

The Colour of Rainbows: The Advent of Post-Postmodernity and the Notion of Forgiveness

BIRGIT HEUER, London, UK

ABSTRACT *This paper enquires into the notion of forgiveness from multiple perspectives. To begin with, it is set in a historical political context, leading to the idea of forgiveness as a bridge between the personal and the political. In addition, my theme is explored through empirical research in the social sciences. This is followed by approaching forgiveness through a spiritual dimension as opposed to a religious or moral one. From this emerges the central idea of this paper: a reading of forgiveness as something that is closely linked to ordinary daily experience and much more prevalent than widely assumed, rather than an act of supreme religious or moral effort. Thus forgiveness is present, whenever the talion law is suspended and a different way is found. A post-postmodern approach is needed here for this conceptually enables positivity without being naïve or regressive. To bring out a further facet of my theme, it is then set in a clinical context, where forgiveness is seen as an imaginal creative act that unfolds over time. The paper ends with addressing restorative justice, a contemporary instance of the notion of forgiveness as a bridge between the personal and the political. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: forgiveness, essence of forgiveness, talion law, post-postmodernity, restorative justice

INTRODUCTION

Amongst the early psychoanalysts at the beginning of the last century, Otto Gross stands out as the originator of the idea that sexual revolutions are a psychoanalytic concern. At the same time, he endeavoured to live a life that was to sexually liberate himself and his partners. Towards the end of his days, however, he was expressing a need for forgiveness. I quote from an undated letter to his wife Frieda:

Frieda, (I know now that) I have always concentrated on others, on what they were lacking and how to help them, but I never focussed on myself. Only the awareness of my own irredeemable guilt (towards you) and the experience of complete powerlessness in this regard, has led me now to look at myself (and my effect on others) . . . You have suffered so much, Frieda, through me and I had never thought to look within myself for the reasons. (Heuer, 2000, 201; my translation)

Correspondence: Birgit Heuer, 13 Mansell Road, London W3 7QH, UK.
E-mail: birgit.heuer@virgin.net

It seems that Gross, having lived a version of sexual revolutions according to his time, in the end felt the need for forgiveness. Gross had introduced the socio-political dimension to psychoanalytic discourse; did it now occur to him that sexual revolutions as a political and psychoanalytic programme needed a relational counterpart in the form of forgiveness? In this context, then, forgiveness becomes a notion that is located at the interface of the personal and the political as a bridging medium and has a linking, relational function. In this paper, I would like to suggest this particular idea of forgiveness as a keynote melody to which I shall add other harmonies.

My central theme will thus be regarded as multifaceted and explored in a variety of ways. Forgiveness can seem extremely personal and intimately bound up with one's own psychobiography. At the same time, the ramifications of forgiveness are often highly public and political. Traditionally speaking, forgiveness has been regarded as a subject of religion and spirituality. Forgiveness has been called an 'art and a science' (Worthington, 2005) and its many aspects have also been studied empirically for the past 25 years. Here, I shall attempt to convey a flavour of this diversity of approaches.

Returning to the notion of forgiveness as a bridging medium, I shall also introduce the concept of an essence of forgiveness that permeates its many facets in a subtle way. I have traced the connection between the mystical experience of grace and what contemporary physicists now term quantum reality in a previous paper (Heuer, 2008). From this perspective 'ordinary reality', including scientific empirical reality, subtly interweaves with a view of reality that is traditionally only accessible through faith. It is in the paradigmatic context of this revised view of reality that the idea of an essence of forgiveness emerges and thrives. Forgiveness might then involve a mystical place, located in a flow of grace that is accessible both scientifically and through inner experience.

The wider paradigmatic setting of the notion of forgiveness thus involves a complex fastening of science and spirituality that, crucially, can be traced from within empirical science. This, in turn, heralds a shift in *weltanschauung* which I propose to call 'post-postmodernism', a term first used by Epstein (1997). I have further developed this term, however, both from a philosophical and a psychological angle and brought it to life as an emerging view of reality that supersedes the postmodern analytic one while retaining the latter's achievements. As a Jungian analyst, I have come to call analytic work informed by this evolving *weltanschauung* a 'post-post-Jungian' approach for which I propose the term 'sanatology' (Heuer, 2008). My concept of post-postmodernity moves on from Aristotelian bivalency – which underpins all postmodern analysis – to a deeper pre-unity, hailing from quantum information theory, that revolves around connection rather than division and utilizes channels other than causality and determinism. As a consequence, stark opposition recedes and a softened sensibility pertains to this world view. Thus post-postmodernism has no need to 'go for the gap', as it were, nor focus on what is wrong or missing and is able to fully conceive of positives, such as goodness, love and forgiveness instead. In other words, post-postmodernism is conceptually equipped to fill out and metaphorically colour in all the hues of the rainbow.

A further section of this chapter concerns clinical aspects of forgiveness. For this purpose, I shall look into practical, emotional and bodily instances of forgiveness, including its shadow aspects. I shall also bring my thoughts on the essence of forgiveness into the clinic.

Finally, I shall address specific socio-political aspects of forgiveness and their relation to the essence of forgiveness. Here I shall explore relationally oriented ways of resolving

conflict. In particular, I shall mention the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the socio-political possibilities of forgiveness that restorative justice might enable.

This chapter then enquires into the notion of forgiveness as a bridging medium encompassing the personal and the collective/political as well as the scientific and the mystical. Approached in this way, paradoxically the notion of forgiveness is demystified and becomes more accessible. My overall intention, though, is more illustrative and evocative than critical and I hope to bring depth and texture to the theme of forgiveness.

EMPIRICAL SCIENCE AND FORGIVENESS

The empirical exploration of forgiveness started in the mid 1980s and forgiveness is now the subject of a science. No unified definition has come forward, however, as forgiveness has been studied in a multifaceted way. Thus a multitude of aspects have emerged.

Forgiveness has been studied in relation to conciliatory group behaviour in primates. It has also been examined as individual human behaviour and as related to spirituality/religion, as related to physical health, as related to emotional health, as based on character, vengeful or forgiving; it has been considered from the angle of the victim's experience and their behaviour and/or psychology. There are fewer studies concentrating on the perpetrator. Forgiveness has also been considered in relation to couples, families and larger social groups and from the point of view of social intervention.

Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) explore forgiveness as a process involving behaviour, cognition and affect that move through 20 steps in naturally occurring settings, thus contributing hypotheses about the natural occurrence of forgiveness. McCollough et al. (2003) conceptualize forgiveness as a redirection of conscious motivation that can change and be measured, with a two-component approach to forgiving, reducing negative motivations and increasing positive ones. Sandage and Williamson (2005) have studied forgiveness in the context of culture, while Mahoney et al. (2005) have addressed forgiveness and the sacred and the particular challenge of forgiving desecration. There is research into 'anger towards god' by Exline and Martin (2005). Tangney et al. (2005) have written on forgiving the Self. Farrow and Woodruff (2005) have published a paper on the neuro-imaging of forgivability. Wade (2002) has examined group interventions to promote forgiveness and Armour and Umbreit (2005) have studied the paradox of forgiveness in restorative justice.

THE NOTION OF AN ESSENCE OF FORGIVENESS

As empirical research highlights the manifold facets of forgiveness, might there be an alternative approach, involving what I shall term the 'essence of forgiveness'? This implies an epistemological discussion about the creative tension between an empirical approach and a paradigm that is informed by the findings of contemporary quantum research. Moreover, it implies a metaphysical shift in what is regarded as the very nature of reality. In a previous paper (Heuer, 2008) I have explored how a quantum-scientific and a mystical view of the world interweave in what might be called an integration of reality and eternity. The 'result' is a logical hybrid where two opposing views of reality coexist simultaneously. From a meta-paradigmatic angle, one might say that mystical experience requires 'making real' in the Winnicottian developmental sense. A similar process is currently unfolding via the socio-cultural reception

of contemporary quantum physics. I would like to propose these considerations as a frame for exploring the essence of forgiveness.

The essence of forgiveness emerging from this is best articulated in poetic/mystical language, inviting resonance to its manifold facets like a song. Such a song might sing of forgiveness as an act of grace, created by the Divine on our behalf and of forgiveness as inspired by the love of the beauty and goodness of human beings. It reverberates with the essence of forgiveness as the transformative power of the Divine and with human forgiveness as a highly creative and imaginative act. It might sing of forgiveness as the capacity to imagine something better, more wholesome. Another stance might sing of the mystical Divine that is constant in complete forgiveness, at all times, unconditionally. Silently and imperceptibly, continues the song, the mystical Divine always transforms badness into goodness, into grace. Suffering ensues where this flow is seemingly interrupted. Forgiveness is to do with the secret, invisible point at which transformation occurs. Might it flow into us at all times unconsciously and create a capacity, which like any creative talent can be honed? Is forgiveness a transformation that has already happened, akin to Jones' (2002) view of Jung's teleology? If future forgiveness is already constellated, does it then need 'making real' in the Winnicottian sense?

Forgiveness also links with the Buddhist view of the wheel of karma. The essence of forgiveness brought to the notion of karma means that the wheel is 'halted' and karma voided. If all karma has been transmuted, we are then challenged to 'realize' this, i.e. by softening and unlearning the concept of crime and punishment, the talion law. If we ourselves are forgiven, the talion law ceases to make sense psychologically. As we learn emotionally about Divine forgiveness, we are inspired by its gentle, yet extremely powerful ways, enabled by Divine generosity to be generous ourselves. The essence of forgiveness then involves a transformative, generous creative act, inspired by the flow of Divine grace. It involves the unfolding of the holy heart in the human heart, perhaps the development of a heart-mind.

Biochemical empirical research (Pert, 1997) now holds that we think and feel with all of our bodies, so that a forgiving heart might be located anywhere in the body or extend to the whole of the body. Broadly speaking, one might consider all instances of nonlinearity as a transformation of the talion law, which leads to an abundance of instances of forgiveness. In this way, nature seems designed to be forgiving, as are our bodies. The earth, Gaia, might be called extremely forgiving in her profound nonlinear ability to regenerate in the face of abuse or lack of care and this includes the seasons, the daily rising and setting of the sun, our bodies' ability to rejuvenate and all healing of physical ailments.

TOWARDS POST-POSTMODERNITY

The notion of an essence of forgiveness can also be accessed through setting it in a wider paradigmatic landscape which I refer to as post-postmodern. Using Epstein's (1997) term, I have developed this into a conceptual amalgam that extends from a paradigmatic view of reality based on quantum logic to a non-bivalent style of academic discourse that I call soft argument and a corresponding clinical approach, a post-postjungian sanatology (Heuer, 2008).

The metaphoric landscape for this emerging *weltanschauung* induces a particular optimistic mood that springs from an orientation towards the whole rather than the part or the positive rather than the negative. Metaphorically speaking, it might be imagined as a panorama subtly

wreathed in rainbows. In some contrast, the postmodern vista evidences the flowering, to fullest capacity, of analytical thought accompanied by a particular mood, which Wilber (1998) refers to as flat, that is, denuded of interiority and meaning. Which factors, then, suggest and enable such manner of shifting paradigmatic scenery? Firstly, its scientific collateral comes from contemporary quantum science, particularly quantum information theory. It is noteworthy that quantum information theory rests on Bell's (1964) famous inequality which effectively imbues all reality with quantum dynamics. Goernitz and Goernitz (2005), a quantum physicist and a Freudian analyst respectively, have introduced a particular world view which they call henadic that is based in empirical science. The term stems from the Greek *hen*, meaning one, so that henadic implies a complex yet fundamental unity. The term was selected to signify a specific unity that is not quite accessible via the more familiar vernacular of holism. This is best illustrated by putting henadism into the context of quantum logic.

Quantum logic has evolved out of its bivalent Aristotelian cousin. The latter rests on a complete, sharp delineation of yes and no or of logical attributes, leading to a black and white division, with a *tertium non datur*, an injunction against any overlap. Quantum logic, however, mainly provides a 'yes', and any negation is only ever 66 per cent accurate (ibid.). This means that, according to quantum logic, anything that is taken to be the case – and thus conventionally speaking excludes its opposite – must still be assumed to be trailing 33 per cent of quantum potential which cannot be made to disappear. The reason for this lies with the deeper, yet complex, henadic unity of subject and object which can only be artificially separated by means such as Aristotelian axioms. Quantum logic thus brings to mind descriptions such as positive, generous or abundant and this, in turn, evidences qualia of experience emerging in empirical science in a hitherto inconceivable way. The latter, combined with a tendency towards the positive are, in my reading, important features of post-postmodernity. In addition, the henadic unity of subject and object implies a non-causal and non-deterministic pre-connection between researcher and subject which, strikingly, recalls the particular type of reason used in mysticism. According to Ferrer (2002) mystical reason is concerned with knowledge *in* rather than knowledge of which, in quantum terms, involves a henadic identity of human and Divine. In my view, such knowledge *in* might be arrived at via quantum resonance and coherent wave patterns. In any case, a convergence of empirical science and spirituality can be seen to emerge here which is another hallmark of post-postmodernity. In conclusion, post-postmodernism then is able to reconnect spirit and science as well as researcher and subject, minimize opposition which leads to softer sensibilities and, finally, introduce generosity of thought in the form of a full – non-reductive – conceivability of positives such as love or faith. It is this subtly rainbow-hued paradigmatic landscape that offers the most fitting setting for the notion of forgiveness.

SOME CLINICAL ASPECTS OF FORGIVENESS

In my view, the most important clinical aspect of the essence of forgiveness lies in its potential power of transformation. Conceptually, Jung's transcendent function is closely related to this, as is his idea of an archetypally patterned morality. Clinical instances of forgiveness can be mental, emotional, bodily or spiritual. I consider the most basic – and at the same time profound – instance of forgiveness clinically to lie in the fact of sheer survival of extreme trauma. The fact that the patient who has survived extreme trauma has not killed

herself/himself or anybody else seems to me to express forgiveness, in that the talion law is already transcended and continues to be so with every day of survival. Another instance of forgiveness is the release of bodily symptoms related to trauma as in the physical symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome, or the release of bodily symptoms that relate to other painful psychic experience. Here it is the body that potentially forgives first. A different example from couple therapy would be the warring couple who have managed to find a degree of peace – without any formal acts of forgiveness – where the forgiveness lies in learning a better way of living together. These are all instances of forgiveness where transformation occurs on a day-to-day level through the way life is lived, rather than any formal acts of forgiveness. It is noticeable that, on this level, there is an abundance of forgiveness everywhere as part of ordinary life. There are untold numbers of everyday ordinary gestures of forgiveness. Yet they link with the deeper, mystical essence of forgiveness and thus have a transcendent numinous aspect in the midst of seemingly ordinary experience. There is something like perception through the eyes of forgiveness that makes them visible, so that instances of forgiveness seem abundant. When this is realized, particularly clinically, it may create a positive cycle increasing the potential for forgiveness.

There are, of course, shadow aspects of forgiveness. According to Murphy (2005), these occur when forgiveness becomes ‘cheap grace’, where it allows an unacceptable situation to continue and constitutes a form of masochistic rage, or where forgiveness is given as a form of manipulation; where forgiveness is an attempt at moral superiority; or where it is given too quickly to defend against resentment, rage or the realization of trauma. Another shadow aspect of forgiveness arises when we ‘play God’, by individually attempting to forget and forgive the collectively ‘unforgivable’, rather than addressing it through socio-political processes of restorative justice.

Forgiveness can also be seen as a creative act. Here its essence inspires the ability to imagine something better and to participate in bringing it about. Unforgiveness, in my view, imprisons a person or an experience in the past. There is usually a traumatic element that serves as an unconscious trigger. This area then becomes split off from the psychic blood supply of embracing emotional reality. Here the ordinary work of recovering the repressed is needed, but also creativity and imagination. Forgiveness can thus be highly individual like a fingerprint and include creatively dreaming up, as well as receiving from the essence of forgiveness, an individual way forward that is transformative. As such it needs to be authentically desired (consciously or unconsciously) and then creatively received and brought about. The act of forgiving then is co-terminus with the creative act.

Clinical instances of forgiveness thus range from sheer survival of trauma or the release of bodily symptoms to rituals of forgiveness, from unconscious to conscious expression and include unilateral or bilateral ways of forgiving. Sometimes it needs atonement from the perpetrator, sometimes this is not possible, yet forgiveness can still be creatively arrived at. Returning to the song of forgiveness, clinical instances of forgiveness are then inspired by the flow of grace from the essence of forgiveness and ‘made real’ by a creative act.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF FORGIVENESS

A recent development in the socio-political sphere is the emergence of restorative rather than retributive justice. The concept of restorative justice involves a relational element, as

perpetrator and victim are implicitly acknowledged to belong to the same dynamic. This relates to a systemic view (Armour and Umbreit, 2005), and also to Jung's idea of the *unus mundus* (Williams, 2007). Examples of restorative justice are to be found in the mediation movement and in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. Both approaches transcend the talion law, which links them to the essence of forgiveness. Desmond Tutu writes:

Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment, but . . . the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, and the restoration of broken relationships. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator who should be given the opportunity to be re-integrated back into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence as something that has happened to people and whose consequence is a rupture in relationships. (Tutu, 1999)

Human interconnectedness and the essence of forgiveness come together in the African concept of *ubuntu*. Bishop Tutu explains:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. . . . We say, 'a person is a person through other people'. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong'. I participate, I share. A person with *ubuntu* . . . is diminished, when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed. . . . *Ubuntu* means that in a real sense even the supporters of apartheid were victims of the vicious system which they implemented. . . . The humanity of the perpetrator of apartheid's atrocities was caught up and bound up in that of his victim whether he liked it or not. In the process of dehumanising another, in inflicting untold harm and suffering the perpetrator was inexorably being de-humanised as much, if not more than the oppressed. (Tutu, 1999, 34)

In moving beyond the talion law, *ubuntu* brings the essence of forgiveness into the socio-political sphere by connecting it with the very essence of humanity.

Bishop Tutu headed the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and gives a moving account of this in his book *No Future without Forgiveness* (1999). The members of the commission were empowered to grant amnesty to perpetrators of crimes against humanity under apartheid. Several features stand out in this example of restorative justice. Perpetrators could only gain amnesty if they came forward to give full and truthful accounts of their deeds. They had to 'plead guilty' as amnesty would not be granted if they tried to defend their actions. Thus amnesty was given in exchange for the truth. Wherever possible, perpetrators and victims or their relatives were to be present together. Perpetrators were not required to show remorse or a wish to atone and equally no expectation was made of victims to forgive.

Bishop Tutu's account seems imbued with the spirit of *ubuntu*. He describes occasions where the perpetration of hellish atrocities transforms, as forgiveness is either spontaneously asked for or given and a step is made to restore the humanity of both victim and perpetrator. Armour and Umbreit (2005) define forgiveness as a change in the victim's as well as the perpetrator's attitude, when both are brought together in a restorative justice process. They describe the psychological changes thus: in the victim's eyes, the perpetrator may turn from a inhuman monster into a human being who can be empathized with, and equally, for the perpetrator the victim might become a human being with feelings, rather than a thing that can be abused. While the deed is still completely unacceptable, it becomes subtly differentiated out and neither victim nor perpetrator is completely defined by it any longer. It then seems that with these relational processes which are promoted by the frame of restorative justice, the element of

forgiveness lies in re-establishing the humanity of both victim and perpetrator, and in restoring empathy. The restorative justice movement thus carries the essence of forgiveness adding a particular note: that of humanity shared by us all and that of the basic human right to empathy.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have inquired into the manifold facets of the notion of forgiveness as a bridging medium, ranging from empirical study to personal–clinical and socio-political aspects. Metaphorically speaking, I have set this in the emerging panorama of post-postmodernism which I have developed in the context of quantum logic and the ratio of mysticism. My inquiry has been in the spirit of exploration, inviting resonance rather than argument. Some emphasis has been given to the idea of an essence of forgiveness which for me, like a song that subtly sounds at all times, is potentially always available, but needs ‘making real’ creatively. When the perception of what might constitute forgiveness is opened up, it appears more abundantly available and, when set in a relational context, it becomes intertwined with the essence of our humanity. In the words of Bishop Tutu:

When we had listened to the testimony of people who had suffered grievously, and it all worked itself out to the point where they were able to forgive and embrace the perpetrators, I would frequently say: ‘I think we ought to keep quiet now. We are in the presence of something holy. We ought metaphorically to take off our shoes because we are standing on ‘holy ground’. (Tutu, 2004, 3)

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