Sympathizing with the Enemy: 
Reconciliation, Transitional Justice, Negotiation

By Nir Eisikovits 
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Since the demise of the Soviet Union, and, to a greater degree, after the collapse of apartheid in South Africa, interest in the transition from mass atrocity has swelled. Surprisingly, this upsurge produced few systematic philosophical discussions of the notion of ‘reconciliation’. The term is employed as if its meaning were obvious. Like ‘terrorism’ or ‘patriotism’, ‘reconciliation’ has become one of those terms, which is easy to use but harder to explain. This book provides a theory of political reconciliation. Its argument is that what Adam Smith called ‘sympathy’, the ability to view the world from another’s perspective, offers a promising framework for thinking about reconciliation - more promising than accounts focusing on forgiveness, forgetting or mutual recognition. The book also suggests that the notion of sympathy is essential for evaluating transitional policies such as truth commissions and war crime tribunals.

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“This is a ground-breaking work, combining innovative theory with case studies, concerning a crucial and increasingly important political issue.”

David Lyons, Professor of Law and Philosophy, Boston University

“Empathy is a moral skill - and a political necessity. Nir Eisikovits, in this lucid and compelling work of ground-breaking reflection, shows how a pragmatic pursuit of reconciliation is not the opposite of ‘realism’, but the essence of it. Sympathizing With the Enemy is as essential as it is timely.”

James Carroll, Boston Globe Columnist and author of Constantine’s Sword and House of War

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