

Jeffrey M. Blustein. *Forgiveness and Remembrance: Remembering Wrongdoing in Personal and Public Life.* Oxford University Press 2014. 352 pp. \$105.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199329397); \$26.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780199329403).

What is the relationship between forgiving and remembering? A starting point may be a judgment on forgiveness itself. Elie Wiesel famously called upon a God of mercy to show no forgiveness to the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Contra Wiesel, Bishop Desmond Tutu advocated forgiveness as a spiritual and political platform for reconciliation and justice, famously writing ‘there is no future without forgiveness’.

Some crimes, as Wiesel and Tutu knew, are so heinous and destructive, that even raising the possibility of forgiveness seems an injustice, if not an unforgivable act. What role can memory play within this mix of forgiveness and justice? Does memory perpetuate and influence why forgiveness should not be extended in such cases? Is it, in other words, a hindrance to the possibility of forgiveness, which may require some element of forgetting? Or for a robust, enduring form of forgiveness must there be an equally robust form of memory, even if the methods and ways of commemorating such past injustice may need to tailor the facts of such memories through the paradigm of the lens of reconciliation or hope for the future?

Jeffrey Blustein’s 2008 text, *The Moral Demands of Memory* (Cambridge University Press), is a key and distinguished contribution to the field and so I looked forward to reading the current book under review, *Forgiveness and Remembrance: Remembering Wrongdoing in Personal and Political Life*. The book’s cover is taken from a striking image of a mural from the Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad (Monument to Memory and Truth), part of the series of engraved memorial walls in el Parque Cuscatlán in El Salvador. The monument, with the names of the victims and the disappeared, resembles similar memorials of atrocities, like the one at la Parque de la Memoria: Monumento a Las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado in the northern outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina. What struck me about the mural on the book’s cover was the image of campesinos holding aloft a framed portrait of Oscar Romero, the murdered Catholic archbishop of El Salvador in 1980. Here, in particular, we have a treasure-trove of material to glean from such images, especially in relation to the personal and public life, the role of State-Church complicity in the Civil War in El Salvador, not to mention the meddling of outside forces, particularly the United States. How we remember such atrocities and betrayals becomes essential, and the image of Romero on the cover may hint at Blustein’s analyzing such prophetic writings, or at the least, hint at the work’s turning to sustained, concrete examples.

Promisingly, the book’s introduction begins with a discussion from a well-known Forgiveness Project event with Desmond Tutu promoting forgiveness and Mary Kayitsei Blewit, a Tutsi survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, challenging the power of forgiveness. Blustein frames their views as key and opposing interpretations of forgiveness and I looked forward to how he would revisit and expand their contentions in the course of his analysis.

While Blustein’s earlier book on memory was focused on the ethics of memory and whether we are obligated to remember past injustice, as well as the relationship of justice and memory, this work is more centered in the field of moral psychology with little sustained concrete and narrative

in-roads. Romero is thus not mentioned in the work—nor is El Salvador. Nor do we specifically hear from Blewit again, or that opening conversation and dialogue, which I expected as a recurring reference, or at least to be revisited at the end of the work. Unfortunately, there is no separate conclusion to the book, though the last chapter ends with an appendix reviewing Avishai Margalit's view on global collective memory. Margalit's well known text (translated as the *Ethics of Memory*) is rightfully drawn upon by Blustein in both of his books on memory, but why the appendix was positioned as part of the last chapter seems to be an odd structural choice. It also ends the book on a less than insightful or inspiring note.

With few sustained historical and narrative connections, and repeated summaries of earlier arguments, not to mention a tendency to tackle what can seem to be pedantic issues or arguments advanced by a minority of one or two scholars, the work can be a frustrating and disappointing read. Jargon slips in too often, as do Blustein's own attempts at neologisms—never sufficiently clarifying and advancing the issues at stake in proportion to the weight given to them. So we read of a 'wronged party's non-acquiescent emotional responses' (54), or Blustein's distinguishing (following Eisenberg and Spinrad) 'emotion regulation' from 'emotion-related behavioral regulation' (123). I did not find the prose appealing or lucid, nor did I find the slow reading demanded rewarding.

Perhaps Blustein's painstaking and laborious methods can help to highlight the emotional and psychological language and frameworks that should not be overlooked when exploring the role of forgiveness, memory, and justice from a legal, moral, philosophical, or theological angle—but the potential for an engrossing, narrative-friendly text (as hinted at in the introduction) was never borne out.

The book's aim, to examine political and interpersonal aspects of forgiveness and remembrance, is examined through two parts, with the first part focusing on forgiveness and memory from an interpersonal context, while the second part focuses on its manifestations in the public realm—though the neat structural divide of the parts undermines the messy interactions and overlap within such realms in the real world. Aims in each chapter are presented and, as noted, repeated summaries and conclusions of arguments raised or attempted are offered. In the first part, one main aim is to examine the role of negative emotions tied into the possibility of offering or withholding forgiveness, and so highlighting what Blustein calls non-retributive negative emotions. These are negative emotions that do not seek revenge or further forms of punishment. Importantly, Blustein wants to show how forgiveness need not remove the reality of some remaining negative feelings towards the perpetrator, and especially the perpetrator's act. There is no universal requirement to 'wipe the slate clean' for the possibility of forgiveness. Nor is a victim obligated to refrain from any negative emotions toward the perpetrator after some act of forgiving. Ongoing protest or a continual commemoration of the injustice may be needed for the victim's self-respect, integrity, and future. A difficult balance must be walked. Thus, if the negative emotions are too strong, forgiveness won't happen, but nor may it last if there is no outlet or means for some lament of legitimate rebuke and negative emotional feelings. Emotionally-laden responses may also be mixed or hybrid, and even the non-retributive negative emotions may need to be surmounted for forgiveness to be successful. The point is to see the complexity within any examination and use of feelings in relation to forgiveness, insult, and blame.

When such actions are carried over into the public realm, as is the focus of part two, particularly in the context of transitional justice after state-wide mass atrocities or civil war, the need to

integrate the moral and psychological language of interpersonal forgiveness becomes clear. Here the collective comes into play, consisting of individual members and also their relationships, which cut across families and cities, space and time. The moral and political demands stretch from honoring and mourning the dead, identifying and naming victims and perpetrators, to envisioning and planning for various public, national and international memorials, museums, and commemorations. Such spheres and levels demand clarity in how and what one remembers, how and whether one forgives, and how such memory and forgiveness support and defend the justice being advocated. Helpfully building on *The Moral Demands of Memory*, Blustein stresses, for example, how both forgiveness and forgetting (in this sense, also remembering) are virtues that need moderation, and how excess in either impedes moral justice (130-131). Such moderation is also important in Blustein's in-depth account of the often neglected role of emotions in most philosophical studies of forgiveness and memory at the interpersonal and public levels, and so of the need to promote and evaluate 'emotional regulation' (100). Again, some crimes of injustice are too raw and potent for there to be some kind of stoic, all pervasive act of forgiveness. How to express, manage, and regulate the recurring (and sporadic) state of negative emotions needs to be more fully addressed in philosophical and theological circles. Blustein's focus can deeply enrich such examinations.

Interestingly, Blustein challenges the positive role forgiveness can play in the context of authoritative justice (171), pointing out ways that memory can lead to violence and how state or community sanctioned calls for forgiveness may undermine a person's self-respect or integrity. Here I am thinking in particular of Jean Améry—though Blustein does not do so. Blustein is right to raise these dangers, but (turning back to) Oscar Romero may have helped clarify his position while offering a more robust, and nuanced version of forgiveness, whether at the interpersonal or public level. Romero often spoke of the violence of love, and importantly his was a conception of justice admittedly impartial, following what the liberation theologians call the option for the poor. In Blustein's examination of such broad topics as forgiveness and remembrance, and his attempt to adjudicate and clarify various psychological and emotional terms related to forgiveness and memory, that image of the poor campesinos holding aloft the image of Romero gets lost in anonymity and over-theorizing. Romero was an advocate for the common humanity of victim and perpetrator and challenged the perpetrators to repent of their crimes—with the more outrageous claim for nonbelievers that God is willing to forgive everyone who repents. Romero's concrete living and working for the poor and challenging the structures of injustice not only led to his death, but embodied the living forgiveness that he advocated. In a sermon on September 10, 1978, for example, Romero begged for forgiveness from his community for the times he had failed them as a bishop. He was reminding his listeners that we are all sinners, and by acknowledging his failures he was positioning himself as a fellow sinner in the hopes of bridging the divide of contested memory and political action, and establishing some sense of just peace. This robust, messy, emotional, and spiritual form of forgiving seems to have no place, however, in Blustein's painstaking, nuanced, often abstract examination, but there is something deeply missing emotionally, if not intellectually, with its absence.

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