Introduction

For me, forgiveness has been the most profound act of self-compassion that I have experienced thus far. I am experiencing that when you start to understand the pain of those who cause you suffering and choose to let it go, forgiveness comes naturally. The cup of poison that I drank from for years is now officially emptied and retired. What a refreshing, liberating relief!

This opening quote was written by a former student of ours while engaging in a 200-hour retreat on the contemplative practice of Naikan, a practice originating in Japan and derived from a form of Buddhist meditation. Through this practice, this remarkable individual, to whom we shall return later, was able to overcome decades of resentment, hurt, and moral injury built up due to a ten-year long traumatic period of sexual abuse starting in early childhood that took place with the full knowledge of, and sometimes in the presence of, her own mother.

But what is perhaps even more unusual is that the practice was undertaken while this young woman was incarcerated in a maximum-security prison for the violent offense she had committed after her years of abuse. She therefore engaged in her practice without access to many of the traditional resources of sacred space places of worship, and spiritual retreat. Yet through her practice, she, and others like her, created their own sense of sacred space and thereby transformed an inhospitable setting into a place of spiritual transformation.

This chapter sets out to examine secular contemplative practices, and in particular the practice of Naikan, as particularly useful tools for spiritual growth, healing, and the treatment of moral injury. Such practices are typically engaged in within sacred spaces, such as temples, monasteries, churches, holy sites, and so on. But in the twentieth century, the definition of sacred space is changing. Increasingly, individuals are seeking alternatives to traditional institutions and traditional forms of practice, spirituality, and religiosity; in some cases, technology and our ever-shrinking world facilitate options for alternative sacred spaces. At the same time, millions of others have been forced to find alternative sacred spaces because traditional venues and communities have been closed off to them – due to war and exile in the case of refugees, for example, or due to another form of exile in the case of mass incarceration.

Whether the move to alternative sacred spaces is by choice or forced, such individuals nevertheless manage to exhibit and cultivate extraordinary resilience by creating their own, less traditional sacred spaces for the purposes of spiritual and religious practice. By examining such instances, we can learn more about the
possibilities of using such practices for the treatment of moral injury and the cultivation of resilience. Moreover, we can examine the way individuals develop resilience not only individually, but by working to establish the systems and structures that support resilience. We call this ‘cultural resilience’: social and cultural systems, beliefs, and practices that best support individual resilience. Both individual and cultural resilience, we argue, are important for the treatment and healing of moral injury.

2 Secular Contemplative Practice

Recent years have seen a growing interest in contemplative practices that have been derived from religious traditions. The most popular of these are probably hatha yoga and mindfulness meditation, both of which are increasingly ubiquitous internationally. These practices retain a strong element of spirituality but are generally not connected to institutional religion. Unlike the original religious practices from which they are derived, which typically involved aims directed towards a future life beyond this one, these secularized contemplative practices are typically approached for this-worldly benefits. Yet these benefits can range from better health or stress-reduction to the purposes of meaning-making and personal growth.

Despite the unmooring of such practices from many of the overtly religious and metaphysical aspects of their original contexts, secularized contemplative practices are not merely raw techniques (Ozawa-de Silva 2016). Rather, they include and are informed by many aspects of contemplative theory. Indeed, they typically require such theory to be intelligible and meaningful to those who practice them. Mindfulness meditation, for example, includes a strong emphasis on the impermanence or fleeting nature of phenomena and experiences – a key Buddhist tenet, but not one that by itself requires faith in or adherence to Buddhism (Shapiro et al. 2006). Yoga, as often practiced in modern contexts, emphasizes the mind-body connection, the fundamental importance of breath and its relation to vital energies, and other spiritual dimensions of the practice. Given all this, modern secularized contemplative practices stand very much at the intersections of religion and spirituality, and of theory and practice. They should therefore be of particular interest for the study of practical theology.

In this chapter, we will examine a contemporary contemplative practice derived from the Buddhist tradition called Naikan, which is less known in the English-speaking world but popular in Japan, where it originated. In its use of sacred space to create safety and an opportunity for deep reflection and self-examination, and in its use of specific modes of memory as a tool to facilitate the reconstruction of autobiography, Naikan is a contemplative practice that also stands at another important intersection: between therapy and meditation (Ozawa-de Silva 2006). The research literature on Naikan in Japanese, English, and German, as well as the first-hand experiences and research of the authors, suggests that Naikan may be particularly
suited to address issues of healing moral injury, which, we will suggest, is an affliction that pertains not only to veterans of war, but to a wide number of individuals in our modern world.

3 Moral Injury

“Moral injury” was originally coined by the psychiatrist Jonathan Shay and his colleagues to refer to the injury of moral conscience suffered by military personnel and veterans (Shay 2014). Since then, definitions continue to evolve. For the purpose of this chapter, and generally following Farnsworth et al. (2014), we define it broadly as a form of on-going suffering caused by committing, witnessing, or being the victim of an act of violence that deeply violates one’s moral beliefs or expectations of how people should behave. It is often characterized by a sense of betrayal and results in condemnation of others and self, a damaged sense of oneself as a moral agent, and feelings of guilt, shame, anger, and helplessness.

In recent years, moral injury has become a topic of interest for scholars of religion, in part due to the efforts of Rita Nakashima Brock and others. The concept of moral injury is useful because it expands our understanding of traumatic events by allowing for triggering events that do not necessarily involve threats to the individual’s life or physical safety. It also shifts the focus away from an often-medicalized and stigmatizing understanding of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as an individual affliction towards a consideration of the moral, social, political, and systemic dimensions of traumatic experience.

4 Contemplative Practice in Prison

Six years ago, we began teaching courses in contemplative and spiritual practice at the Lee Arrendale State Prison for women in Alto, Georgia. We are a psychological and medical anthropologist who studies mental well-being and mental illness in cross-cultural context and grew up in Japan (Chikako), and an interdisciplinary scholar of psychology, Buddhism, and contemplative practices who grew up in the United States (Brendan). We are also both practitioners in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Our interest in offering courses in contemplative practice, however, has never been primarily to teach Buddhist religious practices to Buddhists, and neither of us considers her- or himself to be a Buddhist spiritual teacher. Rather, we are interested in how contemplative and spiritual practices, which may have their origins in Buddhism or other religious traditions, can have benefits (therapeutic or otherwise) to individuals and communities even when offered in a secular way – meaning offered in a way that does not depend upon religious metaphysical claims and that is open to people of all, or no, religion.
We and the several co-instructors we invited to teach with us at the prison quickly realized that despite the students’ strong wish to learn contemplative practices such as mindfulness, Naikan, and compassion meditation, several of the students were encountering serious obstacles in their practice. For many, focusing attention on the breath would cause anxiety and frustration. One woman occasionally got up suddenly during the meditation session to leave the room. She later explained that this was not because she did not want to meditate or disliked what we were doing. She said she desperately wanted to experience the peace and relaxation that the other women were describing, but she found it impossible to settle her mind or sit still in one place.

In hindsight this should not have surprised us. A prison is anything but a safe space. And without the establishment of a sense of safety and sacred space, how could we expect our small community to engage meaningfully in contemplative practice, especially considering that all our students had also experienced a variety of forms of trauma? As we learned more about their situations, it became clear that the traumas they had experienced had impacted their nervous systems significantly enough to make sitting still and engaging in silent meditation extremely challenging, despite their ardent wishes for the peace of mind meditation was said to offer those who practiced it.

Violent offenses, whether inflicted upon or by oneself, and especially when involving a close person or family member, are prime causes of moral injury. Such experiences are violations of moral order and trigger a breakdown in one’s moral vision of the world, and therefore one’s own self-evaluation as a moral individual. One’s mother is supposed to be the one person in the world who will protect oneself – not the person who facilitates or passively witnesses one’s abuse. The same holds for one’s own perpetration of an unthinkable crime. If one comes to realize that one is capable of such action, how does that affect one’s ability to feel safe among others?

Our collective journey of understanding trauma and moral injury led to the recognition that the practices we were engaging in, which had evolved from and been designed for traditional sacred spaces, needed to be adapted to fit new times and new surroundings. The focus of our time together became the establishment of a sacred space within and among ourselves, even within the confines of a prison.

5 Naikan Practice

Both the women mentioned above, and many others who faced similarly traumatic events and instances of moral injury, were taught secularized contemplative practices derived from Buddhist traditions through twelve-week courses in prison. These included: mindfulness meditation; simple restorative yoga practices; Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT), which is an analytical meditation protocol derived from the Lojong (blo sbyong) tradition of Tibetan Buddhism developed by
Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi at Emory University; Compassionate Integrity Training (CIT), developed at Life University; and Naikan, which is originally a Japanese practice derived from Shin Buddhism.

Naikan is a particularly interesting practice with regard to sacred space, because unlike many other contemplative practices, Naikan intentionally and explicitly seeks to establish a sacred, womb-like space around the practitioner both physically and spiritually. Naikan is traditionally practiced for one week, 14–16 hours a day, with the practitioner sitting behind a Japanese paper screen or in a room by themselves, to establish a “tomb and womb” environment of sensory deprivation (Ozawa-de Silva 2006). Naikan is a simple method on the surface. The practitioner contemplates three questions with regard to a significant person in one’s life, such as one’s mother, starting from early childhood and leading to the present day: What did I receive from this person? What did I give back to this person? What trouble did I cause this person?

The practitioner does this in two-hour sessions in a temporal sequence: for example, starting with one’s mother from age zero to five, asking these three questions, and trying to recollect through one’s memory. At the end of each two-hour session, the practitioner is visited by the Naikan guide facilitating the retreat. The guide asks the practitioner to give a report on what they received, what they gave back, and what trouble they caused (the three Naikan questions). The guide listens, usually without comment, and asks the practitioner what they will focus on for the next session. Then the guide leaves and the practitioner continues with the next session.

Both the physical seclusion and the non-judgmental listening by the guide facilitate the establishment of sacred space. But so, too, does the practice. Because practitioners spend around a hundred hours remembering what they received from others throughout their lives – starting with childhood when they could not offer much, if anything, in return – they gradually come to a realization that they have been supported by a seemingly infinite network of care throughout their lives. Some practitioners have described this as being surrounded by love as if sitting in the center of a mandala. This is the establishment of what could be called a spiritual sacred space of safety and care.

C., the woman mentioned above who had suffered sexual abuse in the presence of her mother, at first rejected Naikan as a practice and found it unrealistic when we offered it as a potential practice. Within two weeks or so, however, she had decided to practice it. Very shortly after that, she resolved to do 100 hours of Naikan practice on her mother – the length of a typical one-week Naikan session – by doing half an hour of practice each day for 200 days. She soon increased this to one hour per day of practice, and therefore decided to do 200 hours of Naikan, a ‘double Naikan’ retreat.

In C.’s journal entries prior to doing Naikan, she repeatedly wrote of her mother and the trauma of her childhood abuse. But while engaging in Naikan, and upon completing it, her narrative changed. The following quote comes after C. had engaged in a 30-day period of daily Naikan practice. She refers to the topic of self-compas-
tion, which had been explored in a course on Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) that she had participated in just prior to starting Naikan. In CBCT, self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and happiness come largely from our own perspectives, attitudes, and emotional reactions, and that we have the ability to transform them and thereby emerge from suffering. C. wrote:

Self-compassion and learning how to cultivate it is helping to free me from an inner prison emotionally and spiritually. I find that I am a lot happier, and I am more direct and decisive in my decision making. I am noticing also that I am not as easily disturbed and short of patience with others or with myself. I am genuinely enjoying the company of others and can now respect them for who they are and how they are without attempting to change them and without judgment. I can now accept their beliefs and perspectives respectfully, even if they differ from my own. [...] Learning self-compassion and how to cultivate it has given me a desire to extend compassion to others. I no longer want to be consumed with unhealthy, destructive emotions and behavior. Learning to view and interpret my past horrific childhood experiences in a different way makes me confront and acknowledge these experiences for what and how they were, yet not be controlled and overwhelmed by them. My experiences have given me a passion and desire to share my story and to be of help to those who suffer or have suffered in similar ways as I. [...] One of the things that I gained from doing the Naikan practice for 30 minutes, 30 days, is realizing that the past is already gone and can’t be changed, and the future is yet to come and isn’t promised to anyone. Grasping onto this reality makes me want to acknowledge my past without letting it affect and overwhelm me, accept it for what and how it was, and move on from it, instead of being stuck in it. It also makes me not want to focus on a future that isn’t promised because in doing so, you miss the beauty, blessings, joy, healing, and transformation of right NOW! Learning to live my life in the present moment has made me more appreciative and mindful of my surroundings, myself, and others.

There are many important insights here. C. points out that a violation of moral order occurs within the context of expectations about reality. One assumes that people will act a certain way, but these assumptions do not reflect reality, since violations of our expected moral order do in fact happen. When one learns to see that reality and therefore stops assuming and taking for granted certain levels of decent moral behavior, that does not lead to a breakdown in one’s moral universe. On the contrary, it appears to lead to a greater appreciation for the good in one’s life. As C. writes, the reality she ‘grasps onto’ is that the past is gone and can’t be changed, and the future is uncertain.

She later reported that the chief gift Naikan had given her was memory recall. Before, she had only been able to remember sadness, abuse, and disappointment in her childhood. Yet by going through the process – over two hundred hours – of remembering what her mother had given her, she began to recover memories of happiness and well-being. Her childhood had not all been abuse and pain. There were many moments of joy as well. The ability to recognize goodness and safety in one’s experiences and surroundings – and not just pain, threats, and dangers – seems central to establishing a safe space and a sacred space, and has been an important topic of research in dealing with trauma.
Importantly, Naikan prompts the practitioner to remember their past from the perspective of another person – in this case, C.’s mother. This encourages empathy. C. began to see her mother not just as her mother, but as a young woman struggling to raise a child on her own. As she saw the larger context and remembered all the kindness her mother had shown her over the years, her image of her mother, and therefore her image of her own past, changed. Such changes as a result of Naikan are not limited to one individual but have been well documented in a number of publications and studies (Krech 2001; Ozawa-de Silva 2006, 2007; Reiss and Bechmann 2016).

6 Forbearance and Individual Resilience

The characteristic that comes from seeing reality, and that results in self-acceptance, courage, an ability to bear and withstand hardship and injury, and forgiveness, is called ksānti (Skt) or bzod pa (Tib., pronounced ‘so-pa’) in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Often simply translated as ‘forbearance’ or ‘patience,’ it means an inner fortitude that allows one to bear suffering without buckling under pressure or retaliating with anger. It can also be understood as a resilience that involves not just the ability to ‘bounce back,’ but also the strength to withstand adversity courageously. This type of forbearance is one of the six ‘perfections’ that bodhisattvas (spiritual practitioners intent upon enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings) must practice in Mahāyāna (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism and would appear to be the key virtue of relevance in discussing moral injury. Interestingly, although there is no exact equivalent in English for bzod pa, it appears to be very similar to the Arabic term hilm, particularly as it was used in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, which also meant forbearance and composure, and which was opposed to jahl or ignorance, an incapacity to use reason, and a tendency to break out in anger (Izutsu 2002).

The lasting consequences of moral injury appear to come from a difficulty in sustaining and recovering from the suffering that comes from having inflicted or having witnessed the infliction of unwarranted harm. A path to moral repair, therefore, may be the cultivation of this forbearance or bzod pa. In the Buddhist tradition, this is often done through practices of habituated cognitive reframing, as in Naikan. The most famous text on bzod pa today is the sixth chapter of Śāntideva’s bodhicāryāva-tāra (Entrance to the Bodhisattva’s Way), a key text for the Buddhist Lojong (blo sbyong, mind training) tradition. In it, the author provides a panoply of cognitive reframing strategies to help practitioners overcome anger and ignorance and cultivate bzod pa. In one famous example, he asks: if we do not get angry at the stick that hits us, but rather at the person who compels the stick, why do we get angry at the person who hits us and not at the anger that compels him or her to hit us (Gyatso 1997)? The intention is to focus our blame on ignorance and the destructive emotions it results in, rather than on individual people who are the victims of their own ignorance.
Just as the body can ‘remember’ a physical wound long after it occurs, moral injury seems to be retained when we cannot let go of the memory of a psychological wound, a common characteristic of trauma (van der Kolk 1994). Memory is therefore a central aspect of moral injury, and secularized practices derived from contemplative traditions that engage and deal with memories may be very effective in helping people with moral injury. As C. said beautifully in one of her journal entries during her practice of Naikan, “I truly do believe that gratitude is the moral memory of mankind.”

Our incarcerated fellow practitioners taught us a great deal on moral injury and its relationship to contemplative practice. Some, having learned various practices in classes with us, went on to offer classes for others in their dorms. One such student-turned-instructor wrote of the Buddhist concept of ‘refuge,’ itself a concept closely connected to the idea of sacred space. Just as one seeks physical refuge in a shelter in the case of a storm, or refuge in a place of safety when fleeing a place of danger, the Buddhist concept of refuge pertains to seeking true safety and protection from that which afflicts us. This safety is not to be found in a physical space, but in the Buddhas (those who have transcended sorrow and can therefore show the way to happiness), the Dharma (reality as it is, not as we ignorantly perceive it, and our own wisdom of that reality), and the Sangha (the community of practitioners). Of these, the ultimate refuge is considered to be the Dharma: reality itself, and our understanding of it.

One such student-turned-instructor wrote:

When we reach the ability to withstand pain or seemingly bad situations with a mind that is still positive and unwavering, this is refuge – refuge within ourselves and our ability to endure and overcome. I take refuge in my own wisdom. I know that without a doubt, I have the innate potential to be happy and free from suffering in any circumstance.

This remarkable statement parallels very closely with the quote on self-compassion above, and also with the idea of cultivating bzod pa, the ability to withstand suffering. It seems to be a mental attitude that is the very opposite of moral injury; it is the hope and conviction that one can overcome one’s present situation and future situations of difficulty and emerge with happiness. That type of moral courage would appear to be an essential ingredient in moral repair.

### 7 Trauma and Cultural Resilience

We have been looking at moral injury on an individual level, and there is little doubt that resilience to trauma can be cultivated at the individual level by teaching individuals not only contemplative practices but also skills of body awareness and regulation of the nervous system (Grabbe and Miller-Karas 2018; Miller-Karas 2015). But one of the characteristics of moral injury in the context of war veterans, the incarcerated,
refugees, and others is the larger scale involved. Moral injury is not just about an individual being traumatized and suffering a threat to his or her moral conscience; it is about systems that enable and perpetuate such infractions. If, then, we are to look from the other perspective and ask about moral repair and resilience, are we able to also identify systemic forms of resilience? These would be institutional, cultural, or social forms of resilience that would protect against moral injury and that would facilitate healing and moral repair.

As many have recognized, it is not enough to ask individuals to be resilient as long as they live within systems that continue to be oppressive. It is therefore important that we study not just structures of oppression on a systems level, but also look at the way institutional, social, and cultural structures support and foster resilience. We call ‘structural resilience’ the manner in which social structures, such as laws, policies, and institutions, support resilience, whereas we call ‘cultural resilience’ the beliefs, practices, and values that underpin those structures.

It is possible that the Tibetan refugee population in India and Nepal provides one such example of cultural resilience. This is a population that was forced into exile following the Chinese takeover of Tibet, an occupation that involved brutal murder, rape, imprisonment, and the destruction of most of Tibet’s one thousand monasteries. Some estimate that about twenty per cent of Tibet’s population – or about one million Tibetans – lost their lives because of the violence that took place during this time. Despite taking an overall conciliatory attitude towards China in the hope of reaching a peaceful settlement to the Tibet issue, even the Dalai Lama has called China’s occupation of Tibet a ‘cultural genocide.’ In addition, those who have left for India and come to the refugee settlements had to undergo very long and dangerous journeys across the Himalayas, leaving almost everything behind.

It is important to recognize that for refugee communities like the Tibetans, one of the main losses experienced is the loss of access to sacred spaces. For Tibetans, Tibet is not only the location of the most important sacred spaces of their religious tradition – monasteries, holy lakes and caves, holy mountains, sacred statues of the Buddha, the Potala palace (the traditional home of the Dalai Lamas), and a countless array of local habitats of spirits and protective deities – but Tibet itself was and is considered a sacred space as a whole by Tibetans. Prison and exile share much in common, and even have a related history as forms of punishment. Here again, therefore, we encounter the need to create a different kind of symbolic sacred space for the purpose of practice for those to whom traditional access has been barred.

Despite their losses, Tibetan refugees as a group appear to have exhibited remarkable resilience. Numerous researchers have concluded that Tibetan refugees, who are almost all Buddhist, are less prone to PTSD symptoms than other refugee survivors of torture, even given comparable traumatic experiences (Crescenzi et al. 2002; Holtz 1998; Keller et al. 2006; Terheggen et al. 2001). Based on a study with Tibetan refugees in Dharamsala, Sachs et al. write:
In light of the hardships reported by study participants, the low levels of psychological distress are particularly striking. Average symptom severity ratings typically fell between not at all and a little on standardized measures, with only 10% (n = 77) of the sample demonstrating clinically significant depression or anxiety. Among torture survivors, anxiety and depression were more common, but still occurred in only 12% (for anxiety) and 9.6% (for depression) of this subgroup. Perhaps most surprisingly, only one study participant (0.1%) had clinically significant PTSD symptoms. In short, this study suggests an unusual degree of resilience among Tibetan refugees, even those who had survived torture (Sachs et al. 2008).

Are Tibetans simply more resilient on an individual level? This is possible but unlikely. Tibetan refugees have managed to set up new spaces that can serve to support their resilience, including institutional structures and an exile society that includes political representation. But just as importantly, they have managed to bring with them into exile powerful forms of cultural resilience. Together, these structural and cultural forms of resilience have allowed them to establish a new kind of sacred space — certainly not the same as that which they had in Tibet, but one that seems to exhibit powerful benefits, nonetheless.

Sara Lewis is an anthropologist who has engaged in lengthy ethnographic research on the Tibetan refugee population in Dharamsala, India. According to Lewis, the resilience exhibited by Tibetans is not merely a product of their culture and religion in general, but the specific use of cultural coping mechanisms drawn from the Lojong tradition that serve to make their minds more “spacious” and “flexible” (Lewis 2013). These take place largely in the form of cultural idioms, rather than active engagement in practices such as formal meditation. Yet they involve a cognitive reorientation familiar in Lojong practices and Naikan practice to achieve a different perspective on the past and to let go of, or not dwell on, anger, resentment, and hurt. Lewis’s ethnographic work is supported by a study of 855 Tibetan refugees in Dharamsala by Sachs et al. (2008), which found that it was coping activity that appeared to mediate the effect of trauma exposure on PTSD symptoms.

Moreover, many of the qualities Lewis describes in refugee Tibetans align closely to the idea of bzod pa or hilm (forbearance, acceptance, resilience). For example, Tibetan refugees reflect on the pervasiveness and inevitability of suffering and on existential facts such as impermanence — practices that would lead to the cultivation of an attitude of acceptance and resilience to suffering, i.e., bzod pa. They also reflect that the travails of this life may be transformed to a higher purpose. Three lines from the popular Lojong text “Seven Point Mind Training” read:

When the world is filled with wrongdoing, transform all misfortunes into the path of enlightenment. Banish all blame to the single source, and towards all beings, contemplate their great kindness (Jinpa 2014).

Though brief, these lines encapsulate a range of powerful cultural beliefs that may bolster resilience among Tibetans and Buddhists: there are times when the world will be filled with suffering and wrongdoing, but misfortunes can be turned into ve-
vehicles for spiritual growth. Other human beings are not the appropriate object of blame, and when one sees this, and instead focuses blame on its true source (ignorance, in the case of Buddhism), then others appear in a different light and one can appreciate the true kindness of humanity, which has a liberating effect.

8 Conclusion

Much attention has been given to individual practices such as prayer, meditation, yoga, mindfulness, and so on. Less attention has been paid to the way such practices depend upon the establishment of a conducive space – not just a physical space, but also a symbolic space of safety, support, and nurturance. Specific practices, such as Naikan, intentionally aim to create this sacred space. C. managed to create this experience even while incarcerated, a remarkable achievement, and now that she has been released, her wish is to establish a Naikan center that can offer a space for practice to others.

As we have seen, in the case of Keyword and refugees, traditional sacred spaces are sadly inaccessible, necessitating the creation of new kinds of sacred space. The utility of such spaces, even when non-traditionally constructed, suggests to us that resilience should not be conceived of as solely the attribute of individuals. Sacred symbolic space that is conducive to resilience and spiritual growth is also created culturally through the beliefs, practices, norms, perspectives, and attitudes of multiple people. No doubt, we do see examples of incredible individual resilience in the face of structures and cultures of oppression. That does not change the fact, we would argue, that resilience is best cultivated individually, structurally, and culturally.

This may require a slight shift in perspective. It is often easier to recognize the ways in which structures – institutional and cultural – facilitate oppression and violence; but if we recognize this aspect of the importance of structures and systems, we must also recognize that the same structures and systems can foster resilience. If, instead of tolerating and perpetuating moral injury, systems are redesigned to facilitate moral repair and an intolerance for moral injury, such changes in both policy and climate can help individuals be less subject to harm and more able to recover from harm when it does happen. Work that aims to transform the lives of individuals and communities may be most effective if it seeks to introduce practices of resilience while at the same time reshaping institutions, environments, and cultures so that they best facilitate resilience on a structural and cultural level – be this in prisons, schools, hospitals, or other areas of life.
Bibliography


