoing (which I am not claiming they did). If Pierre Currie was buried at Panthéon but Maria Skłodowska Curie were not, we would also have such a case (though they too were not wrongdoers). When white British soldiers are commemorated and only them, we also have such a case. The discriminatory message may sometimes be more powerful than even the reasons not to commemorate figures on account of their wrongdoing may be (though I address below the question of when the wrongdoing should be seen to overshadow the achievements).

²⁵ Cf. Deborah Hellman, 'Discrimination and Social Meaning' in Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Ethics of Discrimination*, Routledge 2017.

There are also non-comparative cases in play. This is easiest to see when the figure is already being honoured and the commemoration is seen as a symbol of the proper moral standing of some people whose standing has been questioned by others. Some commemorations of Churchill can be reasonably seen as asserting the proper and equal status of Jews, given his role in ending the Holocaust even as commemorating him harms and disrespects those who were the target of his racist policies. Some commemorations of Lincoln can be reasonably seen as asserting the proper and equal status of Black Americans even as such commemorations could harm and disrespect Native Americans.

For commemoration plausibly to serve the purpose of honouring people's equal moral status, some conditions have to be in place. When marking my students' work, for example, I assume the equal moral status of men and women. It does not follow that not commemorating me after my death will amount to a meaningful denial that men and women have equal moral status. The figure ought to be publicly associated with the relevant and significant achievements that affirm the proper moral status that is denied by some and the calls for commemoration have to be plausibly made in the name of such achievements with a reasonable justification of why another person – or impersonal commemoration – would not serve the commemorative purposes better.

That is, if the achievements were particularly heroic or unusual or significant in the relevant way and the wrongdoing was not sufficiently gravely wrong, then public commemoration may be permissible (or even required), despite the wrong/harm it can cause. This is when and because not commemorating can cause more harm or be more disrespectful in a way that people should not suffer given the reasonable salience a given community attaches to the achievements. But public commemoration won't be permitted if the wrongs overshadow the achievements: overshadow in the specific sense that the figure can be reasonably seen by some in the primary audience as primarily a wrongdoer.

5.2. The moral demands on salience

The test for whether a wrong overshadows an achievement is meant to cohere with the importance of salience to my account. A wrong does not overshadow an achievement, in the required sense, when even those for whom the wrongdoing is salient cannot reasonably see the figure primarily as a wrongdoer. While the wrongs will be salient to them, they must also sometimes attend to the achievements when thinking of the person. This requirement need not be owed to the figure; often it will be owed to those who benefited from the achievements in question.

Consider, then, once more the drunk driving case mentioned above. The mother was permitted to see the driver solely as the killer given both the salience to her of the death of her child and the absence of any heroic achievements to his tally. By assumption, the other actions of the driver were not morally monumental. The judgement of whether a given wrong overshadows an achievement is inevitably a function of the wrong (and its salience) and the brightness of the achievement in question (and its salience).

Consider, therefore, a different and stylised case of a person with heroic achievements. Suppose a person with true heroism saved many children during the war at a great risk and cost to herself but after the war drove drunk and killed a child. As before, clearly, the death of her child by the driver

will be salient to the child's mother. But, I think, in this case the mother also owes it to the children whom the person saved to recognise the significance of their lives by acknowledging that they were saved by the driver in the past: the driver should not be seen primarily a wrongdoer in the mother eyes. This connects with the idea advertised above that while we have freedom to set our ends this freedom is limited by what morality requires of us or, in this case, the recognition the mother owes to the saved children. As a result, even as the killing is salient for her, she cannot see the driver primarily as a wrongdoer. To crowd out focus on those achievements *whenever* assessing the mother would mean not responding to the moral significance of those children.

By contrast if the driver is the person from the original scenario, the mother has no duty to acknowledge that he is a good father. It is reasonable, given the relative significance to her of the killing and how much she is obliged to care for anyone else involved, simply not to pay attention to his fatherly skills just as she has no duty to pay any attention to his drawing talents or the size of his feet.

The general idea that morality places demands on our attention should not be too controversial. If there was convincing evidence, for example, that a figure stole a pencil and murdered a person, we would not be morally free to attend only to the stolen pencil and never the murder when thinking about the figure. Even a person who cared deeply about pencils would need to attend to the murder when attending to the figure.

Go back to the scenario where the driver is also the second world war hero. The wrong to her does not overshadow the driver's achievement, given what she does and should attend to herself. This means that the achievement is a relevant consideration in the calculus of permissible commemoration. Commemorating the driver for the achievement can be a way of acknowledging the moral status of the saved children (and those whom no one saved). This does not mean that the mother won't feel any pain and won't be harmed if the driver is publicly commemorated. The agent-relative harm to her may still be serious (though she won't be disrespected if the commemoration acknowledges the killing). But the mother might have to bear it given what the commemoration can accomplish.

If this is correct, we can also understand why some serious wrongs in more familiar commemoration cases may not overshadow the achievements and may be compatible with permissible commemoration. Think, for example, of some famous figures who fought for the equal civil rights of all while also displaying misogyny. The misogyny should be acknowledged but, at least for some instances it, should not simply displace the civil rights heroism in anyone's focus. When not commemorating such figures also harms and disrespects, such commemorations can become permissible.

What are the demands on salience in the case of the son of the SS officer, given the father's crimes and the (here assumed) love his father showed the son? The love is not a heroic moral achievement but even if it were, the wrongs in question are horrific and so, clearly, no public commemoration is permissible. But can the love shine brightly at least for the son in his house? Or should it be completely dimmed by the knowledge of the father's crimes? On account of the father's victims, the son bears a responsibility to (try to) see the father's wrongdoing as salient (though, unless the son also

benefited from the father's crimes, he bears such responsibility as a person rather than as an offspring). Is he nevertheless morally permitted to see the love as valuable and salient in the narrative of his own life: not entirely overshadowed by the father's wrongs? A parent's or guardian's love does accord a person proper moral status and, clearly, recognition of that status is very important in one's life. So if the love was genuine, the child should be able to find space for it in the narrative of his life at least sometimes when thinking about his father.²⁶

Fundamentally, I am, of course, appealing to intuitions here. But note that these are not simply intuitions about the impartial comparative assessment of the figure's actions. The thought, rather, is that those actions need to be filtered through the perspective of those for whom the wrongdoing is most salient to see if they still qualify as significant achievements relative to the wrongdoing. The permission and in some cases even the requirement to pay attention to some of the achievements by serious wrongdoers, when the wrongs do not overshadow the achievements, is not a way of letting the perpetrators, and those who wish to commemorate them, off the hook. Rather, sometimes even salient wrongdoing cannot displace achievements because the achievements ought to be significant and attended to.

5.3. Bandera, Churchill, Dmowski, Lincoln, Washington and (in the next section) the Romans

The salient commemoration account tells us how to assess the permissibility of commemoration but specific assessments might be difficult. They require assessing what can be reasonably salient to whom and the relative harms and wrongs of commemorating and not commemorating.

For what it's worth, my judgement call is that, say, George Washington, or Roman Dmowski and Stepan Bandera should not be publicly commemorated. They were all nation-builders who asserted the equal moral status of their co-nationals against oppressors, but their wrongs grant people rights against them being publicly commemorated. The Washington case is straightforward. The enslaving of people in a system of chattel slavery is terrible (even if others do it too) and the achievement of shaking the yoke of British power, while important, is not decisive especially since the equal moral status of white Americans was not really questioned by the Brits. Another way of putting this point is that those for whom the wrongdoing is especially salient are not morally required to attend to Washington's nation-building when thinking of him. His achievements are overshadowed by the wrongdoing.

Dmowski, the Polish politician of the pre and interwar period, is also out because the wrong of encouraging violent anti-Semitism is grave while the achievement of nation-building when Germany and Russia denied that Poles were their equals was in fact done in part on the back of those who were not Catholic Poles. His wrongs overshadow his achievements since those for whom the wrongs are reasonably especially salient need not attend to the achievements. And Bandera, the Ukrainian nation

²⁶ I focus elsewhere on the costs to the children of the perpetrators for their parents' crimes. For what it's worth, I think that if Hitler had children, this argument would not deliver the conclusion that he can be commemorated by his children (given what Hitler did and what we can think about the quality of his love). I think that this is also the case with Stalin's children, given both what Stalin did and who he was.

builder is also out given his lethal collaboration with the Nazis for the same reasons, even as we can understand the reasons why some Ukrainians wish to honour him when subjected to lethal violence.

Commemorating Lincoln may be permissible, however, given his role in ending slavery: to not hold this achievement in view at least sometimes when thinking about Lincoln would not do justice to the significance of the moral status of the enslaved. If so, Lincoln's hostility against Native Americans cannot entirely displace from view his achievements. However, were he commemorated on land especially significant for Native Americans with an 18 meter tall statue, this could be reasonably seen as gravely disrespectful: a way of not acknowledging the hostility.

By the same reasoning, for it to be permissible to commemorate Churchill it would need to be the case that we commemorate him to acknowledge that the victims of Nazism and of the Holocaust are moral equals and provided that his racist views and policies do not reasonably displace from view his achievements for those most affected by the racism.

Will my account not condemn me to the *reductio* that it is permissible to commemorate figures such as Stalin? Stalin's fight against Hitler helped end the Holocaust. But Stalin initially purposefully facilitated Hitler's invasion of Poland and the wrongs he inflicted on those under his power, including victims of the Holocaust, were terrifying. Commemorating him would clearly seriously harm and disrespect. Moreover, his role in the ending of the Holocaust was a side-effect of his desire to conquer and terrorise. His achievements need not be attended to outside of prudential reasons or history lessons, let alone by those for whom his wrongdoing is particularly salient.

6. Apologies

Honouring gestures can lose their luster in various ways: It is possible to turn something that was once an honour into something that shames or ridicules. The Duke of Wellington statue in Glasgow has a permanent traffic cone on its head (and the museum shop sells cone related merchandise). Suppose, for example, that what was once a commemoration is now meant to act on the part of the perpetrator groups as an apology, an admission of responsibility and a reminder of this responsibility. The fact that honours can be stripped from statues generates a different route – one I argue against – for rendering it permissible to keep some statues of wrongdoers, even if they are no longer proper commemorations. But the salience of the wrongs can still harm and the harm, as I argue below, does not seem justified.



Source: *The Guardian*. Fair use: educational.

CM Lim and Johannes Schultz argue, respectively, that vandalized or contextualized memorials may be permissible. They have the value of teaching us about our history and keeping this history, and the warning it brings, in mind. They can stay in place in those altered forms. Schultz's idea is to permit remembrance of wrongdoers of this type – 'tainted commemorations' – provided they do not amplify existing social hierarchies for example because they are contextualised and part of a 'wide social effort of working through the unjust past'. Such remembrance is permissible as 'an everyday reminder of the existence of a different past, one that must never reoccur'. Otherwise, if it is degrading or alienating by amplifying existing social hierarchies then it is impermissible. So, for Schultz, remembrance of the Roman conquerors of Germanic tribes goes through, since doing so does not amplify any existing social hierarchies. Also, for Schulz, remembering IG Farben in Germany by keeping the company name on its awe-inspiring building, despite its production of Zyklon B and other contribution to the Holocaust, goes through since it is the right type of 'everyday reminder'. But statues of Rhodes in South Africa or the UK is impermissible since it is not part of the wide social effort to work through the unjust past.²⁷

Schultz stresses the value that the keeping of contextualized reminders of the past can have for us:

'...Theodor W. Adorno argues that we should not "close the books on the past" and "remove it from memory." He urges us to engage, rather, as Jürgen Habermas elaborates, in an "unrelenting reflection of an aggrieving past, which confronts us with a different self from the one that we wish to portray." Following Sigmund Freud's notion of *durcharbeiten* (working through), Adorno and Habermas believe that we have to be honest about our moral failures in the narrative creation of our own identity. As self-respecting, responsible human beings, we must be willing to learn from our past mistakes. Habermas stresses. When "we" have committed barbarous acts in the past, "we" ought not to cover them up, but rather push them out into the open arena of the public sphere, where they become a matter of public debate and political struggle. The ultimate goal of this exercise of working through the past is the incorporation of the darker parts of our own history into our collective identity. A collective that knows of its past failures and has morally condemned them is less likely to repeat them in the future and more likely to establish respectful relations in the present'²⁸

I want to put aside the difficulty that arises when the 'we' becomes confined just to the descendants of the past wrongdoers and does not easily accommodate the descendants of the wronged. It is also not

²⁷ Schulz, 'Must Rhodes fall?...', quotations 178. There are other suggestions, of course. A notable one by Joanna Burch-Brown (2021) recognises the complexity of the task with her proposal that we evaluate, on a case by case basis, whether preserving, removing, recontextualising and (compatible with the other three) reclaiming might be needed for transitional justice and reconciliation. Being open to the possibility that different responses will be called for in different settings seems right, but my aim here is to identify general guidelines. J. Burch-Brown, 'Should slavery's statues be removed? On transitional justice and contested heritage', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2020): early view [doi/10.1111/japp.12485].

²⁸ Cited by Schulz as in Jürgen Habermas, "Was bedeutet 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' heute," Jürgen Habermas (ed.), *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik: Kleine Politische Schriften VIII* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 21–45, quote at p. 21 (Schulz's translation). Before Habermas, Stefan Żeromski wrote in 1910 'rozrywać rany polskie, żeby się nie zabiły błona podłości' [tear Polish [inflicted] wounds so that the membrane of wickedness does not heal (google translate)].

clear to me why the valuable outcome of working through the past cannot be achieved by replacing the offending statues or names with different ones. It may be cheaper to keep them but it is not even clear to me that contextualised memorials can play the role assigned to them by Schultz very successfully. They can act as a permission to move on ('we've done enough!'). Worse, as Colonel Korn in Heller's *Catch-22* knows: 'To act boastfully about something we ought to be ashamed of. That's a trick that never seems to fail.'

But suppose we grant that such apologetic and ashamed remembrance can have the right educational function. We can still doubt the permissibility of much of such apologetic remembrance, at least were it not costlessly avoidable.²⁹ To see this consider first a case that's not about remembrance. Suppose that someone has wronged you and then follows you everywhere apologising. You should have the right to decide if you want to hear such apologies – or, at least, repeated apologies – no matter how much the wrongdoer wishes to apologise. You may wish to move on or just give less mental space to the wrong and the wrongdoer. We may agree that it's essential that the perpetrators and bystanders learn about wrongs, but, even so, the permissibility of apologetic statues will depend on how costly it is, on the specific form it takes, for those at the receiving end of it.³⁰

One possible test here might therefore be this: If we did not have any apologetic statues of wrongdoers and erecting them was effortless, should we erect them while those we apologise to are part or entitled to be part of our society? The answer is that we would not aim to apologise or educate by erecting contextualised statues of wrongdoers and we would not locate them in places where they are difficult or costly to avoid (which is compatible with those places being easily accessible and centrally located and compatible with requiring the perpetrators and the bystanders to visit them). Erecting a giant but contextualised statue of Hitler, even if it could be done cheaply and easily, might not be a good way for Germany to apologise for the 2nd world war. Turning commemorative buildings or statues into informative apologies is unlikely to respond to the costs such apologies can have for those who were once targeted by the wrongdoing for which the apologies are now due. There is no reason to think that they must bear any such costs.

What about the Romans? Isn't Schulz right that we can keep their statues in public places? If we put their aesthetic or historic value aside, my account denies this. Even if no one currently alive were to see their wrongdoing as salient to them in particular, we still have agent-neutral reasons not to highlight with public statues people who committed the wrongs Romans did in their conquest.³¹ In addition, it does not even seem that anyone's moral status gets affirmed by having them in place. By contrast, if we wanted to remember and even commemorate Boudica, who resisted the Romans (assuming she did) this may be permissible. The agent-neutral reasons not to commemorate anyone who engaged in serious wrongs (as the fighting was bound to involve) may not be decisive if commemorating her is an especially successful way of expressing our commitment to the equal moral status of the marginalised and the oppressed.

²⁹ 'Costlessly' rather than 'reasonably'. In the next section I adopt the reasonableness standard.

³⁰ I am grateful to Victor Tadros for discussion.

³¹ Cf. Helen Frowe, 'The duty to remove...'

7. Won't salient commemoration disallow too much?

The serious harm of commemorating perpetrators can be sufficient to block their public commemoration. But commemorations of victims of injustice can also cause harm. The harm is different in that it does not involve honouring of denials of equal moral status. But the pain triggered by commemorating the dead can be overpowering or disabling: it can set back the interests of those subject to it. This is why, for example, when talking to parents who lost their children we normally think that we should be guided by them regarding whether to talk about the loss or not.



Source: Source: Zoonar GmbH/Alamy. Fair Use: Educational.

Berlin and other cities in Europe commemorate Holocaust victims with small metal stepping-stones on which the names of those who lived in the buildings nearby are inscribed. There are also other practices that do not commemorate anyone in particular but preserve the relics of oppression. In the Templin Saloon in Gonzalez in the States, for example, a café retains the segregation wall that used to separate different populations during the US apartheid. Although the wall does not commemorate a figure, would such practices be found impermissible on the salient commemoration account? Would my account block some commemorations of the victims of injustice?



An apartheid wall, Gonzales, USA. Source: *The New York Times*. Fair Use: Educational.

Note that the commemoration of wrongdoers is disallowed not merely because it is painful but when and because people are not liable to bear it. By contrast, it is reasonable to ask people to bear some

pain for the sake of commemoration of the victims of injustice. Why? Such commemoration can deliver for the dead what some of them would have wished for while alive and what we can still give them: being remembered.³² It can also allow the living to attend to a crucial feature of the world they must be aware of – its injustice – without honouring wrongdoing. This is the better way to follow Adorno’s call not to close books on the past.

But the fact that the pain is or can be triggered by such commemoration can place limits on what is an acceptable form of commemoration of the victims of injustice. The fact that the salient commemoration account can capture this is a point in its favour rather than a flaw. Moreover, recognising that some representations may be more salient for some than for others gives us guidelines for developing appropriate commemorations. I set out three.

First, my account explains why it is less acceptable to have extremely graphic portrayals of suffering [an image follows on the final page] in places that are not reasonably avoidable for passers-by. I have in mind here monuments such as the 14 meter one currently being erected in Poland that depicts a small child stuck on a digging fork to commemorate a massacre. Even if people need to bear some costs on account of commemorating dead victims there are limits to those costs. It would not be reasonable to force such a statue on any bystanders. But it is even worse when it is forced on those who already grieve the loss of the commemorated children if they would rather grieve differently.

This is not just an appeal to an intuition. The idea here is that we have to clear a high bar – for example advance justice – in order to impose extra pain on third parties in a place that is not reasonably avoidable when such pain is not a necessary or integral part of our crucial activities. Public commemoration that could be done less graphically while still remaining noteworthy would need to advance justice in comparison to a less graphic commemoration.

Might we not owe it, however, to the dead, at the bar of justice, that they be commemorated in such a graphic way? My general approach for answering such questions is to consider what the dead, while alive, could have reasonably demanded for others regarding their commemoration. It seems to me that they could not reasonably have expected the living to bear such high costs of commemorating them when less painful commemoration was available (unless the commemorators were perpetrators, enablers, or the beneficiaries of wrongdoing).

Second, our pain is also affected by how experiential, in the sense of suggesting similarity with the original experience of the victims, the commemoration is. Here there are two worries. One is that the pain may be unnecessarily amplified though, of course, it is difficult to judge what is necessary for memorials that try to engage. The other worry relates to what we owe to the victims. We should avoid suggesting in commemorations that what the passers-by themselves experience echoes what it might have been like for the victims. The reason not to keep apartheid walls in regular cafes (outside of designated, reasonably avoidable places preserved for historic reasons), therefore, is that those sitting

³² This also means that we should not exclusively commemorate victims of injustice qua victims. Cf. Zofia Stemplowska, ‘*Polin*: A Wish to be Remembered; The Museum of the History of the Polish Jews’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 November 2014.

on each side can experience a very distant (and due to the distance entirely inaccurate) faint version of what it was like to be targeted by apartheid.

This can be contrasted with another case. In 2019 a multi-million dollar project was set up on Instagram, via stories, a fictionalised account of the trajectory to murder in a concentration camp of Eva Hayman, a real 13 year old Jewish Hungarian killed in 1944. The project caused controversy. Were the posts experiential in the sense I mean here? In one respect they were – they were recreating a distant experience of learning about the fate of Jews as one went about one's life. But those who saw them were not made to experience a distant version of the horrors of being the direct victim of Nazism. Although they were experiencing, in a radically diluted way, what it could have been like to be told about the horrors that were happening to one's co-nationals or those of another nationality amidst their normal concerns, they were not experiencing an even radically diluted version of what it was like to be subject to the horrors. So I don't think the Instagram posts, although they could be thought of as public, are harder to justify for this reason.

Third, our judgement about commemoration will have to take into account what else is already being commemorated and how this affects what the commemoration expresses. To go back to the commemoration of non-victims: When a request for a 100th bust of Churchill is granted but there are no statues of those whom he saw as lesser beings, this will affect the permissibility of commemoration. The permissibility will depend also on what else is or is not commemorated.

This can best explain, in my view, the difficulty of responding to the initiatives of the current Polish government to amplify the commemoration of the (Catholic) Polish Righteous Among the Nations. Is it not obvious, you may think, that we should be able to commemorate those who were heroic and who often were themselves victims? But if their memorials are erected while there are none, or next to none, of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, then the frequent commemoration of the Righteous begins to communicate disregard for the Jewish victims. Here too we can see that the different presences and absences of commemoration will carry different salience for different people. We must take this into account when deciding whom to commemorate and how.

8. Conclusion

Focusing on salience in our commemorative accounts gives us the right results regarding permissible commemoration of the victims of injustice. It is also, I have argued, essential to get the right results regarding the commemoration of wrongdoers. Commemoration affects different audiences differently and the salient commemoration account is meant to make sense of this. The salience of the actions of wrongdoers depends, in part, on the ends those who commemorate them chose and how they understand their own lives. This suggests a way of understanding the harms and disrespect of commemoration or its absence. It also provides a framework for thinking about what limits there are for the claims that people can advance about those harms and wrongs.

The idea that different audiences can be differently affected also chimes well with recent moves in commemorative commissions to involve different stakeholders in decisions about commemoration. Such moves are usually welcome but they can also be seen as attempts to follow a procedural justice

accounts of permissible commemoration. But proceduralism is too haphazard and it struggles to accommodate disagreement between people who are seen as being within the same stakeholder group.

The right answer to whom to commemorate is not, in my view, whatever emerges from the right procedure. Rather, as I have argued, people enjoy a pro tanto right against a given form of commemoration: this is when commemorating wrong-doers harms or wrongs them for agent-neutral reasons or given the salience the wrongdoing can reasonably have in their lives, provided that not commemorating is not itself even more harmful or wrongful. The right can persist even if the commemorative objects or practice is contextualised or altered but left in place and still demands our attention.

The Master of Jesus College in Cambridge is harmed and wronged even more than some others by the extravagant memorial to the man who invested into trade in enslaved people, even if his donation to the college did not arise from the wrongdoing. Given this, and the fact that she and others who should be welcome at the College cannot reasonably avoid encountering the memorial, the commemoration is impermissible. It wrongs the Master of the College and others if the memorial can be moved (as it can be, easily and cheaply). It is the case even if the memorial is contextualized.

Once we reflect on who is the primary audience of our commemorative practices and recognize that the salience of the wrongdoing that already disqualifies commemoration can be even greater to some members of this audience, we can see the impermissibility of commemorating those who denied their proper and equal moral status and did not achieve spectacular things for the proper and equal moral status of others. It is impermissible to keep their memorials in public places even if they have been transformed by contextualized information. But sometimes commemorating those with a checkered past can be permissible – to not commemorate them may also harm or wrong those who request such commemoration. We cannot get our answers right, here, however, unless we recognize the differential salience the wrongdoer's actions can have for those who are asked to offer commemoration. In the end, we can raise the dead for commemoration only if we recognize that we are not the same.³³

³³ I acknowledge my debt regarding this sentence to U2's 'One'.



Source: *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Fair Use: Educational.