Forgiveness

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Personal, Religious Political

- Main focus is personal relations
- Murphy: religious notions (divine forgiveness)
- Murphy frequently discusses legal parallels
- Can this be applied to nations?
  - Colonized nations resent colonizers
  - Al Qaeda resentment of West
  - Forgiveness, apologies, truth commissions, compensation, memorials (slavery, South Africa, Nazi Germany, Armenia-Turkey, Israel-Palestine)

The Sunflower

- Nazi war criminal’s last request
- Jew walks away
- Should he have granted the wish for forgiveness?
Defined

• (From Butler): Forgiveness is overcoming resentment on moral grounds
• It is a virtue when it is consistent with
  – self-respect
  – respect for others as moral agents
  – morality (not complicit in wrongdoing)
• There may be some duty to forgive
  [last section of essay]

Resentment as a Moral Emotion

• A proper response to being wronged
• Defends one’s self-respect
• An “appropriate response” to some situations
• One can only resent / forgive wrongs against oneself

Forgiveness as a Moral Emotion

• Forgiveness heals and restores
• Necessary part of intimate relationships: “the person who cannot forgive is the person who cannot have friends or lovers” (p. 17)
• Forgiving too easily may be sign of lack of self-respect
• Nietzsche: strong person doesn’t need to forgive because doesn’t feel resentment (p. 18)
Forgiveness is NOT

- Overcoming *indignation* (wrongs to others)  
  (What about wrong to one’s child?)
- Excusing (forgiveness is for *responsible* wrong-doing)
- Justification
- Mercy
  - Based on authority rather than *my* being wronged
  - An action, whereas forgiveness a feeling

Forgiveness is NOT

- Just natural forgetting with time
- Something done out of self-interest
  ("resentment is eating away at me")

Moral Grounds for Forgiveness

- Person repents
- Person meant well
- Person “has suffered enough”
- Person has undergone ritual of humiliation or apology
- “Old times sake”
All 5 Share

• Person has separated herself from the action
  – Would this argue for statutes of limitation? (elderly Nazi war criminals, child-molestation priests)
• Restoration of equality
  – The original wrong insults and lowers

A duty to forgive?

• To reform the wrongdoer?
• We should forgive because we need to be forgiven, an expression of our humility