

First We Stopped Throwing Stones:
Post-Genocide Rwanda and a Political Theory of Forgiveness

by

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Class of 2014

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in Government

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Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the patience and rigor of Professor Chakravarti, who first inspired me to imagine better political worlds four years ago. Professors Kleinberg and Plass and everyone at the Center for the Humanities challenged me to read theory closely. Arnold Davidson encouraged me to scrutinize Derrida. The wonderful Dan Lumonya, Issa, the SIT Rwanda staff, and my Rwandan host family made my research possible. Isaac Mugabe, Chaste Uwihoreye, and Ganza Gahizi were unbelievably generous in connecting me to interview subjects and translating conversations. Marie Valdez and Renée Dunn provided indispensable editing. My parents and family, Rwandan classmates and housemates, Emily Eyestone and Blacksburg friends, and Wesleyan friends and roommates gave invaluable moral support. The women and men who shared their experiences and intimate emotions with me in interviews inspired me to do their stories justice.

This project is dedicated to the people of Rwanda. Twenty years after the genocide, they show incredible strength in seeking and granting forgiveness, the most courageous kind of human love.

“First, we stopped throwing stones. Then we started saying hello to each other. Then we started sitting together, and that is the time that we started forgiving.”

– Member of Ubutwari Bwo Kubaho Women’s Cooperative

Chapter One

The Rwandan Genocide and Theories of Forgiveness

Historical Background: Rwanda's Genocide and Reconciliation

History of Conflict and Restoration

In Rwanda in 1994, decades of political and ethnic manipulation by Belgian colonial forces, turmoil in national and regional politics, and socio-economic narratives of fear and exclusion cumulated in genocide. During a period of one hundred violent days from April to July, between eight hundred thousand and a million died. Most of the victims belonged to the Tutsi minority group or were moderate Hutus, and most of the killers were Hutu. The Hutu-led government planned the genocide, buying weapons and distributing propaganda vilifying the invading Tutsi rebels, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). The United States and other world leaders evacuated their expatriates from the imploding country and ignored the United Nations commander's pleas for humanitarian reinforcement.

The Rwandan genocide is unique among other violent conflicts of the twentieth century because of its high death toll over a short period of time; its homogenous, integrated population; and its mass implementation. Pastors killed members of their congregation; neighbors killed neighbors; husbands killed wives. Physical and emotional scars, social distrust, overt and underlying political-social ethnic identities, and restricted political discourse all complicate the process of reconciliation. Generations-long memories of conflicted ethnic-political identities are wound up in colonist and native histories of oppression.¹ These unique circumstances

¹ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 548.

also made for a unique process of reconciliation and reconstruction once stability was established. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the party that evolved from the army of Tutsi refugees who toppled the genocidal government, gained control during the tumultuous transitional period. A 2003 constitution and decentralization reforms have arguably increased international perceptions of democratization. However, national restrictions on free speech and Rwanda's reported involvement with rebel groups in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) compromise aid and foreign policy relationships. The current RPF-led Rwandan Government of National Unity focuses on economic development and bases its reconciliation policies on a platform of a united "one Rwandan" identity. It seeks to achieve unity and reconciliation by ending the culture of impunity through "homegrown initiatives" like the gacaca community genocide courts.

Reconciliation in Rwanda after the genocide has undergone several phases. After the chaos and mass exodus immediately following the genocide, the RPF established a provisional government and eventually built infrastructure, beginning a period of renewed security. It next focused on refugee repatriation, reorganization of the government, and economic development. The trial and reintegration of genocide perpetrators and the growth of state legitimacy characterized the period from 2001-2012. The current era is marked by rapid economic growth, investment, and infrastructure, with an attempt by the government to replace the image of Rwanda as a charity case with one that of an East African rising star. The country has, at least by official reports, evaded the danger of retributive violence or genocidal aftershocks. Today Rwanda is arguably past the period of negative peace (an unstable state

marked by the absence of war or violence). Its post-genocide reconciliation now concerns building positive peace (the presence of civil rights and stable institutions to prevent future violence). Notably, however, the conflict still resonates regionally; Hutu rebel militias cite grievances in the DRC and frustrated refugees are yet to be repatriated throughout the region.

Transitional Justice

Rwanda's process of transitional justice has been dominated by a two-pronged system. The first step was retributive international justice for the higher-up génocidaires (perpetrators) – the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). The second was community gacaca courts for common offenders. Although the decimated national judicial system sentenced thousands of suspects to prison or death, its judges and prisons were incapable of holding and processing the suspects who languished in makeshift jails. Adapted from pre-colonial Rwandan “grass courts” used to resolve small conflicts in the community, local gacaca courts held open-air procedurals in every village in Rwanda beginning in 2004. They focused on “prosecuting and trying the perpetrators of the crime of genocide and other crimes against humanity, committed between October 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994.”² In 1997, one hundred twenty thousand people were imprisoned for genocide crimes.³ A 2003 presidential pardon of thousands relieved crowded prisons and gridlocked

² Republic of Rwanda, "Organic Law No 28/3006 of 27/06/2006, Modifying and Complementing Organic Law No.16/2004 of 19/06/2004 Establishing the Organisation, Competence and Functioning of Gacaca Courts Charged with Prosecuting and Trying the Perpetrators of the Crime of Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity, Committed between October 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994," Republic of Rwanda, <http://www.inkiko-gacaca.gov.rw/pdf/Organic%20Law%2027062006.pdf>. Accessed June 1, 2012.

³ Mark R. Amstutz, "Is Reconciliation Possible after Genocide?: The Case of Rwanda," *Journal of Church and State* 48, no. 3 (2006): 552.

national courts. The gacaca courts processed nearly one million cases, relying on witness testimony and plea-bargaining to reintegrate the accused into their communities.⁴ Gacaca conviction proceedings ended in the summer of 2012.

Because it included both trial and testimony elements, gacaca was part war crime tribunal, part truth commission.⁵ It combined retributive justice (widely understood as righting wrongs by punishing the offender and/or providing reparations to the victim) and restorative justice (defined by most scholars as finding a common understanding of the crime committed, allowing for participation by both the offender and the offended, and repairing relationships). As retributive justice, the courts sent convicts to national courts or prisons, or reduced sentences through the *Travailleur d'Intérêt Generale* (TIG) community service program, in which prisoners live in camps and perform public works for development projects such as building houses for survivors. After serving their sentences, convicts often return to their home villages to live near their victims' family members.

Gacaca included restorative elements such as the involvement of the community through the *inyangamugayo* jury (comprised of respected members of the community), the mandatory attendance of the whole village, and the opportunity for anyone from the community to testify. Restorative justice can offer a middle ground between the traditional dialectic of justice and peace, breaking the false dichotomy between punishing and reconciling. Because the pre-colonial courts prioritized forgiveness, truth telling, and reparations, their modern iterations also emphasized

⁴ Phil Clark and Zachary Kaufman, "Rwanda: Recent History (2014)," in *Africa South of the Sahara 2014*, ed. Iain Frame, *Europa Regional Surveys of the World* (London: Routledge, 2013), 985.

⁵ Phil Clark, *The Rules (and Politics) of Engagement: The Gacaca Courts and Post-Genocide Justice, Healing and Reconciliation in Rwanda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 303.

bringing people together.⁶ Although the gacaca law makes no mention of forgiveness, only emphasizing the plea-bargaining system and confessions, many survivors cite a Christian duty to forgive in gacaca.⁷ The courts' many critics (mostly Western scholars and human rights organizations) have cited corruption, "victor's justice" of a Tutsi-dominated state, false confessions under the plea-bargaining system, and the impossibility of community rehabilitation after the refugee crisis that resettled citizens in new towns. However, despite many setbacks and controversies, the gacaca courts have been largely successful in reintegrating masses of perpetrators.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda supplemented gacaca's grassroots, "homegrown" approach with purely retributive, internationally enforced trials of the genocidal regime's higher-ups. Operating from 1995 to 2012 in Arusha, Tanzania (against Rwanda's UN vote that it be held in-country), the court was criticized for being too far removed from Rwandans and for being an apologetic effort by the guilt-ridden international community to make up for its inaction during the genocide.⁸ Two decades and over two billion dollars later, the court has processed just over one hundred of the masterminds and worst perpetrators of the genocide. The court established multiple precedents for war crimes tribunals and international law, including the first genocide conviction and the definition of rape as a weapon of war.⁹ Importantly, the ICTR also set the precedent for calling the

⁶ Solomon Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷ Phil Clark, "The Rules (and Politics) of Engagement: The *Gacaca* Courts and Post-Genocide Justice, Healing and Reconciliation in Rwanda," in *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, ed. Phil Clark and Zachary Kaufman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 306.

⁸ Eugenia Zorbas, "Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *African Journal of Legal Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 34.

⁹ Clark and Kaufman, "Rwanda: Recent History (2014)," 984.

conflict “the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi” rather than the “Rwandan genocide,” which helped oversimplify and ethnicize the national narrative of the genocide to depict Tutsis as the only victims and Hutus as the only perpetrators.¹⁰ This official, instrumentalist version of events is important because even if Hutus are not equated with the perpetrators, these accounts depict them as easily manipulated. If the cause of the genocide actually was the masses’ easily controlled ethnic sentiment, this official account gives little agency to the people to prevent such an event from happening in the future.¹¹

The ICTR lacks relevance for most Rwandans, and my interviewees did not mention it at all, nor did the court’s distant proceedings come up in my many conversations about reconciliation with Rwandans over several months in the country. Thus, I will not focus on the court in my analysis because this project focuses on Rwandans’ processes of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Government Reconciliation Programs

Aside from processes of transitional justice, the Rwandan government also put in place two major bodies to bring about reconciliation, and has incorporated the goal of reconciliation into its mission and agencies. The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) was created by Law No. 03/99 of 12 March 1999 “with the aim of eradicating the devastating consequences of the policies of discrimination and exclusion that had characterized the successive repressive regimes

¹⁰ Kaley Nash, "A Comparative Analysis of Justice in Post-Genocidal Rwanda: Fostering a Sense of Peace and Reconciliation?," *Africana* 1, no. 1 (2007): 78.

¹¹ Scott Straus, "Origins and Aftermaths: The Dynamics of Genocide in Rwanda and Their Post-Crime Implications," in *After Mass Crime: Rebuilding States and Communities*, ed. Béatrice Pouligny, Simon Chesterman, and Albrecht Schnabel (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007), 125.

of Rwanda.”¹² The NURC as a government agency officially politicized the reconciliation process by institutionalizing the message and mission of reconciliation.¹³ This agency organizes *ingandos* (six-week long desensitization camps for demobilized soldiers, former genocide perpetrators, and released prisoners) and repatriates refugees from the surrounding countries, mostly Hutus still evading what they see as a Tutsi tyranny. Demobilization centers dot the border of Rwanda, teaching returnees about the government’s unity and reconciliation initiatives. The NURC also conducts desensitization campaigns in prisons to encourage plea-bargaining for genocide criminals who remain imprisoned. It plans formal lectures with national leaders, forums between citizens on themes of unity and reconciliation, and national genocide curriculums for schools.¹⁴ Additionally, several national anti-genocide laws influence the processes of reconciliation by restricting political space and shaping the national narrative about ethnic identity.¹⁵

The NURC also supports a small percentage of local nongovernmental community groups. Over three hundred reconciliation groups organically emerged in Rwanda in the form of community organizing associations, farming or livestock co-

¹² "National Unity and Reconciliation Commission - Proud to Be a Rwandan," NURC, <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/index.php?id=58&L=0>.

¹³ *Building Lasting Peace in Rwanda: Voices of the People*, (Kigali, Rwanda: Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace, 2003), 122.

¹⁴ "National Unity and Reconciliation Commission - Proud to Be a Rwandan".

¹⁵ "Organic Law No 18/2008 of 23/07/2008, Relating to the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Ideology," Republic of Rwanda, http://www.cnl.gov.rw/sites/cnl.gov.rw/files/genocide_laws/Law%20relating%20to%20the%20punishment%20of%20the%20crime%20of%20genocide%20ideology.doc; "Organic Law No 33/2003 of 06/09/2003, Repressing the Crime of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes," Republic of Rwanda, http://www.cnl.gov.rw/sites/cnl.gov.rw/files/genocide_laws/Law%20repressing%20the%20crime%20of%20genocide.doc; "Organic Law No 47/2001 of 18/12/2001, on Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Discrimination and Sectarianism," Republic of Rwanda, http://www.cnl.gov.rw/sites/cnl.gov.rw/files/genocide_laws/Law%20on%20punishment%20of%20the%20crime%20of%20discrimination.doc.

ops, or reconciliation projects. The NURC supports dozens of these bottom-up initiatives financially and logistically for the purposes of national unity and reconciliation.¹⁶ This hybrid between bottom-up and top-down reconciliation efforts is typical in Rwanda; co-ops, student groups, and community workshops often have close relationships with the government reconciliation campaign.

While the NURC primarily deals with the country's mission of "one Rwanda" and moving past the genocide, the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG) focuses on institutionalizing the collective memory of the past. This includes organizing commemoration activities (such as the annual week of mourning in April), fighting genocide ideology through campaigns and legislation, advocating for genocide survivors, and shaping the national narrative of Rwanda's history through documentation and testimonies.¹⁷ Some Rwandans find the annual mourning period an obstacle to unity and reconciliation, excluding Hutus from participation, ignoring RPF crimes, and enforcing the ethnic lens of history by perpetuating the Hutu-as-perpetrator and Tutsi-as-victim narrative.¹⁸ However, others find it necessary to learn from the genocide in order to prevent further atrocities.

Nongovernmental Reconciliation Programs

Government reconciliation programs may not fulfill every need for individual and community reconciliation, so grassroots and local programs that are

¹⁶ Breed, "Performing Reconciliation in Rwanda," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 18, no. 4 (Ananda).

¹⁷ "National Commission for the Fight against Genocide," CNLG, <http://cnlg.gov.rw>.

¹⁸ *Building Lasting Peace in Rwanda: Voices of the People*, 125.; Zorbas, "Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda."; René and Maurice Niwese Lemarchand, "Mass Murder, the Politics of Memory and Post-Genocide Reconstruction: The Cases of Rwanda and Burundi," in *After Mass Crime: Rebuilding States and Communities*, ed. Simon Chesterman and Albrecht Schnabel Béatrice Pouligny (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007), 67.

geographically and conceptually closer to average citizens may be more effective for those distrustful of the government.¹⁹ As non-state alternatives that nonetheless have a strong institutional presence in Rwandan communities, churches may provide a compelling alternative to the state rhetoric on unity and reconciliation²⁰. Nonprofit organizations organize similar forgiveness and trauma healing workshops, forums, and reconciliation initiatives throughout Rwanda. Especially in the countryside, where interpersonal connections are the fabric of society, nonprofit reconciliation programs supplement government initiatives from the bottom up. Trauma healing, which sometimes involves suggesting forgiveness, repairs interpersonal relationships and facilitates community reconciliation. As I will argue, churches and nonprofit reconciliation programs have an important role to play in forgiveness.

Review of Forgiveness Scholarship

Classical and Judeo-Christian Paradigms of Forgiveness

The classical thinkers of Greece and Rome did not have a comprehensive theory of forgiveness involving remorse or personal transformation. As David Konstan's intellectual historical narrative shows, the modern iteration of interpersonal forgiveness (a constellation of ethical and emotional concepts such as remorse and personal transformation) is not present in either the classical texts of ancient Greece and Rome or the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, but came about as a result of

¹⁹ Annemiek Richters, "Suffering and Healing in the Aftermath of War and Genocide in Rwanda: Mediations through Community-Based Sociotherapy," in *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts*, ed. Annemiek Richters and Lidwien Kapteijns, *Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies* (London: Brill, 2010), 182.

²⁰ Amstutz, "Is Reconciliation Possible after Genocide?: The Case of Rwanda," 563.

early modern literature and philosophy.²¹ Aristotle gives some weight to the relief or appeasement of anger, an emotion he describes in *Rhetoric*. He also describes *sungnômê*, the Greek word most closely resembling forgiveness, as comprehending involuntary offenses and judging the offender to be not culpable.²² Aristotle's hypothetical man of virtue is so self-sufficient that he does not need external excusing or approval of his actions, even from god.²³

The Roman Stoics also touch on the issue but do not describe forgiveness *per se*. Seneca and Cato reject excusing or pardoning, while Cicero allows that wise men will excuse some offenses.²⁴ Plato holds forgiveness and even reconciliation in similarly low esteem, and the Epicureans barely mention forgiveness.²⁵ Some narratives from these ancient civilizations may teach lessons of reconciliation, exemplified by the end of cyclical retribution and violence with the establishment of the Areopagus in the final passages of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. However, they still do not describe forgiveness. Our modern conceptions of forgiveness owe much more to the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The Hebrew Bible does not offer moral teachings of forgiveness as such; rather, references to forgiveness are often laws for specific circumstances influenced by ancient sources. For example, the passage urging the punishment of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Exodus 21:24), rather than a moral law, is a specific description of the equivalent of tort law for property disputes, and echoes the

²¹ David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²² *Ibid.*, 28.

²³ Charles L. Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8.

²⁴ Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea*, 33.

²⁵ Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 12-13.

Babylonian Code of Hammurabi. The God of the Hebrew Bible is characterized both as vengeful and as the “God of forgiveness” (Nehemiah 9:17). Nevertheless, God only punishes the descendants of transgressors through the third and fourth generations of Israelites, but forgives all following generations “for the thousandth generation” (Exodus 34:7). Other Hebrew Bible references describe receiving the forgiveness of God through offerings (Leviticus 4:20-35) and through prayer (1 Kings 8:30); the forgiveness of the people of Israel for their unintentional sins (Numbers 14:19); the threat of God’s curse rather than forgiveness of those who worship other gods (Deuteronomy 29:20); the lack of forgiveness from a “jealous God” (Joshua 24:19, 2 Kings 24:4); and instructions for men to forgive each other’s transgressions (1 Samuel 25:28). The Jewish practice of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is based on the Torah and later rabbinical teachings. Jewish faithful repent for their sins against fellow men and are forgiven for these as well as for sins against God. The theme of divine forgiveness persists throughout the Hebrew Bible, although its teachings are diverse and often contradictory because it has many different authors.

While Jewish tradition might understand forgiveness as an obligation to the offender, Christian tradition understands it as a gift of release for the perpetrator.²⁶ In the New Testament, forgiveness is framed in relation to God’s grace as the gift of forgiveness of men’s trespasses through the death of Christ (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14). Paul’s instruction to love one’s neighbors (Romans 13:9) is drawn from the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18). God of the New Testament justifies interpersonal forgiveness of unintentional sins (Luke 23:34, Mark 11:25) and a

²⁶ Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness*, 57.

ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Moreover, God's forgiveness is sometimes contingent upon forgiving others their trespasses (Matthew 6:14-15, 1 John 1:9). However, for the "stumbling block" of intentional evils against fellow worshippers, death by drowning is more suitable than forgiveness (Luke 17:2), and the eternal sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is considered unforgivable (Matthew 12:13-32). Jesus gives his disciples the power to forgive, an important basis for the Catholic practices of confession and indulgences (John 20:23). Forgiveness sometimes requires repentance (Luke 15:7, or as in the Prodigal Son story of Luke 15:11-32) and sometimes does not (Matthew 18:21-22).

Christian and Jewish scholars and theologians have also influenced modern conceptions of forgiveness. The thirteenth century Christian philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas' situates forgiveness within the divine in his *Summa Theologica*. He claims that the merits of Christ and the saints allow the pope to pardon sins. He coined the phrase "love the sinner and hate the sin," or more literally, "with love for the persons and hatred for their vices."²⁷ Martin Luther's religious reforms that set off the Protestant Reformation eliminated the sacrament of confession, changing perceptions of the Christian faithful. One such reform was the elimination of indulgences, the posthumous pardoning of sins by payment. Like many of Luther's other reforms, the changes to conceptions of forgiveness brought about by Protestantism reduced the role of the church in the affairs of God and men.

Protestant, especially Puritan, theologians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wrote profusely about forgiveness, from John Owen's *The Forgiveness of*

²⁷ Christopher Allers, "Undoing What Has Been Done: Arendt and Levinas on Forgiveness," in *Forgiveness in Perspective*, ed. Marieke Smit and Christopher Allers, *Probing the Boundaries* (New York: Rodopi, 2010), 21.

Sin to Joseph Butler's *Fifteen Sermons*. Herbert Spencer, a popular nineteenth century agnostic philosopher, separates forgiveness from its religious context and gave it a political context by connecting it to peace between nations.²⁸ The Anglican bishop Joseph Butler, an influence for British empiricists, lauds forgiveness as the forswearing of revenge, drawing on the Christian concept of loving one's neighbor.²⁹ Søren Kierkegaard also gives significance to the obligation to forgive in the Christian context. His musings on the relation of men to God cite the Bible's linking of love and forgiveness (Luke 7:47) in order to base salvation in love and to associate love with the forgiveness of sins.³⁰

Because a large majority of Rwandans are Christian, the Bible's commandment to forgive holds important social sway in the post-genocide context. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the engineer of South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), formulates a theory of forgiveness as "an absolute necessity for continued human existence"³¹ based on Christian love, empathy, and confession.³² This formulation of forgiveness, sometimes cited as an "African" possibility after South Africa, is important for Rwanda because many Rwandans consider their faith to be the dominant context of their lives.

Forgiveness in Psychology and Popular Culture

²⁸ Steven Prescott Ferguson, "Political Forgiveness: A Religious Interpretation" (Dissertation, University of Southern California, 2006).

²⁹ Joseph Butler, "Sermons VIII and IX," in *The Works of Joseph Butler*, ed. W.E. Gladstone (London: Clarendon Press, 1896). Cited in Griswold 19.

³⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, "Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays (August 7, 1851)," in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. Edna H. Hong and Howard V. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³¹ Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1999), xiii.

³² *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* (New York: Random House, 2004), 57.

For the most part, the Judeo-Christian focus on forgiveness dominated discussion of the topic until the mid twentieth century, when Hannah Arendt wrote about forgiveness in the sphere of human action. However, popular culture's interest in forgiveness began with the help of Lewis B. Smedes' 1984 self-help book about achieving the benefits of forgiveness through a four-step process.³³ Psychology picked up on the topic of forgiveness in psychotherapy in the late twentieth century.

Much of the psychological research attempts to quantify forgiveness as a reaction to conflict. Scientists have developed the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness (TNTF) to measure a person's disposition to forgive, or "forgivingness," by giving subjects different hypothetical scenarios and asking how likely they would be to forgive in each.³⁴ They found that forgivingness was negatively correlated with anger, resentment, neuroticism, and hostility and positively correlated with love, agreeableness, compassion, empathy, and sympathy. However, the test pertains mostly to interpersonal conflicts and cannot measure forgiveness in the context of widespread social violence. Another study classified forgiveness into three categories of positive responses of the victim toward the aggressor: forbearance (ending avoidance and revenge behavior altogether), trend forgiveness (decreasing avoidance and revenge), and temporary forgiveness (briefly reducing avoidance and revenge).³⁵

The empathy model of forgiveness posits that successful clinical psychological interventions encourage perpetrators to confess and apologize and

³³ Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1984).

³⁴ J.W. Berry et al., "Dispositional Forgiveness: Development and Construct Validity of the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness (Tntf)," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27, no. 10 (2001): 1279.

³⁵ Michael E. McCullough, Frank D. Fincham, and Jo-Ann Tsang, "Forgiveness, Forbearance, and Time: The Temporal Unfolding of Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 3 (2003): 3-4.3-4.

encourage victims to focus more on empathy than on the hurt of the offense.³⁶ This research focuses on interpersonal relationships and individual psychological counseling, but the empathy model can be applied to mass violence such as genocide. Refining the idea of empathy-based forgiveness, Wohl and Branscombe find in their study on Native Canadians and Jewish North Americans that when members of a historical victim group perceive members of the perpetrator group with greater inclusiveness (as individuals rather than as members of the perpetrator group), victims are more likely to forgive because they shift blame from the entire group onto the individual perpetrator.³⁷ These findings suggest hope for forgiveness and inter-group reconciliation interventions after genocide if they differentiate the collective perpetrator group from individuals in that group.

Staub, Pearlman, Gubin and Hagengimana's 1999 nine-day psychological reconciliation intervention program in Rwanda emphasized trauma and healing, basic psychological needs, empathy for both parties, and sensitivity for the vicarious traumatization of trauma workers and caretakers. Encounters between victims and perpetrators temporarily increased and then eventually decreased trauma among participants. Both Hutu and Tutsi participants reported more willingness to reconcile or forgive than those who went through no program or church-run healing programs.³⁸ As a result, Staub et al. take a maximalist view of forgiveness, finding

³⁶ Michael E. McCullough, Everett L. Worthington Jr., and Kenneth C. Rachal, "Interpersonal Forgiving in Close Relationships," *ibid.* 73, no. 2 (1997): 7.

³⁷ Michael J.A. Wohl and Nyala R. Branscombe, "Forgiveness and Collective Guilt Assignment to Historical Perpetrator Groups Depend on Level of Social Category Inclusiveness," *ibid.* 88 (2005): 288.

³⁸ Ervin Staub et al., "Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiving and the Prevention of Violence after Genocide or Mass Killing: An Intervention and Its Experimental Evaluation in Rwanda," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 24, no. 3 (2005): 298.

forgiveness essential to reconciliation.³⁹ They also concluded that full reconciliation involves forgiving or giving up anger and the desire for revenge. They see “constructive forgiveness” as productive for all parties.⁴⁰ However, their emphasis on perpetrators acknowledging guilt discounts the possibility of victims forgiving perpetrators without seeing or encountering them. Nancy Peddle also finds a correlation between forgiveness and social cohesion. Her dissertation concludes that refugees from conflict regions who said they had forgiven also demonstrated higher degrees of recovery, hope, and reconnection with their communities (I define this improved relationship between groups as political reconciliation).⁴¹

Forgiveness may even have positive psychosomatic effects. Witvliet, Ludwig, and Vander Laan found that reliving crimes and harboring grudges lead to negative emotions and physiological effects (such as increased blood pressure and brow tension), while forgiveness and empathetic thoughts prompt positive physiological responses, suggesting that over the long term unforgiving thoughts may weaken the cardiovascular and immune systems, while forgiving may have positive effects.⁴² Dr.

³⁹ Ervin Staub and Laurie Anne Pearlman, "Healing, Reconciliation, and Forgiving after Genocide and Other Collective Violence," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney Lawrence Peterson (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 205.

⁴⁰ Staub et al., "Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiving and the Prevention of Violence after Genocide or Mass Killing: An Intervention and Its Experimental Evaluation in Rwanda," 301.

⁴¹ Nancy Peddle, "Forgiveness in Recovery/Resiliency from the Trauma of War among a Selected Group of Adolescents and Adult Refugees" (Fielding Graduate Institute, 2001), 152. Cited in Wainrib.

⁴² Charlotte VanOyen Witvliet, T.E. Ludwig, and K.L. Vander Laan, "Granting Forgiveness or Harboring Grudges: Implications for Emotion, Physiology, and Health," *Psychological Science* 12, no. 2 (2001): 123.

Fred Luskin's Stanford Forgiveness Project's "mindful forgiveness" model shows reduced anger, stress, and physical and psychological health.⁴³

There is also a large amount of non-academic literature about forgiveness, from self-help books to pop psychology to survivors' testimonies and memoirs. In Rwandan survivors' memoirs and Western journalists' narratives, often written for Western audiences, forgiveness manifests in Christian love, release of anger, and redemption. Imaculée Ilibagiza's popular memoir narrates her experiences of being hunted in 1994, the deaths of her family and friends, and her eventual recovery through forgiving their killers. In one passage, Ilibagiza struggles with anger and revenge after seeing her family's unceremonious graves, but when she eventually meets their killers, her forgiveness gives her ease of mind.⁴⁴ Meg Guillebaud's narrative of Rwandan forgiveness (independently and through faith-based workshops) emphasizes the importance of faith for the forgiveness and repentance, which, she argues, together lead to reconciliation.⁴⁵ Laura Waters Hinson's documentary film *As We Forgive* follows Rwandan genocide victims forgiving their families' killers through encounters.⁴⁶ Anne Aghion's films about gacaca and post-genocide Rwanda address the theme of forgiveness between neighbors and former enemies. Whereas Hinson's film and the nonprofit organization that grew out of it assume forgiveness to be a positive force for individuals and communities, Aghion's films explore tensions between individuals during the difficult and discontinuous process of forgiving.

⁴³ A.H. Harris et al., "Effects of Group Forgiveness Intervention on Perceived Stress, State and Trait, Anger, Symptoms of Stress, Self-Reported Health and Forgiveness (Stanford Forgiveness Project)," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62, no. 6 (2006): 715.

⁴⁴ Imaculée Ilibagiza, *Left to Tell: Rediscovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2006).

⁴⁵ Meg Guillebaud, *After the Locusts: How Costly Forgiveness Is Restoring Rwanda's Stolen Years* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2005).

⁴⁶ Laura Waters Hinson, "As We Forgive," (Washington, D.C.: MPower Pictures, 2008).

These mainstream narratives of forgiveness are not academic analyses, but they nonetheless shape the discourse about forgiveness after genocide.

Reexamining Forgiveness After Auschwitz

The atrocities of the Holocaust, which changed conceptions of the human capacity for evil, prompted a wave of critical scholarship, historical narrative, and philosophical debate. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German resistance conspirator and theologian, makes a strong connection between open confession and the health of the community. For Bonhoeffer, the forgiveness of God enables forgiveness within the community.⁴⁷ The Jewish French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch claims in his 1967 book *Le Pardon* (Forgiveness) that forgiveness makes it as if the offense never happened.⁴⁸ His 1971 essay *Pardonner? (Should We Pardon Them?)* argues that the French state should not pardon Nazi criminals for the crimes he deems *imprescriptible*. Instead, the pardon should remain on an interpersonal scale.⁴⁹ Ultimately, Jankélévitch claims that by forgiving the inexcusable, forgiveness undoes the offense, but is only useful when the offender has no excuse for his actions. If he does, not forgiveness but rather reconciliation, rehabilitation, or forgetting occurs. Jankélévitch empowers forgiveness without arguing to pardon or forgive the Nazis.

The French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas reacted in the 1960s to Jankélévitch's position that Nazis should not be pardoned, suggesting that although

⁴⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 287.

⁴⁸ Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Forgiveness*, trans. Andrew Kelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁴⁹ "Should We Pardon Them? (Originally *L'imprescriptible* 1971)," *Critical inquiry* 22, no. Spring (1996).

many Germans are difficult to forgive, it may be possible in some cases.⁵⁰ He claims that forgiveness reverses time to make it as if the offense never happened. Levinas thus sees forgiveness as not only repairing the past, but also opening the future up to new possibilities.⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, the subject of this project's second chapter, and to a degree Jacques Derrida, the subject of the third, also react to the puzzle of forgiveness in the wake of the Holocaust. These modern and post-modern theorists greatly impacted contemporary forgiveness and transitional justice scholarship.

Simon Wiesenthal, a Jewish concentration camp survivor who testified against Nazi criminals, describes in his personal narrative *The Sunflower* (1976) his mixed conscience after remaining silent at the bedside of a SS officer asking for forgiveness on behalf of his Jewish victims. His friends in the camp praise him for not forgiving the soldier, arguing that it is neither his responsibility to "forgive and forget" nor his right to do so on behalf of the dead, who might resent forgiveness. However, decades later Wiesenthal remains ambiguous about whether he should have forgiven, and challenges readers to consider what they would have done.⁵²

Contemporary Critical Forgiveness Scholarship

In recent years, forgiveness has become a topic of interest for many critical, social, cultural, and political theorists. From post-colonial literary critique of male-dominated discourses of forgiveness⁵³ to feminist analyses of third party and self-

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, "Toward the Other," in *Nine Talmudic Readings* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 25.

⁵¹ Allers, "Undoing What Has Been Done: Arendt and Levinas on Forgiveness," 30.

⁵² Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower, with a Symposium* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

⁵³ Julie McGonegal, *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

forgiving,⁵⁴ contemporary critical scholarship has begun to recognize forgiveness as a serious subject. As Brandon Hamber suggests, in this age of violence and global political turmoil, forgiveness and reconciliation have come to be seen as a “paradise lost” of politics, a return to a state of peaceful coexistence.⁵⁵

In drawing the parameters for forgiveness, this project will resist the urge to fuse forgiveness with the political. Donald Shriver’s maximalist approach claims that “political forgiveness” catalyzes the process of reconciliation by combining coexistence, “civil relationship,” and empathy.⁵⁶ He describes the process of political forgiveness in moral and political developments in postwar German-American and Vietnam-American relations.⁵⁷ Similarly, Russell Daye lauds political forgiveness and the South African TRC’s public use of the language of forgiveness. This political forgiveness consists of truth telling, apologizing, building a transitional justice framework, healing, and embracing forgiveness on a wide scale.⁵⁸ In a twist on Arendtian forgiveness of unintended trespasses (such as inadvertently offending black men during a demonstration in solidarity of rape victims), the feminist scholar Melissa Orlie implements political forgiveness of “free yet deliberative and responsible action.”⁵⁹ Peter Digeser also relies on political forgiveness as “an

⁵⁴ Kathryn Norlock, *Forgiveness from a Feminist Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

⁵⁵ Brandon Hamber, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Paradise Lost or Pragmatism?," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2007): 122.

⁵⁶ Donald W. Shriver, *Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8-9.

⁵⁷ "Is There Forgiveness in Politics?: Germany, Vietnam, and America," in *Exploring Forgiveness*, ed. Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ Russell Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 148.

⁵⁹ Melissa A. Orlie, "Forgiving Trespasses, Promising Futures," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 348.

illocutionary act of self-disclosure” that must take place in public with an audience.⁶⁰ When constructing a political theory of forgiveness, the impulse to call forgiveness political or fuse forgiveness with politics is tempting. However, a rigorous critique will recognize forgiveness as a personal, affective internal change and examine the *effects* it has on the political realm, rather than confusing pardoning with forgiveness or throwing a public spotlight onto the tenuous process of forgiveness.

Many observers in Rwanda and elsewhere – journalists and scholars such as Minow, Verdeja, Doorn, Murphy, Hampton, Straus, and Schimmel – worry that prioritizing forgiveness can be harmful to both forgiveness and reconciliation. These survivor-conscious critiques of the political relevance of forgiveness have emerged in part from the criticisms of the emphasis in South Africa’s TRC on amnesty, institutionalized forgiveness, and public apologies. I will answer their concerns with an argument for forgiveness programs that avoid coercing victims in the final chapter.

This project will attempt to address these concerns while drawing on the work of scholars who build a philosophical case for forgiveness. R.S. Downie’s important exploration of interpersonal forgiveness as distinguished from pardoning and condoning reclaims the concept for secular discourse. Downie employs the Greek word *agapē*, or neighborly love, as the basis for forgiveness. It involves both the belief that injury has been sustained and the respect for the offender as a rational and moral being.⁶¹ My theory will draw upon Downie’s use of *agapē*-based forgiveness. Everett Worthington, Jr. argues that what he calls “unforgiveness” – not merely a lack of forgiveness but a presence of fear and anger – can be reduced through pursuit of

⁶⁰ Peter Digeser, *Political Forgiveness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 4.

⁶¹ R.S. Downie, "Forgiveness," *Philosophical Quarterly* 15, no. 59 (1965): 133.

justice, conflict resolution and compromise. Thus, in order to facilitate forgiveness in society, public policymakers should attempt multiple, diverse and careful efforts to reduce unforgiveness.⁶² Considering the specific case of Rwanda, Phil Clark emphasizes the importance of forgiveness for the success of the gacaca courts; for true peace and social cohesion to take place, individuals need to undertake pure forgiveness, which can only take place in the private realm. As a suspect of genocide crimes in his book says, "Reconciliation doesn't come from the sky. It means living together, saying sorry, asking forgiveness."⁶³

The process-oriented analysis of forgiveness is important, as well. Alisa Carse and Lynne Tirrell suggest an "emergent model" of forgiving, which sees forgiveness as a normative power to reclaim the victim's moral authority in relation to the trauma, offender, and community. They claim that forgiveness is impossible without shared "world-building," or cooperation and shared moral norms and social practices between victims and offenders. In the case of Rwanda, they argue, world building emerges over time, rather than through the linear classical model of repentance and apology.⁶⁴ Carse and Tirrell's attention to the mechanism of forgiveness provides a useful framework of forgiveness as an ongoing and imperfect process.

Because of the dearth of research on the empirical effectiveness of programs that teach forgiveness, political theory may provide useful questions and stepping-off points. Murphy and Hampton find three possible reactions to the teaching of

⁶² Everett L. Worthington Jr., "Unforgiveness, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation and Their Implications for Societal Interventions," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney Lawrence Peterson (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001).

⁶³ Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 112.

⁶⁴ Alisa L Carse and Lynne Tirrell, "Forgiving Grave Wrongs," in *Forgiveness in Perspective*, ed. Marieke Smit and Christopher Allers, *Probing the Boundaries* (New York: Rodopi, 2010).

forgiveness to enemies by third parties such as the church or government: accept the teaching and pretend to forgive, but secretly retain resentment and anger; reject the teaching and do not forgive; or accept the teaching and forgive, letting go of resentment. True forgiveness is thus not only the release of resentment, but also the emotional distancing of the perpetrator from the offense in the mind of the victim.⁶⁵

The criticisms of the South African TRC's use of forgiveness have been noted. However, Barbara Flood and Christina Tomacic-Niaros' study of participants in the Annual Memorial for Victims of Homicide in Chicago, a ritual of mourning victims of violent crime, shows that rituals that do not mention forgiveness neither help nor hurt the progression of forgiveness of the offenders of crime. However, because half of those surveyed found forgiveness to be a strong component of the healing process, if given the chance communities such as these might be receptive to rituals that encourage forgiveness.⁶⁶ These scholars' openness to forgiveness' impact on politics opens up future transitional justice research and policy to forgiveness.

The growing body of forgiveness scholarship builds upon the theories of Arendt, Derrida, and contemporary and postwar scholars. However, none of these scholars offer a theory of the specific impact forgiveness has on the political sphere in the case of Rwanda. This paper hopes to make a small contribution to this important subject by examining the political implications of forgiveness for post-conflict politics while drawing on philosophical constructions of forgiveness and addressing the concerns of victims' rights critics.

⁶⁵ Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ Barbara Flood and Tomacic-Niaros, "The Community Response to Violence: Do Rituals of Healing Support Forgiveness?," in *Forgiveness in Perspective*, ed. Christopher Allers and Marieke Smit, *Probing the Boundaries* (New York: Rodopi, 2010).

Methods and Goals

Relevance and Justification

The existing scholarship on forgiveness and reconciliation summarized above forms the background for this paper. I hope to refine existing tools of analysis and provide a new perspective on the two-way relationship between interpersonal forgiveness and political reconciliation. Forgiveness is too important for reconstruction to dismiss as faith-based, affective, or personal. Here I build on the work of Murphy, Clark, Carse and Tirrell, and Richters, among others, to further explore the effect forgiveness has on reconciliation and the possibilities for reconciliation programs to encourage forgiveness. The study of forgiveness in relation to political reconciliation in Rwanda can add to understandings about peace and conflict around the world. The connection between the personal and political in the realm of forgiveness has not been sufficiently explored.⁶⁷ Apart from religious analyses of forgiveness and examinations of the successes and failures of the gacaca trials, the scholarly community lacks research about the effect of personal forgiveness on peace building. Additionally, this project has the potential to add to understandings of forgiveness more generally. In the past twenty years, scholars in a variety of academic fields have taken up the topic of forgiveness, ending its decades of almost exclusively theological debate.⁶⁸ Forgiveness research has been dominated by psychological studies of interpersonal forgiveness in daily life and by non-academic biographical, self-improvement, or religious publications, although

⁶⁷ Digeser, *Political Forgiveness*, 3.

⁶⁸ Hamber, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Paradise Lost or Pragmatism?," 115.

philosophy is now once again beginning to take the subject seriously.⁶⁹ This case study can add the affective perspective of forgiveness to political science research on post-violent politics.

Methodology and Ethics

I interviewed four perpetrators of the genocide, all middle-aged or elderly men who were released from prison, pled guilty in gacaca, and completed their punishment in the TIG community service camps. I also interviewed five survivors of the genocide, all women of various ages, one of whom was a beneficiary of Uyisenga N'Manzi (the nonprofit organization that hosted me during the research period), and four of whom were members of an association of victims of rape in Kabuga, a suburb of Kigali City. I was connected to them through Ganza Gahizi, who started a nonprofit to help these women and their children born of rape. I also interviewed representatives of three different organizations dealing with forgiveness and reconciliation and two representatives from the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide. For a guide to my interview questions, see Appendices A-D.

There were of course biases and problems in my primary research. For example, my translator often conducted whole interviews or long sections entirely in Kinyarwanda before translating them to English, so translations were inevitably incomplete. In some of my interviews with the women in Kabuga, their testimonies were so moving, violent, or emotionally intense for the speaker that I left many of my questions out of the interviews because they broke into tears or were otherwise unable to continue. Of this project's interviewees, survivors and perpetrators alike give

⁶⁹ Barbara Rubin Wainrib, *Healing Crisis with Body, Mind, and Spirit* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2006), 150.

mostly positive assessments of gacaca, although many survivors were too traumatized to participate. The perpetrators I spoke to praised gacaca more than the survivors did, but this is likely because I only interviewed released prisoners who confessed in gacaca, completed their sentences in TIG, and were released back into their communities. Many discontented prisoners remain in prison, despite continued efforts from the NURC, church groups, and nonprofits to convince them to confess and participate in gacaca. Therefore, my findings are based on only one aspect of the perpetrator perspective. Nevertheless, it represents the large population of released prisoners in rural Rwanda and their thoughts on forgiveness and reconciliation.

Rwandan refugees in Uganda told me, “Rwandans have a good face but a bad heart,” implying that post-genocide tensions continue to bubble under the surface. An important tenant of Rwandan culture is the difference between what a person says and what he feels. Rwandans often describe the national personality as “keeping their hearts closed,” and outsiders often notice their emotional guardedness. In 2003 focus group discussions, the Rwandan research nonprofit Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace found that while some Rwandans truly find interpersonal harmony, others only pretend to.⁷⁰ Benjamin Ndzিয়ে explains Rwandan perceptions versus projections:

There are people who will always show their emotions. If they hate you, they will show you. But when we study the background of people, people can be created to hide their emotions, to hide their feelings... [S]ometimes when you have this macro forgiveness, they show you the side that is good, but inside... there is no purity.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Building Lasting Peace in Rwanda: Voices of the People*, 120-21.

⁷¹ Author interview, tape recording, Kigali, Rwanda, November 12, 2012.

My interviewees may not have revealed the whole version of their “truth” of experiences and opinions about the genocide and its aftermath, and I, as an outsider, may never be able to access that “truth.” This project can only attempt to honestly portray the subjects’ stories. The “truth” of a perpetrator may be entirely different from that of a survivor, but my research views both perspectives as legitimate.

Terminology

Before embarking on an exploration of these themes, I propose some working definition of forgiveness, encounters, reconciliation, and the political. Forgiveness in post-genocide Rwanda may be thought of as an attitude of one person toward another, or of one person toward several others, accepting the damage done by the latter and releasing feelings of anger, resentment, fear, or revenge related to that damage. While the classical Judeo-Christian model of forgiveness requires the perpetrator to admit his offenses and apologize, my formulation does not rely on the actions of the perpetrator. As examples from my interviews in Rwanda show, forgiveness is possible even if the victim never meets the perpetrator again, although encounters between the two parties can aid forgiveness. In Rwanda, this usually manifests in a victim, or a relative or friend of a victim, forgiving the person who harmed his body, loved one, or property. Forgiveness may or may not be a conscious decision; it may take a moment or it may take years or generations; and it may be temporary or permanent. Although self-forgiveness, forgiving God and being forgiven by God are all interesting topics, this relatively narrow project will refer to interpersonal forgiveness as forgiving the person who hurt one’s loved ones or oneself.

When I mention encounters in terms of forgiveness, I refer to interpersonal interactions between individuals. These are salient to reconciliation and forgiveness when survivors and perpetrators meet, facilitated by a third party mediator or alone. The timing, place, and setting of encounters between former enemies are all important for the forgiveness that may follow.⁷² Encounters, if they are friendly and timely – not too early, before victims have had time to overcome trauma, or before perpetrators have had time to emotionally distance themselves from their crimes – are important for forgiveness because they can increase dialogue, empathy, and understanding between former enemies.

This paper, as a political theory project, is concerned with the political as it pertains to the relationships between people both as individuals and as members of social, political, historical or economic groups. What happens in the public and private spheres may be different in Rwanda than in Western societies or in the city-states of Ancient Greece on which classical philosophers based their conceptions of public and the private. Thus, for the purposes of this project I will consider the political to be that which relates to the relations between people in their communities. Those elements impacted are governmental institutions, nongovernmental organizations, media, public opinion, and civil society associations. These in turn reshape individuals' attitudes about the political process. I will consider political impact to be a change in the workings, dynamics, or conditions of the public sphere as a result of political developments, historical contexts, or individual actions.

⁷² Charles Villa Vicencio, *Walk with Us and Listen: Political Reconciliation in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 71.

As for reconciliation, I distinguish what I will call “interpersonal reconciliation” from “political reconciliation.” These definitions are loosely based on Rwandan conceptions of reconciliation. Interpersonal reconciliation is related to the Rwandan term *kubana*, or “thin” reconciliation, which is mere cohabitation out of necessity. By contrast, *ubwiyunge*, or “thick” reconciliation, is marked by significantly increased understanding, cessation of hostilities and resentment, and feelings of moving toward a common goal together, which I will argue is facilitated by forgiveness. Related to *ubwiyunge* is political reconciliation, a reconstruction of society through the cessation of anger, violence, or resentment between social, economic, cultural, or political groups. This paper will primarily juxtapose political reconciliation with forgiveness, which I consider on an interpersonal level, not on a political level as the “political forgiveness” scholars theorize.

Interpersonal reconciliation may give the appearance of deeper political reconciliation, but it merely marks progress among individuals toward coexistence and reconciliation on the interpersonal level – people ceasing to see each other as individual enemies. Political reconciliation, on the other hand, takes an important step toward peace beyond interpersonal reconciliation; it also includes people ceasing to see members of other groups of people as enemies. Here I follow Mark Amstutz’s definition of the restoration of relationships in terms of trust and solidarity,⁷³ as well as Charles Vicencio’s definition of transcending both the binary differences between victim and perpetrator groups and the rhetoric of good and evil.⁷⁴

⁷³ Amstutz, "Is Reconciliation Possible after Genocide?: The Case of Rwanda."

⁷⁴ Vicencio, *Walk with Us and Listen: Political Reconciliation in Africa*, 154-55.

Rwanda's national reconciliation may thus be seen as the restoration of society through peace building (both negative peace, the cessation of violence, and positive peace, the reestablishment of cohesive and functioning political systems), repairing the social fabric torn apart by violence, and improving the standard of living for Rwandans. I view political reconciliation, "the litmus test of a successful political transition and peace endeavor,"⁷⁵ as a broader form of restoration than forgiveness.

Looking Forward

The remaining three chapters move from a theoretical exploration of the concept of forgiveness as it relates to politics to an attempt to mount a theory of forgiveness and reconciliation in Rwanda, potentially applicable to post-violence politics elsewhere. Chapter Two launches an immanent critique of Hannah Arendt's work on forgiveness, finding tensions in her work on love and forgiveness and punishment and opening new avenues of critique using her concept of the banality of evil. Chapter Three deals with Jacques Derrida's concept of forgiveness of the unforgivable and reveals the inconsistency between his praise of Nelson Mandela and his critique of pure forgiveness as it relates to politics. Both of these chapters internally critique theorists, preparing for Chapter Four's attempt to piece together a new conception of forgiveness and its political implications. This final chapter analyzes the Rwandan case and suggests a new model of forgiveness after violence and its potential to further political reconciliation.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1.

Chapter Two

Hannah Arendt and Forgiveness

In this section, I launch an internal critique of the political philosopher Hannah Arendt's work on forgiveness in order to later expand on her theory in my normative proposal for forgiveness in post-conflict politics. I show that Arendt contradicts herself by banning love from the public sphere while also grounding the action of forgiveness in love; outline the implications of Arendt wavering on punishment versus forgiveness in order to question her exclusion of both punishment and forgiveness transitional justice; and suggest an alternate interpretation of her banality of evil concept that would allow a possible path to post-violence forgiveness.

A Brief Background to the Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt

Introduction

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) was a German Jewish political philosopher. As a student of Martin Heidegger at the University of Marburg, she developed theories of thought, judgment, evil, and the political sphere. She confronts modernity while grounding her work in classical traditions and the writings of Emmanuel Kant. She wrote the bulk of her work living in the United States in exile from Hitler's Germany, which she left in 1933. Her works include what is widely considered the first thorough post-Holocaust exploration of totalitarianism, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951); a treatise on the private and political spheres and human action, *The Human Condition* (1958); a journalistic report and theoretical exploration of a Nazi tribunal, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963); and several important essays and lectures that have been compiled and published since her death.

Arendt situates man as a political animal and introduces her schema for human activity in *The Human Condition*. Working not to create a theory of *man* but of a plurality of *men*, she sees action as a central element of separate and unique individuals living the *vita activa* and working in the political or public sphere.⁷⁶ Separate from the private realm of the household, the public sphere is the element of human life in which men live and act among others; Arendt here draws on classical Greek philosophy to create her neoclassical – or as Peter Euben calls it, Hellenistic⁷⁷ – *magnum opus*. In the public sphere resides human action, with which men reveal and bind themselves to each other through the mediating element of *inter-est*. This is possible through human plurality, the idea that all people are unique individuals.⁷⁸ She holds plurality as the highest condition for human existence in the public sphere, “*the condition... of all political life.*”⁷⁹

Arendt on Thinking and Judging

Central to Arendt’s theory are her concepts of thinking and judging, which she develops throughout her work. Judging is the act of distinguishing good from bad; aesthetic judgment (based on Kant’s aesthetic theory) judges beautiful from ugly, and moral judgment judges right from wrong. Arendt does not deny that emotions may intrude upon thinking and judging; she notes that even the Nazi Eichmann admits to a gut reaction of disgust when he witnesses Jews being slaughtered. The difference is

⁷⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958; repr., 1998).

⁷⁷ J. Peter Euben, "Arendt's Hellenism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁷⁸ Hannah Arendt, "Debating Totalitarianism: An Exchange of Letters between Hannah Arendt and Eric Voegelin," *History and Theory* 51 (1951): 377.

⁷⁹ *The Human Condition*, 7.

that those who do not think feel without examining their feelings critically. For example, Eichmann transforms his disgust into self-indulgent “inner trembling” after seeing the blood of Jews instead of critically examining the problem.⁸⁰

The real problem for Arendt is that Eichmann lacks imagination, the ability “ever to look at anything from the other fellow’s point of view.”⁸¹ He cannot coherently speak, which is “closely connected with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else”⁸² (although Arendt later relates this thinking to Socratic self-reflection in *Responsibility and Judgment*). Eichmann’s mind is so full of mendacity and clichés that it has no room for reality.

Imagination, which the Nazi Eichmann lacks, is key to judging. It involves representing another person’s situation to oneself.⁸³ It requires “thinking,” a Kantian concept of cognitively discerning right from wrong and re-presenting something that is absent. Thinking relies on Kant’s categorical imperative, which states that one should always hold one’s actions to the highest moral standard, that any given action should reflect how one should act in *every* iteration of that situation. The categorical imperative asks us to pretend we are legislators of the world whose actions will become universal standards.

The result of an inability or unwillingness to think is thoughtlessness, or “the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of ‘truths’ which have become trivial and empty.” Thoughtlessness is “among the outstanding

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Viking Press, 1963; repr., Penguin Classics, 2007), 48.

⁸² Ibid., 49.

⁸³ “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Random House, 1966; reprint, 2003), 139.

characteristics of our time”⁸⁴ and is a cause of Eichmann and others’ complicity in the evils of the Holocaust. These concepts remain important for Arendt’s work as she tries to understand the rupture in history caused by the atrocities of Auschwitz.

Arendt on Totalitarianism and Evil

Arendt’s theory of evil must be understood both in the post-Holocaust context and in terms of her evolving ideas of evil, from radical evil to banal evil. Her theory about the nature of evil and the impossibility of forgiving evolves from a Kantian understanding of radical evil in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to a Biblical restriction of forgiveness of extreme evil in *The Human Condition*, an assertion that evil should be neither forgiven nor punished in *The Promise of Politics*, a famous concept of the banality of evil in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and a description of crimes that can be neither punished nor forgiven in *Responsibility and Judgment*.

Arendt claims that totalitarianism, exemplified by Hitler’s Germany, is a political order that eradicates the juridical human by erasing plurality. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt describes the Nazi system as “radical evil,” which, although it is different from Kant’s formulation, puts an end to the Hegelian narrative of the teleological progress of politics.⁸⁵ She describes concentration camps as hell within the Nazi dehumanizing state following Hitler’s ““new law,”” (which “consisted of the command ‘Thou shalt kill.’”)⁸⁶ Within the totalitarian state the middle-level Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann is a perpetrator of “banal evil.”

⁸⁴ *The Human Condition*, 5.

⁸⁵ *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 443.

⁸⁶ “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship,” in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Random House, 1964; reprint, 2003), 42-43.

In earlier works, she describes a new threat to human nature in the form of radical evil. This evil cannot be forgiven because it is beyond the limits of human understanding and because it poses such a great threat to human plurality and thinking. She writes shortly after *Eichmann* to her friend Gershom Scholem, “You are quite right: I changed my mind and do no longer speak of ‘radical evil.’”⁸⁷ Arendt’s banality of evil may be closely intertwined with the possibility of radical evil in a totalitarian state, as Richard Bernstein argues.⁸⁸

One of Arendt’s most controversial claims is that Eichmann killed not out of ideological furor but out of a lack of imagination or thinking – the “fearsome, word-and-thought-defying banality of evil.”⁸⁹ However, this is not to say he lacked the intent to kill. A recent examination by Bettina Stangneth (in *Eichmann Before Jerusalem – The Unexamined Life of a Mass Murderer*, 2011, not yet translated into English) of newly released interviews with Eichmann before the trial shows that he was indeed more ideological and fanatically anti-Semitic than he appeared in the trial. In her interpretation of Eichmann’s banal lack of ideology and her unwillingness to explore the evildoer’s affective motivations, Arendt downplays the importance of emotions, although she might have been fooled by Eichmann’s “banal” act.

The concepts of public and private life, plurality, thinking and judging, and the nature of evil are fundamental to Arendt’s thought. With an understanding of these fundamental concepts of Arendt’s political philosophy, we can now move on to her work on forgiveness and violence.

⁸⁷ "Eichmann in Jerusalem - an Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt," *Encounter*, July 24, 1963 1964, 56.

⁸⁸ Richard Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996).

⁸⁹ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 252.

A Conceptual Contradiction: Forgiveness, Politics, and Love

Arendt reveals important conceptual flaws in her work by contradicting herself when she grounds forgiveness in love, claims that forgiveness is a radically generative action (and thus belongs in the public or political sphere), and then bans love from politics. Her view of forgiveness in *The Human Condition* is at once radically broad and morally conservative, granting love-based forgiveness the power to generate new human action but restricting forgiveness to apply only to daily trespasses, not grave crimes. We must examine the turn in Arendt's forgiveness because the contradictory role of love brings into question the shift between forgiveness' expansive power in daily offenses and its inapplicability to serious offenses. Because of this contradiction, a normative analysis must choose between forgiveness based in love and forgiveness devoid of affect, and that Arendt's framework may be experimentally applied to graver offenses.

Forgiveness: Based in Love

Arendt's description of love-based forgiveness in *The Human Condition* is a radically maximalist view. The divergence between her emphasis on forgiveness of daily offenses and her restriction of forgiveness of greater offenses mirrors the contradiction between her positions on love, forgiveness and action. Her basis for forgiveness of daily offenses in Jesus' teachings of love contradicts her attempt to separate love from forgiveness.

In *The Human Condition* Arendt draws upon the teachings of Jesus to promote a theory of forgiveness based in love, claiming that “[o]nly love has the power to

forgive.”⁹⁰ Arendt emphasizes the role of love in forgiveness by mentioning Jesus’ use of the “heart”: she quotes Jesus in Mark 18:35 saying, “‘if ye from your hearts forgive,’ God shall do ‘likewise.’”⁹¹

Perhaps Arendt’s decision to ground forgiveness of daily offenses in love is connected to her 1929 dissertation, *Love and St. Augustine*,⁹² about Augustine’s concept of *caritas* or neighborly love that is separate from love of God. For Augustine, love for one’s neighbor stems naturally from love of God and His world.⁹³ Caritas, which Augustine identifies as “the right love,” strives toward “eternity and the absolute future.”⁹⁴ Thus, Arendt in this early work leaves the door open for love to ensure lasting change. Caritas in this sense can ground a secular or secularized understanding of neighborly love ensuring lasting political peace or stability. The dissertation draws on her advisor Karl Jaspers’ idea of self-reflection, but its most important contribution to her body of work is the concept of natality, for which she is indebted to her professor and lover Martin Heidegger. Roy Tsao describes Arendt’s later concept of forgiveness as a kind of Augustinian natality that marks a return to ideas she first explored in her dissertation. Despite citing Jesus, however, she is not “recommending Jesus’ teaching as an ethical rule; it is no part of her business to offer what Jesus did not, a secular reason for granting unlimited chances to those who

⁹⁰ *The Human Condition*, 242.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁹² *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁹³ Daniel Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 50.

⁹⁴ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 17.

repent.”⁹⁵ There is a significant shift from her early work on Augustinian love and natality to her later rejection of emotion or love from the public sphere.

This shift might be attributed to her experience of surviving the Holocaust, or to her desire to create a neoclassical political world devoid of sentimental elements. Whatever the reason for this shift, the implications are the same. Love as the basis for forgiveness contradicts forgiveness’ place in the sphere of action along with love being banned from the political sphere. This contradiction brings into question the role of forgiveness in politics for grave and minor offenses.

Forgiveness as Action

Because Arendt describes forgiveness, “among the greatest of human virtues,”⁹⁶ as a radically constructive action and because action lies in the public sphere in her neoclassical political framework for the private and political spheres, forgiveness must be a part of the public sphere. Without rejecting one of these claims, Arendt on forgiveness remains internally inconsistent.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt situates forgiveness as an action in the realm of human affairs and thus in the political world. Not only does she place the subheading of forgiveness – “Irreversibility and the Power to Forgive”⁹⁷ – in the “Action” chapter of the book, but she also claims, “it is very dangerous to use this faculty [of forgiveness] in any but the realm of human affairs.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, she explicitly connects action to politics. Since “the political realm rises directly out of

⁹⁵Roy T. Tsao, "Arendt's Augustine," in *Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt*, ed. Roy T. Tsao Selya Benhabib, and Peter Verosvek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 55.

⁹⁶Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Random House, 2005), 58.

⁹⁷*The Human Condition*, 236.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 238.

acting together,”⁹⁹ forgiveness as an action gives rise to the political sphere. Thus, even if Arendt does not explicitly place forgiveness in the political or public sphere, by association the concept plays a part in the political world.

The notion of forgiveness as action involves its relationship to plurality: it “depend[s] on plurality, on the presence and acting of others, for no one can forgive himself” but rather must forgive while relating to others.¹⁰⁰ Thus, as an action related to the public sphere, forgiveness happens in the context of other people. Arendt is interested in not self-forgiveness but interpersonal forgiveness, claiming that only equals can forgive each other.¹⁰¹ Although she claims, “*what* was done is forgiven for the sake of *who* did it,”¹⁰² she later revokes this, distinguishing between forgiving the offender and forgiving a “thing” (which she sees as charity, equivalent to condoning betrayal).¹⁰³ Moreover, to avoid strictly religious interpretations of Biblical forgiveness, Arendt supports the connection between forgiveness and plurality by dissociating forgiveness of God from forgiveness between men.

Arendt gives forgiveness, along with promise making, the exclusive power of natality. Promise making and forgiveness, despite being the only generative actions, may also be “the only alternatives to mastering the darkness of human affairs through violence and domination.”¹⁰⁴ The temporal concepts of promise making, which looks

⁹⁹ Ibid., 198.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 237.

¹⁰¹ Reconciliation, on the other hand, is the victim’s act of removing the wrong from the perpetrator and releasing him from guilt and involves a political act of judgment (non-reconciliation can itself be an act of political judgment).

¹⁰² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 241.; see also *Men in Dark Times* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1955; repr., 1968), 248.

¹⁰³ “Letter to W.H. Auden, 14 February 1960,” in *Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Messianism in Hannah Arendt and W.H. Auden*, ed. W.H. Auden (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960). Cited in Ferguson, 140.

¹⁰⁴ Serena Parekh, *Hannah Arendt and the Challenge of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 73.

to the future, and forgiveness, which looks to the past, both protect against the uncertainty of human action.

In this framework of natality, Arendt understands forgiveness as a constructive act, perhaps one that can be clarified by Erving Goffman's concept of the "performative utterance," or illocutionary speech that performs an action.¹⁰⁵ When a victim forgives a perpetrator of inadvertent or daily trespasses, the speech-act of saying "I forgive you" restores their relationship. In *The Human Condition*, forgiveness is thus a pragmatic generative action: being forgiven is being "released from the consequences of what we have done" and allows us to move on from our actions without being stuck in the past.¹⁰⁶ Forgiveness releases the perpetrator from punishment or revenge and terminates escalating disputes, but it applies only to the everyday offense that "needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly."¹⁰⁷ More serious offenses or deliberate evils are not eligible for this forgiveness.

Arendt describes Jesus' connection between forgiveness and miracles, "putting both on the same level and within the reach of man."¹⁰⁸ By releasing offenders from their past actions, "forgiving is an action that guarantees the continuity of the capacity for action, for beginning anew, in every single human being who, without forgiving and being forgiven, would resemble the man in the fairy-tale who is granted one wish and then forever punished with that wish's fulfillment."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1959).

¹⁰⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 237.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 240.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁰⁹ *The Promise of Politics*, 59.

In this image of natality, Arendt foreshadows Jacques Derrida's conclusion that "forgiveness attempts the seemingly impossible, to undo what has been done, and that it succeeds in making a new beginning where beginnings seemed to have become no longer possible."¹¹⁰ Arendt gives a surprisingly wide rein to forgiveness, and while she might not agree wholeheartedly with either Jesus' equation of forgiveness with miracles or Derrida's impossibility of pure forgiveness, her framework for daily offenses is nonetheless radically far-reaching.

The metaphor of Biblical redemption and Jesus' "political" teachings further elucidate Arendt's forgiveness-as-action. She cites the New Testament to explain that forgiveness "serves to undo the deeds of the past, whose 'sins' hang like Damocles' sword over every new generation" and provides a "possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility"¹¹¹ of action. Jesus' assertion that forgiveness between men is a prerequisite for forgiveness from God (Mark 11:25)¹¹² is important for Arendt because it places forgiveness firmly in the sphere of human action, not exclusively in the heavenly sphere. Pragmatic, everyday forgiveness is necessary for action; it allows us to move beyond our violent pasts.

However, in a later essay, Arendt claims that the potential for forgiveness in politics ended with modernization. It was only "with the sudden and disconcerting onrush of the gigantic technical developments after the industrial revolution that the experience of fabrication achieved such an overwhelming predominance that the uncertainties of action could be forgotten altogether" and forgiveness lost its potential for use in the political sphere. All that remains of forgiveness in politics is the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 58.

¹¹¹ *The Human Condition*, 237.

¹¹² Ibid., 239.

political prerogative of heads of state to pardon, which hardly fits Arendt's previous definition of forgiveness. She argues that modern political philosophy should revitalize "the relationship between doing and forgiving as a constitutive element of the intercourse between acting men."¹¹³

By connecting forgiveness to action and politics, granting forgiveness near-exclusive natal power to create new action, and citing the teachings of Jesus to clarify forgiveness as an action between men, Arendt leaves no doubt about forgiveness' situation in the realm of human action.

Love: Anti-Political

Despite basing forgiveness in love and situating it firmly in the sphere of action (which is associated with politics), Arendt makes a contradictory turn to claim that love is "unworldly... not only apolitical but anti-political, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces."¹¹⁴ Throughout *The Human Condition*, love is an emotion that should not enter the public sphere:

[L]ove, in distinction from friendship, is killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public... Because of its inherent worldlessness, love can only become false and perverted when it is used for political purposes such as the change or salvation of the world.¹¹⁵

Arendt makes the turn from love in forgiveness to love as anti-political through the metaphor of the child, explaining how the child as a product of a couple's love is both an entryway for the couple into the world and the point at which love must end when

¹¹³ *The Promise of Politics*, 58.

¹¹⁴ *The Human Condition*, 242.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

it becomes worldly.¹¹⁶ Love “destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others,”¹¹⁷ thus creating a new worldliness between people, and forces them to either recreate or end their love. Love thus extinguishes the moment it enters the public sphere. She separates love from politics by arguing against love and emotion in the courtroom in the *Eichmann* piece; rejecting love of a group and explaining group identity in the social sphere; and offering political alternatives to emotions such as love.

Arendt resists the entrance not only of love but also of other emotions into the political sphere, especially in her analysis of post-conflict justice. Instead of appealing to the audience’s sympathies by airing emotional victim testimony of “background witnesses,” she argues, the trial should rely on judging and thinking about the facts of the case. Arendt criticizes the trial as having an atmosphere of a “mass meeting, at which speaker after speaker does his best to arouse the audience.”¹¹⁸ This media spectacle puts anti-Semitism and the whole enterprise of the Holocaust on trial, and Arendt objects, saying that the court should objectively judge based on the specific facts of the case.

This denial of the role of love in politics has concrete ramifications for Arendt’s scholarly and personal identity: she refuses to replace her cosmopolitanism with Jewish victimhood, and she prescribes in the wake of genocide not a moral but a critical education for the masses. In a 1964 interview on the German series “Zur Person,” Arendt clarifies her dismissal of love from politics and explains why she said she never ‘loved’ the Jews as a people:

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 242.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 121.

This kind of organization has to do with a relationship to the world... The direct, personal relationship where one can speak of love, that exists, of course, foremost in real love. It also exists in a certain sense in friendship... People of the most divergent organizations can still be personal friends. But if you confuse these things, if you bring love to the negotiating table, to put it bluntly, I find that brutal. I find it unworldly and I find it to be a great disaster.¹¹⁹

Arendt's aversion to love for a group is different from her aversion to love-based politics; as *The Human Condition* and an essay about American desegregation explain, group identity and discrimination reside not in the political sphere but in the ambiguous social sphere.¹²⁰ Her arguments against American federally enforced desegregation of schools and against Jewish pride provide an important clue to her motivations in rejecting love from politics outright. Clearly, Arendt incorporated into her neoclassical political treatise some of her opinions about the tumultuous politics of the time, as well as her vehement insistence that she would not agree to belong to or "love" a group of Holocaust survivors.

Just as Arendt does not incorporate love into either the political or the social sphere; nor do either she or her contemporary, Jewish exile Theodor Adorno (who arguably, through his insistence that the visceral and painful elements of violence be noticed rather than ignored, leaves more room for the inclusion of emotion in political discourse) propose the use of love in preventing or memorializing genocide. Arendt argues for an education that questions mass culture and history and that encourages individuals to take responsibility for the world.¹²¹ Adorno is similarly prescriptive in his conclusions for "Education After Auschwitz"; he calls for anti-nationalism and

¹¹⁹ Günter Gaus, *Hannah Arendt, Zur Person* (Germany: ZDF, 1964), Television Interview.

¹²⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Random House, 1959; reprint, 2003).

¹²¹ *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961).

anti-barbarism education for susceptible rural populations, psychoanalysis of Nazi desk murderers, and a halt to the coldness that comes with relying on technology.¹²² However, Adorno goes further than Arendt, perhaps in reaction to Arendt's rejection of a survivor identity (Adorno incorporated his Holocaust survivor into his philosophical writing); he strongly resists what he sees as the failed attempt to preach love against coldness. Nonetheless, it is significant that neither Arendt nor Adorno, both prominent survivors exiled to America, prescribe love-based political solutions to prevent future atrocities. This was likely because of their fear of the educational mission of totalitarianism that helped fuel the Third Reich. Post-conflict theory in response to other atrocities might be more receptive to love-based education, which I will explore in the final chapter.

The last component of Arendt's rejection of love from politics is that she offers political alternatives to different moral absolutes, defining respect as love's counterpart in the realm of human affairs.¹²³ By providing these alternate terminologies for moral terms, she resists the entrance of moral absolutes such as love into politics. Love is restricted to "its own, narrowly circumscribed sphere," and is replaced by respect, or political friendship or "regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us." Thus, respect is sufficient to forgive the *what* of a person's actions – because it resides in the sphere of action – although love remains the only thing that can forgive the *who*, the person himself.¹²⁴

¹²² Theodor Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," in *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedmann (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967; reprint, 2003).

¹²³ Arendt also offers other political substitutes for their emotional counterparts: solidarity for compassion and pity, and citizenship for conscience.

¹²⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 243.

Maurizio D'Entrèves argues against George Kateb (who laments the anti-modernist turn he sees in Arendt's refusal to allow moral absolutes into politics¹²⁵) that Arendt does not eliminate morality from politics – although, as I have described, she does ban love – but merely creates the “moral resources” of forgiving and promise making in the public sphere.¹²⁶ Even if, as D'Entrèves asserts, Arendt successfully segregates public from private morality to guard against the risks of action, her exclusion of love and forgiveness from politics contradicts her grounding of forgiveness in love and her placement of forgiveness in the world of action.

Implications

Short of a biographical reading of Arendt's motivations for eliminating love from politics, it is difficult to say why she turned to segregate emotions such as love from the political world. This divergence may be explained by her complex distinction between forgiveness of small crimes and grave offenses. Love's separation from politics could support her assertion that human judgment is not enough to either forgive or punish the crimes of genocide, and thus should not enter the political sphere. Even so, the conceptual contradiction – that Arendt grounds forgiveness in love, places forgiveness in the world of action (which is connected to politics) and then bans love from the political sphere – remains.

Another possible explanation of Arendt's motivations for eliminating love from politics is that she wanted to maintain her affect-free, neoclassical philosophical style. Although, as I will explain in the next section, she does not always succeed at

¹²⁵ George Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

¹²⁶ Maurizio Pesserin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London: Routledge, 1994), 94.

writing dispassionately, it is possible that Arendt wants to maintain a consistent style of carefully argued philosophical claims so as to avoid being accused of falling back on her identity as a Jewish survivor, a woman, or an immigrant (Arendt was called cold and criticized by Zionists for rejecting her Jewish identity after the publication of the Eichmann reports in the *New Yorker*).

Regardless of the reasons for this distinction, the implications of these internally contradictory claims – that forgiveness is based in love, that forgiveness is public or political, and that love is anti-political – are that the contemporary reader must choose one of the different versions of forgiveness she offers. Later in this project, I will support the first of those three claims in order to extend Arendt’s love-based, radically generative forgiveness of daily offenses. I will apply this partial model to forgiveness after violent crime and genocide using the case study of Rwanda as an example of love-based forgiveness with political ramifications. The internal conceptual weaknesses of Arendt’s description of love and forgiveness provide an opening for an external critique that experimentally extends her framework to graver offenses. I do not attempt to reconcile Arendt’s contradicting claims about forgiveness, as Phillip Hansen does when he argues that Arendt does not leave out the possibility for forgiveness having political implications (in fact, he claims, she sees forgiveness as “incipiently a communal and thus political act”¹²⁷). Rather, I maintain that Arendt’s inconsistencies allow for new readings and applications of her theory.

Arendt’s claim that forgiveness and promise making are the only truly generating acts is quite radical; she sees these actions as the basis for political

¹²⁷ Phillip Hansen, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, History and Citizenship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 63.

morality grounded in plurality and *inter-est*. However, Arendt insists that love belongs outside the political sphere. This concept of forgiveness as an action (and thus belonging in the public sphere) contradicts her claim that love, the foundation for forgiveness, is inherently non-political, as well as her denial of love from politics while grounding forgiveness in love. This outright contradiction of ideas mirrors the conceptual turnabout regarding forgiveness of minor offenses and forgiveness of grave offenses. A close examination of these two turns – one internally inconsistent, the other merely intriguing – is crucial to better understand Arendt's philosophical use of the concept of forgiveness for political and philosophical purposes.

Arendt gives plenty of ways we can avoid the evils of totalitarianism or daily offenses through thinking or love, but when it comes to building a new future *after* violence or genocide, Arendt leaves love out of the sphere of human action, where I will argue love as a basis of forgiveness has great potential. Arendt lauds the possibility of forgiveness to generate new action, but as soon as it enters the political arena she insists it is no longer forgiveness but reconciliation, a concept with which she is much more comfortable. In my final chapter, I will argue that not only reconciliation, but also forgiveness can create new possibilities for *political* action by creating and healing connections between people.

Vacillating on Punishment and Forgiveness

Arendt wavers on the issues of punishment, forgiveness, and the power of human judgment of major crimes. She gives forgiveness radical power to restore action in minor cases and sees punishment as an alternate reaction, although she finds both inapplicable to grave offenses after genocide. However, her lapse into the

language of punishment, exemplified by her extrajudicial sentencing of Adolf Eichmann at the end of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, is reason to question her exclusion of both punishment and forgiveness from post-conflict politics. This inconsistency requires a critical reader to rethink the role of forgiveness after violence within Arendt's political philosophy.

Rejecting Forgiveness, Punishment, Vengeance, and Reconciliation

As we saw in the previous section, Arendt looks to the teachings of Jesus to find potential in love-based forgiveness of nonviolent and daily offenses. However, in the case of deliberate evil or horrific crimes, she denies the possibility of either forgiveness or punishment. She contrasts forgiveness to three alternate reactions to violence: punishment, vengeance, and reconciliation. The alternative to and opposite of forgiveness is punishment; both require the offended to see the offender as an equal, and both end predictable and repetitive cycles of harmful action.¹²⁸ Utilitarian forgiveness of daily offenses achieves the same thing as punishment but through different means. Both act as “control mechanisms”¹²⁹ for the risks that come with imperfect human action. However, unforgivable evils such as those committed by the Nazis are also unpunishable.

While punishment may be the alternative to forgiveness, vengeance is its opposite. Arendt relies on a classical interpretation of forgiveness and revenge as a vicious cycle (echoing both Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right* and one of Hegel's frequently cited examples, Euripides' *Oresteia*): forgiveness offers “freedom from vengeance, which incloses both the doer and sufferer in the relentless automatism of

¹²⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 241.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

the action process, which by itself need never come to an end.” Whereas vengeance re-enacts the offense, implicating everyone involved, forgiveness acts spontaneously.¹³⁰ Thus, vengeance “retains, though being a reaction, something of the original character of action,” unlike generative forgiveness.

As a final alternative to forgiveness, in her *Denktagebuch* (“thought diary”) Arendt suggests reconciliation while reflecting her 1950 postwar reunion with Martin Heidegger. Here she describes forgiveness as having the potential to destroy relationships by putting the forgiver above the forgiven. As a more suitable alternative to greater offenses like Heidegger’s desertion of critical thinking in joining the National Socialists, she offers reconciliation, “an averted glance, a silent passing over of injustice, an acceptance of suffering as destiny that does not require self-reflection about one’s own potential to be among the guilty.”¹³¹ In her private journal, Arendt seems to have no qualms about reconciliation’s lack of self-reflection. However, later in *The Human Condition* she asserts that reconciliation requires more than an averted gaze. Roger Berkowitz suggests that in her discussion of forgiveness as action-generating in *The Human Condition* Arendt might have meant something closer to reconciliation, like “release” or “change of mind,” which as she mentions is a closer translation of the word in the Book of Luke than “forgiveness.”¹³² Moreover, Arendt rejects punishment and reconciliation for Eichmann (vengeance would have been assassinating the Nazi criminal in Argentina, where Israeli spies found him).

¹³⁰ Ibid., 241.

¹³¹ Hannah Arendt, Ursula Ludz, and Ingeborg Nordmann, *Denktagebuch (Thinking Diary)*, Cited in Maier-Katkin 186 (Munich: Piper, 2002), 3-7.

¹³² Roger Berkowitz, "Bearing Logs on Our Shoulders: Reconciliation, Non-Reconciliation, and the Building of a Common World," *Theory & Event* 14, no. 1 (2011): 11.

Her assessment of Holocaust crimes as being beyond these normal human judgments is important in contrast to her extrajudicial sentencing of Eichmann to death.¹³³

Arendt deems war criminals also past the point of forgiving. She claims that the Nazis removed their own personhood by focusing on their duties to the totalitarian system instead of thinking or judging, “as if nobody were left to be either punished or forgiven.”¹³⁴ For Arendt in 1966, this is no longer radical evil, but “the evil committed by nobodies, that is, by human beings who refuse to be persons.”¹³⁵ She denies the Nazis the possibility of forgiveness: “in rootless evil there is no person left whom one could ever forgive.”¹³⁶ She rejects Christian formulations of affective, empathetic forgiveness in favor of objective judgment. “The reflection that you yourself might have done wrong under the same circumstances may kindle a spirit of forgiveness, but those who today refer to Christian charity seem strangely confused on this issue too.”¹³⁷ Furthermore, her claim in the *Denktagebuch* that forgiveness eliminates the possibility of a relationship between the forgiver and the forgiven indicates a fear of affect side of forgiveness.¹³⁸

By situating totalitarian atrocities within Kant’s conception of “radical evil,” Arendt solidifies her assessment that forgiveness is inapplicable to grave offenses. She deems the slaughter of millions by “desk bureaucrats” to be beyond forgiveness or traditional punishment: “there are crimes which men can neither punish nor forgive.

¹³³ In *Men In Dark Times*, we find that “[e]very judgment is open to forgiveness, every act of judging can change into an act of forgiving; to judge and to forgive are but the two sides of the same coin” (p. 148). Since Arendt deems forgiveness a judgment, I will consider forgiveness’ alternatives to be judgments in the sphere of action as well.

¹³⁴ Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 111.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 95.

¹³⁷ *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 296.

¹³⁸ Arendt, Ludz, and Nordmann, *Denktagebuch (Thinking Diary)*, 3.

When the impossible was made possible it became the unpunishable, unforgivable absolute evil which could no longer be understood.”¹³⁹

Arendt claims, “men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish and that they are unable to punish what has turned out to be unforgivable.” These unforgivable, unpunishable cases transcend, almost satanically, both human action and human judgment.¹⁴⁰ Through the Biblical metaphor of the *skandalon* (or *mikshol*, a stumbling block placed intentionally in front of a blind man), Arendt explains why it would be better that the “offender to the world”¹⁴¹ of malicious or violent evil be flung into the sea with a millstone hung around his neck than he be forgiven.¹⁴² Despite later reconsidering punishment as an alternative to pardoning (if not to forgiveness), in extreme cases like Nazi atrocities, Arendt sees no use for punishment.¹⁴³ Moreover, she predicts that punitive measures alone will be unable to prevent repeated atrocities.¹⁴⁴ Her argument that human judgment cannot address the enormity of Nazi crimes is curious, given her own judgment of Eichmann.

Finally, Arendt also rejects reconciliation as a judgment after serious offenses. The *Denktagebuch* description makes Arendt’s judgment of Eichmann what Berkowitz calls “non-reconciliation,” a separate political judgment that someone is ineligible not only for punishment or forgiveness, but also for reconciliation.¹⁴⁵ Reconciliation with her teacher and lover Heidegger may be an exception. Her

¹³⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1951; repr., 1958), 459.

¹⁴⁰ *The Human Condition*, 241.

¹⁴¹ "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 125.

¹⁴² *The Human Condition*, 241.

¹⁴³ "Letter to W.H. Auden, 14 February 1960." Cited in Ferguson, 140.

¹⁴⁴ *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 273.

¹⁴⁵ Berkowitz, "Bearing Logs on Our Shoulders: Reconciliation, Non-Reconciliation, and the Building of a Common World," 3.

judgment that Eichmann should hang – and her indignant refutation of her detractors' claims that she wanted forgiveness or reconciliation for Eichmann and the Nazis – shows her rejection of reconciliation in most grave cases.

She also wavers on when forgiveness itself should be applied. I posit her inconsistency on forgiveness is a result of her efforts to put forth a comprehensive neoclassical political theory and to account for totalitarian atrocities as ruptures in that system. Thus, while the *Denktagebuch*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and later essays situate forgiveness in the exceptional political situation of genocide in Arendt's lifetime, *The Human Condition* attempts to isolate the phenomenon in a world of action. It is the very definitiveness with which Arendt rejects forgiveness, punishment, vengeance, and reconciliation as viable judgments after serious crimes that makes her own judgment of Eichmann so contradictory. This contrast calls into question Arendt's argument against forgiveness of violent offenses.

The Exception: Punishing Eichmann

Arendt contradicts her own claim that forgiveness and its alternatives are insufficient in grave cases by writing a passionate sentencing of Adolf Eichmann at the end of the Epilogue of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, causing a rupture in her restriction of forgiveness to daily offenses only. This extrajudicial sentence, an alternative to the Israeli court's death sentence, is an impassioned defense of the power of human judgment. This judgment outlines his objective guilt before the law for participating in the murder of millions of Jews and thus affronting the whole human race (she allows for no excuse; "in politics, obedience and support are the same").¹⁴⁶ Arendt

¹⁴⁶ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 279.

ultimately justifies Eichmann's punishment not for victims' private desire for retribution, but rather for the damage to the common humanity inflicted by Eichmann's refusal to share the earth with a plurality of human beings ("this is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang").¹⁴⁷ In her description of the abyss that the Nazi crimes opened in society, Arendt lapses into the language of punishment and an ancient concept of a balance that needs to be restored. Significantly, the law before which she finds Eichmann guilty is not the law of the state of Israel or recently passed international laws, but rather a higher moral law of Kantian *sensus communus*.

Regardless of the extralegal authority upon which Arendt bases her judgment of Eichmann, the fact remains that this punishment is the exception that disproves the rule. Punishment after serious offenses, even if hypothetical, works against Arendt's general claim that both forgiveness and punishment are inappropriate reactions to serious offenses. Arendt's breach of her own ban of punishment from grave offenses allows for an exploration of other judgments after genocide – including forgiveness.

Implications

Why does Arendt sentence Eichmann to death, a punishment of unpunishable evil that she herself rejects in other works? Roger Berkowitz suggests that it may have been an effort to restore the supremacy of judgment in a world of uncertainty after mass atrocity.¹⁴⁸ It is also possible that Arendt's infuriation with the banality of Eichmann's crimes caused her to repudiate (if only momentarily) her assessment that punishment is insufficient. Regardless of Arendt's motivations for abandoning her

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Berkowitz, "Bearing Logs on Our Shoulders: Reconciliation, Non-Reconciliation, and the Building of a Common World," 2.

exclusion of punishment or forgiveness from grave crimes, the implications are the same: what remains after considering this curious incongruence is the possibility for critical analysis of forgiveness and punishment. While forgiveness of Nazis such as Eichmann would likely have been neither viable nor popular – indeed, some of Arendt’s detractors accused her of forgiving Eichmann – we must reconsider forgiveness, if not of genocide’s orchestrators then at least of its perpetrators. This project will further explore the potential for forgiveness in post-conflict settings.

Banality of Evil and Forgiveness

This section employs Arendt’s idea of banal evil as a possible route to understanding or forgiving violent crimes. Through the mechanism of empathy, Arendt’s concept of the banality of evil may facilitate conceptions of forgiveness, despite her resistance to forgiveness and the intrusion of emotion or affect into the public sphere: if we can see perpetrators as unthinking, rather than as demonically evil, we might be able make space for forgiveness by attempting to understand their motivations for complying with orders in the totalitarian system. Arendt is in a way writing a warning to humankind: Eichmann’s banality of evil could potentially manifest in any human who ceases to think; anyone could be banally evil. Perhaps if victims understood or empathized with the transformations of humans to inhuman murderers as a banal process that could happen to anyone, they would more readily consider forgiveness. Thus, the opening banality gives to forgiveness can facilitate a reconsideration of Arendt’s restriction of forgiveness to minor offenses only.

Arendt's Reaction to Nazi Crimes

For Arendt, the framework of interpersonal forgiveness is far from applicable to Jewish Holocaust survivors in Arendt's time and the Nazis. She does not mean by her often-misunderstood phrase "banality of evil" that Eichmann's deeds be forgiven; on the contrary, she wants decisive and thoughtful judgment of his acts.¹⁴⁹ Jews in Arendt's time (and Arendt herself – who never considered forgiving Eichmann or the Nazis) could neither forgive nor reconcile with the Nazi leadership. Arendt finds the idea of conciliation between the Nazis and Jews ridiculous: she incredulously quotes Eichmann saying he "'would like to find peace with [his] former enemies' – a sentiment he shared... unbelievably, with many ordinary Germans, who were heard to express themselves in exactly the same terms at the end of the war."¹⁵⁰

Banality Enabling Forgiveness

However, through the concept of empathy, Arendt's theory of banality of evil and thoughtlessness may provide a pathway to forgiveness of extreme or violent offenses, though Arendt herself would reject this progression.¹⁵¹ What Arendt would prefer is not an empathetic or an affective reaction to the crime, but rather that Eichmann "think" and act to stop the violence. This theory of thinking and judging relies on Kantian concepts of the *sensus communus* (sense of others, literally "common sense," that represents the viewpoint of others to find a common or higher sense of right and wrong) and categorical imperative, rather than empathy or emotion.

¹⁴⁹ Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 90.

¹⁵⁰ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 53.

¹⁵¹ I understand empathy in this project as the ability to experience the feelings or emotions of another person.

Indeed, Arendt specifically attempts to replace the concept of empathy with that of imagination, explaining that an observer of poverty imagines but does not conform to the experiences of another by “representing to myself how I would feel if I had to live there, that is, I try to think in the place of the slum-dweller.”¹⁵² However, the above passage reveals a lapse in Arendt’s own language; even as she urges imagination and thinking instead of empathy and feeling, she slips into the language of emotion, describing how she would “feel.” Therefore, Arendt cannot entirely avoid the concept of empathy, which we may employ as a mechanism by which the banality of evil can lead to greater understanding and forgiveness.

Arendt analyzes Eichmann’s character in two directions: she elevates his acts to “transcend the realm of human affairs and the potentialities of human power”¹⁵³ by judging his deeds to be beyond human punishment or forgiveness, and she also insists that Eichmann’s evil deeds were banal, or “stupid.” Eichmann lacked imagination, she claims, and did not think. This explanation of Eichmann’s evil deeds, along with her careful biographical portrait of the Nazi criminal, from his childhood to his careerism and vapid adherence to Nazi commands, helps the reader understand his part in the Nazi bureaucracy. Indeed, some passages put the reader in Eichmann’s shoes, even as they scorn and deride his empty-headedness, his lack of imagination, and his unthinkingness. For example:

[i]n March, 1941, during the preparation for the war against Russia, Eichmann was suddenly put in charge of a new subsection, or rather, the name of his subsection was changed from Emigration and Evacuation to Jewish Affairs, Evacuation. From then on, though he was not yet informed of the Final Solution, he should have been aware not only that emigration had definitely come to an end, but that

¹⁵² Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 140.

¹⁵³ *The Human Condition*, 241.

deportation was to take its place. But Eichmann was not a man to take hints, and since no one had yet told him differently, he continued to think in terms of emigration.¹⁵⁴

In this passage as in the rest of the book, Arendt does not (as her detractors claimed) cut the criminal any slack; earlier in the report, she finds Eichmann's assumption that his testimony would evoke "'normal, human' sympathy for a hard-luck story"¹⁵⁵ laughable. However, her careful consideration of his internal dialogue, personal history and motivations – and above all his vacuousness – allows the reader to empathize or understand why Eichmann carried out the Führer's orders to the end.

Such attempts to understand the processes of evildoers like Eichmann may allow us to understand evil *acts* on a human level, rather than elevating them to a superhuman or religious status as Arendt does in her analysis of *skandalon*. For Arendt, forgiveness requires lowering oneself to the level of the perpetrator and realizing one could have done wrong, too. She realizes the importance of forgiving small offenses to allow for future actions. This restores relationships and allows for future actions without miring people in the past. What she does not realize is the potential of her framework to enable forgiveness by demystifying evil.

A realist or *realpolitik* challenger might contend that this view of empathy and forgiveness is Pollyannaish and sentimental or that politics are rough and do not allow for the intrusion of emotional acts such as forgiveness upon the rational choices of individuals. I would offer a counterargument, however, that the distinction between rational judgment and sentimentality is a false dichotomy to begin with, and moreover that affect has an important role to play in the political and judicial

¹⁵⁴ "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 153.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

processes that occur after both mundane offenses and violent crime. The airing of affect or the recognition that it is already present allows for a more realistic view of action in the public sphere. Moreover, acknowledging the political implications of forgiveness elevates a previously abstract moral or religious concept and empowers it as a generative action for good in a rough political landscape. This is not an easy feat to achieve, but it is important to give forgiveness a chance to have political impact.

Arendt herself might contend that the banality of evil is not about forgiveness, that it improves our understanding of evil within the totalitarian system but not of the emotional motivations of those who commit it. I would counter, however, that any attempt to understand or share another's internal motivations has the potential to lead to empathy, which, as I will argue in the final chapter, is a route to forgiveness.

Implications

This progression from banality to understanding, empathy, and forgiveness suggests the possibility of Arendt's own philosophical tools to expand the framework for forgiving serious offenses. An internal critique of her concept of forgiveness and its relation to her other theories can pave the way for an external critique such as the one mounted in the final chapter, an example of the successful role of forgiveness of violent crime in post-conflict politics. This understanding of the crime, perpetrator, and totalitarian system that is facilitated by her concept of the banality of evil may, although Arendt would resist this use of the idea, facilitate the kind of understanding that can lead to forgiveness.

Conclusion

This internal or immanent critique of Hannah Arendt provided a background to her political theory; pointed out her internal contradictions on forgiveness, love, punishment, and other alternative judgments; and suggested a use for her theory of banality of evil for the purposes of understanding forgiveness after genocide. These different contradictions, inconsistencies, and new directions of analysis help elucidate Arendt's nuanced depiction of forgiveness. Her radically expansive view of forgiveness in daily life is conceptually at odds with her moral conservatism when it comes to applying that view of forgiveness to serious crimes or post-conflict politics. Her apprehension is a crucial tension that needs to be teased out in order to better understand both her theory and forgiveness more broadly.

These insights provide important new questions for Arendt's readers. First, the inconsistency of love, the basis for forgiveness, being banned from the political sphere results in the reader's imperative to choose which version of love and forgiveness he prefers, since not all three claims can remain viable. I suggest that a version that bases forgiveness in love and allows for it to occur either publicly or privately – without eliminating love from politics – is the most useful model for a post-conflict study of forgiveness. Second, Arendt's inconsistency on the viability of punishment, forgiveness and other alternatives reveals a more fundamental flaw in her theory on the limits of forgiveness. This contradiction calls for a reconsideration of both punishment versus forgiveness and the role forgiveness can play in post-conflict politics. Finally, Arendt's theory about the banality of evil can, despite her

own intentions for the theory, provide an opening to forgiveness of the worst offenders by promoting understanding and empathy.

The conclusions of these three different immanent critiques reveal tensions in Arendt's theory of forgiveness, thus allowing a normative project such as the one I undertake in the final chapter to accept those elements of the theory that are useful and rejecting those that are not. An internal critique can thus lay the foundation for a proposal to implement Arendt's framework of love-based forgiveness of daily trespasses in for more major offenses, even those as grave as intentional murder or genocide. It is not just for philosophical practice that I analyze Arendt's theory from within; it is crucial to ground a normative claim about forgiveness and politics in serious scholarship and theoretical investigation. In the next chapter, I will do the same for the forgiveness scholarship of Jacques Derrida, a French theorist who deals with some of the same issues that concern Arendt but using a very different strategy.

Chapter Two

Jacques Derrida and Forgiveness

In this section, I will suggest that Jacques Derrida's deconstructive theory of pure forgiveness of the unforgivable is a persuasive philosophical concept that nonetheless breaks down at the moment when it enters into a political discourse. Whereas Derrida's aporia of pure forgiveness is consistent within his deconstructive framework, his admiration of Nelson Mandela's morality both shows a discord between exceptional forgiveness and universal justice, and exemplifies what Derrida elsewhere sees as the corruption of the deconstructive concept by the political. The concept of pure forgiveness, however, resonates with the seemingly impossible release of negative emotions surrounding severe trauma that survivors of genocide describe. While I acknowledge that Derrida is not an explicitly political thinker and that his writings about politics more closely resemble an aesthetic or literary reading than an engagement with policy, I engage in this immanent critique in order to assess the relevance of his concept of pure forgiveness for post-conflict political theory.

Derrida's Aporia of Forgiveness

Developed mainly for a seminar on forgiveness he taught in 2001 at New York University with Avital Ronell, the concept of forgiveness is one of several "aporias," or thought experiments juxtaposing the possible and the impossible, that Derrida began exploring late in his career.¹⁵⁶ As such, his theory of pure forgiveness as a "madness of the impossible"¹⁵⁷ fits into the broader deconstructive framework.

¹⁵⁶ Benoit Peeters, *Derrida: A Biography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 287.

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes, *Thinking in Action* (London: Routledge, 2001), 39.

In his essay *On Forgiveness* he describes forgiveness as only possible in forgiving the impossible, meaning that the seemingly impossible task is only possible when the crime is so heinous as to be seemingly unforgivable.¹⁵⁸ This puzzling description of forgiveness nonetheless fits into his deconstructive schema of the aporia. Moreover, Derrida's pure forgiveness is a powerful concept because it begins to unravel survivors' difficulty in coming to terms with terrible crimes and releasing the offender from resentment or culpability.

Background: Derrida and Deconstruction

An outcast his whole life as a Sephardic Jew raised in Algeria and marginalized under the Vichy colonial system, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) is best known as the father of deconstruction. This critique of Western philosophy attempts to undermine preconceived ideas by turning them inside out and by both reversing and destroying their dichotomies. In binaries where one idea is dominant (such as male-female or signifier-signified), deconstruction both reverses and breaks down the hierarchy. This critique is strongly rooted in language and textual content; his concept of *différance*, the "non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences," focuses on the sign and the necessity of writing to reveal the relativity of meaning.¹⁵⁹ Critiques of deconstruction aside (is it useful? Playful? Intellectually wasteful?), its attack on moral universalisms provides an alternative to all-encompassing philosophical or ethical systems.

Deconstruction's trope is that it reveals absence to be the new presence, distorting philosophical and literary narratives and revealing them to both enclose and

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 11.

destroy dualities. A concept loses its purity when it is circulated in discourse, an unavoidable but nonetheless important problem in philosophy. Derrida's essay *White Mythology* claims that metaphor is a necessary part of philosophy; language is itself mere metaphor.¹⁶⁰ Like knife-grinders who efface coins' markings and thus devalue them, metaphysicians participate in effacement through metaphor, in which the idea is "worn and effaced, polished by the circulation of the philosophical concept."¹⁶¹ The concept of effacement captures deconstruction's criticism of philosophy that over-uses universal concepts (from Aristotle and the classical world-builders to Kant and the Enlightenment thinkers and Hegel and the historicists). Derrida proposes instead a new philosophy that rejects metaphysics' tropes of presence, telos, truth, and the good – one that shows how ideals turns back on themselves and reveals their dualisms. Late in his career, Derrida shifted his focus toward ethical and political questions. This "phase of affirmative deconstruction" takes on political issues, from September 11th to the death penalty, although Cheah and Guerlac argue that Derrida's philosophy was always politically engaged.¹⁶²

The Puzzle of Forgiveness

The late Derrida turns to the aporia, or philosophical puzzles that present an impasse by being both possible and impossible. These include the impossibilities of gifts, hospitality, forgiveness, and mourning. As thought experiments, they use deconstruction to find contradictions in philosophical concepts. Temporarily setting

¹⁶⁰ "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (1971).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶² Pheng Cheah and Suzanne Guerlac, "Introduction," in *Derrida and the Time of the Political*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Suzanne Guerlac (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 6, 9.; A.J.P. Thomson, *Deconstruction and Democracy: Derrida's Politics of Friendship*, Continuum Studies in Continental Philosophy (London: Continuum, 2005), 58.

aside pragmatic concerns about separating forgiveness from (post-conflict) politics, I will now launch an internal or immanent critique of forgiveness. Staying within the deconstructive framework, this critique will reveal contradictions between his aporia of pure forgiveness and his work on Nelson Mandela.

It is in the context of a dialogue with Vladimir Jankélévitch's work on forgiveness and against the backdrop of the Holocaust that Derrida begins his deconstruction of forgiveness. The French government had recently eliminated the statute of limitation, *l'imprescriptible*, for crimes against humanity. Jankélévitch's 1967 philosophical exploration, *Le Pardon* or *Forgiveness*, covers the Judeo-Christian and philosophical concepts of forgiveness, the power to forgive the crimes against forgiveness itself, and the gift of forgiveness as being similar to love.¹⁶³ However, Jankélévitch changes his mind about forgiveness in a chapter of a later book, *L'imprescriptible*, arguing against forgiveness of the German people.¹⁶⁴

Derrida traces the shift in Jankélévitch's argument between two key texts. *Le Pardon* (1967) claims that forgiveness is possible even for inexpiable crimes: mad forgiveness "forgives one time, and this time is literally *one time for all!*"¹⁶⁵ In *L'imprescriptible* (1971) he retracts his early exploration of forgiveness in the post-Holocaust case because the Nazi crimes are too monstrous to forgive – "[f]orgiveness is as strong as evil, but evil is as strong as forgiveness."¹⁶⁶ Jankélévitch's thought influences Derrida's emphasis on the sovereign and the problem of having a single identity to forgive unconditionally. However, these two works are strongly grounded

¹⁶³ Jankélévitch, *Forgiveness*.

¹⁶⁴ "Should We Pardon Them? (Originally *L'imprescriptible* 1971)," 553.

¹⁶⁵ *Forgiveness*, 154.

¹⁶⁶ "Should We Pardon Them? (Originally *L'imprescriptible* 1971)."

in the French legal context of the statute of limitations on crimes against humanity. Derrida explains the seeming contradiction between *Le Pardon* and *L'imprescriptible*: "pure forgiveness is uncoupled from the institutional application of its principles in the same way that Jankélévitch's work *Forgiveness* is uncoupled from *Pardonner?* [the chapter in *L'imprescriptible*]." ¹⁶⁷ Moreover, Derrida fails to account for Jankélévitch's initial Arendtian assertion in *Le Pardon* that the moral force of forgiveness lies in the fact that it erases the past, effectively causing offenses to no longer have happened. Whereas Jankélévitch ultimately finds that the Holocaust makes forgiveness impossible, for Derrida the Holocaust simply reaffirms that "because forgiveness seems to become impossible that forgiveness finds a starting point, a new starting point." ¹⁶⁸ Here is where Derrida differs from Jankélévitch: the former expropriates forgiveness to fit into his deconstructive framework, while the latter reworks his theory when forgiveness challenges it.

Jankélévitch criticizes the use of forgiveness after the Holocaust because the perpetrators did not repent or ask for forgiveness. In contrast, Derrida criticizes the use of forgiveness after political violence for degrading Abrahamic forgiveness by attempting to fulfill a function, such as repentance, changing the offender, or preventing a return to previous evil. ¹⁶⁹ Derrida critiques Jankélévitch for refusing to accept absolute forgiveness, although Jankélévitch flirts with the concept. ¹⁷⁰ As Ethan Kleinberg notes, Derrida's intellectual gymnastics of impossible-possible

¹⁶⁷ Ethan Kleinberg, "To Atone and to Forgive: Jaspers, Jankélévitch/Derrida, and the Possibility of Forgiveness," in *Vladimir Jankélévitch and the Question of Forgiveness*, ed. Alan Udoff (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2013), 153.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Kearney, "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida," in *Questioning God*, ed. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 54.

¹⁶⁹ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 34.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

forgiveness allows him to “escape responsibility for the ‘monstrous crimes’ at once ‘cruel and massive.’ After all, the death camps are not the place where the impossible happened but where everything became possible.”¹⁷¹ However, Derrida’s approach is not immune to post-genocide critique, and this project will apply his pure forgiveness to the Rwandan genocide.

Late in his career, Derrida argues through the lens of aporia that one can only forgive that which is impossible to forgive – mortal or grave crimes those committed in Germany under the Third Reich. Forgiveness “only becomes possible from the moment that it appears impossible. Its history would begin, on the contrary, with the unforgivable” such as the atrocities of Nazi death camps.¹⁷² While both Derrida and Arendt note the impossibility of forgiving mortal crimes, Derrida moves past Arendt’s extrajudicial sentencing and instead revitalizes forgiveness when the crime is grave enough to become unforgivable. Forgiving the impossible is thus useful because it helps explain how such a seemingly difficult task becomes possible at the darkest moment. This is one contribution Derrida adds to Arendt’s work: a theory that recognizes forgiveness’ circular and improbable nature, more fully capturing its power to heal relationships in the unpredictable post-conflict landscape of conflict.

Derrida’s most innovative contributions to thought about forgiveness are the elements of unconditionality and non-sovereignty in pure forgiveness. He insists upon a “radical purity” and unconditionality of forgiveness (that is, not asking

¹⁷¹ Kleinberg, "To Atone and to Forgive: Jaspers, Jankélévitch/Derrida, and the Possibility of Forgiveness," 154.

¹⁷² Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 37.

anything of the forgiven, including not asking him to change).¹⁷³ Unconditionality is as crucial to Derrida's theory of forgiveness as it is to his theory of gifts: he claims that is impossible for anyone, especially not the person forgiving (or giving a gift) to state, "I am forgiving; forgiveness has happened" or "I am giving." This is because forgiveness defies practical application, and an utterance proclaiming it both defies its impossibility and is unfounded because the concept is beyond cognitive understanding.¹⁷⁴ For Derrida, forgiveness is not only unconditional but also divorced from sovereignty. The modern nation-state was born out of violence, and complicates issues of international human rights with sovereignty or individual power issues. For pure forgiveness, Derrida demands the dissociation of sovereignty and unconditionality, arguing for "a forgiveness without power: *unconditional but without sovereignty*."¹⁷⁵ This means taking away the power of the individual to judge and punish in order to enable pure and radical forgiveness.

Moreover, he draws the important distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation, or a calculation to heal a relationship or fix a situation where wrongs have occurred.¹⁷⁶ Pointing out a discord between unconditional "globalized" Christian forgiveness and conditional, economically exchanged forgiveness, he distinguishes pure forgiveness (which has little bearing on actual scenarios of post-conflict politics) from reconciliation. This makes an external criticism of his isolated philosophical concept of forgiveness difficult.

¹⁷³ *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 25.

¹⁷⁴ "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," in *Late Derrida*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell and Arnold Davidson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 232.

¹⁷⁵ *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 59.

¹⁷⁶ Kirby and Amy Ziering Dick, "Derrida," (USA: Jane Doe Films, 2002).

Derrida opposes the use of forgiveness in a normative discourse of mourning and reconciliation at risk of corrupting pure forgiveness. He insists that forgiveness and reconciliation are two separate processes and that the use of the language of forgiveness in dialogues of reconciliation prevents pure forgiveness. This is because, he argues, the entrance of a third party corrupts pure forgiveness and at the moment the victim understands the perpetrator as something other than a perpetrator, pure forgiveness gives way to a deliberate process of reconciliation. Here my previous definition of the political (as the relationships between people as individuals and members of social, political, historical or economic groups) can clarify Derrida's aversion to the intervention of the state in forgiveness as wariness of the effacement of forgiveness. This dissociation is important because, unlike Arendt, it separates judging from forgiving. The implication is that forgiveness is at odds with punishment, which Western systems of law associate with justice. However, these two concepts share the characteristics of universality and political applicability, and the Rwanda example will show their successful coexistence.

Derrida poses forgiveness only in the context of a singular perpetrator, explaining what it would look like *s'il y en a*, "if there is such a thing," in a 2002 roundtable discussion following a seminar on forgiveness.¹⁷⁷ Forgiveness can only be between two people on their own terms; he cites the example of South African TRC to show that the state cannot forgive on behalf of the victim.¹⁷⁸ Forgiveness is the sole decision of the victim, and the offender must retain her identity of an offender while the victim retains his victimhood. The only instance, then, in which Derrida's

¹⁷⁷ Kearney, "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida."

¹⁷⁸ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 43.

pure forgiveness could play out among actual people is an imaginary scenario in which a victim repeatedly forgives an offender as the offender continues to harm the victim, thus maintaining the status of each individual as victim and offender. This scenario, though unrealistic and narrow, describes forgiveness only if the offender, repeatedly offending, would remain an offender and the victim, repeatedly victimized, would remain a victim while forgiving. The moment the victim stops seeing the offender as an offender, there is no longer an offender to forgive. This puzzle of forgiveness offers many immediately obvious but shallow points of critique. For example, there is the concern that the above scenario echoes cycles of domestic abuse and could be critiqued from a feminist angle; the argument that forgiveness as a deconstructive concept transcends all philosophical categories; and the critique of pure forgiveness as an inhuman act.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, part of Derrida's argument against the universality of forgiveness is a practical concern: if everyone forgave every offense, "there would no longer be an innocent person on earth – and therefore no one in the position to judge or arbitrate."¹⁸⁰ Derrida isolates the possibility of pure forgiveness to a hypothetical, a move that seems to fall in line with both his deconstruction of forgiveness and his reworking of metaphysical approaches to metaphor. However, it runs counter to his political engagement in the Mandela piece.

The exact scenario of forgiveness aside, the pure forgiveness model as an aporia is consistent with the deconstructive attempt to break down dualities and show ideas enclosing both their possibility and their impossibility. Derrida's forgiveness (both in his theoretical explanation in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* and in his

¹⁷⁹ Mary-Jane Rubenstein, "Of Ghosts and Angels: Derrida, Kushner, and the Impossibility of Forgiveness," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 9, no. 1 (2008): 84.

¹⁸⁰ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 27.

imaginary scenario from the roundtable discussion) exemplifies the deconstruction of a concept. Moreover, he resists the effacement of the idea of forgiveness, which is coherent with his work on metaphor. Thus, it is consistent with the broader deconstructive project to reveal and subvert binaries of philosophical concepts. Derrida may have moved in the direction of the aporia late in life in order to explore some of the most extraordinary human concepts – hospitality, gifts, and forgiveness – to narrow his theoretical goals at the end of his career. His aporia of forgiveness within the deconstructive framework is especially powerful because it makes an internal critique difficult, though not impossible. Deconstruction is based on a series of contradictions, so pointing out contradictions as flaws in the puzzle of forgiveness is a limited strategy. However, I will later develop a critique of forgiveness in relation to his liberal praise of Nelson Mandela in order to tease out important tensions. Seemingly impossible pure forgiveness resonates with this project’s encounters with forgiveness in post-genocide Rwanda, and has the potential to be accessible to readers of all disciplines because it is relevant to forgiving grave offenses. It is crucial to engage with Derrida’s aporia of pure forgiveness on his own terms before integrating it into a political theory of forgiveness.

Derrida’s philosophical mobility and lack of systematic unity make a critique of his aporia, itself a hole in the critical framework, difficult. “I have no cut-and-dry positions,” he tells a 1998 interviewer, and he vacillates on his analysis of forgiveness’ applicability to the Holocaust and other genocides.¹⁸¹ Derrida’s self-effacing attitude about his work on this topic late in his career also highlights the

¹⁸¹ Michal Ben-Naftali, "An Interview with Professor Jacques Derrida," *Shoah Resource Center* (1998): 4.

difficulty of forgiveness and its application to post-conflict politics. It is tempting to follow Derrida's own caveat when he says, "[e]ach time I make a theoretical statement about the event of forgiveness I am sure that I miss it."¹⁸² Nevertheless, having resisted the urge and affirmed pure forgiveness' internal consistency, I will now examine tensions between universalisms and utilities of justice and forgiveness.

Inconsistent Universalisms: Forgiveness and Mandela's Ideals

Derrida deconstructs forgiveness, denying it the morally universal power he grants Mandela's ideals. However, in an earlier piece he lauds the imprisoned South African leader for his commitment to a higher law of justice and equality.¹⁸³ His praise for this universalizing morality, allowing for the application of a standard of justice to politics, contradicts his denial of pure forgiveness being applied to politics.

Although this analysis has so far treated forgiveness and justice as similar universal ideals, it is important to note that they are quite different concepts that, as Western legal history shows, are often placed at loggerheads. Their comparison is useful to this critique because both are "pure" concepts with Judeo-Christian implications and rich controversy surrounding their application to politics. Both are abstract philosophical concepts, and thus antithetical to Derrida's scorn for the corrupting influence of effacement. This analysis aims not to examine different philosophies of justice versus forgiveness; for the purposes of an internal critique it merely identifies both as universal concepts.

¹⁸² Kearney, "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida," 53.

¹⁸³ Jacques Derrida, "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration," in *For Nelson Mandela*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Mustapha Tlili (New York: Seaver Books, 1987).

It is not that Derrida forgets his deconstructive roots when he turns to Mandela; on the contrary, he deconstructs both Mandela's admiration (admiring Mandela and admiring Mandela's admiration) and the historical moment (Mandela's reflective view toward the unjust apartheid law showing the law its own illegality).¹⁸⁴ Rather, it is Mandela's ideas and his use of them that Derrida fails to deconstruct. Derrida (almost uncritically) traces the historical narrative of Mandela's application of a universal ideal to politics, itself an example of what Derrida usually would deride as effacement of the idea. Mandela and the African National Congress' Freedom Charter resisted Africanist groups' black rights agenda and insisted upon the inclusion of "the entire nation," including the white oppressors. The Charter is thus, Derrida claims, a performative action that prescribes equality.¹⁸⁵ This demonstrates Mandela's admiration for both his white oppressors and his Anglo-American democratic ideals of equality and freedom. Mandela reflects these ideals onto the same white population whose European Enlightenment ancestors touted them. Derrida's Mandela essay presents a liberal idea of justice (echoing Gandhi and Martin Luther King) that emphasizes respect for the individual and a higher morality that transcends current laws. Perhaps Derrida was caught up in the tide of social justice and anti-apartheid activism in 1989.

Derrida's Opposition to Universalisms

Derrida usually remains steadfastly against the acceptance of a universal ideal as such (which may be defined as a general moral standard for a concept such as

¹⁸⁴ Suzanne Guerlac, "The Fragility of the Pardon (Derrida and Ricoeur)," in *Derrida and the Time of the Political*, ed. Suzanne Guerlac and Pheng Cheah (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 264.

¹⁸⁵ Derrida, "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration," 21.

equality, justice, or forgiveness), including in his deconstruction of the aporia of forgiveness. Deconstruction's very mission runs counter to a universal ideal that would be applicable to a variety of moral situations; on the contrary, deconstruction aims to show universals' self-encapsulating self-contradictions. This general refusal to accept as given the moralistic standards that grew out of Western Enlightenment philosophy makes the earlier admiration of Mandela's sense of justice all the more perplexing and contradictory, and pokes holes in the forgiveness piece's critique of being moralistic. In his analysis of forgiveness, Derrida openly critiques universal moral standards and eliminates them from his view of impossible forgiveness. However, the concept of forgiveness is inseparable from its Biblical origins and their moralistic or universalistic implications:

Now the danger of becoming moralistic is obviously a danger... I do not think that there is anything secular in our time. First of all, the concept of secularity is a religious concept... If I am interested in forgiveness and the gift it is because I think what is at stake today in our time is something that is neither secular nor religious in the traditional sense. It is something else.¹⁸⁶

While Derrida allows forgiveness a Judeo-Christian lineage, he suggests a radical shift away from the religious narrative.¹⁸⁷ If forgiveness is not allowed to stray toward moral universalism (even if it cannot avoid a certain religious heritage), why then can Nelson Mandela's conscience cite a moral ideal of equality and justice?

Derrida avoids universalizing forgiveness not only on a religious plane, but also on a philosophical-historical one. He critiques the grounding of languages of forgiveness in human rights discourses. He claims that Roman-Christian individualism and Enlightenment thinking influence these discourses, and he argues

¹⁸⁶ Kearney, "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida," 66-67.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

that they pose a dangerous threat to the plurality of ideas. This view of history echoes Walter Benjamin's vision of the angel of history watching disaster upon disaster accumulate: Derrida claims that all people are in a way heir to history's crimes against humanity. More recently, Robert Bernasconi echoes this concern in his argument against philosophical universalities that laud freedom while contributing to slavery, racism, and genocide.¹⁸⁸

Derrida's rejection of universal ideals is not necessarily destructive to a theory of forgiveness. Its wary eye toward the self-destructing nature of democracy, for example, is a useful tool for a theory of post-conflict reconciliation. It offers a cautionary view of human rights discourses that sometimes tend toward retribution rather than forgiveness. Finally, it reinforces the disclaimer necessary for a maximalist view of forgiveness: forgiveness is not easy, immediate, or universal.

Admiring Mandela's Universal of Justice

Derrida's moral and extralegal concept of justice in "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, In Admiration" (a contribution to a 1987 volume about the imprisoned South African hero) points to a tension within his philosophy of political justice versus abstract forgiveness. The inflexible demands of justice are at tension with the multifaceted concepts of pure forgiveness that resists moral universalism.

The essay admires Mandela for his admiring gaze at the world. It is "[a]dmiration of Mandela, a double genitive: the one he inspires and the one he feels... he becomes admirable for having, with all his force, admired, and for having

¹⁸⁸ Robert Bernasconi, "Blind to Justice: Philosophizing in the Face of Slavery and Genocide" (paper presented at the Center for the Humanities Lecture Series: Justice and Judgment, Middletown, CT, November 4 2013).

made a force of his admiration, a combative, untreatable, and irreducible power.”¹⁸⁹ Although Derrida later deconstructs democracy as thus both self-improving (constantly aspiring to be more democratic, exhibiting "perfectibility") and self-destructing (providing weapons for its own destruction, as in the case of September 11th),¹⁹⁰ in the Mandela piece he is fairly uncritical of the democratic ideal and the universal moral concept Mandela invokes. All but abandoning the deconstructive critical outlook that he maintains throughout so much of his philosophy (including his forgiveness piece), he admires Mandela for admiring “law itself, the law above other laws” and the English system of parliamentary democracy, separation of powers, and human rights.¹⁹¹ He finds universal potential in a teleological democratic ideal, represented by the “seed,” or the “filling out” of the democratic form.¹⁹² He praises Mandela for fighting apartheid from within the apartheid government’s constitutional framework and for calling upon a higher ideal of law based on the Rousseauian general will of the whole nation, black and white. Despite his previous critique of teleological philosophy and metaphysics from Aristotle to Heidegger, in the Mandela essay Derrida traces Mandela’s understanding of law from Rousseau’s “general will” to Kant’s categorical imperative and Socrates’ primacy of a higher law of conscience over man-made laws.¹⁹³ He also describes Mandela’s admiration of early African democratic structures as part of a potential lineage for democracy in Africa.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Derrida, "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration," 15.

¹⁹⁰ Cheah and Guerlac, "Introduction," 13.

¹⁹¹ Derrida, "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration," 15.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

The deconstructive take on Mandela rests on the leader's ability to reveal to his oppressors that their oppressive laws contradict a higher moral law. Thus it is Mandela's commitment to scrutinizing the laws for their compliance with a superior law of fairness and democracy that shows his admirable reflective quality.¹⁹⁵ Mandela, in Derrida's eyes, succeeds in "mastering Western law, this weapon to turn against the oppressors... the true force of a law that they manipulate, violate, and betray."¹⁹⁶ However, this route of deconstructive critique, because it supports Mandela's universal ideals of justice and equality, ignores Derrida's efforts elsewhere to break apart such universals. Derrida's analysis here of Western law presupposes a universal moral standard for justice or democracy.

Derrida explores the possibility that the text of Mandela's trial proceedings and defense will be received as a "testament" by posterity.¹⁹⁷ A critique that turns the concept of democracy inside out by deconstructing the concepts of justice and equality and revealing them to be both themselves and their opposites would have remained faithful to deconstruction's overarching goals. However, instead he opens up his critique of forgiveness to inconsistencies and loses his critical eye in rapture of the idealistic and inspiring figure of Mandela. The earlier Derrida's fascination with the South African leader's admiration of democratic models in the Mandela piece contrasts with his later forgiveness piece, described earlier as resisting a moral or universal idea of forgiveness, in that the Mandela analysis praises the activist for his universal moral idea of justice. This essay offers support for the argument that forgiveness plays a part in political change.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 37.

Forgiveness versus Mandela Piece: Economic Exchange

Forgiveness: Resisting Effacement

In *On Forgiveness*, Derrida explicitly resists the use of pure forgiveness for political purposes. Explaining what he sees as the danger of over-using forgiveness, he writes, “if I am conscious that I forgive, then I not only recognize myself but I thank myself, or I am waiting for the other to thank me, which is already the reinscription of forgiveness into an economy of exchange and hence the annihilation of forgiveness.”¹⁹⁸ Although it is intrinsically corrupted by third parties (language, institutions, survivors, and victims),¹⁹⁹ pure forgiveness must not be “contaminated by political agendas.”²⁰⁰ This move to resist the effacement of forgiveness stands in stark contrast to his earlier veneration of Mandela’s use of the ideal of justice in politics, and makes room for an immanent critique of this contradiction.

Citing the example of the female apartheid victim who during her TRC testimony resists Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s language of forgiveness, Derrida argues against the use of forgiveness in post-conflict politics, saying that pure forgiveness must happen between two people:

[O]ne day a woman comes to testify before the Commission. Her husband had been assassinated by torturers who were police officers... “A commission or a government cannot forgive. Only I, eventually, could do it. (And I am not ready to forgive.)”... the anonymous body of the State or of a public institution cannot forgive. It has neither the right nor the power to do so; and besides, that would have no meaning.²⁰¹

This example of Derrida’s resistance to the use of forgiveness in politics illuminates

¹⁹⁸ Kearney, "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida," 53.

¹⁹⁹ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 48.

²⁰⁰ Guerlac, "The Fragility of the Pardon (Derrida and Ricoeur)," 258.

²⁰¹ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 43.

its contrast with his admiration for Mandela's political use of the idea of justice.

In 1998, Derrida spoke on forgiveness in several South African universities. After a lecture at the University of Western Cape, a young South African woman asked him, "You might have made that idea of pure forgiveness with a lot of irony... But we [the white post-apartheid student audience] sit here as potential objects of forgiveness, and we are all of us, including you, in a sense, guilty. Don't you think it fulfills an ideological function telling us we should not repent, not ask for forgiveness, because then we ruin pure, unconditional forgiveness, when at the same time you are telling oppressed people they should forgive without expecting forgiveness?" In response, Derrida admitted to an element of irony in the forgiveness piece and drew a dividing line between pure forgiveness and reconciliation in South Africa, voicing a concern that bringing forgiveness into the political process of reconciliation would Christianize the latter.²⁰² This response exemplifies the very resistance to the economization of a concept of which he is guilty in the Mandela essay. In contrast to his endorsement of universal standards of justice, Derrida relegates forgiveness to hypotheticals and thought experiments.

Derrida insists that he has nothing against reconciliation, which he sees as politically beneficial in many post-conflict situations. He argues that national reconciliation is an economic transaction that is not equivalent to forgiveness. Nor is justice, judgment, amnesty, punishment, pardoning, acquittal, grace, or withdrawal. He merely makes a terminological distinction between reconciliation and forgiveness:

"Healing away" is a major term in South Africa. In France, each time the head of state, the prime minister, wants to grant amnesty and to

²⁰² Dick, "Derrida."

erase the crimes of the past, it is in the name of “national reconciliation,” to reconstitute the healthy body of the nation, of the national community. I have nothing against that. But if the word forgiveness is used in a view of such an ecology or therapy I would say no, that is not to forgive. It is perhaps very useful, a very noble strategy, but it is not forgiveness... I am trying – and I know how violent this is – to disassociate true forgiveness from all these finalities – of reconciliation, salvation, redemption, and so on.²⁰³

This terminological slight of hand conveniently obscures Derrida’s failure to do anything more with “true forgiveness” than describe its impossible scenario. The moment the question of pure forgiveness is raised in the wake of unforgivable crimes, Derrida shies away from its application and turns to reconciliation instead. The caution he exhibits toward the use of forgiveness in politics can temper a policy- or results-driven approach. Instead of urging post-conflict regimes to attempt to legislate forgiveness, this project (with an eye toward Derrida’s apprehension about effacement) will propose a model of transitional justice that facilitates or suggests forgiveness, rather than mandates or enforces it.

Derrida’s answer to the problem of using forgiveness after violence is reconciliation as a more feasible alternative to forgiveness generations removed from the conflict.²⁰⁴ Forgiveness remains impossible, but reconciliation becomes an easier alternative. However, the incongruence caused by the Mandela piece provides an opening for a critique that applies Derrida’s concept of forgiveness, contrary to Derrida’s own restrictions for the theory.

Mandela’s Universal Ideal: Effacement of Justice

When Derrida turns to politics and attempts to apply the deconstructive

²⁰³ Kearney, "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida," 56.

²⁰⁴ Ben-Naftali, "An Interview with Professor Jacques Derrida," 7.

concept to current events, he cheapens his own claim to deconstructive purity, exemplifying the usury or effacement of concepts he so fears. In his praise of Mandela's use of the universal ideals of justice, freedom, and equality, Derrida loses his critical view of philosophical concepts being used and abused in politics. Even if this non-ironic reverence of Mandela's principles of equality and justice is written in a different genre than the more literary deconstructive readings of political events (such as his essay about September 11th), it still reveals the political weakness of Derrida's attempt to turn moral ideals inside out and to posit only very specific instances in which pure forgiveness is possible.

In a 1998 interview, one of the few times Derrida spoke of South Africa in terms of both forgiveness and Mandela, he described Mandela as an integral part of the new government, admiring his lack of resentment for his jailers and his decision to integrate reconciliation into the new government.²⁰⁵ Ideas of universal rights and crimes against humanities (the ultimate justification for the Nuremburg Trials, the South African TRC, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda) emerged from mass violence. If these ideas are based on the sacredness of the Abrahamic man, then they represent a large-scale "virtually Christian convulsion-conversion-confession"²⁰⁶ that can globalize to non-Christian areas of the world, such as parts of Asia. Derrida argues against such globalization of forgiveness on an international or national scale, which he sees as a "theatrical space."²⁰⁷ This is his main grievance with the government's employment of the language of forgiveness in the TRC and in international political negotiations (although he also criticizes the TRC for

²⁰⁵ Michel Rosenfeld, "An Interview with Jacques Derrida," *Cardozo Law Life Magazine* Fall 1998.

²⁰⁶ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 31.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

undermining victims' rights, diffusing accountability, and pardoning the guilty with amnesty).²⁰⁸ The African National Congress' history of reconciliation politics and language of post-apartheid forgiveness throws this internal contradiction within Derrida's philosophical endeavor into even starker relief. However, this analysis is a critical and not a historical one and will put history aside.

Conclusion

Although Derrida himself would likely resist a definition of his theory as such, his deconstruction of unattainable pure forgiveness resembles teleology. This ideal scenario may not be feasible in the realm of human affairs because it is so specific, but it might manifest as repeated offenses retaining victim and offender identities without the third party or religious intervention. Derrida's telos of forgiveness is a cyclical pattern in which the victim privately and repeatedly forgives the offender, who repeatedly commits serious crimes without asking for forgiveness.

Something resembling pure or impossible forgiveness, as I will later describe, is not only possible but has been attained in Rwanda after horrific violence, although not in that exact scenario. Derrida senses the tension between the philosophical imperative to define pure forgiveness and the pragmatic need for political reconciliation. His answer to this tension is to point to the need for laws based on ethics of pure forgiveness. This imprecise answer gives little to the political pragmatist other than critical legal theory or legal reform informed by Derridian pure forgiveness and its contrast with reconciliation.

²⁰⁸ Rosenfeld, "An Interview with Jacques Derrida."

To an argument for pure forgiveness having political utility, however, Derrida poses an incisive counterargument: no one but the person forgiving can know whether pure forgiveness happens at all.²⁰⁹ This problem aligns with the researcher-outsider problem of interviewing Rwandans about their experiences in the genocide; it is difficult to determine how much subjects explain their true emotions. However, because no study of abstract philosophical or psychological processes such as forgiveness could ever truly discern whether it has occurred, this project takes as given the interviewees' explanations of forgiveness. While the pure forgiveness Derrida proposes is elusive, its effects are more public and thus more easily discerned; I later describe its political manifestation and effects.

I accept Derrida's concept of pure forgiveness as an isolated philosophical concept within his deconstructive framework. However, I take issue with the tension between the Mandela essay and pure forgiveness, in terms of universal ideals and effacement. The discrepancy between political-ethical discourse and deconstructive critique not only cheapens the pure forgiveness model but also insufficiently approaches political problems, doing injustice to both deconstructive theory and political solutions. An internal or immanent critique of this philosopher is difficult because deconstruction reveals concepts' internal contradictions, but it is more philosophically robust to find contradictions within his critique before using them to use his theory in for new concept of forgiveness, which I will do in the next chapter.

²⁰⁹ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 55.

Chapter Four

Rwanda and a Political Theory of Forgiveness

“There will be no humanity without forgiveness. There will be no forgiveness without justice. But justice will be impossible without humanity.”²¹⁰

“Forgiveness is a road towards reconciliation.”²¹¹

Introduction

Now that we have taken a close look at forgiveness through the eyes of two influential theorists, we may turn to the central question of this project: what role does forgiveness play in politics? Concepts based in emotions such as love are rarely allowed space in the political sphere: Derrida allows for pure forgiveness but fears it will only be abused if allowed into politics, and Arendt says that forgiveness is appropriate for lesser offenses but turns away from forgiveness of graver crimes. Contemporary writers fear the consequences of forced forgiveness imposed on traumatized survivors too soon, and point to the South African TRC as having pushed the issue of forgiveness in the political sphere too far. I show through the Rwandan example that facilitated and non-facilitated forgiveness brings about political change and lasting peace after genocide, describe programs that have had a degree of success facilitating forgiveness in Rwanda, and then make a normative argument for reconciliation programs that encourage forgiveness.

In this chapter, I will assert the mutual necessity of interpersonal forgiveness and political reconciliation (defined earlier as people ceasing to see members of formerly opposing groups as enemies, and drawing on the Rwandan concept of

²¹⁰ Mukagazana, Yolande, quoted in the Gisozi, Kigali Genocide Memorial Center exhibit. Cited in Michael Henderson, *No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 100.

²¹¹ Alexandre Guma, "Personal Interview," (Kigali, Rwanda 20 November 2012).

ubwiyunge, or deep reconciliation) and describe the opening for political import this necessity gives forgiveness. I will address trauma- and victim-centric dialogues and argue for politically useful forgiveness that does not force survivors to forgive too soon. I will present primary research from Rwanda, examine political reconciliation programs in Rwanda – the NURC, CNLG, church programs, gacaca, TIG, and nonprofits – and assert that they promote forgiveness and thus political reconciliation when they do not force insincere forgiveness. Following this Rwandan model, I will assert that forgiveness increases political reconciliation while a lack of forgiveness inhibits it, and argue for political reconciliation programs that prioritize facilitating forgiveness. In doing so, I hope to critically engage with both the work of the great theorists on forgiveness (in this project, primarily Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida) and contemporary scholarship to rethink the political implications of forgiveness for healing after mass conflict, as well as the possibility for policy initiatives that would respond to those implications.

Interpersonal forgiveness is an idea that few disagree with in principle, but the risk of victim coercion and impunity makes many (especially Western) scholars and activists wary of incorporating it into the language of political reconciliation. This chapter will attempt to show that it has been possible in many cases in Rwanda to encourage forgiveness without forcing it, to the benefit of political restoration, and this may be possible elsewhere. Of the programs I often laud and suggest as models (and not every program has been entirely successful), those that have succeeded enable forgiveness by situating the different parties together without coercing the victim to forgive. As I have shown in the previous two sections, forgiveness works to

further political reconciliation, and reconciliation programs from the top down have the potential to help forgiveness. Thus, transitional justice scholars and policymakers should consider programs that foster or encourage forgiveness without attempting to fuse forgiveness with politics. This chapter will first describe the Rwandan case as an example of mostly successful forgiveness and reconciliation, and then it will present a theory of the ideal post-conflict scenario of forgiveness and reconciliation that is based on my research in Rwanda but applicable to other post-conflict situations.

The Rwandan Case: From Forgiveness to Political Reconciliation

This section will first consider the ways in which forgiveness between individuals in Rwanda after the genocide has had a positive impact on political reconciliation. I present evidence from primary interviews conducted in Rwanda eighteen years after the genocide showing that forgiveness is a basis for the political reconciliation that is essential for lasting peace after the Rwandan genocide. The primary ways in which forgiveness facilitate reconciliation are: release of anger and resentment by victims, absolution for past offenses for perpetrators, trust instead of fear among individuals, and increased community cohesion. This model provides a picture of imperfect but fairly successful post-conflict restoration. Although success in terms of forgiveness and reconciliation is impossible to definitively measure, I take interviewees' accounts of forgiveness at face value and point to peace and security in Rwanda today as indicators that political reconciliation is taking place. Rwandan presents a model that can be replicated elsewhere: forgiveness plays an important role in *ubwiyunge*, deep reconciliation. This model urges scholars and policymakers to take more seriously the force forgiveness exerts on political processes.

Background and Parameters of Forgiveness

To reiterate, this project accepts a wider definition of forgiveness than only the offended party forgiving the perpetrator. As the Rwandan example shows, the victim's loved ones can forgive his or her murderer, especially if the victim is dead. The victim can forgive the offender without seeing them again. This view of forgiveness diverges from the classical model and sees forgiveness as an ongoing and laborious process, rather than a single moment of permanent release. Thus, building on the work of Carse and Tirrell on emergent forgiveness occurring over time and through repeated interactions, I argue that there is no prescribed route to forgiveness. The experience of forgiveness is different in each case, it is non-linear, and it can encounter setbacks such as renewed return anger or resentment. Moreover, not everyone will be able to forgive or even reconcile.²¹² This project does not attempt to answer empirically the impossible question of how many Rwandans have forgiven, but my sources point to trends of increased intermarriage, decreased violence, and integrated communities as signs that many have forgiven.

The religious narrative of forgiveness, which grounds the concept in love, realizes the humanity of the offender, and releases the burden of resentment, allows for the possibility of survivors forgiving perpetrators without encountering them. Two kinds of forgiveness are common in Rwanda: private or internal forgiveness, in which the survivor internally forgives the perpetrator, and interpersonal forgiveness, in which the victim and the perpetrator have a social interaction and the victim

²¹² Ernesto Verdeja, *Unchopping a Tree: Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Political Violence* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 176.

indirectly or directly releases the perpetrator from retribution.²¹³ Many different variations of these scenarios are possible.

The refugee crisis immediately following the genocide caused large populations to seek safety across regional borders. Many never returned to their home villages, including several of the survivors interviewed for this project, making the classical model of confession, apology, and forgiveness impossible. Thus, Alice MacLachlan's concept of third party forgiveness as moral solidarity is common.²¹⁴ Obviously, the people killed in the genocide cannot forgive those who killed them, so perpetrators and their victims' surviving relatives are left to face each other, although some victims of rape and physical violence face their own attackers. The identity of the person who actually dealt the final blow might be unknown because of misinformation or the passage of time. Moreover, self-forgiveness, in which the perpetrator forgives himself for the offense, can be seen as third party forgiveness.²¹⁵

Forgiveness may not be the only path to political reconciliation. Forgetting through intergenerational amnesia after mass displacement could be imagined in some decimated refugee communities. However, forgetting is a far from ideal route to peace, and will be difficult if survivors pass their grievances on to their children. In some cases, separating warring groups might be another path to peace if the groups are not closely intertwined and can agree to a peaceful disunion (the unfulfilled hope for Sudan and South Sudan). Rwanda's pre-colonial context of intermarriage and

²¹³ Solomon Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time*, 43.

²¹⁴ Alice MacLachlan, "Forgiveness and Moral Solidarity," in *Forgiveness: Probing the Boundaries*, ed. Stephen Bloch-Schulman and David White (Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press, 2009), 3-16.

²¹⁵ Kathryn J. Norlock, "Why Self-Forgiveness Needs Third-Party Forgiveness," in *Forgiveness: Probing the Boundaries*, ed. Stephen Bloch-Schulman and David White (Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press, 2009), 17-29.

interdependence between Hutus and Tutsis makes this an unviable route to reconciliation. However, it is not the aim of this project to explore routes to political reconciliation other than forgiveness, and the themes of collective memory and trauma veer into other areas of post-conflict studies. While interpersonal reconciliation (surface reparation of personal relationships) may suffice for coexistence, it does nothing to dissipate festering inter-group resentment or to change individuals' perceptions of their former enemies. Similarly, political pardons are not enough to facilitate reconciliation; a government's release of perpetrators from culpability does not heal individuals, change attitudes, or unite communities. For the purposes of this project, forgiveness will remain the only known route to political reconciliation, and certainly the only one exemplified in the Rwandan case that shows a clear route to lasting peace.

Hannah Arendt's concept of forgiveness provides a useful springboard for understanding its role in everyday life, but is severely limited in its application to restorative justice and interpersonal relations after mass violence. The model for forgiveness proposed in this chapter finds Arendt's framework for the forgiveness of minor offenses as described by Jesus useful, but argues that it should be applied to graver or violent offenses. Thus, I borrow the radical constructive power Arendt gives to forgiveness in *The Human Condition* and incorporate it into a view of forgiveness that has the power to reconstruct not only human action in daily life, but also whole communities.

Arendt creates a nuanced and pragmatic framework for forgiving daily offenses in the sphere of human action. Her concept of forgiveness is particularly

compelling in its immediate pragmatism and applicability to human action, its radical vision of natality as a positive generative force, and its suggestion as an alternative to punishment for offenses. Arendt's concept of the crime of the *skandalon* recognizes the abyss created by violence but leaves no room for forgiveness of such evil.

Against Arendt's own resistance to forgiveness of the crimes of genocide, the Rwandan example shows that forgiving violent crimes is not only possible but also constructive for politics.

Arendt recognizes the severity of violence and the damage it does to *inter-est* and the political sphere. However, by elevating perpetrators of violence to Biblical or mythical terms in her earliest and her latest work (*Origins of Totalitarianism*, *The Human Condition*, and *Responsibility and Judgment*), she closes off the possibility for reconciliation after genocide. A more open attitude about the human nature of the perpetrator enables restorative justice models that heal communities and individuals. Pure retribution or punishment informed by such ideas of evil is not only unrealistic (there were hundreds of thousands of perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide), but also morally bankrupt. Its focus on the evil acts of a person allows vengeance and resentment to simmer under the surface or erupt into violence, a legitimate fear in the Rwandan context. The perpetrators interviewed for this project expressed that one of the greatest advantages of forgiveness is being seen as a human, rather than as a criminal or ex-prisoner. The focus on identities associated with the genocide, similar to Arendt's incomprehensibility of evil acts, only mires individuals in their violent histories. Forgiveness of violent offenses, on the contrary, moves past the dehumanizing limits of the *skandalon* and repairs relationships and eventually

political life. Isaac Mugabe, who runs programs for underserved youth for the nonprofit organization Uyisenga N’Manzi, gives forgiveness the constructive power to restore the possibility of new action. Describing his forgiveness of and restored relationship with his friend who tortured and killed his father, Isaac says: “You have to be able to go behind the mistakes, face the realities, and face what we see day to day... My current life could not cope with the past. My living condition could cope with the future. The more you focus on the past, the more you remain on the past.”²¹⁶

Arendt herself might contend that forgiving the perpetrators of genocide would be a moral compromise tantamount to condoning their violent actions; her adamant insistence that her detractors were wrong to claim she was proposing forgiving Eichmann certainly reflects this view. However, the Rwandan example shows that forgiveness releases perpetrators from culpability, not resentment.

Forgiving as Release: Moving Past Victimhood

For victims, an important benefit of forgiveness based on neighborly love (agapē) is the release of anger and resentment that comes with forgiving. This allows victims to see themselves and be seen by others as not just victims, but as individual citizens. Thus, the replacement of victimhood with citizenship after the release of negative emotion and the experience of agapē allows the victim to return to political life and contribute to political reconciliation.

For many, forgiveness begins with a sensation of political or neighborly love similar to the Greek concept of agapē, or selfless love between fellow citizens (although as we have seen, forgiveness without encountering the forgiven is also

²¹⁶Author interview, tape recording, Kigali, Rwanda, November 16, 2012.

possible). One of the four kinds of love defined by the Ancient Greeks, *agapē* originally held a pre-Christian meaning of mutual reciprocity and love for other social actors. The case of Rwanda, where neighborly love or *agapē* is crucial in political life, forgiveness after devastating violence has been possible for many. This points both to a hole in Hannah Arendt's theory that love-based forgiveness lacks political significance and to the possibility for *agapē* to provide political solutions.

Arendt contrasts the familiar love between friends, family, and lovers – the love that belongs the private sphere – with solidarity between political actors – the alternative to love that belongs in the public sphere. However, I contend that the neighborly love of *agapē* relies on the public sphere and is necessary for extraordinary acts such as forgiveness of violent perpetrators. Arendt's framework begs expansion to include *agapē* in a polis held together by *inter-est* after the social rupture of genocide. This project attempts to appropriate *agapē* for the modern age, putting a twist on the Greek understanding of neighborly love in the post-genocide context. The kind of *agapē* that is involved in forgiveness after violence involves empathizing with and acknowledging the other as a separate political agent, loving the other as a neighbor, and reflecting oneself in the other. It is more than Arendt's solidarity; it requires a deeper pseudo-spiritual understanding of the other within the public sphere. It is central to empathy and necessary for forgiveness after genocide, and should in an ideal post-conflict society be recognized as an important part of reconciliation, not merely as a private emotional occurrence.

The respondent “Colette”²¹⁷ exemplifies the power of agapē. The genocide tore her happy, healthy life apart. Her husband and five children were killed and she was brutally beaten and raped. Many of her relatives were thrown in the river, and the locations of the other bodies remain unknown. She has chronic back pain and headaches from being beaten with sticks, and her son is handicapped from being beaten as an infant strapped to her back. Unable to reach peace with the perpetrators through gacaca, she went to a psychologist for trauma healing. The psychologist told her, “[y]ou go and love them, because they are the ones who made those consequences...’ I started thinking to myself, if I can’t forgive them, they will completely destroy my life because of this trauma... She started teaching me how to love him, and that’s when my life begin to come back.”²¹⁸ Despite the great blow to her sense of personhood, Colette experienced personal healing as a result of the love and empathy she was able to feel for the perpetrators, her fellow citizens. Colette’s case brings together elements from both Arendt and Derrida. Although she has not returned to her home village and still struggles with trauma, her forgiveness – which she describes as an improbable forgiveness of seemingly unforgivable acts in the Derridian sense – has allowed her to rebuild her life, in the Arendtian sense of securing the potential for future action.

This concept of love does not necessarily have to cheapen private love (it can still retain the public-private divide and distinguish between familial, friendly, or romantic love in the private sphere and public love), but can coexist alongside it. Nor is it politically weaker than Arendt’s alternative of solidarity or respect; on the

²¹⁷ Like all the names in quotations, this pseudonym was created to protect the identities of the perpetrators and survivors I interviewed in Rwanda.

²¹⁸ Author interview, tape recording, Kabuga, Rwanda, November 21, 2012.

contrary, this neighborly love, residing in the *inter-est* Arendt describes as integral to a functioning politic, is crucial for extraordinary actions in the public sphere such as forgiveness or charity. It exists between active members of a polity outside of the private sphere, even if it results in private or interpersonal experiences of forgiveness. This contemporary agapē is necessary, for example, in cases heard in gacaca courts in which the perpetrator and victim are neighbors or fellow community members. In these cases, solidarity is not enough; an extraordinary neighborly love is necessary to overcome resentment, to understand the situation of the other, and to forgive or otherwise repair the fabric of the politic torn apart by violence. The love-based forgiveness that I propose does not preclude punishment; Rwanda's gacaca courts and National Unity and Reconciliation Commission produced a fairly successful model of punishment paired with reconciliation (a combination of jail time, community service, and reconciliation programs) that in some cases enabled such love-based forgiveness as an important step toward restoration.

After the experience of neighborly love, a next possible next step in the process of forgiveness is the release of anger or resentment toward the perpetrator. The experience is described by nonprofit and government workers who witness multiple instances of forgiveness as the relief of psychological pain inflicted by the trauma of violence. Benjamin Ndizeye runs forgiveness workshops and oversees associations between perpetrators and victims. He sees forgiveness as a process in which the wounded victim "decides to remove the burden and release him or herself. So forgiveness, it's a kind of releasing yourself." This release frees the victim not only from the negative emotions of grief and anger connected to the trauma, but also

from self-blame and self-identified victimhood, as James Ndirimu, who works for the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide, explains. “When you forgive, your conscience also feels free and released from blaming yourself... I forgive what you did because I want to be relieved emotionally.”²¹⁹ As such, forgiveness can occur because the victim wants this release, among other reasons.

The victim may then transcend victimhood into individual self-identity and citizenship. When a victim stops seeing genocide victimhood as his or her primary identity, he or she can move past the constraints of this identity and re-enter the political sphere. This allows her to start seeing herself as a citizen, or member of local political life, and to start projecting that identity to others in civil society. The progression from forgiveness to resilience, hope, and “reconnecting with their selves and their communities” is clear, as Nancy Peddle shows in her study of refugee trauma.²²⁰ Forgiveness is thus a form of victim empowerment and a release from the constraints of victimhood. As Michael Henderson shows through the example of Joseph Sebarenzi, a Tutsi victim who forgave the Hutus who killed his family and then went on to pursue a political agenda of reconciliation in local politics, forgiveness can allow the victim to think of himself as a political agent within a connected community, rather than as just a victim.²²¹ Thus, forgiveness can help the victim move past victimhood and toward political flourishing.

In many cases, survivors rely on their personal religious beliefs and ask God or religious leaders for help forgiving the perpetrators. “Josephine’s” entire family

²¹⁹ Author interview, tape recording, Kigali, Rwanda, November 20, 2012.

²²⁰ Peddle, “Forgiveness in Recovery/Resiliency from the Trauma of War among a Selected Group of Adolescents and Adult Refugees,” 152.

²²¹ Henderson, *No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World*, 96-100.

was killed and her right eye maimed beyond repair in the genocide by her neighbors and close family friends. Today her glass eye, which causes her to have a “constant headache,” is a painful reminder of her physical and emotional trauma. When she returned home from Burundi after the genocide, she found her house destroyed, and her family’s killers feared her because they thought she had perished alongside her relatives. They never came to ask her for forgiveness. However, she says, “[i]f they come [asking forgiveness], I will have no problem. But me, I decided to forgive them... The perpetrators did bad to me, but my forgiveness goes one hundred per cent to them.”²²² As a result of her forgiveness, Josephine has achieved not only the personal peace of mind described by Colette, but also a broader feeling of national security and reconciliation. She believes that “Rwanda is peaceful. Everything here is good.” Josephine’s case shows the clear path from forgiving to relief for victims and a more positive outlook on political society.

However, as we have already acknowledged, forgiveness is not possible in every case; sometimes, the wounds of trauma are too deep. In such cases, the offender’s violent assertion of power causes a great blow to the victim’s “personhood,” inhibiting recovery from trauma and self-empowerment through forgiveness.²²³ Although victims who cannot achieve forgiveness should in no way be blamed or shamed, the effects of not forgiving can be as negative for the victim as for the perpetrator and community. Everett L. Worthington Jr.’s concept of “unforgiveness” is characterized by residual anger, fear, and resentment toward the

²²² Author interview, tape recording, Kabuga, Rwanda, November 21, 2012.

²²³ Margaret E. Smith, “An Exploration of Forgiveness, Empowerment, and the Journey of Healing,” in *Forgiveness: Probing the Boundaries*, edited by Stephen Bloch-Schulman and David White (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2009), 155.

wrongdoer, and the psychological effects on the victim can be as serious as the psychological benefits to forgivers discussed in the first chapter.²²⁴ For Benjamin Ndizeye, lack of forgiveness causes great inner pain: “When you have not forgiven someone, it’s like a nail in your heart.” Moreover, even when forgiveness occurs, the victim may find emotional release or peace of mind without being able to shed victimhood. “Jacqueline’s” whole family was killed, many in front of her eyes.²²⁵ She herself was brutally raped; as a young virgin, she was taken as a “wife” by one of her attackers. Jacqueline did not participate in any formal or informal processes of reconciliation in her home village, and placed no hope in gacaca. Thus, she has not participated in her village’s processes of political reconciliation. However, she reached forgiveness out of an internal effort and religious faith: “Because of praying, I feel like I forgive them... Nobody asked me to forgive, even the government didn’t ask me, but inside I feel like I can forgive, there’s nothing I can do to those people.” While Jacqueline experienced the release of forgiveness, her trauma and continued self-identification as a victim remind us that forgiveness is a nonlinear and emergent process that does not occur for everyone in the same way.

Absolving Past Offenses, Moving Past Perpetrator Identity

Forgiveness reaps benefits not only for victims, but also for perpetrators. When they are forgiven, perpetrators feel that their actions have been absolved, freeing them from the burdens of their past and allowing them to replace their criminal identity with citizenship. As James Ndirimu explains, forgiveness “is also

²²⁴ Worthington Jr., "Unforgiveness, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation and Their Implications for Societal Interventions," 172.

²²⁵ Author interview, tape recording, Kabuga, Rwanda, November 21, 2012.

good emotionally to the person I am forgiving... he will be relieved” from the pain of the past. Perpetrators may seek forgiveness for this reason, or they might hope for a restored relationship with the victim and the community. They may seek the catharsis of confessing their crimes, or they may be plea-bargaining in economic self-interest for interactions with survivors. Whatever the motivation for seeking forgiveness, the benefits to perpetrators are psychologically and politically restorative.

Just as victims who forgive can move past victimhood, perpetrators who receive forgiveness can see themselves and be perceived by others as individuals and even citizens, not merely as criminals. Ananda Breed’s study of Abiyunze, a NURC-supported grassroots reconciliation group, shows that empathy and forgiveness can give way to positive encounters and the removal of conflict identity:

A perpetrator and one of the association’s original founders, Tharcisse, recounted how after the presidential decree of 2003, he was released from prison. Seeking forgiveness for his crimes, he approached over sixty families. Tharcisse felt people should interact, which led to the formation of the association. Some of association’s practices include beekeeping, craft making, and house building for both the survivors and the families of the perpetrators. Josephine, who helped to develop the association, was a genocide survivor whose husband had been killed. Tharcisse approached her house over ten times before he was granted forgiveness. She joined the association for unity and reconciliation because there was equal representation from the victimized group, as well as from those who killed, and those whose families had relatives in prison. “We dance together, we sing, we make handicrafts, build houses. When they confess, it gives morality,” she said. When asked how art changed her feelings after losing her husband, she said, “When we sing and dance, we feel happy and excited. I no longer see them as enemies, but those that share problems of the survivor.”²²⁶

The women of Ubutwari Buro Kubaho, a similar cooperative formed between the wives of perpetrators (and eventually the released perpetrators themselves) and the

²²⁶ Breed, "Performing Reconciliation in Rwanda," 509.

wives of their victims in the countryside near Butare, also emphasize the importance of empathy and erasing identities tied to the genocide after forgiving:

We started sharing things. We would go and pick water not for one person but for many people... When we stopped basing everything on who was a survivor and who was a perpetrator, everything started being based on love and caring... As long as you honor everyone's suffering, that would allow us to go where we want to go: to live in peace, to help one another.²²⁷

In these examples and in hundreds of similar associations founded by Rwandans after the genocide, the organic process of forgiveness between former enemies leads to restored political activity through the humanization of individuals and decreased inter-group animosity. By allowing victims and perpetrators to empathize with each other and see each other as more than their conflict labels, forgiveness gives way to changes in relationships and attitudes that affect political relationships between groups. While this may be a best-case scenario and the emergent model of forgiveness shows that one step forward can be followed by two steps back, this example shows the ideal fusion of Arendtian and Derridian thought on forgiveness. The “puzzle” of difficult forgiveness of unforgivable crimes allows concrete action in the future for the individuals and communities.

Decreasing Fear, Increasing Trust

Another way that forgiveness in Rwanda facilitates political reconciliation is by replacing fear with trust between former enemies. Both survivors and perpetrators expressed that they felt fear at some time after the genocide: victims feared they would be attacked again, and perpetrators feared the survivors who blamed them for

²²⁷ Reported to author, 18 September 2012.

the crimes of all Hutus. Forgiveness facilitates both the restoration of a sense of physical safety foundational to political reconciliation and the increased feeling of trust between members of the community.

The inverse is also true: survivors who have not forgiven still live in fear that their families' killers might still hurt them. "Rosette" is a survivor who was brutally raped; all seven of her children were killed; she bears chronic back pain and had a child born out of rape. She did not participate in gacaca, because of the shame of "bearing a child of bad memory." She has not forgiven her rapists or her family's killers, nor can she "forget it because even my Hutu neighbors, I don't feel that I can reconcile with them because they can be a friend today, but tomorrow they can betray you."²²⁸ Her fear that the killers might revert to their violent pasts echoes underlying tensions in many rural Rwandan communities between survivors and perpetrators or their families. Especially in small villages, the results fear can be dire: the genocide was fueled by fear-based divisional propaganda that convinced members of one group that they were superior to members of another.

A lack of trust can impede the political and economic success of the community. One perpetrator interviewee, "Francois," said the released prisoners are a "forgotten category" without social programs to help them, and felt a lack of trust among his neighbors.²²⁹ Forgiveness can help this category of people, many of whom are poor farmers whose land was taken while they were imprisoned or exiled, regain space in the public sphere free of the shame of not having been forgiven. Perpetrators and their families can secure employment opportunities through cooperatives and

²²⁸ Author interview, tape recording, Kabuga, Rwanda, November 21, 2012.

²²⁹ Author interview, tape recording, Rwamagana, Rwanda, November 14, 2012.

associations or jobs on farms or in shops owned by survivor families if forgiveness has facilitated a high level of trust.

Decreasing Isolation, Increasing Social Cohesion and Revitalizing Political Life

Forgiveness in Rwandan society has the power to promote deeper political reconciliation. In many cases where survivors and perpetrators have not reached forgiveness, Rwandan communities find it difficult to achieve true social cohesion and political reconciliation because of a lack of trust. The social isolation brought about by trauma and a lack of forgiveness is intensely damaging for both perpetrators and survivors, because Rwandan culture places a high emphasis on the strength of the community. More than one Rwandan told me, “You cannot live alone.” When deeply scarred individuals separate themselves or are ostracized from the public sphere, divisionism can take root. Informal social interactions can begin to deteriorate the social fabric, leading to the possibility of more violence. One solution is forgiveness: increased trust and decreased fear allows individuals to interact more freely with their neighbors, building up social cohesion and a flourishing polis.

By decreasing the isolation and fear of traumatized survivors and perpetrators, forgiveness allows for increased cooperation in everyday tasks and the re-entry of individuals into the public sphere. Studies of community-based sociotherapy programs in Rwanda have found that victims feel more empowered to break out of social isolation and victimhood if engaged in group healing and involvement in sessions that place the victims back in the public sphere.²³⁰

²³⁰ Annemiek Richters, “Suffering and Healing in the Aftermath of War and Genocide in Rwanda: Mediations Through Community-Based Sociotherapy,” in *Mediations of Violence in Africa*, ed. Lidwien Kapteijns and Annemiek Richters (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 193.

“Claudine” is a genocide orphan who cares for her siblings and faces many of the economic, psychological, and social challenges typical to young survivors. After testifying and pleading guilty in gacaca, her parents’ killers were released to live nearby her after their punishment. However, none of them came to her personally to apologize or admit guilt outside of gacaca, and she feared they would exterminate her remaining family. Today, after the government’s programs, she feels safer, although she still has not forgiven the perpetrators. The result of Claudine’s state of not having forgiven is that she is fearful of the killers. Without talking about their families’ violent past, she lives peacefully with the children of perpetrators and has “positive interactions with them... They come to me, they help me; there are interactions among youth of the same age.” However, she does not interact with the perpetrators themselves: “those elders are a bit resisting, somehow... I don’t approach the ones that were involved in the groups that came to exterminate my parents. I can talk with his children or his relatives, but not with him or her.”²³¹ This lack of interaction contributes to the social isolation of both Claudine and the perpetrators, further perpetuating self-segregation between the survivor and perpetrator, or Tutsi and Hutu, groups. Although Claudine is partially integrated with the families of her parents’ killers, she still lives a “lonely life” and her interactions with her elder neighbors are still rife with tension. This social tension impedes political reconciliation by maintaining Claudine’s perception of the perpetrators as members of a perpetrator group, rather than as fellow citizens. Although she has not forgiven her parents’ killers, Claudine has forgiven those who stole her property, who approached her and

²³¹ Author interview, tape recording, Kigali, Rwanda, November 19, 2012.

asked her for forgiveness. This indicates that she might also be able to forgive the killers themselves if given the chance. Thus, although Claudine has reached a certain level of perceived safety and social trust, she cannot participate in the public sphere as fully as she would be able to if she had forgiven the perpetrators. In addition to her social isolation, the negative political impact of not forgiving is that Claudine fears the perpetrators' families (members of the Hutu group, an abstract other).

Social isolation can be a problem for perpetrators as well as victims; former prisoners, including those profiled here, often feel ostracized by the dominant black-and-white historical narrative of good and evil. All four of the perpetrators interviewed for this project asked me for help advocating their cause and telling their story because they felt that the mainstream narrative silences their voices and marginalizes them as a social category. "Immanuel" was released in 2003, pled guilty in gacaca, and served his sentence. Survivors have forgiven him and "now we are just living peacefully, don't have any problems, and sometimes those families are visiting me and I am just visiting them."²³² Thus, forgiveness led to Immanuel's reconciliation with the family members. While before seeking forgiveness, he suffered from the isolation of having his wife leave him because of the social stigma of his sentence, after seeking forgiveness Immanuel lives peacefully alongside survivors and periodically visits them, reducing his social isolation.

By decreasing social isolation, forgiveness also renews the informal interactions between neighbors and friends that make up the fabric of Rwandan society. A study of one church-run community-based "sociotherapy" program run by

²³² Author interview, tape recording, Rwamagana, Rwanda, November 14, 2012.

the Byumba Diocese of the Episcopal Church of Rwanda found that victims feel more empowered to break out of social isolation and victimhood if engaged in group healing – defined as repairing and rebuilding communities – and involvement in sessions that place victims back in the public sphere.²³³ When accompanied by forgiveness, the reintegration of perpetrators and survivors can rebuild the social relationships that bind political worlds together. The power of a shared beer or a friendly visit cannot be underestimated in Rwandan culture, and one of forgiveness’ important contributions toward political reconciliation is the re-establishment of social interactions. Isaac Mugabe explains: “Reconciliation is the continuation of forgiveness. We can solve the problem between me and you, and with informal interactions like going to parties or helping bury relatives, that’s the next stage that’s called reconciliation.”²³⁴ Likewise, the reconciliation worker Alexandre Guma sees a strong relationship between forgiveness and reintegration: forgiveness is “all about accepting him [the perpetrator] back into your life. If you accept him back into your life, your livelihood, community and cultural activities, that’s forgiveness.”²³⁵

Before the genocide, the ex-prisoner “Francois” lived peacefully alongside his neighbors, “sharing social life with the community, helping each other, and doing things in common.” He claims to have had an epiphany in prison; he decided to plead guilty and “took my own initiative and wrote down on the paper to the prosecutor general, Sir, I’m ready to plead guilty. I’m ready to live in harmony with other neighbors, so I’m just pleading guilty for what I did. I’m so sorry for what

²³³ Richters, "Suffering and Healing in the Aftermath of War and Genocide in Rwanda: Mediations through Community-Based Sociotherapy," 193.

²³⁴ Author interview, tape recording, Kigali, Rwanda, November 16, 2012.

²³⁵ Author interview, tape recording, Kigali, Rwanda, November 20, 2012.

happened.” Francois asked for and received forgiveness from his victims’ relatives; he says he now lives peacefully in the community. His forgiveness allowed him to avoid the social isolation he would have faced if the family had not forgiven him, and has allowed him to reconcile with the community, building social cohesion.

Similarly, “Jean-Pierre” became involved in genocide crimes as a teenager and was imprisoned for years. He pled guilty in gacaca, and asked for and received forgiveness from his victims’ relatives. He described his experience of receiving forgiveness as a process toward economic and social reconciliation:

Survivors have not only forgiven us in theory, but this has also been put into practice. Out of the killings, the other crimes included destroying houses and destroying properties. During gacaca, the charges included to pay compensation for those properties which was [too much] money. But some survivors said, ‘I know your situation, I know you are poor, so just give me the small amount.’ This was a process that showed them they had a way of forgiving them.²³⁶

Jean-Pierre’s case exemplifies the transition from forgiveness to reconciliation in rural Rwandan society. After having being forgiven and formed a relationship with survivors based on empathy and mutual understanding, as in their decision to release him from debt, Jean-Pierre has reconciled with survivors and the rest of the community across different social groups. Today, he does not merely live peacefully with the survivors or tolerate their presence; he also shares beers in the bar with them.

This is the point at which some scholars argue that mere interpersonal reconciliation is enough, that forgiveness is not needed for the meaningful and lasting diffusion of inter-group tensions. I contest, however, that surface reconciliation (the restoration of niceties and peaceful coexistence) is not enough if Rwanda is to prevent

²³⁶ Author interview, tape recording, Rwamagana, Rwanda, November 14, 2012.

further atrocities. Without widespread forgiveness, tensions will bubble under the surface, rumors will circulate, and trust will remain low. As a result, inter-group animosity will persist, preventing political reconciliation.

The final way forgiveness works toward political reconciliation after genocide is by revitalizing political life. By rebuilding individuals' psychological health and allowing them to reclaim their citizenship, forgiveness allows for re-entry into the political sphere. Likewise, the restoration of social cohesion and interactions in a society unimpeded by fear or isolation allows for the exchange of ideas in the public sphere. In Rwandan villages, this modern-day polis consists of the marketplace, local government, elections, and public debates and celebrations. Through all the previously mentioned processes, forgiveness works its way toward the rebirth of the polis, the site of power and exchange. This revitalized polis helps further political reconciliation, because individuals acting as citizens rather than as members of Hutu or Tutsi groups help to decrease group identification and inter-group animosity.

Survivors' rights critics worry about infringing upon victim rights and safety in the political sphere. Scott Straus argues that it is too soon for forgiveness or even reconciliation in Rwanda because it would put too much of a burden on survivors before they are ready to forgive. Instead he argues for trust and confidence between former enemies.²³⁷ Martha Minow problematizes the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation, saying that public and third party forgiveness risks forgetting, and "thereby fail[s] to respect fully those who have suffered...

²³⁷ Straus, "Origins and Aftermaths: The Dynamics of Genocide in Rwanda and Their Post-Crime Implications."

Forgiveness is a power held by the victimized, not a right to be claimed.”²³⁸ Instead, she suggests healing and reconciliation as a middle ground between revenge and forgiveness and rejects the idea of politically significant forgiveness. Ernesto Verdeja also makes a survivors’ rights critique of institutionalized forgiveness, which he worries may coerce victims²³⁹ and disregard anger and resentment.²⁴⁰ Like Minow, Verdeja sees reconciliation as an achievable goal for political society through the “partial pardon.” Murphy and Hampton claim that reconciliation is possible without forgiveness, and that tertiary institutions teaching forgiveness run the risk of achieving false forgiveness while enemies continue to secretly harbor resentment.²⁴¹ Neelke Doorn problematizes the idea of forgiveness in transitional justice and proposes reconciliation without forgiveness. Doorn worries that forgiveness and apology “run the risk of corruption when put to social and political use... national forgiveness attempts can be experienced as ‘false reconciliation’ by the victims, especially in the absence of full truth and justice.”²⁴² She sees trust, not forgiveness, as the prerequisite to reconciliation. Charles Villa Vicencio also proposes a more moderate goal of cooperation and harmony between former enemies instead of forgiveness.²⁴³ Likewise, Solomon Schimmel takes a cautious approach, arguing that even victims who forgive in the sense of relinquishing the desire for punishment or

²³⁸ Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 17.

²³⁹ Verdeja, *Unchopping a Tree: Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Political Violence*, 16.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁴¹ Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 8.

²⁴² Neelke Doorn, "The Place of Forgiveness in Transitional Justice Processes," ed. Stephen Block-Schulman and David White, *Forgiveness: Probing the Boundaries* (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2009). 197.

²⁴³ Vicencio, *Walk with Us and Listen: Political Reconciliation in Africa*, 171.

anger might not want to reestablish a relationship with the offender.²⁴⁴ Jeffrie Murphy concurs, arguing that reconciliation does not guarantee forgiveness, which he sees as an internal moral change²⁴⁵. Charles Griswold makes a conceptual distinction between apology and forgiveness, claiming that apology, not forgiveness, is appropriate on a political level.²⁴⁶

In response to these scholars, whose concerns for victims are valid, some Rwandan examples shows the timely and successful execution of programs facilitating forgiveness. Although not everyone will be able to forgive, those who forgive and have been forgiven can release their anger and focus on a common future with their fellow citizens, Hutu and Tutsi alike. Thus, re-entry into political life after forgiveness is good for victims, perpetrators, and communities. The concern that forgiving ignores underlying tensions is valid, but the answer is not superficial reconciliation or pardoning. Although there are other paths to reconciliation, forgiveness is the only one that returns people to the political sphere free of anger and resentment. Because of this important political consequence of forgiveness, political scientists and architects of transitional justice should take forgiveness seriously as a force of reconciliation, an attainable goal and not just an impossible ideal.

The Rwandan Case: From Political Reconciliation to Forgiveness

This section will consider the varying degrees of success of the ways in which Rwandan national and nongovernmental programs have helped foster or hinder forgiveness. Top-down reconciliation efforts have included: encouraging confession

²⁴⁴ Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness*, 52.

²⁴⁵ Jeffrie Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14-17.

²⁴⁶ Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 172.

through the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission; memorializing through the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide; enabling forgiveness through nonprofit and church workshops; and bringing people together through *gacaca*. From the monthly *umuganda* day of community service to ethnically integrated schools and the “genocide ideology” laws, national governmental programs can only do so much to unite people. So too can nonprofit and church programs with sporadic rural outreach. Ultimately, it is the choice of individuals to forgive. However, those programs that have successfully encouraged forgiveness in Rwanda should serve as a model for governmental, nongovernmental, and ecclesiastical programs in other post-conflict situations, a model that should be refined and adapted to fit each unique political and cultural context.

Teaching Absolution: National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

The NURC enabled forgiveness through its desensitization campaigns for perpetrators but facilitated false confessions in some cases, inhibiting forgiveness. Because the sincerity of forgiveness is impossible to measure and this project makes no claims to quantitative evidence, I am unable to assess whether NURC programs have overall furthered or hindered forgiveness. However, peace in the countryside and released prisoners’ testimony of forgiveness point to this agency’s effective utilization of Christian teachings while convincing prisoners to participate in transitional justice and return to their communities.

The NURC is a major proponent of the “Banyarwanda” (“One Rwanda”) campaign of unity and reconciliation. This program’s message is that Rwandans were culturally unified in pre-colonial times and will be now: individuals are not

Hutus or Tutsis, but Rwandans.²⁴⁷ Thus, it assumes that reconciliation is contingent upon on the erasure of the identities that were central to the genocide. This mission of unity and reconciliation is embedded in nearly every program and governing body;²⁴⁸ note the official name of the “Government of National Unity.”²⁴⁹ Despite the national narrative of unity, Rwandan identities actually have overt and subtle complex and overlapping categories: Hutu and Tutsi; perpetrator, survivor, and bystander; returnee and native; upper class, lower class, and middle class; and rural and urban. The failure of the Banyarwanda campaign to recognize these differences is a major omission, although the Rwandans I encountered seemed to find unity an important priority for peace. The government’s anti-genocide ideology laws have drawn criticism for their vague language and use in silencing political opposition, although it agreed to consider amending the 2008 law to narrow the terms of punishable infractions.²⁵⁰ Moreover, the government’s narrative blaming colonialism for ethnic division can prevent ordinary Rwandans from taking ownership of their history of violence.²⁵¹

The NURC conducted sensitization campaigns in prisons, bringing in officials from the NURC and other government bodies to convince genocide convicts and

²⁴⁷ Nigel Eltringham, "The Past Is Elsewhere: The Paradoxes of Proscribing Ethnicity in Post-Genocide Rwanda," in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Lars Waldorf and Scott Straus (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 273.

²⁴⁸ B. Ingelaere, "The Gacaca courts in Rwanda," in *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences*, ed. L. Huyse and M. Salter (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008), 45-46.

²⁴⁹ Eugenia Zorbas, "Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda," 29-52.

²⁵⁰ "Le gouvernement rwandais accepte d'amender la loi punissant 'l'idéologie de genocide'" *League Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Defense des Droits de l'Homme*, November 5, 2012, accessed November 15, 2012, <http://www.liprodhor.org/2012/11/le-gouvernement-rwandais-accepte-damender-la-loi-punissant-lideologie-de-genocide-publie-le-5-11-2012-a-0734-par-igihe/>.

²⁵¹ Eltringham, "The Past Is Elsewhere: The Paradoxes of Proscribing Ethnicity in Post-Genocide Rwanda," 278-79.

suspects to plead guilty to all of their crimes in gacaca. It continues to conduct sensitization programs for prisoners who have still refused to admit to the crimes they are accused of. Paired with these campaigns were the twelve weeklong *ingando* solidarity camps, which trained prisoners for re-integration into the community and encouraged them to apologize to survivors and ask for forgiveness. The campaigns have been mostly successful at relieving the burden of prison overcrowding and convincing perpetrators to apologize and ask for forgiveness.

The NURC saw many failures in promoting forgiveness and reconciliation. Often, perpetrators made superficial apologies and promised to seek forgiveness in order to be released from prison, but did not approach survivors outside of court proceedings to ask for forgiveness, rendering survivors fearful and unable to forgive them. Plea-bargaining often brought about false claims of forgiveness and pardoning often made survivors perceive a lack of justice.²⁵² Claudine said that the NURC's program of reconciliation and forgiveness caused the perpetrators "to change slowly, but I can no longer believe that those people changed truly because none of them came to me personally to apologize or ask for forgiveness, even though they did in gacaca." This echoes a fear expressed by many survivors that the government wants to move forward before they are ready to forgive. Claudine thinks the government should have encouraged them to approach her; if they apologized, she would have been able to forgive them. "The big task is to tell them to come to approach me. I think they can hardly come to do that... they have to take their own initiative to approach me and ask for forgiveness." However, she is satisfied with the

²⁵² *Building Lasting Peace in Rwanda: Voices of the People*, 123-124.

government's establishment of peace and security, even if she has not forgiven the perpetrators, saying that the government "has built a culture of peace and established security and strengthened people through the process of reconciliation." Some outside observers find the *ingando* camps to be "utterly didactic"²⁵³ places "wherein ethnicity would be dismissed as colonial fabrication."²⁵⁴ National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide officer David Mwesigwa defends the NURC's sensitization programs, saying any cases where the campaigns forced perpetrators to ask for forgiveness or survivors to forgive were failures of the system and should be avoided: "We should teach people the good intentions of forgiving, and let them decide."²⁵⁵ My respondents – especially perpetrators – found that the NURC's reintegration campaigns were successful at restoring prisoners to society and facilitating forgiveness. Mark Amstutz cites Fatuma Ndangiza, the former NURC Executive Secretary, whose family was killed during the genocide. Touring prisons, she told the story of her husband's death and expressed that she wished she could meet and forgive his murderer. A man at one presentation stood up and admitted to killing her husband, and Ndangiza forgave him. She visited him in prison and once, years later, allowed him and his wife to stay in her home.²⁵⁶

Perpetrators who have gone through *ingando* express satisfaction with the system's success at promoting forgiveness and reconciliation. When "Julien" was in prison, it was hard to consider reconciliation because the perpetrators feared

²⁵³ Chi Mgbako, "Ingando Solidarity Camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 18 (2005): 208.

²⁵⁴ Susan Thomson, "Reeducation for Reconciliation: Participant Observations on "Ingando"," in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Lars Waldorf and Scot Straus (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 274.

²⁵⁵ Author interview, tape recording, Kigali, Rwanda, November 20, 2012.

²⁵⁶ Amstutz, "Is Reconciliation Possible after Genocide?: The Case of Rwanda," 560.

retaliation by survivors. The NURC campaigns encouraging them to “to orient us in the good way we can plead guilty” successfully facilitated apologies and cohabitation - “now we just live in harmony with survivors.”²⁵⁷ The NURC “was much involved to teach us reconciliation and unity, and this coalition was the one that organized the solidarity camps, and taught us how to proceed on reconciliation” and building “a culture of peace.” Thus, top-down encouragement of forgiveness worked toward political reconciliation.

“Jean-Pierre” was imprisoned for genocide crimes; he never thought he would plead guilty until the NURC told prisoners it was in their own interest to tell the truth about their crimes so everyone could live peacefully together. Some of his fellow prisoners were skeptical and thought the government would kill them if they pled guilty, but he cooperated and pled guilty in gacaca because conditions were bad in the prisons, out of self-interest. He did not indicate that he has been forgiven, but he feels the program’s psychological care processed him successfully and reduced his fear of victim retribution. He believes that the government has played a big role in political reconciliation: “At a certain time, we were like animals. But since the government authorities started to approach us, we started to think our lives had value, we could plead guilty, this could get peaceful.”

A deep-rooted relationship between the NURC and Christianity must be noted; this government agency owes some of its success to its cooperation with religious leaders (the organization is headed by former Archbishop of Rwanda John Rucyahana). The deeply religious population places great import on faith-based

²⁵⁷ Author interview, tape recording, Rwamagana, Rwanda, November 14, 2012.

forgiveness and reconciliation. A majority of Rwandans are Christian (fifty six per cent Catholic and twenty six per cent Protestant),²⁵⁸ and churches remain the most important nongovernmental institutions in communities. Despite the problematic role of the Catholic Church in the genocide – many priests sheltered Tutsis in churches before offering them to the killers, and the Vatican failed to denounce the genocide or order its clergymen to resist – Catholicism remains popular, although many left the Church for the growing evangelical movement or the small Muslim minority. Church leaders teach forgiveness based on the Christian formulation of love, empathy, humanity, and release of resentment.²⁵⁹ Many churches have taken up the NURC’s mission of unity and reconciliation. Thus, a fully secular understanding of reconciliation or forgiveness is impossible. The message of humanity, empathy, and love in faith-based initiatives seems to resonate even with non-observers.

In prison, pastors and priests came to visit “Immanuel” and his fellow perpetrators and told them to admit to their crimes: “In prison, churches came to help us that we need to change, to look how to live peacefully with other persons and to give apologies so this could happen to be forgiven and they used to tell us, ‘you know guys, you need to first approach those relatives of the people you killed and then you need to come to God so that your forgiveness will be accepted.’” It was likely in part because of the religious message of repentance that the NURC campaigns convinced so many perpetrators to participate in *gacaca* and return to their communities.

“Francois” participated in genocide killings and lootings and was imprisoned. He does not feel that he was forced to ask for forgiveness or plead guilty, and he

²⁵⁸ "Rwanda," Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rw.html>.

²⁵⁹ Solomon, *Wounds Not Healed by Time*, 45.

praises government campaigns that “played a big role in this process” of forgiveness. Officers from the NURC and priests came into the prison when he was serving his sentence saying, “if you guys just tell us what happened, we can see what can be done.” He says they asked, not coerced, the prisoners to ask for forgiveness, and he is glad they did. He feels welcome in his community today, and credits the sensitization campaigns with survivors’ willingness to forgive him.

If the faith-based programs cooperating with the NURC avoid coercing people – if they are carefully implemented in ways that are relevant and helpful to the population, and succeed in avoiding the Derridian spectacle of “a virtually Christian convulsion-conversion-confession”²⁶⁰ – then they can encourage forgiveness in ways that secular reconciliation programs cannot. Many Rwandans ground their forgiveness in their faith, even without church interventions.²⁶¹ In such a deeply religious country, these efforts should not be ignored or dismissed for their Biblical teachings or evangelizing strategies; because of Rwandans’ religiosity, they play a crucial role in promoting forgiveness.

The message of the government’s unity and reconciliation campaign is often at odds with the national memorialization’s narrative of Tutsi victimhood. Rwanda has certainly not balanced these two impulses of commemoration and reunification perfectly. In its efforts to ensure the national narrative of the genocide and reconciliation prevails, the government has censored journalists and academic researchers.²⁶² It has been accused of political assassinations of dissenting public

²⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 31.

²⁶¹ Phil Clark, *The Rules (and Politics) of Engagement*, 306.

²⁶² Thomson, "Reeducation for Reconciliation: Participant Observations on "Ingando"," 332.

figures and political opponents.²⁶³ Its genocide ideology laws are arbitrarily vague. However, in the instances where *ingando* and prison release campaigns have facilitated forgiveness, the government has succeeded at promoting lasting political reconciliation.

Memorializing for Victims: National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide

Created in 2007 by Parliament, the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG) focuses on survivors, memorialization, and preventing future atrocities.²⁶⁴ Campaigns geared toward both survivors and perpetrators shape the national narrative of the genocide, and emphasize coexistence and reconciliation while also advocating for victims' rights. While message of the CNLG has at least partially succeeded in commemorating the victims and creating a space for survivors to mourn, it has not significantly furthered forgiveness.

The CNLG shapes the national historical narrative of the genocide, advocates for survivors' rights, organizes the Week of Mourning in April (when CNLG was established in 2007, it consolidated all the existing memorialization services), fights genocide ideology, and researches the genocide to commemorate and memorialize it. It also hosts events yearly reconciliation forums in rural communities and ceremonies recognizing genocide heroes and rescuers. Two CNLG officers interviewed for this project, David Mwesigwa (head of the Survivor Advocacy Program) and James Ndirimu (Survivor Advocacy Officer) emphasized that their programs do not force

²⁶³ Lydia Polgreen and Alan Cowell, "Body of Rwandan Ex-Spymaster Found Dead," *The New York Times*, January 3 2014.

²⁶⁴ Article 4[4], Organic Law No. 09/2007, "Law on the attributions, organisation and functioning of the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide" in "Organic Law No 47/2001 of 18/12/2001, on Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Discrimination and Sectarianism".

people to forgive, as many of the NURC programs have been accused of doing. Ndirimu insists that CNLG programs are well-received and promote forgiveness in Rwandan communities: "In the villages people appreciate what we do in terms of fighting genocide, and also in terms of reconciliation... People perceive teaching love better than teaching hate. CNLG is viewed in a good way because we are teaching love." They insist that the CNLG's encouragement of debate and discussion about reconciliation is helping Rwandans reconcile and forgive. Mwesigwa claims that the CNLG's programs are necessary because of underlying tensions remaining in Rwanda: "If you go around the country, if you did not know the history, you would never know that genocide happened here. But then you cannot say that things are OK. That's why we have those programs." President Kagame cites a "degree of unity and reconciliation; unimaginable just a decade and a half ago because a culture of forgiveness - not vengeance - has taken root," thanks to these programs.²⁶⁵ However, the rural respondents interviewed knew little about the CNLG's programs, indicating that they have not been directly affected by this agency. Everyday Rwandans' lack of information about the CNLG prevents analysis of its effectiveness at promoting forgiveness, but an analysis of the national memorialization narrative reveals a focus on the grievances of survivors, which does not promote forgiveness.

As an agency of memorialization, the CNLG has succeeded in consolidating sites of memory into genocide memorials throughout the country that remind Rwandans and visitors of the atrocities committed in 1994. Following the lead of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, this government agency tells a story of

²⁶⁵"Pockets of Genocide Ideas Still Alive, Says Cnlg Officer," *AllAfrica.com*, 2011 Oct 24 2011.

Hutu perpetrators and Tutsi victims without much nuance. The critique that this excludes Twa (pygmy minority) and moderate Hutu victims, mixed-ethnicity people, and Tutsi perpetrators is legitimate. The efforts of the CNLG do not directly facilitate forgiveness – although they do not eliminate its possibility – but they do provide physical and temporal spaces for remembering and grieving the genocide, however problematic those spaces may be.

In their public forums and education programs, the CNLG recognizes that Rwandan reconciliation is unique in its interpersonal destruction: neighbors killed neighbors, and now have to live next to each other, so the Commission “teaches every category of Rwandans,” Hutu and Tutsi alike, the lessons of the genocide.²⁶⁶ One indirect route to forgiveness may be an emotional catharsis that enables victims to process testimony, but top-down approaches remain fairly far removed from rural populations and do not always succeed in promoting forgiveness. Moreover, those efforts have drawn much criticism for their propensity “to legislate ethnic identities out of existence,”²⁶⁷ paradoxically perpetuating ethnic divisionism and inhibiting political reconciliation. Jens Meierhenrich argues that the centralization of memory by the CNLG discounts the value of *lieux de memoire* – physical sites of violent acts during the genocide – and thus erases individual histories of the genocide by prioritizing official memorial sites.²⁶⁸ Moreover, programs may seem more successful or well-received in communities than they actually are; many outreach

²⁶⁶ James Ndirimu.

²⁶⁷ René Lemarchand, “Politics of Memory in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” in *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, ed. Phil Clark and Zachary D. Kaufman (London: Hurst Publishers Ltd., 2008), 66.

²⁶⁸ Jens Meierhenrich, “Topographies of Remembering and Forgetting: The Transformation of “Lieux De Memoire” in Rwanda,” in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Lars Waldorf and Scot Straus (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

programs fail to reach those who do not have radios, and often people turn their radios off when government-sponsored memorial announcements come on.²⁶⁹ None of the people interviewed for this project except the nonprofit and government workers mentioned the CNLG or said that its programs had directly affected their lives; this may be because they do not know that the Commission is the body that organizes the April memorial services. Other than the Week of Mourning, few of the CNLG's programs directly affect rural Rwandans. Those programs that Rwandans do encounter can help survivors to mourn, furthering forgiveness. However, they also run the danger of re-traumatizing survivors by prompting painful memories, inhibiting processes of forgiveness, rather than focusing on the humanity of perpetrators or community restoration.

Government programs vary in degrees of success in promoting forgiveness. Despite some failures, to a great extent they are at least facilitating an environment in which forgiveness can occur. According to Isaac Mugabe, at first:

Unity and reconciliation was a struggle... if the government didn't take steps to make sure people were living in harmony, it could actually lead to another genocide... This is one of the successes of the government, telling people that these are the steps we need to take if we are to cope with our own situation.

Programs of the NURC and CNLG have been somewhat trial-and-error, with a contradictory message of victim grievances in memorialization and idealized national unity, but have made some advances toward forgiveness.

Enabling Encounters: Nonprofit and Church Workshops

²⁶⁹ Annemiek Richters, "Suffering and Healing in the Aftermath of War and Genocide in Rwanda," 181.

Perspectives from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working toward forgiveness and reconciliation show the possibility for programs to supplement government initiatives. Nongovernmental organizations have the potential to cooperate with the government's agenda even if they use different methods and target different populations in order to promote forgiveness and reconciliation. "NGOs are the hands of government," says Benjamin Ndizeye, whose programs cooperate with the government to complement its "macro" reconciliation programs with "micro" reconciliation programs. Nonprofit organizations that run forgiveness workshops or focus on economic inequality or social issues can facilitate forgiveness if they enable safe encounters between former enemies. This project values encounters, or moments of contact in civil society between people, as important steps toward forgiveness, although it recognizes that forgiveness is possible without encounters. Encounters are an important route to forgiveness because of the importance of social existence in Rwandan culture, as Alexandre Guma explains:

The advantage of forgiveness is, no man is an island. You can't live alone. The people you were supposed to live with, they are no longer and you can't bring them back. And the people you have to live with for your future and your children's future are the people around you, and those people are offenders. But we also show them that people are people and crimes are crimes, and people can be changed based on politicization and other factors... they are your friends, and they are people like you.

The faith-based NGO As We Forgive (AWF) Rwanda promotes forgiveness by facilitating mediated, productive encounters and counseling participants to forgive each other in forgiveness workshops. Its poverty-tackling initiatives and associations between survivors and perpetrators began as forgiveness and reconciliation groups

and grew into economic empowerment cooperatives.²⁷⁰ It is one of the few organizations in the country with forgiveness as a central mission, but it is not alone in its goal of political reconciliation.

In its workshops, AWF places perpetrators and survivors together in a room, facilitating formal encounters, and uses the lessons of the Bible and the humanity of each party to encourage participants to forgive and seek forgiveness. Benjamin Ndizeye, a coordinator for the organization, explains the strategy in terms of mutual victimhood, empathy, and humanity: “When you are putting yourself in the shoes of another person, a perpetrator, you feel that that person is a victim. So we try to show the victim[hood] of the perpetrator, and also the victim[hood] of the survivor.” He explains that facilitated forgiveness does not happen immediately. At first, people are resistant, and many refuse or leave the workshops and do not return. However, eventually most participants empathize, reconcile, and forgive, and many recommend the workshops to their friends and relatives. Ndizeye explains that the president of one of the associations supported by AWF is an ex-RPF leader and the vice-president is a former ex-FAR (Hutu genocidal militia) soldier. “[T]hey reconciled, returning to the society, and now they are friends. They are working together. And just in one year only, they have some goats and pigs.” It was only by the deep forgiveness the workshops facilitated that this close relationship, a building block of political reconciliation, developed. The workshops achieve “more than living together... When you are rebuilding relationships, you are dealing with real peace.”

²⁷⁰ “Our Programs and Outcomes,” *As We Forgive Rwanda*, accessed November 9, 2012, <http://asweforgive.org/our-programs/>.

Prison Fellowship Rwanda (PFR) is a faith-based organization led by Bishop John Rucyahana, who also heads the NURC. The organization leads forgiveness and reconciliation workshops in “reconciliation villages” scattered across the country as well as prison outreach encouraging guilty pleas and apologies, called the Umuvumu Tree Project.²⁷¹ In its workshops, PFR encourages victims and perpetrators “to accept the good will if they change within the context of reconciliation.” The programs aim to increase not only interpersonal reconciliation and peaceful cohabitation, but also forgiveness, and PFR employee Alexandre Guma insists the organization merely facilitates forgiveness and does not coerce individuals to forgive. “When you motivate people in terms of forgiveness... [y]ou are reminding them of the better future and showing them the bad part of their history.” It is difficult to gauge the degree to which forgiveness is achieved willingly. However, facilitated encounters that give both parties a voice and avoid re-traumatization supplement government programs. Guma says that the reconciliation programs coincide with the Rwandan unity and reconciliation agenda and the organization often partners with the government, using faith-based techniques.

Independent academics, mental health specialists, community leaders, and NGO trauma workers have developed similar workshops encouraging storytelling, trauma healing, preaching, and encounters – a diverse toolkit of approaches to forgiveness and reconciliation. Many of the successful models incorporate Christian teachings that resonate with Rwandans. Dr. Simon Gasibirege, a Rwandan professor, developed trauma workshops focused on healing through faith and spirituality; many

²⁷¹ “Programs,” *Prison Fellowship Rwanda*, accessed November 9, 2012, http://www.pfrwanda.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=34.

such programs cite God's forgiveness as a reason for Rwandans to forgive and reconcile.²⁷² Associations between survivors and perpetrators throughout the country, like the Ubutwari Bwo Kubaho cooperative in Huye between wives of perpetrators and wives of victims, credit prayer and help from God for their mutual forgiveness. They cite a direct link from forgiveness to friendship and the restoration of political cohesion in the greater community.

Nonprofit organizations can fill in the gaps left by poorly run or insufficient government programs. However, these organizations cannot do it all: "In order for reconciliation to be sustainable, the government has to play a big role," says Guma. While NGOs might emphasize forgiveness more specifically as a path to political reconciliation than the government, which focuses on unity, reconciliation, and commemoration, their programs share the burden of facilitating forgiveness through encounters and culturally relevant concepts. These three NGOs represent a sample of Rwanda's vast network of such organizations, and their successes and failures at promoting forgiveness represent the potential for nongovernmental organizations to further political reconciliation through forgiveness.

Enabling Encounters in Gacaca

The gacaca system was a daring experiment. Deviating from both the pure retributive model of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the political forgiveness model of the South African TRC, the Rwandan government chose a hybrid of its pre-colonial courts (perhaps in deliberate defiance of Western institutional models) and its more Westernized criminal justice system. Gacaca also

²⁷² Régine Uwibereyeho King, "Trauma, Healing and Reconciliation in Rwanda," *International Journal of Disability, Community and Rehabilitation* 1, no. 3 (2002).

facilitated truth telling, which was useful for the airing of victims' emotions and for the perpetrators' confession. When they confessed their crimes, perpetrators furthered the healing process by telling victims' families where their loved ones' bodies were buried or the story of their final days, providing closure for some by enabling final burial rites. Repeated encounters between offenders and the offended surrounded by the community, facilitated forgiveness and interpersonal reconciliation simultaneously, thus ultimately promoting political reconciliation between groups. However, this process of truth telling is an often-problematic route to political reconciliation; there remains the risk of re-traumatizing or further angering an upset victim, rather than providing closure. Gacaca thus successfully facilitated forgiveness in many cases despite alienating some survivors.

With some exceptions, both survivor and perpetrator respondents seemed to think that gacaca effectively promoted reconciliation by bringing victims and offenders together in a public setting. The courts' founding documents did not mention forgiveness until 2008, and even then the government only encouraged citizens to forgive; however, many see the proceedings as airing out the national conscience with private forgiveness and public apologies.²⁷³ However, Rwandan perceptions of forgiveness are connected to gacaca because the courts encouraged perpetrator apologies.²⁷⁴ The open air of the grass courts, where antagonistic parties could reconcile and even forgive publicly, underlines the importance of community to the Rwandan processes of forgiveness and reconciliation. The ideas of truth telling,

²⁷³ Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda*.

²⁷⁴ Timothy Longman, "Trying Times for Rwanda," *Harvard International Review* 32 (2010), accessed November 6, 2012, <http://hir.harvard.edu/law-of-the-land/trying-times-for-rwanda?page=0,1>.

reparations, and encounters between victims and perpetrators in gacaca are inseparable from Rwandan pre-colonial concepts of community justice.

“Francois,” a released perpetrator, said that gacaca was important because it revealed the true locations and deaths of some unknown victims. This truth-telling component of gacaca helped survivors find out the fates of their slain relatives and began the healing process; when survivors knew where the bodies were, they were closer to being able to forgive. Another released prisoner, “Immanuel,” explained that “gacaca was healing for [survivors] because they found out where their relatives were being thrown, so they were thankful for this process to give the last burial to their relatives.” This culturally important burial process provided closure to many survivors, allowing them to fully grieve and, in some cases, to forgive.

However, when the truth commission aspect of the courts, the testimony of witnesses and perpetrators, took place before the survivors were ready to face their trauma, gacaca failed to promote forgiveness and reconciliation and made survivors feel like they no longer had a voice. Although there is no linear step-by-step process that predicts when survivors will be ready to participate in transitional justice procedures, in some cases, testimony or confessions given too soon run the risk of victims seeking survivors’ vengeance or fearing that perpetrators still pose a risk to their safety.²⁷⁵ Likewise, survivors cannot fully participate in gacaca if their trauma and psychological wounds are too fresh. The survivor Colette testifies, “When we went back, we found the bodies... Since then, I haven’t been back. I have no way to go back. Even in gacaca, I did not participate because I had no way to express

²⁷⁵ Staub et al., “Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiving and the Prevention of Violence after Genocide or Mass Killing,” 300.

myself.” “Claudine” and “Jacqueline’s” offenders did not apologize, and they lost hope in the gacaca courts, which they saw as a Derridian “theatrical space in which the grand forgiveness, the grand scene of repentance with we are concerned which, is played out, sincerely or not.”²⁷⁶ The solution is careful timing of testimony based on the emotional state of survivors, according to the judgment of the elders presiding over each community’s gacaca court. The courts did not always succeed at this timing, as their many critics testify.

The gacaca courts also drew criticism from foreign observers for their plea-bargain system that allows perpetrators to receive shorter sentences in the *Travailleur d’Intérêt Generale* (TIG) community service program in exchange for a full confession of their crimes. Indeed, it is possible that some of the perpetrators I interviewed confessed to more than they committed or unwillingly confessed to crimes in order to expedite their TIG sentence and release. “Immanuel” said he “pled guilty following the information of the campaigns” and indicted fellow perpetrators in order to receive a shorter sentence himself, and many other prisoners participated in a similar plea-bargaining deals. While these criticisms may be warranted, many perpetrators found reconciliation based on the forgiveness they achieved through gacaca after admitting to their crimes and apologizing, either in or outside of the court proceedings. Moreover, the TIG program increases empathy, forgiveness, and reconciliation in many cases by putting perpetrators to work in communities during the day building schools, roads, and public housing for survivors. The respondent

²⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 29.

“Julien,” a former “Tigiste,” feels that TIG was successful because it both punished the perpetrators and built homes for survivors.

Discontent with gacaca was common, but many of the survivors and perpetrators I spoke to expressed satisfaction with its truth-telling processes. Gacaca helped facilitate forgiveness through encounters between survivors and perpetrators. Its emphasis on confession and forgiveness held great potential to facilitate community reconciliation.²⁷⁷ When survivors met face-to-face with offenders, it was often easier to see the other party as a fellow human being, and to feel empathy for the people who harmed them. Benjamin Ndizeye argues that forgiveness through empathy could not have been possible without gacaca and the reintegration of prisoners. He says that although it was not always completely successful, “that’s not saying that gacaca itself was a failure... at the macro level, generally gacaca was good because it was helping perpetrators to express themselves,” despite problems (corrupt judges, lies, forced apologies, etc.).

Except in cases where false or forced confessions in the courts perpetuated patterns of violence and victimization,²⁷⁸ gacaca and TIG helped promote forgiveness (and thus political reconciliation) by encouraging testimony, apologies, public repentance, and empathy through encounters in the public sphere with the community as an audience. Because of the different implementations of gacaca in each village, it is difficult to assess whether the courts facilitated or impeded forgiveness, and whether interpersonal forgiveness achieved outside of the courts affected their

²⁷⁷ Amstutz, "Is Reconciliation Possible after Genocide?: The Case of Rwanda," 561.

²⁷⁸ Kaley Nash, “A comparative analysis of justice in post-genocidal Rwanda: Fostering a sense of peace and reconciliation?” *Africana* 1.1 (2007): 78.

proceedings. However, the courts often facilitated forgiveness by bringing people together in encounters and by airing the truth.

The Ideal Case: A Political Theory of Forgiveness

In this section, building off of the evidence from the Rwandan case that forgiveness is a politically relevant step toward political reconciliation, I will make a normative argument that in an ideal post-conflict society twenty years after mass atrocities, institutional political reconciliation programs should facilitate forgiveness. In an ideal post-conflict society, scholars, politicians, and respected members of local communities should recognize and encourage the importance of agapē-based forgiveness for political reconstruction. Institutions should do this by implementing national education and public outreach programs; making forgiveness part of the culture of transitional justice proceedings; reintegrating populations of perpetrators and victims when it is appropriate; and supporting nongovernmental forgiveness promotion programs. This model aims to be applicable to many different post-conflict scenarios across national and cultural differences. However, it assumes the presence of a government with the legitimacy and resources to implement reconciliation and forgiveness programs, a civil society with the initiative to start grassroots efforts, and a minimal level of peace and security. Although Western critics worry the Rwandan administration has secured tenuous stability through authoritarian rule, this model can be applied where power is either concentrated or diffuse. Moreover, each post-violence society has a different suite of resources for forgiveness and reconciliation, such as religion, psychological counseling, political culture, oral narrative, and literature. Access should be increased to whichever of

these resources are helpful to individuals for forgiveness, but because forgiveness occurs differently for different people, none of these resources are guaranteed to help.

Educating the Public

One way a program of restoration after mass violence can encourage forgiveness, which the previous section has proved helps political reconciliation, is through a campaign of education. This program of forgiveness in an ideal post-conflict society is modeled after the successful elements of Rwandan reconciliation, but improves upon that model. It is based on a campaign of education in public school curriculum, media, and government-facilitated public debate. However, forgiveness should not be forced or pushed too quickly, at risk of exposing the victims to further abuses and perpetuating victimhood status.²⁷⁹ Nor should the government claim to achieve the “political forgiveness” espoused by Shriver and Daye in the style of the South African TRC, but instead should recognize that government pardons are not equivalent to interpersonal forgiveness, which has to occur on a deeply personal and emotional level. Thus, campaigns of reconciliation should simply present forgiveness as a positive step toward personal and community healing without demanding or attaching conditions to forgiveness.

One part of this forgiveness campaign is a national school curriculum for elementary and secondary education that teaches children the value of conflict resolution. The lessons should include workshops about the value of resolving interpersonal conflict in daily life, about difference and status, and about forgiving wrongs committed. In history lessons about the genocide, public education should

²⁷⁹ Jeffrie Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 117

include success stories about forgiveness improving the lives of individuals and the health of communities. Exercises similar to those in human rights curricula implemented by the American education nonprofit Facing History and Ourselves, which supplies lesson plans about historical and contemporary examples of human rights and nonviolence to teachers, could be provided²⁸⁰. These lessons should draw on cultural values relevant to each individual society – in Rwanda, those values include community, respect for elders, and social cohesion. Because the values of reconciliation and community are embedded in Rwandan culture, the lesson of forgiveness may be easily incorporated into education. Although it may be more difficult to teach forgiveness in a retributive-minded culture, the ideal institutional response to mass violence should still attempt to teach forgiveness in schools.

Government public service announcements should also include a message of forgiveness when dealing with reconciliation. In the Rwandan case, this would mean the CNLG not only memorializing the genocide and honoring the suffering of survivors but also including a message of forgiveness. It would include telling forgiveness success stories and describing the benefits of forgiveness to both perpetrators and victims on billboards, radio or television advertisements, and public speeches by government officials.

Finally, the government in a post-genocide society should foster a culture of forgiveness by facilitating public debate. The nonprofit Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) interviews Rwandans and hosts public debates across the country about social, economic, and political issues in order to gauge and make

²⁸⁰ Martha Minow, "Education for Coexistence," in *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity after Violent Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Martha Minow and Antonia Chayes (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 225.

policy recommendations based on public opinion. Ideal institutions in the hypothetical post-genocide society twenty years after crisis should adapt this model for reconciliation agencies. They could air grievances about post-conflict society and come together in civil society encounters to facilitate forgiveness. These debates would reveal the positive impact forgiveness has on those who have experienced it and bring people together in the public sphere as fellow citizens, thus restoring their identities and revitalizing the polis. Concerns that such an official message of forgiveness could impinge upon survivors' rights are legitimate, and the government must perform a careful balancing act, presenting forgiveness as a possibility without mandating it or attaching conditions to it, while making clear that forgiveness can still make a profound political impact if it occurs in private without being expressed in political terms. If carefully monitored in a way that neither represses free expression of grievances nor endangers victims, these forums would promote forgiveness.

Incorporating Forgiveness into Transitional Justice

A successful post-genocide institutional reconciliation effort will incorporate forgiveness into its transitional justice processes. Institutions should present confession and forgiveness as possible routes to reconciliation for individuals without mandating the expression of forgiveness in public (distinguishing forgiveness from political pardon, or the “many-to-many” apology Konstan and others separate from political pardon).²⁸¹ Successful models of transitional justice will enable forgiveness among individuals by helping victims to move on from atrocities through testimony and by enabling encounters between former enemies.

²⁸¹ Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea*, 172.

If a country engages truth commissions as their transitional justice institutions, proceedings should open with an official statement that the goals of the commission include forgiveness along with other goals of institutionalized memory and truth telling. Michael Ignatieff worries about the dangers of “false reconciliation” in South Africa and elsewhere and prioritizes political reconciliation reforms over forgiveness.²⁸² To avoid the pitfalls of the TRC, our hypothetical truth commission should explain the benefits of forgiveness but do no more to explicitly bring it about.

If a country chooses mass trials for its lower-level perpetrators (not the higher-up orchestrators of genocide, like in Nuremberg Trials or the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda), it can incorporate forgiveness much in the same way Rwanda (sometimes) did through gacaca. It should present confession and forgiveness as an option without mandating it or attaching it to conditions for sentences. To address the concern about insincere forgiveness in plea-bargaining, the courts may link confession to reduced sentences for perpetrators (checking testimony of perpetrators with that of survivors to reduce the likelihood of false confession), but they should not link the seeking or granting of forgiveness to any such reduction of punishment. The courts would thus merely promote forgiveness by bringing perpetrators and survivors together in public encounters and by providing a space for truth telling (such as revealing the location of bodies). This safeguard is necessary to ensure that pure interpersonal forgiveness is not abused for political aims, as Derrida feared it would be with his concept of impossible forgiveness.

²⁸² Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997), 217.

Reintegrating Populations

Ideally, twenty years after genocide conditions should be stable enough for perpetrators to safely return to society. This reintegration is another way institutions can enable forgiveness and political reconciliation. Although some cultures might be resistant to perpetrators of atrocities reentering society, it would expand Western notions of punitive justice, emphasizing instead community and absolution, values important to many non-Western cultures. In cases of mass violence where neighbors kill neighbors, eventually for political reconciliation perpetrators must once again live side by side with survivors. This facilitates forgiveness by encouraging everyday encounters, cooperation, and social cohesion in communities.

It will of course be important for governments to establish law and order before releasing prisoners to be processed by transitional justice institutions. To the argument that superficial interpersonal reconciliation is an equally viable path to political reconciliation and preferable to teach publicly, I respond that mere co-existence is not enough for members of formerly opposing groups to release inter-group hatred and resentment. Forgiving is the only path – other than forgetting, which in the case of mass violence is infeasible – that leads to political reconciliation after genocide. To the argument that reintegration is detrimental to forgiveness, I point to Rwandan villages, where perpetrators have successfully made amends with survivors and restored community cohesion through cooperation and forgiveness. In the wake of large-scale violence and refugee crises, short of a two-state solution (which is untenable if populations were integrated before the violence), co-existence is not a choice; it is a logistical necessity. Because forgiveness is the response to this

necessity that most effectively promotes political reconciliation, governments should consider reintegration as a route to forgiveness and lasting peace.

Presenting Forgiveness as an Option: Independent Programs

An ideal post-conflict society should work toward forgiveness not only on the deeply personal and interpersonal level, but also through voluntary programs that present forgiveness as a route to the restoration of relationships and civil society. The burden of the work for forgiveness-driven teachings should ultimately fall on independent institutions that facilitate forgiveness through encounters and moral and religious teachings, although governments can endorse them. As Benjamin Ndziye puts it, “Forgiveness comes with two people. But forgiveness also comes with the society... sometimes people need someone to come between them, like an organization, like a mediator.” In response to the counterargument that these programs pardon perpetrators or let them off scot-free while doing harm to victims, I maintain that participants should be able to join and leave them at will.

There remain valid concerns about teaching forgiveness in a fragile post-conflict society. Jacques Derrida and the survivors’ rights critics mentioned earlier argue against the corrupting presence of a third party in forgiveness, and would likely resist the courts, national agencies, NGOs, or churches encouraging forgiveness. The ideal institutional implementation of forgiveness would address these concerns by allowing space for truth telling and testimony (including the important emotions of grief and anger) in transitional justice processes. Transitional justice structures should emphasize forgiveness without enforcing it or connecting it to conditions, by

enabling encounters that allow survivors to regain their citizenship and personhood, and by recognizing the legitimate grievances of both survivors and perpetrators.

Derrida also decisively separates law from forgiveness, calling them “heterogeneous and irreducible.”²⁸³ He argues that “[o]ne could never, in the ordinary sense of the words, found a politics or law on forgiveness”²⁸⁴ and resists the use of the word in political negotiations and postwar French “national reconciliation.” He criticizes the French use of Abrahamic forgiveness to achieve the ostensible goal of national unity (actually nationalism and state legitimacy). He also critiques Desmond Tutu’s Christianization of South Africa’s political amnesty for offenders into a language of forgiveness and repentance, and reiterates that only an individual can forgive.²⁸⁵ Derrida would likely criticize Rwandan forgiveness programs in prisons. However, these programs often facilitated forgiveness, and an ideal implementation would do so even more. Derrida is right to reject the state’s supposed power to forgive through political amnesty or public expressions of forgiveness. However, the state can, and has, worked toward reconciliation in ways that enable the process of forgiving through transitional justice and education.

The model of forgiveness proposed here implements Derrida’s concept of pure forgiveness of the unforgivable (not his specific hypothetical scenario of forgiveness of repeated and cyclical offenses) and applies it to the forgiveness of atrocious crimes of genocide. Derrida’s framework needs to be extended by political applications of pure forgiveness; he warns of the dangers of encouraging forgiveness in the political world by claiming that this will corrupt and weaken forgiveness.

²⁸³ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 27.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

However, carefully planned programs encouraging forgiveness (not extorting or plea-bargaining) through education, and repeated encounters can give pure Derridian forgiveness the political impact of inter-group reconciliation.

Conclusions and Implications

After mass violence, the Arendtian boundary between public and private is ruptured, demanding a reexamination of the Derridian purity of forgiveness. Pragmatic reconciliation initiatives of post-genocide governments with an eye toward the ideal of justice and social restoration have a duty to recognize the compelling philosophical aporia of forgiveness. The Rwandan example, and the ideal model for which it provides a springboard, force us to reexamine the role of forgiveness in politics. A hypothetical post-genocide society twenty years after atrocities is timely given the current twentieth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. Far from secluding itself in the circuitous arguments about the abstract nature of forgiveness, political philosophy has a duty to find what has worked from the Rwandan example – teachings from the NURC and CNLG, nonprofit and church organizations, and successful encounters and truth-telling in gacaca – and theorize solutions.

Forgiveness-based political reconciliation is within reach for Rwanda. Before the Belgian colonists' divide-and-rule regime, Rwandans lived side-by-side, their lives fully intertwined; unlike elsewhere, the two populations share a culture, language, and history. On the surface, communities in Rwanda appear to be at peace with each other. Ethnic violence is all but non-existent; the government enjoys legitimacy as a peacetime power; the streets are clean, orderly, and calm; and Rwandans go about their daily business across the country without appearing to be

affected by the country's history. Isolated pockets of violence erupt sporadically, but overall reconciliation seems to have been successful. We cannot be sure that people have truly forgiven, but intermarriages between former ethnic groups have increased, Hutus and Tutsis are often close friends, and Rwandans of every social, economic, and political group coexist, live, work, and go to school together. Forgiveness or lack thereof might be under the surface; a son of a perpetrator, a Hutu, might appear to be reconciled on the surface but talk about how he hates the Tutsi in the company of other Hutu, even if they do not refer to the ethnic groups in public. Forgiveness is an ongoing process: Benjamin Ndizeye explains, "Our country has forgiven partially, which is the reason we still have the NURC... the trust, the deep forgiveness, is still something we need to do."

We must acknowledge the role of cultural difference in the Rwandan example and its applicability to other post-violence situations. Although the Rwandan reconciliation process presents a unique case study, it also has much to teach political scientists and policy-makers about the intersection between private experiences and political processes of reconciliation. Forgiveness' political ramifications after the genocide make Rwanda an unusual occasion for the fusion of the religious and personal with the political.

In many interpersonal relationships and communities in Rwanda, the morality of forgiveness has trumped the morality of justice or just retribution that is central to Western society. The Rwandan conception of justice, or *utabera*, differs from Western conceptions of accountability and focuses more on correcting the

equilibrium of society or the collective.²⁸⁶ However, as a successful alternative and a powerful force for politics, forgiveness has the power to subvert the dysfunctional drive for punishment that is imbued into many facets of Western society (exemplified by the American criminal justice system, which currently incarcerates 2.3 million of its citizens, mostly men of color). As such, the political and scholarly communities should take the concept of forgiveness – traditionally relegated to churches, deeply personal revelations, or psychological studies – into serious consideration as a force that, despite not being inherently political in nature, can have a profound impact on the politics of post-violence society.

Some differences in reconstructive periods and political discourses about the treatment of perpetrators must be noted. Forgiveness works in Rwanda partly because most of the country – excluding certain areas of Kigali – is not industrialized to the extent of, for example, Nazi Germany. Rwanda is far from a pre-modern society, and its economy is becoming increasingly bureaucratized and formalized, but its culture remains inherently skewed toward informal interactions, or the nonverbal and verbal connections that make up the fabric of Rwandan society. These interactions include appropriate body language, eye contact, or method of addressing someone in deference to culturally embedded customs such as respect for elders, exchanging favors, or acknowledging authority. Whereas more individuals in Westernized societies may rely more heavily on formal interactions and systems – for example, filling out standardized paperwork to enroll their children in kindergarten – those in some societies like Rwanda rely more heavily on informal interactions – for

²⁸⁶ Timothy Longman, "Trying Times for Rwanda," *Harvard International Review*, August 2010.

example, possible difficulties enrolling their children in the school of their choice if the principal of the school remembers a perceived slight from the parent, such as refusing to lend his car to the principal's son.

I agree with Derrida's conception of human rights and international discourses of crimes against humanity as a particular movement that sprung out of particular historical circumstances, not as a moral absolute that is applicable to all cultures and contexts (and Arendt would concur, although she would instead reaffirm the righteousness of such a discourse, as she wanted the Eichmann trial to see Nazi crimes as against humanity, not against the Jews, and she called for the creation of an international criminal court). In fact, one of the biggest problems facing Rwanda and other non-Western post-violence societies is the imposition of Western frameworks of justice by colonial power. This philosophy of Kant, Locke, Rousseau, and Mill came to fruition in light of international reactions to Nazi atrocities; this human rights framework is a moral outlook on justice that is specifically Western, and it often falls short when applied to non-Western situations. Rwandans complained that the United Nations International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda, which focused on bringing the highest-up orchestrators of violence to justice and took place in Tanzania, were out of reach of the average Rwandan. Postwar Northern Uganda is another such example; the Acholi people of that region are currently advocating for the amnesty of former child soldiers of the Lord's Resistance Army, rather than for the arrest of its war criminal leader Joseph Kony.

However, a political theoretical analysis of forgiveness should not fall back on cultural relativism. Cultural differences do not mean that the Rwandan case of

forgiveness is inapplicable elsewhere, or that we cannot draw conclusions about other post-violence situations from forgiveness in a culture that values informal interactions, but simply that informal interactions increase the importance of awareness of others, the role of action, and the Arendtian space between people in the public sphere. They thus enhance the political implications of forgiveness. The political world in which forgiveness with political implications can occur likely requires a measure of (commonly described as “African”) community orientation, interpersonal relationships, and common religious or moral principles.

In what kinds of political worlds, then, is this kind of forgiveness possible? A liberal democratic theorist might challenge the model, touting the cultural values of individualism and justice as retribution for damages done. I would counter, however, that the success of forgiveness and political reconciliation in Rwanda thus far points to not only the success of this model, but also the cultural traits and contexts that enable it. These conditions for forgiveness may also be cultivated in political systems such as American liberal democracy, which values individual rights and freedoms and conceptualizes justice retributively, rather than in terms of community healing. Programs that aim toward reconciliation or restorative justice after violence should thus facilitate forgiveness for its personal and political healing. For example, a restorative justice program in a culture less prone to community sentiment, such as the predominantly retributive and “tough on crime” American culture of justice, could build Arendtian *inter-est* with community outreach programs before proceeding to encourage forgiveness or reconciliation in post-violent situations. Ultimately there are some contextual cultural prerequisites to the implications of forgiveness found in

Rwanda, but they can be cultivated by state and non-state actors to an extent (cultural values cannot be completely manufactured, but must come at least in part from a population's preexisting values and systems, as the values of community and *inter-est* did in Rwanda). Forgiveness is receiving increased attention in criminal justice in the United States, and the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and negotiations between the state of Maine and Native Americans point to interest in restorative justice. Twenty years after Rwanda's hundred days of horror, the example of forgiveness between friends, relatives, and neighbors should inspire political actors around the world to strive toward a culture of forgiveness.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Perpetrators Interview Guide

- Let me tell you a little bit about myself and my project, and then you can decide if you would like to participate in this interview. My name is Lucy Britt, and I am an American student studying political science at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, studying Post-Conflict Transformation through the School for International Training in Kacyiru, Kigali. I live in Virginia in the United States with my parents and sister. I have been living with a Rwandese family in Kigali for the past two months and taking classes, and now I am in the last month of the program, when I am conducting an independent study project about the role of forgiveness in Rwanda's reconciliation after 1994. Your testimony will shape what I learn and study within this subject and will help form the bulk of my research. At the end of the month, I will present my findings to a panel of experts at my school, selected public servants, and fellow students. A written copy of my final paper will be kept at my school in Kigali and I will keep a copy for myself. I will not include your name in the paper. I may use the information you give me for a further research project at my university, but in that paper I will not use your name or personal information either, and any information or transcripts containing your name will be carefully stored under password protection and destroyed after that project is finished, in the spring of 2014.
- What were your experiences before, during, or after the genocide? You can tell me anything you are comfortable sharing.
- [Follow-up questions to testimony]
- What was your relationship with survivors immediately after the genocide, and has it changed today?
- Did you participate in gacaca? Do you think gacaca was successful?
- Did you experience reconciliation or forgiveness with survivors? How? Was the community involved? Was the government or a civil society or non-profit organization involved?
- Do you think forgiveness has influenced the whole community?
- Do you think the government is doing a good job at promoting forgiveness or reconciliation? How could they improve?
- Have you been impacted by NURC or CNLG reconciliation programs? If so, how?
- Do you have anything else you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Thank you so much for your time and responses.

Appendix B – Survivors Interview Guide

- Let me tell you a little bit about myself and my project, and then you can decide if you would like to participate in this interview. My name is Lucy Britt, and I am an American student studying political science at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, studying Post-Conflict Transformation through the School for International Training in Kacyiru, Kigali. I live in Virginia in the United States with my parents and sister. I have been living with a Rwandese family in Kigali for the past two months and taking classes, and now I am in the last month of the program, when I am conducting an independent study project about the role of forgiveness in Rwanda's reconciliation after 1994. Your testimony will shape what I learn and study within this subject and will help form the bulk of my research. At the end of the month, I will present my findings to a panel of experts at my school, selected public servants, and fellow students. A written copy of my final paper will be kept at my school in Kigali and I will keep a copy for myself. I will not include your name in the paper. I may use the information you give me for a further research project at my university, but in that paper I will not use your name or personal information either, and any information or transcripts containing your name will be carefully stored under password protection and destroyed after that project is finished, in the spring of 2014.
- What were your experiences before, during, or after the genocide? You can tell me anything you are comfortable sharing.
- [Follow-up questions to testimony]
- What was your relationship with perpetrators immediately after the genocide, and has it changed today? Do you live nearby perpetrators or see them often?
- Did you participate in gacaca? Do you think gacaca was successful?
- Did you experience reconciliation or forgiveness with perpetrators? How? Was the community involved? Was the government or a civil society or non-profit organization involved?
- Do you think forgiveness has influenced the whole community?
- Do you think the government is doing a good job at promoting forgiveness or reconciliation? How could they improve?
- Have you been impacted by NURC or CNLG programs promoting reconciliation or forgiveness? If so, how?
- Have you been impacted by NGO programs promoting reconciliation or forgiveness? If so, how?
- Do you think perpetrators should be encouraged to approach survivors and ask for forgiveness? If so, by whom?
- Do you think Rwandans have forgiven each other? Do you think Rwandans have reconciled?
- Do you have anything else you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Thank you so much for your time and responses.

Appendix C – NGO Interview Guide

- Let me tell you a little bit about myself and my project, and then you can decide if you would like to participate in this interview. My name is Lucy Britt, and I am an American student studying political science at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, studying Post-Conflict Transformation through the School for International Training in Kacyiru, Kigali. I live in Virginia in the United States with my parents and sister. I have been living with a Rwandese family in Kigali for the past two months and taking classes, and now I am in the last month of the program, when I am conducting an independent study project about the role of forgiveness in Rwanda's reconciliation after 1994. Your testimony will shape what I learn and study within this subject and will help form the bulk of my research. At the end of the month, I will present my findings to a panel of experts at my school, selected public servants, and fellow students. A written copy of my final paper will be kept at my school in Kigali and I will keep a copy for myself. I will not include your name in the paper. I may use the information you give me for a further research project at my university, but in that paper I will not use your name or personal information either, and any information or transcripts containing your name will be carefully stored under password protection and destroyed after that project is finished, in the spring of 2014.
- [Have participant sign informed consent form]
- To start out with, would you mind giving me an overview of the functions of your organization?
- How did you first get involved in this organization?
- What are your definitions of forgiveness and reconciliation, and what is the difference?
- What are the differences between *ubwiyunge* and *kubana*?
- What does your organization do specifically to promote forgiveness or reconciliation?
- How do local participants react to your programs related to forgiveness or reconciliation?
- Has your organization ever changed its programs or strategies because of community feedback?
- Can a third party promote forgiveness after violence or is forgiveness something more personal?
- Do you think most Rwandans have forgiven?
- What is the relationship or difference between your organization's programs and reconciliation programs and institutions run by the Rwandan government (such as *ingando* solidarity camps, gacaca courts, research and public awareness programs, the NURC, and the CNLG)?
- Do you think government efforts at reconciliation have been successful? Why/why not, and how could they be more successful?
- What is the difference, if any, between personal forgiveness and political reconciliation?

- Does personal forgiveness lead to political reconciliation? It is a requirement for political reconciliation?
- What is the role of the church and religion in Rwanda's processes of forgiveness and reconciliation?
- Can peace happen without forgiveness?
- Is it possible to learn from Rwanda's processes of forgiveness and reconciliation and apply them elsewhere in the world, or is Rwanda a unique situation?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about forgiveness and reconciliation or any other topic?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your willingness to talk to me about these topics. Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Appendix D – Government Interview Guide

- Let me tell you a little bit about myself and my project, and then you can decide if you would like to participate in this interview. My name is Lucy Britt, and I am an American student studying political science at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, studying Post-Conflict Transformation through the School for International Training in Kacyiru, Kigali. I live in Virginia in the United States with my parents and sister. I have been living with a Rwandese family in Kigali for the past two months and taking classes, and now I am in the last month of the program, when I am conducting an independent study project about the role of forgiveness in Rwanda's reconciliation after 1994. Your testimony will shape what I learn and study within this subject and will help form the bulk of my research. At the end of the month, I will present my findings to a panel of experts at my school, selected public servants, and fellow students. A written copy of my final paper will be kept at my school in Kigali and I will keep a copy for myself. I will not include your name in the paper. I may use the information you give me for a further research project at my university, but in that paper I will not use your name or personal information either, and any information or transcripts containing your name will be carefully stored under password protection and destroyed after that project is finished, in the spring of 2014.
- [Have participant sign informed consent form]
- Could you give an overview of the goals and functions of your institution?
- How is your institution promoting reconciliation?
- What is the difference, if any, between forgiveness and reconciliation? Is forgiveness necessary for reconciliation?
- What is the relationship between top-down approaches to reconciliation like those of government institutions and bottom-up systems like grassroots associations, church initiatives, NGOs, civil society, or individual forgiveness and reconciliation?
- Does your institution promote individual forgiveness, reconciliation, or both?
- Can a third party promote forgiveness, or is it something that must happen between the parties directly affected?
- How are your institution's reconciliation programs received by Rwandans?
- Has your institution ever changed a program or approach based on community feedback, negative or positive?
- Do you think most Rwandans have forgiven? Reconciled?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Thank you for your time. Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Appendix E – Informed Consent Form

You have been asked to participate in a research project conducted by Lucy Britt from the Post-Conflict Transformation program at the School for International Training. You should read all the information on this sheet and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding to participate.

The research has the purpose of studying the role of forgiveness in Rwandan society after the genocide and the relationship between individuals and governmental efforts at forgiveness and reconciliation.

This interview is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time. The interview will take approximately an hour and a half.

I would like to record this interview on an audiocassette so I can use it for reference proceeding with this study. I will not record you without your permission.

All the information you give me is confidential, including your personal data. Unless you give me permission, I will not use your name, title or other information that may reveal your identity in any publication that may result from this research, but I may use your quotes or non-revealing information you give me in a senior thesis project written from fall 2013-spring 2014. After that project is done, all interview recordings and transcripts containing your name or other revealing information will be destroyed.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

- Check here if you do not want to be recorded
- Check here if you give me permission to use your name and title in my paper

Name

Signature, Date

Signature of Researcher, Date

Please contact Lucy Britt (0786395835) with any questions or concerns.