



2020

# A case for unforgiveness as a legitimate moral response to historical wrongs

Hollman Lozano  
Simon Fraser University, hollman\_lozano@sfu.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/jec>



Part of the Continental Philosophy Commons, Criminal Law Commons, Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons, Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons, Humane Education Commons, Law and Philosophy Commons, Law and Politics Commons, Law and Psychology Commons, and the Prison Education and Reentry Commons

### Recommended Citation

Lozano, Hollman (2020) "A case for unforgiveness as a legitimate moral response to historical wrongs," *Journal of Educational Controversy*. Vol. 14 : No. 1 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/jec/vol14/iss1/4>

This Article in Response to Controversy is brought to you for free and open access by the Peer-reviewed Journals at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Educational Controversy by an authorized editor of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact [westerncedar@wvu.edu](mailto:westerncedar@wvu.edu).

## **A case for unforgiveness as a legitimate moral response to historical wrongs**

Hollman Lozano  
Simon Fraser University  
hollman\_lozano@sfu.ca

### Abstract:

The emergence of forgiveness as the preferred mechanism through which historical wrongs are addressed within reconciliation discourses has meant that for the people who cannot forgive or will not forgive, there are no alternatives other than insisting on forgiveness until it hopefully one day arrives. As such, the point of unforgiveness is to constitute an agentic space where the people who cannot forgive can articulate their stance in ways that not only allow them to articulate their resistance to the injunction to forgive, but also constitute alternative spaces whereby they can articulate their stance in inclusive ways. If we constitute alternatives to the hegemonic injunction to forgive, we might be able to open spaces whereby those who are excluded from the reconciliatory discourses, manage to participate and enrich the spaces of reconciliation while refusing to partake of the calls to forgiveness.

“I refuse not to be angry and cannot forgive, what is even more difficult is to have someone tell me I should not feel like this...” Bryan Mpaphela, Apartheid victim (cited in Verdoolaege Annelies, 2006).

“And do not forgive, because it is not within your power to forgive in the name of those who were betrayed at dawn.” Poet Zbigniew Herbert (quoted in Michnik & Havel, 1993, p. 25).

In this paper, I explore the possibility of unforgiveness as a legitimate response to historical wrongs for those who cannot or will not forgive. On a practical note, I am looking for spaces of creative dissonance where non-retributive stances are possible in the midst of scenarios of national reconciliation or post-conflict. One challenge that emerges from the emphasis on forgiveness in post-conflict scenarios could be the supererogation of forgiveness. By the supererogation of forgiveness, I refer to the expectation that survivors follow the examples of religious or political leaders such as President Nelson Mandela or Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Both Mandela and Tutu suffered heinous injustices at the hands of the South African security forces. They opted for forgiveness as the most propitious course not only for themselves but also for the country. There are countless other people like Mandela or Tutu for whom forgiveness is the most adequate alternative. But there are others for whom forgiveness fails to meet their needs, and the calls to forgive and follow the steps of supererogation of forgiveness further entrench their disappointment with forgiveness as an alternative. And it is for those who cannot follow the steps of those who forgive for whom unforgiveness may be an alternative. While some cannot forgive, there might also be those who do not consider that their inability to forgive requires much of their attention to the point that unforgiveness may not be required as an alternative. If the injunction to forgive does not present a moral challenge for them, then unforgiveness does not have much to offer to them. In order to clarify this point, it may be useful to bring up Derrida (2001), who argues that “one can acquit or suspend judgement and nevertheless refuse to forgive” (p. 33). In that sense, unforgiveness is neither acquittal nor suspension of judgment. Unforgiveness is a space for those who cannot forgive and find themselves dissatisfied with the alternatives presented by calls for reconciliation.

Although I will use the general term forgiveness, the type of forgiveness I am referring to is not what is requested when one steps on someone else’s foot or when one accidentally bumps into someone else in a crowded space. The type of forgiveness that concerns this paper is one requested from a harm so profound, an injury so heinous that the direct survivors have been undone by it to the core of their being (Butler, 2004). The emphasis on the direct survivor is premised on the assumption that one can forgive only the actions that directly impact oneself or the consequences of those actions upon oneself. To illustrate this point, we could evoke the often-cited testimony (Derrida, 2001) of the Black woman who comes to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and whose testimony is translated by Archbishop Tutu as “A commission or a government cannot forgive. Only I, eventually, could do it. (And I am not ready to forgive)” (p. 43). For Derrida, the woman was suggesting that only the dead person could legitimately consider forgiveness as an option, for all she could potentially forgive was the consequences of that loss of life upon her own. In that sense, I agree with Derrida when I argue that one can only forgive the

pernicious actions that directly impacted oneself and the consequences that those actions have on one's life.

The aim of exploring unforgiveness is to examine it as an agentic space through which those who find it morally or emotionally untenable to forgive or are just incapable of forgiving, can articulate their disagreement in a manner comparable to what Kohl (1994) described as "creative maladjustment" (p. 130). For Kohl, "when it is impossible to remain in harmony with one's environment without giving up deeply held moral values, creative maladjustment becomes a sane alternative to giving up altogether" (p. 130). As such, creative maladjustment is a moral stance, a retort that springs from one's moral stance against the societal arrangements that one is incapable to reconcile with one's moral principles. Later on, Kohl goes on to argue that creative maladjustment implies

adapting your own particular maladjustment to the nature of the social systems that you find repressive. It also implies learning how other people are affected by those systems, how personal discontent can be appropriately turned into moral and political action, and how to speak out about the violence that thoughtless adjustment can cause or perpetuate. (p. 130).

Building on Kohl's concept of creative maladjustment in the case of unforgiveness, we can understand it as articulated dissonances, everyday tactics that contest the hegemonic discourse of conciliation in ways that are individually and politically empowering. These practices could strengthen the political space by bringing to the conversation those who hitherto just had a part in the reconciliation discourse by being included through their exclusion, as tends to occur with those who do not agree with the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. The point of creative maladjustment for unforgiveness is to make possible an alternative other than apathy that challenges from a moral stance the repressive structure one opposes.

The stance of those who cannot or have chosen not to forgive mirrors Kohl's (1994) learning "how not to learn" (p. 2), when people creatively constitute alternatives to the institutional arrangements like forgiveness that emerge and which they contest as a matter of principle. Not-learning, like not-forgiving, is a response to the challenges that the lack of respect for one's stance creates. Not-forgiving occurs when the imposition to forgive is veiled as a choice for the good of the individual, only that the individual who is expected to forgive is not free to choose to not forgive. Her only choice is to agree to forgive, and the questioning of forgiveness entails the embracing of hatred and vengeance as its only alternatives. Not-forgiving, like not-learning, allows individuals to constitute themselves as other-than and to stand up for that which they believe in, even if that means the creation of a marginal space from which the world will be articulated.

Potentially, those people who chose the path of unforgiveness could have chosen the path of forgiveness and work through it until such a point as forgiveness arrives. Moreover, there are many survivors for whom such an alternative is successful and Tutu's (1999) *No Future Without Forgiveness* is full of such examples. However, if victims like Bryan Mpaphela, the apartheid victim quoted at the beginning of this paper, could explore alternatives to forgiving that are neither forgiveness nor revenge, as none of those fully represent their stance, an altogether different path could emerge. If the survivors are not ready to commit to practices of forgiveness at the end of which reconciliation could potentially emerge, nor are they necessarily looking to harbour their

wounds in ways that could potentially expose them to the possibilities of retribution, there should be an alternative. Somewhere in the middle, those who are standing up for unforgiveness are trying to keep distance from both the calls towards forgiveness and the political deployment of anger and resentment as tools to retaliate the inflicted wounds. As such, walking the fine line of neither forgiveness nor retribution, those exploring the alternative of unforgiveness are seeking the possibility of a creative, moral space that is neither vengeance nor forgiveness. It is necessary to mention that unforgiveness as a concept operates in different realms, the political as well as psychological, when we consider it as a vector of agency for the survivors who cannot forgive, as well as socially emancipatory when it seeks to bring together a coalescence of those who resist the injunction to forgive.

## Unforgiveness

At the risk of sounding prescriptive, I have tentatively found five characteristics of unforgiveness:

1. Unforgiveness is a non-retributive moral stance for direct and indirect survivors to respond to harm and wrongdoing when forgiveness is not an alternative for them.
2. Unforgiveness is a type of principled dissent for the survivors to stand up for their moral principles against the calls to forgive and reconcile; it is from that dissent that the alternative space of those who cannot forgive is constituted in the first place.
3. Unforgiveness is also a type of unlearning since the survivors are trying to unlearn the assumptions about forgiveness and reconciliation, while also staying clear of the calls to vengeance, thereby constituting a space that is neither vengeance nor forgiveness.
4. Unforgiveness is also a heterotopical space that is constituted once the people who cannot forgive come together to constitute alternatives for their plight, validating and working with each other's moral and negative emotions.
5. Unforgiveness is neither a veiled type of forgiveness, nor a type of apathy, nor is it a ruminative type of getting even. It is foremost an alternative that tries to be neither vengeance, nor forgiveness, but remains bound within the limits of civility.

Broadly speaking, when I refer to unforgiveness, I mean a non-retributive moral stance in scenarios of national reconciliation or in spaces where forgiveness has been decided as the vehicle through which conflict and strife will be overcome. If there is a purpose for unforgiveness, it is to become a space in which those who find it morally untenable to forgive, or are simply incapable of forgiving, can articulate their disagreement in ways that are empowering. Through the inclusion of unforgiveness in the repertoire of legitimate moral responses to harm and wrongdoing, a space is opened for the recognition of the role of negative emotions and their possibilities as legitimate, teachable responses to wrongdoing or harm. By opening the space to include those who hitherto did not have a part, unforgiveness could strengthen the political space by allowing voices that were silenced to be included in the conversation about their future.

As I mentioned above, one of the ways to articulate the disagreement that unforgiveness entails is through what Kohl (1994) calls “creative maladjustment” (p. 130), understood as

everyday tactics that contest the hegemonic discourse of conciliation in ways that are both individually and politically empowering. By bringing to the fore those who had been excluded, unforgiveness strengthens rather than thwarts scenarios of conciliation by opening the space to those who were not ready to reconcile. By bringing to the conversation those who previously did not have a part, the conversation about forgiveness and possible reconciliation is further enriched by including a space for those who cannot forgive.

The imposition of forgiveness within conciliatory processes (Verdoolage, 2006) not only devalues the purposes and ends of forgiveness but also further increases the likelihood of conflict and strife shoring up down the road. Foreclosing the social and political space to the survivors that could not forgive will further increase a sentiment of us versus them and could have pernicious consequences for the narratives of reconciliation. In other words, the practice of unforgiveness constitutes a space for those that, while standing in opposition to the various political, religious and social injunctions to forgive, manage to create a stance that while not being forgiveness *per se*, also keeps distance from the calls to retribution that may spring from time to time. As such, the practice of unforgiveness is neither a veiled type of forgiveness, a subterfuge through which people who cannot forgive are encouraged to think that they are doing other than forgiveness, only to discover that they have been led to forgiveness discourse, only through alternative paths.

The practice of unforgiveness is also not a type of apathy that uses unforgiveness as a proxy to keep distance. There is a difference between the disinterested survivor who for different reasons chooses not to partake and the unforgiving survivor who even with the fear of being reprimanded, socially isolated and even pathologized, speaks up. While the former prefers apathy as the means to avoid the calls to forgive and reconcile, and fails to express dissent openly, the latter decides to speak up about unforgiveness, their pains, and the consequences that forgiving would have for them.

Choosing unforgiveness does not mean opening the space to a shrouded type of vengeance whereby survivors who cannot forgive refuse to partake in a forgiveness process as a way to retaliate for the wounds inflicted upon them. Unforgiveness is not a ruminative type of getting even where the survivors keep to themselves the gift of forgiving as a means to avenge those who harmed them.

The purpose of unforgiveness is not to mobilize the pain of the survivors to further political agendas that prevent and hinder policies of forgiveness and reconciliation. The purpose of unforgiveness is to bring together those who cannot forgive so that their voices are heard and their demands integrated into the general make-up of the discussions about the present and the future of the communities once the conflict has abated. Anchored as a fundamental principle of unforgiveness is a commitment to equity understanding that the legal, the moral, and the just may be at odds particularly in transitional justice settings. Moreover, it is here precisely where unforgiveness touches on its morally agentic features, for it allows the survivors to stand up for their principled stance against those who seek to mobilize their wounds in ways that further hinder those who cannot forgive. As such, the people who choose not to forgive actively choose the side of the oppressed survivors who cannot forgive, over and above the laws and the general sentiments that demand that survivors just move on from their pain and go on forgiving.

The practice of unforgiveness also recognizes the moral dimension of dissent and the role it plays in the constitution of a political space, for as Sarat (2005) asserts, dissent itself is the “truest expression of loyalty” (p. 7), which takes seriously the discussions that affect them and partakes in the political space (Rancière, 2010). Specifically talking about dissent, we could follow the path of Graham P. McDonough (2010), who, while exploring the role of dissent within the Catholic Church, recognizes that “dissent is a ‘vital concept’ in moral education [that] requires acknowledging that some kind of disagreement is germane to the aims of its theory, research and practice” (p. 421). As such, if we recognize unforgiveness as a type of dissent that seeks to explore the disagreement that exists between the inability of those who cannot forgive and the request that they forgive, we can recognize unforgiveness as containing the characteristics of dissent that make it a vital concept in moral education. In other words, there is more to unforgiveness than the political space that is constituted by the survivors who cannot forgive. The vitality of dissent that McDonough (2010) recognizes in moral education is present in unforgiveness, since dissent provides the imminent critique of the dissenter from within, who seeks not only to reform the calls to forgiveness to include those who cannot forgive, but also to recognize the role and legitimacy of the dissenters.

## Unforgiveness as Agency

One of the common arguments in favour of forgiveness revolves around the agency that the survivor gains once forgiveness occurs (Bash, 2007). The moment the survivor decides to forgive, the literature on forgiveness suggests that she gains a sense of agency that was not there before. That agency, that feeling that they own their destiny and that they have taken steps to take care of what happened to them is part of the liberating journey of forgiveness (Thompson, Snyder, Hoffman, Michael, Rasmussen, et al., 2005). However, if forgiveness is agentic for those who are ready to forgive, it seems to be the exact opposite for those who cannot forgive particularly when their inability to forgive is either pathologized or understood as anchored in needs for vengeance. Moreover, for those unable to forgive, the injunction to forgive can be a burden that further isolates them from the rest of the community and complicates their relationship to their wounds. But if we understand agency as “the action that propels deliberate movement through a structure(s) by an individual(s) and/or collective(s), with the expressed purpose of achieving a goal or desired outcome...” (Maslak, 2008, p. xv), it seems that agency comes from elsewhere. Agency, in this case, does not necessarily come from the abandonment of negative emotions, as some scholars such as Enright and North (1998) seem to argue. The agency of forgiveness comes from the decision made by the survivor who can forgive and the steps she takes towards the process of forgiving. So, the agentic features that are afforded to forgiveness in the literature on the subject cannot be adjudicated to forgiveness, but to the decision and the act of the survivor who chooses a path to deal with the consequences of harm and wrongdoing that was committed. In that regard, if the agency to choose forgiveness does not come from the liberatory act of forgiveness but from the survivors’ decision and actions towards forgiving, the same conditions could be said to apply to the *decision* for unforgiveness.

The space of unforgiveness that I am proposing is a politically liberating, transitional space for overcoming strife where the survivors can adopt an active stance of positioning themselves within a safe community while contesting the political articulations of their pain. Such space of unforgiveness is more an interregnum that tries to distance itself from the demands to be either/or and seeks to articulate itself in recognition of the needs of the survivors who cannot forgive, as

well as preventing that such inability to forgive be coopted by discourses that seek to mobilize it for politically pernicious agendas. For rather than a flag to claim or a series of specific demands to be articulated, unforgiveness is an auto-poietic space where those who cannot forgive come together to articulate themselves as political subjects who are not being considered by the injunctions to forgive. The space of unforgiveness is also not or should not be thought of as a mere addendum to traditional classroom settings, as proposed by Enright and Worthington in regard to forgiveness (Enright, & the Human Development Study Group, 1991; Enright, & North, 1998; Worthington, Mazzeo, & Klewer, 2002; Worthington & Scherer, 2004; Worthington, 2005), or organized, top-down structures. Unforgiveness is anchored on an individual refusal to accept a univocal path and the alternatives that emerge once those who refuse that univocal path come together to build those alternatives, rather than remain at the level of the creative maladjustment. There are greater gains to be made by deploying unforgiveness in non-traditional group settings as well as with communities who traditionally do not have access to formal education. Refugees, survivors of domestic violence, indigenous people, the elderly, as well as many other marginalized communities are groups of people who are often invited to forgive and who could benefit from unforgiveness as an agentic alternative that equips them with tools to articulate their dissent.

Unforgiveness as I am proposing it is a teachable strategy where the survivors who cannot forgive can speak from their specific locality and situatedness. By speaking up, those who cannot forgive enter the political scenario assuming the risks of contravening what is a communal sentiment towards forgiveness but demanding that overcoming strife not occur over and against those who cannot forgive. Rather than hoping for a utopian future that is yet to come, the unforgiving subject is aware of her stance and the distance between her needs and the needs of the majority, as well as of the consequences that forgiving will possibly have for her and her community. From that self-awareness, the survivor demands the opening of the space for those who, while disagreeing or being unable to forgive, still belong to the polity and should be integrated into the political realm. As such, unforgiveness dissents from the general sentiment that sees forgiveness as the only way forward and articulates an alternative path, which, rather than hindering the possibilities of reconciliation, strengthens the political space by opening it up to those initially excluded. Moreover, by addressing the plight of those who cannot forgive, unforgiveness becomes the space for those who do not see themselves represented in the *status quo* and are morally compelled to stand up and demand their inclusion.

Anchoring unforgiveness in the strategic deployment of a moral sentiment when the survivor does not feel sufficiently recognized by a State that failed to protect her could become a kernel through which alternative narratives of survivorhood, identity, and dissent are articulated, concomitant with and sometimes in opposition to hegemonic discourses of forgiveness. If the wound that has not healed is deployed through principled dissent as a strategic articulation that calls attention to the erasure of those who cannot forgive, a space of contestation that broadens the political spectrum could emerge. Such a site of contestation could become the axis that challenges and revises the horizons of forgiveness, as well as the outcome of the process of forgiving that benefits not only those who cannot forgive, but also the community as a whole and the process of conciliation by bringing even those who disagree to the conversation.

If the space and practice of unforgiveness occur through principled dissent, a morally grounded vector of emancipation could emerge. Survivors hitherto excluded and neglected, could "become independent and autonomous... able to think for themselves, to make their own judgments



and draw their own conclusions" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 25) in relation not only to their wounded present but also to the past and the way in which the articulation of those two could point towards richer futures. Unforgiveness explored as a type of critical emancipation (Gur Ze'ev, 2001; McLaren, 2002; Biesta, 1998, 2005) could become a space to challenge structures of power, and hierarchies between those who are supposed to know and those who are supposed to obey. If unforgiveness is articulated through a critically emancipatory stance that assumes equality, not as an end or the conclusion of the shaping of unruly souls, but as a default from which emancipation is to occur (Rancière, 1991), we can begin to see the agentic potential of unforgiveness. So, if we argue that unforgiveness borrows from Rancière's (1999) understanding of equality understood as an "open set of practices driven by the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being and by the concern to test this equality" (p. 30), we could see the agentic, emancipatory features of unforgiveness. So those facilitating unforgiveness, rather than talking down from the position of the one who knows, recognizes that those who are trying to articulate spaces of unforgiveness have already had a powerful moment of self-awareness that brought them to this point. Moreover, it was precisely in those powerful moments of self-awareness where they have recognized their stances about their wounds and the way in which that uneasiness would place them at odds with the demands to forgive. So, they chose to pay the price of *maladjustment*, rather than abandoning their moral sentiments, and sought the spaces to articulate their dissent.

## Unforgiveness as Disagreement

Unforgiveness is understood here as a moral, rational, legitimate response to harm and wrongdoing that seeks ways to articulate and integrate those who have been harmed into the political space in ways that afford them dignity and equality. Anchored in an understanding of dissent as a vital concept in moral education (McDonough, 2010), unforgiveness seeks to ground its stance on the contestation of disagreements that are anchored in fundamental moral tenets of the survivors who cannot forgive. This allows richer, more inclusive and diverse alternatives to emerge.

However, unlike the critically empowering, morally grounded understanding of unforgiveness that has been advocated above, the current research on forgiveness understands unforgiveness as correlated with higher degrees of psychopathology (Mauger, Perry, Freeman, & Grove, 1992; Maltby, Macaskill, & Day, 2001; Worthington, Mazzeo, & Klewer, 2002). Failure to forgive oneself has been connected to more intra-punitive pathologies, such as anxiety and depression, while failure to forgive others has been associated with extra-punitive pathologies, such as social alienation, social introversion, depression, and psychosis (Macaskill, Maltby, and Day, 2001). Unforgiveness is also understood to be a part of a person's internalized negative affect, and it may become detrimental both by causing addictive behaviours and by being a result of such addictive behaviours (Worthington, et al., 2002).

Along the lines of unforgiveness, trait vengefulness (or the tendency to be unforgiving) is associated with an increase in maladaptive, avoidance-based relationship behaviours (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough, & Bono, 2004). In other words, the general conclusions from forgiveness research are that unforgiveness, or failing to forgive, have pernicious consequences both at the individual and communitarian level, which go from depression, anxiety, and psychosis, to name only a few.

However, there is a body of literature slowly emerging that points out that the refusal to forgive is a moral, cognitive stance. This cognitive stance, unlike most understandings of not forgiving, does not have adverse health consequences for those who either refuse or are unable to forgive (Stackhouse, Ross & Boon, 2016). The importance of unforgiveness as a cognitive moral stance, without the pernicious consequences of what has been referred to as unforgiving, stands in direct contrast to most of the literature, which understands unforgiveness more as a disease, or a pathology (Stackhouse, et al., 2016).

If we recognize that the pragmatic benefits that have been linked with forgiving may not necessarily follow, and ground unforgiveness as an agent-driven stance where the survivors own their destinies, the current understanding of forgiveness will necessarily shift. In other words, if unforgiveness is understood as an agentic decision made by the individual, a conscious moral stance where the survivor chooses not to forgive, then the widely held belief that understands unforgiveness as an affliction or an ailment can and should be contested (Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). As such, this might be an opportunity to move beyond the association of Stackhouse, et al.'s (2016) findings when they argue about the causal association that presupposes that ruminative types of unforgiveness entail the negative affect of the transgression. But if those negative affects are curtailed and addressed properly, the health benefits that have been attributed to forgiveness, namely stress and anger reduction, (Seawell, Toussaint, & Cheadle, 2014; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001; Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007; Harris & Thoresen, 2005) can also be enjoyed by those who are unable to forgive. Thus, if the benefits that the research adjudicates to forgiving can also be obtained through the management of the emotions, then the pragmatics of forgiveness lose the main argument about the benefits of forgiving.

If educators continue teaching that there are no alternatives to managed dissent or effective ways to articulate the moral response that negative emotions enunciate, we will be doing a disservice, not only to education, but also to people's ability to deal with their past as well as their roles in enunciating their social and political stances in paternalistic political systems (Giroux, 1997, 2000, 2003; Kohl, 1994). If, on the other hand, we could recognize their refusal to forgive in all its moral significance and teach them to articulate their dissent in agentic ways that encourage them as individuals and citizens with voices worth hearing, creative possibilities can emerge. If the dissent of those who cannot forgive is articulated through principled disagreement, their articulation of unforgiveness will open the political space as a site for contestation, rather than a preconceived deliberative stance that is anchored in an unequal distribution of power that weighs in the silence of some to the detriment of others.

## **Unforgiveness as Principled Dissent**

In an epoch in which Schmitt's (1932/2008) articulation of the political as a division between friend and enemy seems to have taken hold of the political spectrum yet again, there is paramount value on the principled dissent that anchors unforgiveness. There is a value on disagreeing with the imposition that the social milieu weighs in on people, particularly when those impositions stand in direct opposition to one's principles, even if those social impositions are for one's own good and the good of one's community. Before being socially and politically articulated, unforgiveness manifests through a discomfort, an inability to go along with the calls to forgive, or what Kohl (1994) refers to as the "unavoidable challenges to her or his personal family loyalties, integrity and identity" (p. 6) that a survivor faces. The uneasiness of the wounded person who

cannot forgive is, however, articulated through a dissent that is other than the mere refusal to forgive. For unforgiveness is not simply the stance of someone who is ostracized in her pain and who enters into dynamics of rancorous contestation and conflict. The articulation of that dissent, the passage from the intimate and private to the public and contested, is constituted through an exercise of principled dissent that recognizes the locality and prescience of the wound, seeks to articulate spaces that are neither forgiveness nor vengeance, whereby those who cannot forgive can also coalesce and articulate their social and political demands.

There is an agentic value that needs to be understood and acknowledged by those who recognize that their relation to their wound is different from the one that is articulated by those who advocate for forgiveness. As such, there should be a space through which they can intervene in the political, demand to be heard, and influence the political realm without being cast as opposite to and enemies of, for such binaries only reinforce the Schmittian binaries of reducing rather than fostering the political as a space of deliberative contestation.

Although the difference between the space of contestation and argumentation seems tenuous, it is important to notice, following Phillips (2015), that the space of contestation, unlike the space for argumentation, allows for new and disruptive discourses to emerge in a more irreverent creative fashion. The space of contestation that Phillips devises expands Foucault's idea (1972) of "spaces of dissent" (p. 152), where he understands dissent as more than mere disagreements between parties that ultimately will converse and resolve their differences. To articulate the space of unforgiveness, along the lines of spaces of dissent, it needs to be acknowledged that those who recognize themselves as unable to forgive position themselves as other than, different from those who are able and willing to forgive and / or those who seek any type of retaliation (Phillips, 2015). Moreover, that caesura, that space created between the survivors who can and will possibly forgive and those who are looking for alternatives to forgiveness, constitutes a space of contestation about the way in which overcoming strife will be articulated. Those who enunciate their inability to forgive also articulate their differences from those who can forgive, and through that caesura, they constitute themselves as not being among those with the political position of being ready and able to move on. However, they also constitute themselves as moral and political subjects who recognize and voice their needs in ways that differ and contravene the demands to move on that substantiate the demands for forgiveness. Through the enunciation and the demand for a space in which their demands can be articulated in ways that do not entail erasure and/or oblivion, they intervene in the realm of the political and challenge the univocal discourse that tries to articulate forgiveness as the only way forward.

The moral articulation of the dissent of those who cannot forgive is not merely the enactment of their wounds. It is also the constitution of a particular node of coalescence that brings them together and makes them into politically distinct subjects in a way that they were not before their public articulation of dissent and before their seizing of the political spectrum to address their moral demands about forgiveness. Moreover, if unforgiveness allows a process of subjectification that articulates the stance of those who cannot forgive and who were erased from the political spectrum, such principled disagreement will articulate an agonistic understanding of the engagement that sees "[t]he essence of politics resid[ing] in the modes of dissensual subjectification that reveal a society in its difference to itself" (Ranciere, 2010, p. 42). Such principled articulation of difference, the moral uttering of a stance that differs from the impressions and/or the wishes of the religious or political majority that advocates for forgiveness, will

necessarily broaden the space of engagement, since it will challenge the consensus of those who speak on behalf and for the betterment of the community.

At this point, it is important to note the similarities that exist between the articulations of unforgiveness sketched above and what authors like Foster (2007) denominate as ethical resistance, which is understood as “tak[ing] a high stakes stance, one that may cost in terms of status and reputation, but which gives us the inner freedom to act consistently on the basis of one’s conscience” (p. 20). So ethical resistance, like unforgiveness, is constituted by a stance of principled dissent where the survivors come out even against the powers that be at their own risk and dissent from the general population’s opinion. Like unforgiveness, ethical resistance is more than the rational criticism levied against that which one opposes. It presupposes as untenable the present or future envisaged by the general populace and, from a principled moral position, opens up a space of contestation, for as Foster argues “[e]thical resistance preserves one’s own integrity as premised on conscience that animates the rational, action being” (p. 20).

Although it could be argued that there is a prevalence of the political over the pedagogical in the space of unforgiveness that is articulated through principled dissent, the intention is to constitute alternative spaces of emancipation that are fundamentally political, à la Rancière, rather than psychologically emancipatory, such as Freire's (2018). For as Bingham argued (2010) the difference between the two emancipatory models is that, while the subject of the emancipation accomplished through the Freirean model is fundamentally psychological, Rancière's type of emancipation is decidedly political. As such, considering that the issue of the injunction to forgive (Gudan, 2006) is a moral and psychological issue with profound political consequences, it is imperative that we anchor the type of emancipation that we are seeking to deploy through principled dissent, in a Rancièrian type of emancipation as Bingham argued (2010).

The broadening of the political space, the inclusion of those hitherto excluded in the name of a better future, and the full consideration of their inability to forgive through their integration into the conversation about the social and individual future will be proclaimed through an active enactment of political argumentation. Such active enactment of the political argumentation occurs via the challenging of the common understandings that each side has of forgiveness as well as the requirements that such forgiveness will entail, especially from the perspective of those who cannot forgive.

The space of dissensus, the moral articulation of a disagreement that is anchored in principled dissent, constitutes the political emergence of a vague political subject that was not there before the announcement of unforgiveness. For while there might have been assumptions, hints and/or voices about the dangers of the path towards reconciliation and the consequences of an unfulfilled justice, the intelligibility of the position of the other remains an imaginative exercise, rather than a politically present one. However, the articulation of unforgiveness as an agentic, politically empowering stance will eventually constitute a *heterotopical* space (Foucault, 1998, p. 176). This space is other than the utopic space of a community that has moved beyond conflict or the dystopia of an endless conflict that is fueled by the vindictiveness of those who cannot forgive.

The heterotopical space of unforgiveness that is neither forgiveness nor vengeance is “utterly different from all the emplacements that they reflect or refer to” (Foucault, 1998, p. 178) and constitutes itself into an articulation of the needs, fears, and concerns of the survivors who

cannot forgive. In the case of unforgiveness, one could not talk of either a heterotopia of accumulation or of heterotopias of time among others. However, since heterotopias are "a kind of contestation both mythical and real of the space in which we live" (Foucault, 1998, p. 179), there is a sense in which we could talk about a heterotopia of affect since the space that is being articulated tries to manage the moral and affective stances of those who cannot forgive.

The emergence of a heterotopical space of unforgiveness manages to challenge the real politics of those for whom it is either forgiveness or mayhem (Tutu, 1999) as well as those who only see a Calliclean (Plato, 2018) or Thrasymachian (Plato, 2016) understanding of justice as the only way out of a conflict. As such, the heterotopical space of unforgiveness as it has been hinted at here could become a materiality that seeks to challenge the present of the survivors who cannot forgive, aiming at a utopian future that is grounded on a present that contests their oblivion and the injunction to forgive as the only alternatives to survivorhood.

## Recognizing Unforgiveness

The constitutive characteristics of unforgiveness as an organic space assembled for and by the survivors is their resistance against the injunction to forgive. That resistance is paired with their poietic stance that seeks to create heterotopical spaces that can articulate distinctive perspectives to the dyad of either vengeance or forgiveness as well as transversal frames of reference that challenge the simplistic top-down or bottom-up approaches that stultify the emergence of dissonant alternatives to the plight of those who cannot forgive.

Traditionally resistance and disobedience have been understood as a sign of maladjusted individuals who have not fully comprehended or integrated to the demands that society places on them and as such signs of disobedience and resistance are often met with disciplinary measures. However, emerging research in moral education (Callan, 1997; McDonough, 2010, 2012; Leighteizer, 2006) is recognizing the role that resistance and dissent have not only in the life of the dissenter but also in their communities. In the specific case of the people who either refuse or are not able to forgive, there is a value on refusing to move on from the situatedness of their wounds and disobeying the demands of those who, without recognizing the wounds of the survivors, impose their agendas on their lives. Those who cannot forgive through the "creative maladjustment" (Kohl, 1994, p. 130) of their inability to forgive, create a parrhesiastic (Foucault, 2001) stance against the imperative to forgive carrying out Ranciere's (2010) dictum, according to which "...the essential work of politics is the configuration of its own space. It is to make the world of its subjects and its operations seen. The essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus as the presence of two worlds in one" (p. 37). The articulation of their perspective, the heterotopia (Foucault, 1998) that is uttered by their contestation of the narratives of forgiveness, *de facto* opens a space where there was none, creating dissensus where there were only majoritarian voices speaking in favour of leaving their wounded pasts behind.

This heterotopical space (Foucault, 1998) articulated through the principled dissent and resistance of those who cannot forgive will start as an incomprehensible site of contestation. The process of recognition of a political agent goes through the inability to understand what the one with whom one disagrees is trying to articulate. The voices of those who cannot forgive constitute both the subject and the space that are enacted and made intelligible in a way that was not there before the emergence of unforgiveness.

Although the heterotopical (Foucault, 1998) space of unforgiveness is somewhat structured above, it is imperative that it be practiced outside the *arboreal* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1998, p. 8), hierarchical structures of power; otherwise, the space of unforgiveness will become a coded, prescriptive, pyramidal space based on rules, obedience, and compliance. For as Wallin (2013) argued when exploring Guattari's (2015) concept of *transversality* (p. 112), there is a sense in which "insofar as education is organized under an institutional superego, the potential for student autonomy and autonomous manifestations within the schools would be functionally crippled" (p. 39). If the space of unforgiveness becomes such a deeply structured space, the agentic, emancipatory possibilities of principled dissent will lose its possibilities. In its place, a series of prescriptive steps to manage people and their emotions will emerge, preventing the alternatives to forgiveness to be creative and organic.

While it has been noted above that the heterotopical (Foucault, 1998) space is not necessarily a conventional classroom, since it can be deployed in non-traditional classroom settings, there is a sense in which an institutional superego could also emerge in non-traditional pedagogic spaces with equally pernicious consequences. As such, instead of presupposing models that are imposed from the top down, in what Kreisberg (1992) referred as "power over" (p. 70), the alternatives to the injunction to forgive (Hampton, 1998) should be thought of as an implementation of "power with" (Kreisberg, 1992 p. 70).

*Power with* is understood as a stance through which those who cannot forgive articulate their dissent and seek strategies to reconstitute a political space in ways that are inclusive and equitable. The most appropriate tool to challenge the sedimentations of power that could emerge with the solidification of the space of unforgiveness will be

"transversality [since, it] is a dimension that strives to overcome two impasses; that of pure verticality and a simple horizontality. Transversality tends to be realized when maximum communication is brought about between different levels and above all in terms of different directions." (Guattari, 1972, 2003, p. 63)

Unforgiveness challenges the oppositional stance of either vertical exercises of power or sheer horizontality, which can also cripple the self-constitution of the group through indecision and uncertainty. The transversal model challenges the unyielding solidifications of power so that as Aoki (2005, cited by Wallin, 2013) argued when referring to transversality, "pedagogy pertains more to the formation and conceptualization of assemblages as it does the orthodox scene of student-teacher transference" (p. 36). As such, if we were to articulate the pedagogy of unforgiveness closer to an organic, unprescribed, creative space that articulates dissent outside the sedimentations of traditional pedagogic places that Aoki (2005) sought to challenge, we could deploy alternatives through which agency and freedom could emerge.

The heterotopical (Foucault, 1998) space of unforgiveness that is anchored and substantiated in principled dissent, rather than articulating what Kant (1900) referred to as the pedagogical paradox, is understood as this: "How do I cultivate freedom through coercion?" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010 p. 28), which will seek to cultivate freedom through a transversal (Guattari, 1972, 2003) articulation of difference that manages to prevent coercion *per se*. The heterotopical space, while attentive of how different perspectives coalesce into the constitution of

a pedagogical space, keeps distance and constitutes itself as other than both forgiveness and vengeance, while still being determined by them.

To summarize, the space for unforgiveness is a space of dissent and resistance whereby the survivors can articulate their objections, demand their voices be heard, and ask for social and political policies that address them as political subjects. Failing to listen and address their concerns while asking them to forgive will hinder some of the features of what Young (1990) defined as the enabling conceptions of justice that open the way for processes of revictimization in the name of forgiveness. Young's (1990) enabling conceptions of justice include "not only distribution but also, the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation" (p. 39).

Failing to listen and address the concerns of the survivors who cannot forgive will further revictimize them and ostracize them from the political space of conciliation, opening the space for possible articulations of violence in the name of vengeance. The worthiest of reconciliation is oppressive if it fails to integrate principles of social justice "affirming . . . human agency and human capacities working collaboratively to create change" (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007, p. 2), thereby limiting the possibilities of a better society.

Unforgiveness requires the recognition that there is more than one way to move beyond survivorhood and pain. An openness to the possibility that while the survivors could not choose what happened to them, at least they can choose how to deal with the consequences in ways that are agentic, empowering and community-building beyond the immediacy of their victimhood.

Unforgiveness requires that the survivors who do not feel that forgiveness is an alternative for them be granted the opportunity to articulate such disagreement and to constitute themselves as political subjects who, from that moral stance, work through their negative emotions looking for alternatives that, within the limits of civility, constitute that space that is neither forgiveness nor vengeance. This space recognizes that there is a role and a function that negative emotions play in the life of such survivors and, rather than neglecting and pathologizing them, integrates them to the legitimate array of responses that a survivor experiences, so that they are not further re-victimized for not being able to forgive.

Along the same lines of the recognition of not forgiving as a legitimate response to harm and wrong-doing, there are positive features that emerge from the recognition of the survivors' standing up for their principles and paying the price for dissenting from the opinion of the majority. There are agentic, moral features that emerge from the survivors' exercise of free speech that, along with the recognition of the role and value of negative emotions, makes principled disagreement a moral stance that should be strengthened. There is a price of social isolation and neglect that is paid by the those who refuse to go along the positions of the majority, and that hefty price should be recognized in all its dimensions. This is imperative, particularly when it is none other than the survivors who speak up and stand up through their principled disagreement about how the silent majorities revictimize them.

If we were to go back to the initial examples of Bryan Mpaphela and the poet Zbigniew Herbert and think of unforgiveness as an alternative to their plight, one of the first requirements will be to recognize that each one of them comes from a specific moral stance that sees the demands

of forgiveness as too onerous, fundamentally impractical in the midst of their experience of the conflict, or simply immoral. Irrespective of the naming of the stance, the basis of their position entails that forgiveness is simply not an option within the particularities of their experience.

If we consider the possibility that Mpaphela and Herbert could have explored an alternative such as unforgiveness that addressed their inability to forgive while at the same time providing them with agentic tools to open the space of political participation and challenge the hegemonic discourse of forgiveness, this could open the heterotopical space of unforgiveness in a way that is not only inclusive and agentic, but also affords the survivors alternatives beyond the governmentality of forgiveness. If we are able move the survivors beyond their legitimate recognition of their inability to forgive toward more propositive stances that seek to alter the space of the political, we could strengthen the space of the political by including those who hitherto have been excluded. In other words, rather than the stultification of the survivors who cannot forgive, unforgiveness seeks to provide alternatives for their emancipation that recognize not only their emotive stance, but also the need to move beyond their current plight.



## References

- Adams, M., Bell, L. A., Griffin, P. (2007). *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge
- Bash, A. (2007). *Forgiveness and Christian ethics* (Vol. 30). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Bingham, C. (2010). Under the name of method: On Jacques Rancière's presumptive tautology. In C. Ruitenberg (Ed.), *What do philosophers of education do?* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bingham, C., & Biesta, G. (2010). Jacques Rancière: education, truth, emancipation. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Biesta, G. J. (1998). Deconstruction, justice and the question of education. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 1(3), 395-411.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. London, UK verso.
- Callan, E. (1997). *Creating citizens: Political education and liberal democracy*. New York, NY: Clarendon Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1988). *Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (2001). *On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Enright, R. D., & the Human Development Study Group. (1991). The moral development of forgiveness. In W. Kurtines & J. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Handbook of moral behavior and development*, Vol. 1 (pp. 123-152). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Enright, R. D., & North, J. E. (1998). *Exploring forgiveness*. Wisconsin, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Foucault, M. (1998). Different spaces. In Faubion, J. D. (ed.) *Aesthetics, method, and epistemology: essential works of Foucault, Volume 2* (pp. 175–185). London, UK: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (2001). *Fearless speech*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*: Michel Foucault. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foster, C. R. (2007). Toward a Pedagogy of Dialogical Resistance. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 16(2), 15-33.
- Freire, P., Ramos, M. B., Macedo, D., & Shor, I. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed 50th anniversary edition*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

- Giroux, H. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture and schooling, A critical reader*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.
- Giroux, H. (2000). *Stealing innocence: Corporate culture's war on children*, London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Giroux, H. A. (2003). Public pedagogy and the politics of resistance: Notes on a critical theory of educational struggle. *Educational philosophy and theory*, 35(1), 5-16.
- Guattari, F., Deleuze, G., & Hodges, A. (2015). *Psychoanalysis and transversality: Texts and interviews 1955-1971*. Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Gudan, E. (2006). Beyond extrinsic forgiveness: Recognizing the dignity of the offender. *Catholic Social Science Review*, 11, 183-193.
- Gur-Ze'ev, I. (2001). Philosophy of peace education in a postmodern era. *Educational theory*, 51(3), 315-336.
- Harris, A. H., & Thoresen, C. E. (2005). Forgiveness, unforgiveness, health, and disease. *Handbook of forgiveness*, 321-334.
- Kant, I., (1900) *On Education*, Boston, USA D.C. Heath & Co Publishers.
- Kohl, H. R. (1994). *I won't learn from you: The role of assent in learning*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Kreisberg, S. (1992). *Transforming power: Domination, empowerment, and education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press
- Leighteizer, V. K. (2006). Resistance Reconceptualized. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 15(2), 27-35.
- Maltby, J., Macaskill, A., & Day, L. (2001). Failure to forgive self and others: A replication and extension of the relationship between forgiveness, personality, social desirability and general health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30(5), 881-885.
- Maslak, M. A. (Ed.). (2008). *The structure and agency of women's education*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.
- Mauger, P. A., Perry, J. E., Freeman, T., & Grove, D. C. (1992). The measurement of forgiveness: Preliminary research. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*. 11(2), 170-180.
- McCullough, M. E., Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Rachal, K. C. (1997). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(2), 321-336.
- McCullough, M. E., & Bono, G. (2004). *How rumination deters forgiveness: Two longitudinal studies*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Miami.

- McDonough, G. P. (2010). Why dissent is a vital concept in moral education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 39(4), 421-436.
- McDonough, G. P. (2012). Beyond obedience and abandonment: Toward a theory of dissent in Catholic education. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.
- McLaren, P. (2002). White terror and oppositional agency: Towards a critical multiculturalism. In *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture* (pp. 131-158). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Michnik, A., & Havel, V. (1993). Confronting the Past: Justice or Revenge? *Journal of Democracy*, 4(1), 20-27.
- Murphy, J. G., & Hampton, J. (1998). *Forgiveness and mercy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Phillips, K. R. (2015). The event of dissension: Reconsidering the possibilities of dissent. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 101(1), 60-71.
- Plato, Bloom, A., & Kirsch, A. (2016). *The Republic of Plato*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Platon, & Canto-Sperber, M. (2018). *Gorgias*. Paris, France: Flammarion.
- Rancière, J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster (Vol. 1)*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Rancière, J. (1999). *Disagreement: Politics and philosophy*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rancière, J. (2010). *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Sarat, A. (2005) Terrorism, dissent and repression: an introduction, In A. Sarat (Ed.), *Dissent in dangerous times* (pp. 1-19), Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Seawell, A. H., Toussaint, L. L., & Cheadle, A. C. (2014). Prospective associations between unforgiveness and physical health and positive mediating mechanisms in a nationally representative sample of older adults. *Psychology & Health*, 29, 375–389.
- Schmitt, C. (2008). *The concept of the political: Expanded edition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Stackhouse, M. R., Ross, R. J., & Boon, S. D. (2016). The devil in the details: Individual differences in unforgiveness and health correlates. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 94, 337-341.
- Thompson, L. Y., Snyder, C. R., Hoffman, L., Michael, S. T., Rasmussen, H. N., Billings, L. S., et al. (2005). Dispositional forgiveness of self, others, and situations. *Journal of personality*, 73(2), 313-360.
- Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. New York, NY: Random House

- Verdoolaege, A. (2006). Managing reconciliation at the human rights violations' hearings of the South African TRC. *Journal of Human Rights*, 5(1), 61-80.
- Wallin, J. (2013). Get out from behind the lectern. In *Cartographies of becoming in education* (pp. 35-52). Rotterdam, NL: Sense Publishers.
- Witvliet, C. v. O., Ludwig, T. E., & Vander Laan, K. L. (2001). Granting forgiveness or harboring grudges: Implications for emotion, physiology, and health. *Psychological Science*, 121, 117-123.
- Worthington, E. L., Witvliet, C. V. O., Pietrini, P., & Miller, A. J. (2007). Forgiveness, health, and well-being: A review of evidence for emotional versus decisional forgiveness, dispositional forgivingness, and reduced unforgiveness. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 30(4), 291-302.
- Worthington, E. L., Jr., Mazzeo, S. E., & Klewer, W. L. (2002). Addictive and eating disorders, unforgiveness, and forgiveness. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 21(3), 257-261.
- Worthington, E. L., & Scherer, M. (2004). Forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping strategy that can reduce health risks and promote health resilience: *Theory, review, and hypotheses*. *Psychology & Health*, 19(3), 385-405.
- Worthington, E. L. (2005). *Handbook of forgiveness*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zechmeister, J. S., & Romero, C. (2002). Victim and offender accounts of interpersonal conflict: autobiographical narratives of forgiveness and unforgiveness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 82(4), 675.