

The Hardened Heart: The Moral Dangers of Not Forgiving

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I used to be such a quiet, gentle person . . . I wouldn't hurt anybody, but now I am consumed with hatred and anger and fear.

—Denise Fergus, mother of murdered toddler Jamie Bulger¹

When writing on forgiveness, most authors focus on when it is appropriate to forgive and the role that the offender's attitudes play in determining the appropriateness of forgiveness. In this paper I will take a different approach. Instead of examining when forgiveness may or may not be appropriate, I discuss the moral attitude displayed by being *unforgiving*. I argue that we have reason to strive for forgiveness based on the kind of moral outlook we deplore in those who wrong us, and that we strive to remove from our own moral worldview. Believing someone to be unforgivable can result in the adoption of aspects of the wrongdoer's moral outlook and so forgiveness is worth attempting for reasons unconnected to the wrongdoer's attitudes: reasons that arise from the kinds of moral agents we strive to be.

Accounts of forgiveness fall into two distinct types: conditional and unconditional. Conditional accounts traditionally make the appropriateness of forgiveness conditional on the severity of the offense and the attitudes and behavior of the offender. If the offender does not display remorse, say, or any acknowledgment of the wrong, then the victim is justified in withholding forgiveness. Unconditional accounts claim that forgiveness is an issue for the victim alone and is independent of the offender's attitudes. I will argue that conditional accounts of forgiveness fall victim to several misconceptions based on the conflation of forgiveness with condoning, amnesty, or mercy and furthermore they place what Trudy Govier calls an unacceptable "burden of unforgiveness"² on the victim. Effectively, under many conditional accounts of forgiveness the offender's behavior dictates when the victim may forgive. Unilateral accounts of forgiveness remove that burden from the victim and make a strong conceptual distinction between forgiveness, condoning, mercy and amnesty. However, many unilateral accounts rely on the Kantian concept of the intrinsic value of persons, a value that remains unchanged by a person's actions and their attitude toward their actions. This concept is problematic for several reasons. In cases where the offender has identified herself completely with her evil actions, it requires that we see beyond her actions *and* her will *and* her personal endorsement of them to an elusive intrinsic value that is not manifested in any way, shape or form.

I will argue that it is possible to develop a unilateral account of forgiveness based on a different interpretation of the Kantian position, one that relies on the respect for moral agency that is the basis for Kant's account. I will develop a unilateral account of forgiveness based on an understanding of the conceptual framework of forgiveness and of the moral outlook displayed by not forgiving.

Most accounts of forgiveness focus on situations where the wrongdoer is someone with whom we had a prior relationship, situations where the question of forgiveness is tied closely to that of reconciliation. The reasons I will outline for striving to forgive apply equally to these cases but I believe they carry more force in cases where the possibility of reconciliation and the wrongdoer's repentance are remote, if not impossible, and thus cannot be factors in deciding whether one should strive for forgiveness.

In order to do this I will focus on a particular class of wrongdoings that are often described as unforgivable and that are examples of what I will call *dehumanizing evil*.³ An act of dehumanizing evil is directed at the victim simply because they are a member of a despised group that is believed to be inherently inferior, whether that group is racial, sexual or political. In the eyes of the perpetrator of dehumanizing evil the victim's moral worth is defined entirely by their membership in the despised group: They are a Jew, a communist, a woman—and nothing more. The Holocaust, the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, the Rwandan genocide and apartheid are all examples of acts of dehumanizing evil.

1. The Moral Outlook of Dehumanizing Evil

Our natural response to being wronged is usually a combination of hurt, anger, and resentment. We respond this way not simply because the wrongdoer has caused us physical or emotional pain but also because the act of wrongdoing carries a message about our worth.⁴ In *Forgiveness and Mercy*, Jean Hampton and Jeffrie Murphy explore the message that is communicated through an act of wrongdoing. Hampton argues that we feel resentful when we are wronged partly because wrongdoing is an attack on our self-esteem—it is an insult.⁵ Murphy describes this very clearly:

One reason we so deeply resent moral injuries done to us is not simply because they hurt us in some tangible or sensible way; it is because such injuries are also *messages*—symbolic communications. They are ways a wrongdoer has of saying to us, “I count but you do not,” “I can use you for my purposes,” or “I am here up high and you are there down below.” Intentional wrongdoing *insults* us and attempts (sometimes successfully) to degrade us—and thus it involves a kind of injury that is not merely tangible and sensible. It is moral injury, and we care about such injuries.⁶

It is not simply the *act* of wrongdoing that causes us pain; it is the *attitude* of the wrongdoer—their deliberate intention to harm—that hurts us. As Murphy points out, quoting Justice Holmes, “even a dog notices and cares about the difference between being tripped over accidentally and being kicked intentionally.”⁷

This point is echoed in most accounts of forgiveness. Margaret Holmgren, for example, argues that “implicit in the wrongdoer’s act of abuse is the claim that the victim is not valuable.”⁸ As she rightly points out, one of the most important stages of recovery a victim goes through is the recovery of self-esteem. Depending on our security about our sense of self-worth, we might feel demeaned or literally degraded by the wrongdoer’s actions. Yet regardless of our reactions to it, the message implicit in most acts of wrongdoing is the same; the wrongdoer is telling us that we are of less worth than they are: that we are just an object.

Thus our normal reactions to being wronged—feeling resentful, desiring revenge and wanting the person who wronged us to suffer—clearly make sense when we understand these reactions as attempts to adamantly refuse the lower worth the wrongdoer is implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) assigning to us—even if at the same time we half-fear that it might be true.⁹

All acts of wrongdoing communicate the message that the victim is not valuable, but acts of dehumanizing evil communicate a particularly abhorrent version of this message. Such acts do more than communicate the message that the victim is merely an object; they communicate the message that the victim is intrinsically inferior—morally, socially, and physically—simply because she is a member of a particular group. The perpetrator of dehumanizing evil often thinks and speaks of the victim in dehumanizing terms. A clear example of the purpose of dehumanizing terminology is described by Ervin Staub in *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Evil*:

The most general condition for guilt-free massacre is the denial of humanity to the victim. You call the victims names like gooks, dinks, niggers, pinkos, and japs.¹⁰

Other methods such as shaving the victim’s hair, removing their clothing and personal items and hooding are common dehumanizing techniques that are experienced by the victim as an extreme loss of personal identity and self-worth. In *If This Is a Man* Primo Levi describes the devastation of self-identity that results from being treated in a dehumanizing manner:

Imagine now a man who is deprived of everyone he loves, and at the same time of his house, his habits, his clothes, in short, of everything he possesses: he will be a hollow man, reduced to suffering and needs, forgetful of dignity and restraint, for he who loses all often easily loses himself.¹¹

The message implicitly and sometimes explicitly communicated through acts of dehumanizing evil can have devastating consequences for the victim’s self-esteem and self-identity.

The message characteristic of dehumanizing evil need not be expressed verbally. Sometimes, just by virtue of being a victim, the victim becomes subhuman in the eyes of the wrongdoer. The process of torture, for example, dehumanizes victims by reducing them to a state of physical and emotional desperation.

Sociologist Ronald Crelinsten points out that “It has often been reported that the screams of torture victims no longer sound human. The irony is that, to the torturer, this only reinforces their dehumanization.”¹² Nowhere is this more apparent than in the attitudes of the guards at the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib. The soldiers depicted in the photos of the abuse are not ashamed; they are proud. They are smiling, giving the thumbs-up sign—behaving as if the Iraqis were nothing more than despicable animals:

The pictures from Abu Ghraib are trophy shots. The American soldiers included in them look exactly as if they were standing next to a gutted buck or a 10-foot marlin . . . The Americans in the photographs are not enacting hatred; hatred can coexist with respect, however strained. What they display, instead, is contempt: their victims are merely objects.¹³

The perpetrator of dehumanizing evil does not hate the victim; he may not even think about them at all. The only relevant fact about the victim is that they are part of the victim group: a Jew, a communist, a terrorist. For the perpetrator that fact overrides all other features of the victim’s identity. Torturing or killing them is, after all, nothing personal.

A dangerous consequence of this dehumanization is the removal of the victim group from the realm of those considered moral equals. Harms to the victim are no longer classified as “wrong” but simply as appropriate treatment for members of that group. The moral outlook of dehumanizing evil is not *amoral* nor does the perpetrator of dehumanizing evil operate outside of moral boundaries. In the moral outlook of dehumanizing evil terms such as “murder” still retain their meaning—the unjustified killing of a person—but the killing of the victim does not fall into that category because the victim is not considered a person.

A vivid example of this moral outlook is the use of Jewish prisoners by Nazi doctors for medical experiments in World War II. Such use was not considered wrong—it was considered the moral equivalent of using animals for experimentation. When confronted by the apparent contradiction between the values of the Hippocratic Oath and his participation in the killing of the Jews, one Nazi doctor justified his actions as follows:

Of course I am a doctor and I want to preserve life. And out of respect for human life, I would remove a gangrenous appendix from the diseased body. The Jew is a gangrenous appendix in the body of mankind.¹⁴

From this doctor’s perspective there is no conflict between upholding the Hippocratic Oath and killing Jews. The Hippocratic Oath forbids the taking of human life, and the Jews are not fully human.

The attitudes inherent in dehumanizing evil are generally condemned and rightly so. Dehumanization is not only morally unjustifiable but very dangerous; it has been used to justify the appalling treatment of other human beings and furthermore lessens psychological constraints against harming others. Some of

the greatest evils of this century have emerged out of the dehumanization of particular groups—the Holocaust, the ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, the treatment of women in Afghanistan and there are many others. The moral outlook of dehumanizing evil can result in a scale of wrongdoing from minor humiliations such as the segregation of drinking water in the United States, to what are often considered unforgivable atrocities, such as genocide.

The question of forgiveness is particularly significant in relation to perpetrators of dehumanizing evil. At first glance it seems that none of the traditional grounds for forgiveness apply. Victims of dehumanizing evil may never see the perpetrator again; they may not even know the perpetrator's name. Victims may never know if the perpetrator has repented or acknowledged the harm they caused. Nor can reconciliation be a motive for forgiveness—there was no prior relationship between victim and perpetrator. Thus forgiveness in these cases can seem almost saintlike. We are in awe of those who, like Nelson Mandela, forgive those who have wronged them in this way. Equally, we understand why some victims of dehumanizing evil feel they can never forgive.

Given that acts of dehumanizing evil are often particularly atrocious, what reasons can victims of dehumanizing evil have for forgiving those who have so severely wronged them? To answer this we must examine the concept of forgiveness in more detail.

2. Common Accounts of Forgiveness

Defining forgiveness is no easy task. It is easily confused with excusing, being merciful, pardoning, amnesty and condoning. Some writers argue that, far from always being a virtue, forgiveness can in fact *increase* wickedness by not providing the correct condemnation of a wrong.¹⁵ Others have claimed that it is a saint-like bestowal of compassion and charity on the wrongdoer.¹⁶ While I cannot offer a complete definition in this paper, I will extract some common themes from among the many definitions offered by writers on this topic.

Forgiveness is most commonly defined as a change of heart where the victim renounces negative feelings toward the wrongdoer and accepts them back into the moral community—accepts them as a person.¹⁷ Some authors, typically proponents of unconditional forgiveness such as Margaret Holmgren, also argue that forgiveness involves developing an attitude of “real goodwill” toward the wrongdoer.¹⁸ Whether “real goodwill” is required for forgiveness is controversial. What is uncontroversial is that forgiveness requires more than the cessation of negative attitudes such as hatred and resentment; it also requires a *positive* change of attitude toward the wrongdoer so that they are no longer viewed as permanently outside the moral community. This positive attitude means that we cease to view the wrongdoer as solely defined by their act of wrongdoing and instead see them as a fellow human being—a complex rational being who warrants our respect and compassion. In Jeffrie Murphy's phrase, forgiveness is the restoring of moral equality.¹⁹

While forgiveness entails that we adopt a positive attitude toward the wrongdoer and renounce negative judgments about their intrinsic worth, it does not entail renouncing *all* negative judgments about the wrong and about the wrongdoer's responsibility. The judgment that the wrongdoer should not have committed the wrong, that she is to blame for the act of wrongdoing and that she is responsible for having done wrong are not erased when the wrongdoer is forgiven by the victim. Forgiveness is therefore quite compatible with continuing to condemn the wrong that was done. Forgiveness involves a change of attitude toward the wrongdoer but negative judgments about the wrong remain intact—indeed they must remain intact for forgiveness to be conceptually possible. Joanna North explains this clearly in “Forgiveness and Wrongdoing”:

Any account which denies the existence of the wrong or which describes the act in terms outside the arena of moral discourse is one which leaves no room either for retribution or for forgiveness. Both require that moral vision in which the human agent occupies a central place, and in which praise and blame are allotted in full recognition of his nature as a responsible being.²⁰

In *Freedom and Resentment*, P. F. Strawson defines forgiveness and resentment as participant reactive attitudes, attitudes that we have toward those whom we believe to be moral agents, members of the moral community.²¹ If we believe that the wrong was outside the wrongdoer's control or that the wrongdoer could not have done otherwise, then the wrongdoer is not a fit subject for the participant stance and neither resentment *nor* forgiveness are appropriate. In such cases we adopt the objective attitude and see the wrongdoer as an object rather than a person—a nuisance to be managed or treated.²² Both resentment and forgiveness require a belief that the other is a culpable and responsible moral agent who intentionally committed a wrong action. We can only forgive those who we believe are responsible for their actions.

Given this definition, it is important to clarify what forgiveness does *not* imply, in order to forestall the objection that forgiveness so defined implies that reconciliation between victim and perpetrator must take place, or that punishment is no longer appropriate if the wrongdoer has been forgiven.

First, forgiveness does not imply that reconciliation must take place between wrongdoer and victim. If a battered wife forgives her husband but he shows no signs of changing his behavior, it would be very foolish of her to reconcile with him and such reconciliation is not demanded by her forgiveness of him. She can forgive him—cease to think of him as unforgivable—without accepting him back into a close personal relationship with her.²³ Forgiveness is *one* of the necessary steps for reconciliation but it is by no means the only one. Reconciliation could only be advised if the wrongdoer had repented or significantly changed their hurtful behavior.

Nor does forgiveness imply that the offender should not be punished, although as Jeffrie Murphy points out, it would seem to rule out punishment

motivated by revenge or retributive emotions.²⁴ However, there are many justifications for punishment that are not based on the satisfaction of retributive emotions, such as punishment as a moral lesson, punishment as a deterrence to others or punishment to protect the community from danger. In “Forgiveness and the Unforgivable” Trudy Govier notes that forgiveness can occur after punishment has taken place.²⁵ Forgiveness, as Murphy writes, is “primarily a matter of how I feel about you (not how I treat you), and thus I may forgive you in my heart of hearts even after you are dead.”²⁶

Forgiveness must not be confused with the concepts of mercy and amnesty, both of which imply a reduction in or immunity from punishment. Mercy is to “treat a person less harshly than, given certain rules, one has a right to treat that person.”²⁷ Mercy implies the existence of a legitimate authority that can give or withhold punishment and of external and public rules which the wrongdoer has broken, and neither of these are implied by forgiveness.²⁸ Amnesty is the granting of immunity from legal prosecution and can only be offered by a state or legal authority. Such immunity does not imply any change of attitude or cessation of resentment toward the wrongdoer and so amnesty is quite distinct from forgiveness.²⁹

Given this definition of forgiveness, two questions arise: When is it morally appropriate to forgive and is it morally appropriate to forgive the perpetrator of dehumanizing evil?

Jeffrie Murphy, Jean Hampton and Margaret Holmgren all agree that forgiveness is morally appropriate only if it is compatible with self-respect, respect for others and respect for morality.³⁰ However, disagreement arises over when forgiveness is compatible with these criteria. Attitudes are divided roughly between conditional forgiveness, which holds that forgiveness is compatible with the criteria only if certain facts about the wrongdoer’s attitudes hold, and unconditional forgiveness, which argues that forgiveness should not be reliant upon any attitudes of the wrongdoer.

3. Conditional Forgiveness

Proponents of conditional forgiveness argue that forgiveness is only appropriate when certain conditions are met. Typically, but not always, these are conditions related to the offender’s attitudes and behavior regarding his wrongdoing, such as his repentance. Other common conditions cited are if the wrongdoer meant well, or if he has suffered enough or undergone some form of humiliation.³¹ All conditional accounts agree that if the crime is serious and none of the required conditions are met, then the victim is justified in withholding forgiveness. Norvin Richards describes this view:

Hard feelings toward the wrongdoer serve to express one’s feelings about the (now completed) wrong. In my view, there is nothing inappropriate about this.³²

Conditional accounts have several features in common; they make forgiveness dependent on the wrongdoer's behavior and attitudes and they claim that there are cases where not forgiving is morally justified. For example, in "Forgiveness and the Unforgivable," Trudy Govier argues that we are justified in holding perpetrators of atrocities "conditionally unforgivable" until they repent and acknowledge their wrong. Withholding forgiveness is a way of "marking our resistance to evil" and our condemnation of the atrocity.³³ This implies that forgiving when the required conditions have not been met could be seen as condoning the wrong—could send the wrong "moral message" to the wrongdoer—and so one could be morally criticizable for forgiving in such a case. Jeffrie Murphy takes this view:

Indeed, if I am correct in linking resentment to self-respect, a too-ready tendency to forgive may properly be regarded as a *vice* because it may be a sign that one lacks respect for oneself.³⁴

Resentment is claimed to be a justified and appropriate response to certain kinds of wrongdoing and certain kinds of wrongdoer, and in fact can be indicative of a healthy self-respect.³⁵

These accounts have an intuitive appeal for there are many cases where most of us would hesitate at the prospect of forgiving an unrepentant wrongdoer. We might well question the self-respect of a victim of violent crime who seemed to forgive her wrongdoer too readily.

As we have seen, conditional accounts imply that forgiving when the relevant conditions have not been met could be interpreted as condoning the wrong, and so one may be criticized for forgiving an unrepentant or unpunished wrongdoer and morally praised for maintaining an unforgiving attitude. However, there are several problems with this view.

First, it is a serious misconception to conflate forgiveness with condoning. Forgiveness only makes sense when *culpable* wrongdoing has occurred; it is therefore a conceptual requirement of forgiveness that we hold the wrongdoer responsible and that we condemn the wrong. Govier makes this point: "When we forgive, we assume that there is something to forgive—a wrong action for which the offender was responsible."³⁶ Unlike condoning, forgiving does not imply that the victim no longer considers the wrong to be "wrong." Instead, as I argued in section 2, forgiveness involves a certain change of attitude toward the wrongdoer but not a change of attitude toward the wrong. It does not require that we cease to see the wrongdoer as blamable for their actions or as no longer responsible for their act. To conflate forgiveness with condoning is to misunderstand what forgiveness implies.

Second, the belief that there are cases where the victim could be guilty of a moral *vice* by forgiving is highly counterintuitive. Nelson Mandela forgave his unrepentant captors after 25 years in prison yet we do not think that he is morally

at fault by his act of forgiveness.³⁷ On the contrary we think he is exhibiting a moral virtue and we consider him to be morally praiseworthy. Similarly, while we might understand why Jamie Bulger's mother has not forgiven her son's murderers, we do not think her attitude is morally *virtuous* and we do not think she is a role model we should seek to emulate.

Another significant problem with accounts of conditional forgiveness is the "burden of unforgiveness" that is placed on the victim.³⁸ Conditional accounts require the victim to withhold forgiveness until specified conditions are met. According to these accounts, the victim has a moral reason and, in some cases, a moral *duty* to maintain feelings of resentment and hatred. But while initial feelings of hatred and resentment might perhaps help to restore the victim's sense of worth while she recovers from the wrong, to continue holding onto these feelings can place a serious psychological burden on the victim. Jamie Bulger's mother expressed this burden so clearly: "I used to be such a quiet, gentle person . . . I wouldn't hurt anybody, but now I am consumed with hatred and anger and fear."³⁹ Maintaining hatred, anger and a hardened heart can destroy one's quality of life and one's self-image. Yet conditional accounts make such a burden morally required.

Govier argues that the view that some wrongdoers could be "absolutely unforgivable" regardless of their repentance or moral reform is to condemn victims to the burden of unforgiveness forever.⁴⁰ However, her own account condemns victims to just such a burden by tying the appropriateness of forgiveness to the wrongdoer's attitude toward their act of wrongdoing. This burden is linked to what I consider to be a serious problem with accounts of conditional forgiveness: the perpetuation of the victim's powerlessness.

Conditional accounts claim that the wrongdoer must earn the victim's forgiveness by repentance or atonement or some other acknowledgment of the wrong. At first glance this seems to empower victims by placing the power of forgiveness in their hands—the wrongdoer can't just expect or assume that he will be forgiven; he must earn forgiveness. But this empowerment is an illusion. Far from empowering the victim, conditional accounts like Govier's place the appropriateness of forgiveness into the wrongdoer's hands. It is the wrongdoer's behavior and attitudes that dictate when it is appropriate for the victim to forgive. If the wrongdoer never repents or acknowledges their wrong then the victim can and should never forgive them. For victims of dehumanizing evil who have no way of finding out whether the wrongdoer has repented or atoned, these accounts mean that they will never know if it is appropriate to begin the process of forgiveness—they are condemned forever to the "burden of unforgiveness." Conditional accounts of forgiveness therefore reverse the desired balance of power in the victim–perpetrator relationship. At the time of the wrongdoing the victim was entirely in the perpetrator's power and by making forgiveness conditional on the perpetrator's behavior and attitudes, this powerlessness is perpetuated. The victim must wait for the wrongdoer to change before she can forgive—this means that she is still in the wrongdoer's power, just as she was at the time of the wrong-

doing. The question of forgiveness is a question for the *victim*—it is something that the victim alone must decide whether or not to pursue.⁴¹ Conditional accounts of forgiveness place the supposedly necessary factors for that decision into the perpetrator’s hands.

Conditional accounts might grant that there could be consequentialist reasons for letting go of resentment and desires for revenge, if such emotions threatened to overtake the victim’s life, but those motives alone would not amount to forgiveness. One might let go of resentment out of purely selfish motives or replace hatred with contempt or pity, reasoning that “the wrongdoer is not worth my hatred” but neither of these motives would constitute forgiveness because they do not involve any positive change of attitude toward the wrongdoer and they do not involve the reacceptance of the wrongdoer as an equal moral agent.⁴²

We can now ask whether conditional accounts of forgiveness can provide any reason for the victim of dehumanizing evil to forgive. It is evident that proponents of conditional forgiveness would argue that there is *no* reason for the victim of dehumanizing evil to forgive and furthermore victims of dehumanizing evil never *should* forgive. The question of reconciliation does not arise as there is no prior relationship to be salvaged. The only relationship is one of victim and perpetrator. Given that many victims never see the people who wronged them again and thus will never know if they have repented, forgiveness in these cases, if it is justified, cannot be conditional on the wrongdoer’s attitudes.

It seems that only unconditional accounts of forgiveness could provide reasons for the victim of dehumanizing evil to forgive. Such accounts hold that forgiveness can still occur when the wrongdoer is dead or beyond our reach. Forgiveness is thus completely independent of the wrongdoer’s attitudes toward the wrong they committed.

4. Unconditional Forgiveness

Unconditional accounts of forgiveness take various forms. Cheshire Calhoun offers an account of what she terms “aspirational forgiveness” that is based on an understanding of the perpetrator’s life history. Aspirational forgiveness seeks to make sense of the wrongdoer’s actions in the light of her life story—not to condone those actions, but to understand how such actions might make biographical sense even if they do not make moral sense.⁴³ Aspirational forgiveness is the acceptance of the wrongdoer as a person and it means that we cease to demand that they change to conform to our particular moral standards.⁴⁴

More commonly unconditional accounts of forgiveness are based on a concept of the intrinsic worth of persons. Typically this might be a Christian concept or, as in Margaret Holmgren’s account, the Kantian concept of persons as ends in themselves.

Holmgren develops a detailed description of the steps a victim must go through in order to forgive (recovering self-esteem, honoring feelings of anger

and hurt, and several others), and stresses that this process is by no means easy and that attempting forgiveness before the process is complete can be damaging to the victim's recovery. She argues that once these stages have been worked through forgiveness is always morally appropriate, but never obligatory.⁴⁵ Because forgiveness is recognizing the intrinsic moral worth of the wrongdoer as a person, unconditional forgiveness is entirely compatible with self-respect, respect for others and respect for morality.⁴⁶

Both Calhoun's and Holmgren's accounts provide reasons for aspiring to forgiveness that are not solely consequentialist but instead are connected to specific conceptions of self-respect and the intrinsic value of persons. However, while at first glance these accounts seem to provide reasons for the victim of dehumanizing evil to forgive, they are problematic. First, Calhoun requires that we have detailed knowledge of the perpetrator's life history so that we can make sense of their actions within the context of their past. Yet, leaving aside the not unimportant question of why understanding the motivations behind an act of wrongdoing should be *necessary* for forgiveness, this account seems to make it impossible to forgive those about whom we know little or nothing. The victim of torture is unlikely to even know her torturer's name, let alone her torturer's history. Calhoun's account cannot provide a reason for the victim of dehumanizing evil to forgive for too often the perpetrators of dehumanizing evil are faceless, nameless and vanished.

Holmgren's account is more promising. However, the apparent problem with a Kantian-based account such as hers is that it seems to ask *too much* of the victim—requiring a kind of “leap of faith” to seek intrinsic value in a person about whom nothing is known beyond the fact that they committed an act of great evil. As Govier points out, it is extremely hard to separate a person from their acts when they have conceived, willed, and carried out atrocities without displaying any compassion.⁴⁷ When all we know of a person is that she committed a serious crime against us, we seem justified in asking ourselves the following question posed by Jean Hampton: “Can we judge our assailant to be a decent person if his immoral action against us seems to provide substantial evidence to the contrary?”⁴⁸

When the wrongdoer is someone close to us it is perhaps easier to see them as complex moral agents whose moral worth cannot be determined by a single act. In cases of dehumanizing evil, however, often the perpetrator is known to the victim *solely* through the act of dehumanizing evil. For the victim, the perpetrator is often defined by that act. The victim is unlikely to have access to information that would allow them to form a more complete picture of the perpetrator's character. Thus the apparent problem for unconditional accounts that presuppose a belief in the intrinsic equal worth of all persons seems to be epistemological.

However this objection is based on a misunderstanding of Kant's account of intrinsic worth. According to Kant, persons have intrinsic value because they are ends in themselves—they are rational beings capable of forming universal laws.⁴⁹ It is the recognition of the capacity for rational autonomous agency, not a belief

in an unchanging positive moral character, which demands respect and limits our treatment of others. As Kant writes:

The legislation which determines all worth must therefore have a dignity, i.e., unconditional and incomparable worth. For the esteem which a rational being must have for it, only the word “respect” is a suitable expression. Autonomy is thus the basis of the dignity of both human nature and every rational nature.⁵⁰

The Kantian account of intrinsic value does not require us to see everybody as equally morally good regardless of what they do. We should treat others with respect because they are rational beings and the capacity for rational moral agency is valuable in and of itself. We should therefore promote the ability of others to act in accordance with the rational law and we should try to further their permissible ends.⁵¹ However this positive attitude toward the value of rational moral agency *per se* is distinct from seeing other people as morally good regardless of their actions.⁵² We are not required to adopt a positive attitude toward individuals who act in destructive or morally impermissible ways or who fail to act in accordance with the good will.⁵³ The Kantian account requires that we treat the wrongdoer with the respect due to an autonomous moral agent with the capacity for change and it requires that we view the wrongdoer as responsible for her actions. It does *not* require us to view her as a morally good person.⁵⁴

Secondly, a Kantian could argue that it is precisely *because* we know so little about the perpetrator that we cannot infer anything about their inherent moral worth. Who are we to judge their moral state? We have enough trouble determining our own moral state—how can we be in a position to determine decisively the state of another? The very lack of information might be a reason to withhold a damning judgment of their moral worth.⁵⁵

Yet even accepting that Kant’s account of intrinsic worth does not require us to see the wrongdoer as a morally good person, and even accepting that we cannot form a reliable judgment about the moral worth of another, there are still two further objections that might be made. First, one might argue that taking the worth and rational agency of another on faith is just not a good enough reason to forgive them, especially if the act they committed was particularly atrocious. Second, it might be objected that a belief in the moral agency of the wrongdoer merely implies that we cannot view them as inherently immoral but it does not imply that we should adopt the *positive* attitude toward them that is required by forgiveness.

After all, what is wrong with seeing the wrongdoer as unforgivable? Why should we try to see perpetrators of dehumanizing evil as moral equals? Why not hate and resent the torturers, the operators of the furnaces at Buchenwald, the Nazi doctors? If anyone deserves hatred and resentment, deserves absolute moral condemnation, it is these people.

Answering these questions requires further inquiry into what happens to us when we decide *not* to change our attitudes toward the perpetrators of dehuman-

izing evil, *not* to think of them as members of the moral community—when we consider them unforgivable.

5. Not Forgiving: Accepting the Moral Outlook of Dehumanizing Evil

When we believe someone to be unforgivable there are several different attitudes we might adopt toward them. Jean Hampton describes two ways in which we may hate those who wrong us. We may hate the immoral cause the wrongdoer has identified with and wish to triumph over that cause.⁵⁶ Or we might feel that the wrong has in fact lowered our worth (or revealed us to be of less worth than we had thought) and so we might feel malicious or spiteful and desire to bring the wrongdoer down to our level, to join us in the gutter.⁵⁷ These forms of hatred may overtake our lives and lessen our enjoyment in living. We may wish to renounce our hatred for consequentialist reasons, out of desire for peace of mind. We may then merely pity the wrongdoer or view them with contempt, as unworthy of our consideration. We may choose to forget the wrong; pretend it never happened and wipe the wrongdoer and the wrong from our minds. In all cases, we see the perpetrator as permanently beyond forgiveness.

What are the attitudes that underlie our unforgiving position? What are the beliefs about the perpetrator that remain even when we only think of them with pity and contempt? Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, why should we strive to eradicate these beliefs?

When we view a wrongdoer as unforgivable we are claiming that the wrongdoer, by their heinous act, has put themselves outside the moral community and no longer deserves respect.

This could be interpreted in two ways. We could say that a person is unforgivable because they have shown themselves to be irredeemably, permanently stained with evil and there is nothing they could do that would render them forgivable. Or we could say that while they are not inherently evil, they have done something so awful that there is no way they could ever pay off their “moral debt.”⁵⁸ Both these options mean that we treat the wrongdoer, in Govier’s words, “as though they are forever and necessarily incapable of moral change.”⁵⁹ In both cases we believe that the wrongdoer’s character has been permanently marked by the wrong they did and there is nothing they can do to alter their status as a lesser moral being. We believe that their act of wrongdoing has entirely defined their moral character and exhausted their moral potential. By seeing them as unforgivable we are identifying the wrongdoer with the wrong and because we condemn the wrong we also condemn the wrongdoer’s moral character.⁶⁰

Believing the wrongdoer to be unforgivable is importantly different from not forgiving them *yet*. I may strive for forgiveness but still feel hatred or resentment toward my wrongdoer. I may have not yet achieved forgiveness but this does not mean that I believe that they are unforgivable. Believing someone to be unforgivable is more than not having forgiven them: It involves, as I have noted above, a set of beliefs about the wrongdoer’s innate worth.

This unforgiving attitude is more than continuing to hold the wrongdoer blameworthy. As I argued in section 2, negative judgments about the wrong and the wrongdoer's responsibility are compatible with forgiveness. In "Personal and Redemptive Forgiveness," Christopher Bennett explains that blame accords the wrongdoer the recognition that he is a member of the moral community, that he has committed a moral wrong and that he has the capacity to understand that he has done wrong:

... not to blame either fails to treat the wrong as a wrong, or else fails to treat the wrongdoer as a member of the moral community. Blame is appropriate because it grants the wrongdoer the recognition that is due to a fellow member of the moral community.⁶¹

The unforgiving attitude, on the other hand, is more than blaming. In either version of unforgivability, holding the wrongdoer to be unforgivable requires a commitment to the belief that the perpetrator is, from that moment on, *inherently* morally inferior.⁶² As Govier notes, holding someone to be unforgivable is to claim that no matter what they do, it would always be inappropriate to forgive them.⁶³ While often understandable, the attitudes behind being unforgiving are problematic for several reasons.

First, there is a conceptual confusion in the concept of unforgivability. Believing someone to be unforgivable effectively denies their capacity for moral change and their status as responsible moral agents. As Bennett explains:

Not to recognize a person as a member of the moral community would mean that it was no longer possible . . . to involve them in any dialogue on questions of value or policies or responsibilities, and no longer possible to engage with them in a trusting relationship.⁶⁴

Claiming that someone is unforgivable is often intended to express permanent outrage at the wrong and continued condemnation of the wrongdoer. Yet, as Margaret Holmgren argues, believing someone to be unforgivable is actually inconsistent with continuing to hold them morally responsible for their actions:

For the retributivist to hold that resentment or retributive hatred is the morally appropriate response to an unrepentant offender, he must hold that the offender is a moral agent who is responsible for her own wrong actions and attitudes. However, if an individual is identical to her current attitudes, then she cannot choose to hold those attitudes, nor can she choose to change them.⁶⁵

Believing someone to be unforgivable therefore involves confusion about the status of the offender as a responsible moral agent, and in fact requires denying that the offender is a moral agent with the capacity for moral change. Holmgren argues that this complete identification of the wrongdoer with the act of wrongdoing is morally objectionable because it fails to recognize the wrongdoer's personhood and capacity for moral change.⁶⁶ Ironically, therefore, it is the unforgiving outlook—not forgiveness—that is incompatible with continuing to blame the

wrongdoer and holding them responsible because these attitudes require seeing the wrongdoer as part of the moral community, as a person.

Second, the unforgiving attitude is relevantly similar to the moral outlook of dehumanizing evil. The outlook of dehumanizing evil sees the victim as a contemptible object who has no claim to equal moral consideration and whose moral character is intrinsically and permanently inferior. The unforgiving outlook similarly views the perpetrator as intrinsically morally inferior and similarly considers them to have lost any claim to equal moral consideration. In eyes of the perpetrator of dehumanizing evil, the victim's moral status and moral potential is entirely defined and exhausted by one contingent fact about them—their Jewishness, for example. The victim is a Jew and that fact alone determines their intrinsic moral worth, and there is nothing the victim could do to change that. The unforgiving attitude similarly objectifies the wrongdoer. The wrongdoer's evil act is believed to determine their intrinsic moral character the same way that being a Jew completely defines the victim in the eyes of the Nazi doctor. The wrongdoer is defined by their act of wrongdoing.

Maintaining the unforgiving outlook requires maintaining the belief in the perpetrator's irredeemably inferior nature: It "freezes" the perpetrator's character at the moment of their crime.⁶⁷ By describing the perpetrator as unforgivable we are treating them as if the only relevant fact determining their moral worth and moral potential is their act of dehumanizing evil. By being unforgiving we are in effect adopting the moral outlook of dehumanizing evil and reversing its object—it is not *I* who is inferior, it is *you*. We are holding some people to be inherently less valuable than others.

It might be objected at this point that we are justified in treating the perpetrator of dehumanizing evil in this way because there is a morally relevant difference between the outlook of dehumanizing evil and the unforgiving outlook. The perpetrator of dehumanizing evil does not have good grounds for believing the victim to be inherently inferior; their assessment of the victim's worth is based on morally *irrelevant* features about them such as their race or gender. However our assessment of the perpetrator's character is based on a morally *relevant* fact about them: their behavior. Unlike the victim of dehumanizing evil, the perpetrator has done something so awful that they deserve to be viewed as morally inferior: They have shown themselves to be morally inferior by their actions. We therefore have good grounds for believing the perpetrator to be of less intrinsic moral worth.

This objection has force. After all, dehumanization based on morally irrelevant features is completely unjustifiable and, as we have seen, has been linked to some of this century's worst atrocities. However, there are two problems with this objection.

First, this objection is based on a misunderstanding about the similarity between dehumanizing evil and the unforgiving outlook. I am not claiming that the unforgiving outlook and dehumanizing evil have the same grounds for the belief that the other is an inferior moral being. The perpetrator's reasons for

believing the victim to be a lesser creature are very different and far less understandable than the reasons we might have for holding someone to be unforgivable. The reasons why we might believe a wrongdoer to be unforgivable are connected to the wrongdoer's actions in a way the perpetrator's beliefs about the victim are not: The victim of dehumanizing evil is usually blameless but the perpetrator of dehumanizing evil is *not* blameless. But while the *grounds* for believing the other to be intrinsically inferior are different, the *content* of the belief—that the other is now and forever irredeemable—is the same. Like the outlook of dehumanizing evil, the unforgiving outlook is a denial of what Govier describes as the “possibility of moral change”⁶⁸—a denial of the other's moral agency. In both the unforgiving attitude and the outlook of dehumanizing evil the object of the attitude is dehumanized because they are denied recognition of and respect for the essentially human capacity for rational moral agency. It is this denial that is morally problematic.

Second, the move from condemning the wrong and holding the wrongdoer responsible to holding the wrongdoer unforgivable is based on confusion about the relationship between forgiveness and our judgments about the act of wrongdoing. The belief that being unforgiving is a way of showing proper condemnation of the wrong implies that forgiveness would in some way condone or at least fail to properly recognize the wrong that was done. But this falls foul of the conceptual confusion pointed out by Margaret Holmgren and fails to understand what forgiveness involves. Forgiveness does not mean that we must change our moral assessment of the wrong or no longer consider the wrongdoer morally responsible. Forgiveness involves a change of attitude toward the perpetrator so that we no longer consider them to be irredeemable. Instead, we view them with the respect due to all rational beings. Forgiving the perpetrator therefore does not mean that we cease to condemn the wrong. The belief that being unforgiving is the only way to truly condemn the wrong is based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of forgiveness.

The unforgiving attitude is not simply a condemnation of the wrong (as we have seen, such condemnation is far from incompatible with forgiveness): It is a belief that the act of wrongdoing has revealed the wrongdoer's character to be intrinsically inferior. It is this attitude that is relevantly similar to the attitudes that underlie the outlook of dehumanizing evil. The moral outlook of dehumanizing evil sees the victim as intrinsically and unchangeably morally inferior and by being unforgiving we effectively see the perpetrator in the same light.

Holding the belief that the wrongdoer is unforgivable is therefore morally problematic for two reasons. One, it is based on the mistaken belief that an agent's moral worth and moral potential can be entirely and permanently determined by a single act or other contingent feature about them and, two, it is similar to the attitudes that underlie acts of dehumanizing evil. If we find the outlook of dehumanizing evil morally objectionable because it can lead to treating others as unworthy of respect—to wrongdoing—then we should be very wary of adopting

a version of that outlook ourselves by maintaining an unforgiving attitude, even if our reasons for adopting that outlook are very different. If we think that believing that others are intrinsically morally inferior is both morally wrong and dangerous because of the kinds of wrongdoing it can lead to, then that provides a strong reason to attempt to eradicate such beliefs within ourselves. This is not to imply that we will become torturers or executioners or perpetrators of genocide if we are unforgiving—there are degrees of dehumanization—but it forces us to recognize that we too have the capacity to view others as inherently and permanently morally inferior. The attitude that others are intrinsically inferior is morally problematic even if it does not in fact lead to wrongdoing. We have good reason to be concerned about the attitude itself even when the consequences of holding the attitude are seemingly slight.⁶⁹

Realizing that being unforgiving maintains a similar moral outlook to that of dehumanizing evil provides a reason to strive for forgiveness. Out of respect for morality and out of respect for the kinds of moral agents we wish to be, forgiveness is a morally worthy goal to strive for. I am not claiming that forgiveness is obligatory or that it is easy. Of course it is not. Forgiving a perpetrator of dehumanizing evil would be an incredibly hard task, a process that might take years. My claim here is simply that there are good reasons to begin that process—reasons based on the kinds of attitudes we might wish to cultivate within ourselves. It is based on the recognition that as moral agents we are responsible for the attitudes that we adopt toward others. When we are wronged by dehumanizing evil we are faced with a choice. We can take on the wrong doer's attitude and turn it onto them; we can, in effect, adopt a version of their moral outlook. Or we can choose to reject that outlook. We can recognize the harm that outlook can cause and we can attempt, to the best of our ability, to eradicate such an outlook from our moral view.

However, the question still remains: How do we go about changing our attitude toward the perpetrator of dehumanizing evil?

6. The Process of Forgiveness: Empathy out of Recognition

Part of the intuitive resistance to forgiving perpetrators of dehumanizing evil is the seeming intractability of the question: How could anyone do such a thing? How can someone commit acts as atrocious as those of the Nazi doctors and then go home and be loving fathers, wives, husbands?

The analysis of dehumanizing evil revealed at least part of the reason why we find acts of dehumanizing evil so abhorrent—such acts are based on the belief that a person's moral potential and intrinsic moral worth can be wholly determined by one feature about them. Adopting the unforgiving outlook threatens to perpetuate that kind of belief. Recognizing our own capacity for adopting the beliefs characteristic of dehumanizing evil has several implications. We can no longer assume that we are incapable of adopting a moral outlook that can lead to the dehumanization of others, and we cannot claim that the perpetrators of dehumanizing evil

must be somehow intrinsically evil or beyond the moral pale. We can no longer say blithely: I would never have done such a thing. Research into the processes by which people come to commit atrocities have revealed that, contrary to what we might wish were true, torturers and camp commandants were not born moral monsters. A study of Greek torturers, for example, found no evidence of sadism or abusive behavior in the soldiers who became torturers and after they ceased torturing they lived “what seemed to be normal lives.”⁷⁰ Similarly, a commission into the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War found that the soldiers who took part were “generally representative of the typical cross-section of American youth assigned to most combat units throughout the Army.”⁷¹ Rorschach tests on Nazi War criminals were indistinguishable from those of average Americans.⁷² It is not clear that there is any significant feature about those who become torturers that marks them out as relevantly different from the “rest of us.”

So we must understand that it is possible for an ordinary moral agent to adopt the moral outlook of dehumanizing evil. Just as we have the capacity to reject that outlook, so too do the perpetrators of dehumanizing evil. Forgiveness is founded on a humbling recognition of “sameness,” a recognition that the other is a moral equal with the capacity for moral change, even if that capacity is never realized.

An act of dehumanizing evil is an invitation to adopt the unforgiving attitude—an invitation to adopt a similar moral outlook to that of the perpetrator. As we saw earlier, an act of dehumanizing evil communicates a message to the victim—it tells them that they are intrinsically morally inferior. Being unforgiving takes that same attitude and turns it back on the perpetrator and by doing so can perpetuate the message of the wrongdoing. By striving for forgiveness we are refusing to pass on that message. We are giving the responsibility for that outlook back to the perpetrator. By rejecting it, we are demonstrating a respect for ourselves as moral agents and a respect for the kind of moral outlook we consider to be most of value.

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Notes

¹ Simon Mann, “It’s Time for Restraint, Begs Bulger Father,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 26, 2001.

² This phrase was used by Trudy Govier in her article “Forgiveness and the Unforgivable,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 36 (1999): 59–75, 66.

³ I do not mean to suggest that wrongdoing falls neatly into two categories: personal and dehumanizing. There are many acts of wrongdoing that might be termed anonymous wrongdoing such as muggings and burglary. Yet the motivation behind anonymous wrongdoing is relevantly different from that underlying dehumanizing evil. A mugger does not think his act is warranted by the victim’s membership of a certain group, and the facts about the victim that pick him out as a likely target do not cause the mugger to think that the mugging is no longer morally wrong.

- ⁴There are some acts of wrongdoing often called victimless crimes, such as tax fraud, which possibly do not convey this message. However, an act of wrongdoing directed at a *person* certainly does.
- ⁵Jean Hampton and Jeffrie Murphy, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 45.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, 25.
- ⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁸Margaret Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1993): 341–52, 343.
- ⁹Hampton and Murphy, 54.
- ¹⁰Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Evil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 61.
- ¹¹Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man* (London: Abacus Books, 1987), 33.
- ¹²Ronald D. Crelinsten, "In Their Own Words: The World of The Torturer," in *The Politics of Pain: Torturers and Their Masters*, ed. Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 41.
- ¹³Luc Sante, "Tourists and Torturers," *New York Times*, May 11, 2004.
- ¹⁴Staub, 16.
- ¹⁵Hampton and Murphy, 17.
- ¹⁶Aurel Kolnai, "Forgiveness," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 74 (1973–74): 91–106, 104.
- ¹⁷Joanna North, "Wrongdoing and Forgiveness," *Philosophy* 62 (1987): 499–508, 506.
- ¹⁸Holmgren, 342. She makes the same point in "Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness in Psychotherapy," in *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*, ed. Sharon Lamb and Jeffrie Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 128.
- ¹⁹Hampton and Murphy, 22.
- ²⁰North, 507.
- ²¹P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen & Co., 1974), 22.
- ²²Strawson, 9.
- ²³Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," 342.
- ²⁴Under a strictly retributive theory of punishment, forgiveness would rule out punishment.
- ²⁵Govier, 60.
- ²⁶Hampton and Murphy, 21.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, 20.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, 20.
- ²⁹Govier, 71.
- ³⁰Hampton and Murphy, 19; Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," 342.
- ³¹Hampton and Murphy, 24.
- ³²Norvin Richards, "Forgiveness," *Ethics* 99 (1988): 77–97, 82.
- ³³Govier, 66–67, 70.
- ³⁴Hampton and Murphy, 17. Their italics.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, 16.
- ³⁶Govier, 60.
- ³⁷On page 60 Govier uses this example to make the point that forgiveness does not imply forgetting. We do not imagine that Mandela forgot his experiences as soon as he forgave his captors.
- ³⁸*Ibid.*, 66.
- ³⁹Mann, *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 26, 2001.
- ⁴⁰Govier, 66.
- ⁴¹It is possible that a victim might choose to forgive unwisely—might push themselves to forgive before they have really dealt with their anger and resentment at the wrong that was done to them. There are objective standards about when forgiveness is appropriate that are linked to the well-being of the victim—for example, pushing someone to forgive before they are ready could

damage their recovery (Holmgren, "Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness," 125–26), but the decision to begin the process of forgiveness or at least to attempt forgiveness is ultimately in the victim's hands. The existence of such standards does not mean the decision to forgive or attempt to forgive should not be the victim's to make.

⁴² Richards, 78.

⁴³ Cheshire Calhoun, "Changing One's Heart," *Ethics* 103 (1992): 79–97, 92.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁵ Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," 344.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁴⁷ Govier, 68–69.

⁴⁸ Hampton and Murphy, 154.

⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1959), 47.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

⁵² Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

⁵³ Thanks to Jeanette Kennett for clarification of this point.

⁵⁴ Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," 349.

⁵⁵ Hampton and Murphy, 152.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁸ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this option, and the editor of *Journal of Social Philosophy* for helpful comments on the following section.

⁵⁹ Govier, 70.

⁶⁰ Thanks to Dirk Baltzly for his comments on this section.

⁶¹ Bennett, 133.

⁶² Claiming that the wrongdoer has a moral debt that can't be paid off is effectively identical to the claim that they are forever morally inferior—that there is nothing they could do that would change their status as someone whose moral status is defined by their act of wrongdoing.

⁶³ Govier, 67.

⁶⁴ Christopher Bennett, "Personal and Redemptive Forgiveness," *European Journal of Philosophy* 11 (2003): 127–44, 132.

⁶⁵ Holmgren, "Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness," 129.

⁶⁶ Holmgren, "Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness," 130.

⁶⁷ Thanks to Jeanette Kennett for this term.

⁶⁸ Govier, 69.

⁶⁹ There is an important distinction between the moral status of the act and the moral status of the attitude that led to the commission of the act. I am not claiming that when we don't forgive we put ourselves on the same moral level of the wrongdoer, only that by not forgiving we are adopting an attitude that is relevantly similar to the attitudes that lie behind acts of dehumanizing evil. This does not mean that we will commit acts similar to those committed by the perpetrator.

⁷⁰ John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 88. For the full study of the Greek torturers, see Mika Haritos-Fatouros, "The Official Torturer: A Learning Model for Obedience to the Authority of Violence," in *The Politics of Pain: Torturers and Their Masters*, ed. Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid (Colorado: Westview Press, 1993), 129–46.

⁷¹ John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 88.

⁷² Molly Harrower, "Rorschach Records of the Nazi War Criminals: An Experimental Study after Thirty Years," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 40 (1976): 341–51.