Between Vengeance and Forgiveness

Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence

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Beacon Press Boston

2. Vengeance and Forgiveness

"Forgiveness . . . seems to rule out retribution, moral reproach, nonreconciliation, a demand for restitution, and in short, any act of holding the wrongdoer to account." —Chesire Calhoun

"Boundless vindictive rage is not the only alternative to unmerited forgiveness." —Susan Jacoby

Perhaps there simply are two purposes animating societal responses to collective violence: justice and truth.[1] Justice may call for truth but also demands accountability. And the institutions for securing accountability—notably, trial courts—may impede or ignore truth. Democratic guarantees protecting the rights of defendants place those rights at least in part ahead of truth-seeking; undemocratic trials may proceed to judgment and punishment with disregard for particular truths or their complex implications beyond particular defendants. Then the question becomes: Should justice or truth take precedence? Of what value are facts without justice? If accountability is the aim, does it require legal proceedings and punishment? Do legal proceedings generate knowledge?[2] One answer calls for "[a]ll the truth and as much justice as possible";[3] another would stress punishment for wrongdoing, especially horrific wrongdoing. Only if we make prosecution a duty under international law will we ensure that new regimes do not lose courage, overstate the obstacles they face, and duck their duties to punish perpetrators of mass violence, argue experts such as Diane Orentlicher.[4] Yet only if we acknowledge that prosecutions are slow, partial, and narrow, can we recognize the value of independent commissions, investigating the larger patterns of atrocity and complex lines of responsibility and complicity.

Even this debate is too partial. Truth and justice are not the only objectives. At least, they do not transparently indicate the

range of concerns they may come to comprise. There is another basic, perhaps implicit pair of goals or responses to collective violence—vengeance and forgiveness.

Vengeance: Although this word may sound pejorative, it embodies important ingredients of moral response to wrongdoing. We should pursue punishment because wrongdoers should get what is coming to them; this is one defense—or perhaps restatement—of vengeance. Vengeance is the impulse to retaliate when wrongs are done. Through vengeance, we express our basic self-respect. Philosopher Jeffrie Murphy explains, "a person who does not resent moral injuries done to him . . . is almost necessarily a person lacking in self-respect."[5] Vengeance is also the wellspring of a notion of equivalence that animates justice. Recompense, getting satisfaction, matching like with like, giving what's coming to the wrongdoer, equalizing crime and punishment, an eye for an eye; each of these synonyms for revenge implies the proportionality of the scales of justice.[6] Yet vengeance could unleash more response than the punishment guided by the rule of law, more even than the punishment consistent with the goal of forgiving those who have paid their price, or served their time.

The danger is that precisely the same vengeful motive often leads people to exact more than necessary, to be maliciously spiteful or dangerously aggressive,[7] or to become hateful themselves by committing the reciprocal act of violence. The core motive may be admirable but it carries with it potential insatiability. Vengeance thus can set in motion a downward spiral of violence,[8] or an unquenchable desire that traps people in cycles of revenge, recrimination, and escalation. In a book examining themes of punishment and forgiveness in literary works, John Reed notes that the danger of retaliation is "splendidly, if comically, illustrated by those Laurel and Hardy episodes when such a pattern of destructive retaliation, beginning with something as trivial as the inadvertent damaging of a shrub, may escalate rapidly to the trashing of vehicles and the virtual demolition of houses."[9]

Consider a more serious example: A Holocaust survivor portrayed in a recent novel explains to a man who has brutally lost a relative that to survive the death of people close to you, you need rituals. "In the camps there was no possibility of ritual—no corpses, no funerals, no sending or receiving condolences. So I created a ritual appropriate to the situation in which I found myself. . . . I spent three years tracking down the doctor who sent them to the gas" and upon finding him, "I created one last ritual . . . With these hands I strangled him." Only then, he explained, was he able to begin a new family and a new life. "It didn't bring them back from the dead," replied his interlocutor. The survivor answered, "It brought *me* back from the dead."[10]

Adam Michnick, the Polish Solidarity activist, opposed a proposal to purge communist collaborators from working in formerly state-run enterprises because of its implications of vengeance. He claimed that the logic of revenge "is implacable. First, there is a purge of yesterday's adversaries, the partisans of the old regime. Then comes the purge of yesterday's fellow-oppositionists, who now oppose the idea of revenge. Finally, there is the purge of those who defend them. A psychology of vengeance and hatred develops. The mechanisms of retaliation become unappeasable."[11]

Vengeance can lead to horrible excesses and still fail to restore what was destroyed initially. At a personal level, the result can be painful and futile vendettas. At a societal level, as the recent conflicts in Bosnia and Rwanda only too vividly demonstrate, memories, or propaganda-inspired illusions about memories, can motivate people who otherwise live peaceably to engage in torture and slaughter of neighbors identified as members of groups who committed past atrocities. The result can be devastating, escalating intergroup violence. Mass killings are the fruit of revenge for perceived past harms.

For Michnick, and for others, the way to avoid such escalating violence is to transfer the responsibilities for apportioning blame and punishment from victims to public bodies acting according

to the rule of law. This is an attempt to remove personal animus, though not necessarily to excise vengeance.[12] Tame it, balance it, recast it as the retributive dimension of public punishment.[13]

Retribution can be understood as vengeance curbed by the intervention of someone other than the victim and by principles of proportionality and individual rights. Retribution motivates punishment out of fairness to those who have been wronged and reflects a belief that wrongdoers deserve blame and punishment in direct proportion to the harm inflicted.[14] Otherwise, wrongdoers not only inflict pain but also degrade and diminish victims without a corrective response. The retributive dimension insists on punishment not necessarily in search of deterrence or any other future effects, but instead as a way of denouncing previous wrongs and giving persons their deserts.[15] Yet assigning retribution to public prosecutors rather than reserving it for individual victims does not guarantee appropriate or respectable results, as Stalin's show trials and other abuses of public prosecution indicate.

In a powerful argument, philosopher Jean Hampton explains that retribution at its core expresses an ideal that can afford proper limitation, and thereby differ in theory from vengeance.[16] The ideal is equal dignity of all persons. Through retribution, the community corrects the wrongdoer's false message that the victim was less worthy or valuable than the wrongdoer; through retribution, the community reasserts the truth of the victim's value by inflicting a publicly visible defeat on the wrongdoer.[17] From Hampton's perspective, commitment to this ideal carries an internal limitation on retribution. The very reason for engaging in retributive punishment constrains the punishment from degrading or denying the dignity even of the defeated wrongdoer.[18] Thus, "[i]t is no more right when the victim tries to degrade or falsely diminish the wrongdoer than when the wrongdoer originally degraded or falsely diminished the victim."[19]

But whether retribution, properly understood and enacted, carries its own limitations, or whether limitations on retribution must be supplied from outside through competing ideals such as mercy and moral decency,[20] retribution needs constraints. Otherwise, it risks expanding into forms of harm that violate respect for persons, and that threaten the bounds of proportionality and decency. Moreover, giving in to emotions that often circle revenge and retribution can be self-defeating and illusory.

Traumatized people imagine that revenge will bring relief, even though the fantasy of revenge simply reverses the roles of perpetrator and victim, continuing to imprison the victim in horror, degradation, and the bounds of the perpetrator's violence. By seeking to lower the perpetrator in response to his or her infliction of injury, does the victim ever master the violence or instead become its tool? Satisfaction may never come. We should avoid hatred and revenge, Jean Hampton urges, not in order to be unreasonably saintly, but instead to be sensible.[21] Avenging the self can be too costly emotionally, by stoking consuming fires of hatred. Psychologist Judith Herman reports that "[p]eople who actually commit acts of revenge, such as combat veterans who commit atrocities, do not succeed in getting rid of their post-traumatic symptoms; rather, they seem to suffer the most severe and intractable disturbances."[22]

Moving from needs of victims to societal concerns, Jeffrie Murphy, a defender of retribution, urges recognition of the legitimate bounds of hatred and outrage over wrongdoing. Limitations are demanded for decency, for the sanity of the victims, and for the needs of an orderly society.[23] It is often impossible to get even because the wrongdoer is unreachable or because no proportional response could be conscionable.[24]

These concerns are nowhere better placed than in the context of collective violence, genocide, and mass atrocities. For at no other time does the need to condemn the misconduct seem more compelling; and at no other time does revenge bypass the usual societal constraints over the conduct of individuals, groups, or states. Michael Ignatieff explains,

> What seems apparent in the former Yugoslavia is that the past continues to torment because it is not the past. These places are not living in a serial order of time but in a simultaneous one, in which the past and present are a continuous, agglutinated mass of fantasies,

distortions, myths, and lies. Reporters in the Balkan wars often observed that when they were told atrocity stories they were occasionally uncertain whether these stories had occurred yesterday or in 1941, or 1841, or 1441.[25]

He concludes that this "is the dreamtime of vengeance. Crimes can never safely be fixed in the historical past; they remain locked in the eternal present, crying out for vengeance."[26] As Geoffrey Hartman puts it, "[t]he entanglement of memory and revenge does not cease."[27]

Finding some alternative to vengeance—such as government-managed prosecutions—is a matter, then, not only of moral and emotional significance. It is urgent for human survival.

Forgiveness: Reaching for a response far from vengeance, many people, from diverse religious traditions, call for forgiveness. The victim should not seek revenge and become a new victimizer but instead should forgive the offender and end the cycle of offense. When we have been injured by another's offense, we should seek to reconnect and recognize the common humanity of the other, and grant forgiveness to underscore and strengthen our commonality.[28] Through forgiveness, we can renounce resentment, and avoid the self-destructive effects of holding on to pain, grudges, and victimhood. The act of forgiving can reconnect the offender and the victim and establish or renew a relationship; it can heal grief; forge new, constructive alliances; and break cycles of violence.[29]

These aspirations may seem especially compelling following a period of mass atrocity. Finding a way to move on, as individuals and as a society, takes central stage. If the nation is turning or returning to democracy, forging new relationships of trust and foundations for collective self-government become urgent goals. Those very goals may be jeopardized by backward-looking, finger-pointing prosecutions and punishments.

José Zalaquett, a Chilean human rights activist, maintains that underneath truth, justice, and forgiveness lie the "twin goals of prevention and reparation in the process of moral reconstruction."[30] This formulation acknowledges that vengeance can be excessive or unquenchable, and that preoccupation with harms in the past can be debilitating for victims and bystanders. Instead, through forgiveness, victims can reassert their own power and reestablish their own dignity while also teaching wrongdoers the effects of their harmful actions. They can seek the reintegration of oppressors into society for their own sake, and for the sake of the larger projects of reconciliation and the rebuilding of a more fair and more humane world.

In theory, forgiveness does not and should not take the place of justice or punishment.[31] Forgiveness marks a change in how the offended feels about the person who committed the injury, not a change in the actions to be taken by a justice system.[32] Philosopher Jeffrie Murphy explains, "[b]ecause I have ceased to hate the person who has wronged me it does not follow that I act inconsistently if I still advocate his being forced to pay compensation for the harm he has done or his being forced to undergo punishment for his wrongdoing—that he, in short, get his just deserts."[33] Advocating punishment for a wrongdoer one has forgiven in fact is well supported by reference to the impersonal processes of a justice system, the inherent operations of a theory of deserts, or a commitment to treat offenders as full members of a community that demands responsibility by autonomous actors for their actions.[34] Forgiveness in this sense need not be a substitute for punishment. Even the traditional Christian call to forgive rather than avenge accompanies faith that vengeance will come—through the Divine.[35]

Yet, in practice, forgiveness often produces exemption from punishment. Especially when a governmental body adopts a forgiving attitude toward offenders, the instrument often takes the form of amnesty or pardon, preempting prosecution and punishment. This institutionalizes forgetfulness, and sacrifices justice in a foreshortened effort to move on. Moreover, such an effort to move on often fails because the injury is not so much forgiven but publicly ignored, leaving it to fester. After tireless work gathering the testimony of Bosnian Muslim women who had been rounded up, detained, and raped by Bosnian Serb soldiers, and

helping to convince the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to bring indictments declaring rape a war crime, Jadranka Cigelj reflected on the failure of prosecutions five years later: "We are so disillusioned. We wonder if we shouldn't put all this behind us."[36]

Even when offered for moral reasons rather than realpolitik, forgiveness may appear to elevate the wrongdoer at least as someone worthy of forgiveness. Philosopher Chesire Calhoun warns that forgiveness "seems to rule out retribution, moral reproach, nonreconciliation, a demand for restitution, and, in short, any act of holding the wrongdoer to account."[37] Even if others maintain it is possible to forgive and still punish, forgiveness may mean ultimately forgetting or putting aside the harm. How can survivors of atrocity ever do that, emotionally? Even those who seek to forgive or move on need to face and address the fact and scope of the wrong that would occasion the forgiveness or forbearance.[38] Some may seek a way to reconcile with perpetrators, even perpetrators of atrocity, as a way to choose to be different from those perpetrators, to embrace a different set of values.[39]

Yet discerning and explaining the meaning of no punishment for war criminals, with or without official grants of immunity or amnesty, can be very difficult. If there is no punishment for those who ordered and committed the murders of hundreds and thousands of people, does the society imply forgiveness, or instead fear? Impediments to justice, especially in the context of war crimes prosecutions, "give rise to the suspicion that 'forgiveness' is nothing but a nice word for 'forgetfulness' and 'pardon' a synonym of 'amnesia.' "[40] Forgetfulness and amnesia, in turn, seem anathemas in response to mass violence because they let the perpetrators prevail in blotting out memories and avoiding punishment. Victims and witnesses who seek to forget ironically may assist the perpetrators by keeping silent about their crimes. Silence about violence locks perpetrators and victims in the cruel pact of denial, literally and psychologically.

Donald Shriver, who has written eloquently about the need for forgiveness in politics, also vividly explains the problems with forgetting atrocities: "Pain can sear the human memory in two

crippling ways: with forgetfulness of the past or imprisonment in it. The mind that insulates the traumatic past from conscious memory plants a live bomb in the depths of the psyche—it takes no great grasp of psychiatry to know that. But the mind that fixes on pain risks getting trapped in it. Too horrible to remember, too horrible to forget: down either path lies little health for the human sufferers of great evil."[41]

Human rights activist Aryeh Neier warns that public forgiveness in particular runs the risk of signaling to everyone the need to forget. When governments or their representatives "usurp the victim's exclusive right to forgive his oppressor," they thereby fail to respect fully those who have suffered.[42] Governmental forgiveness that means exemption from punishment also forecloses the communal response, the acknowledgment of harm, that vengeance, and indeed justice, demand. Even if the rigor of prosecution and punishment are not pursued, some other form of public acknowledgment, overcoming communal denial, is the very least that can be done to restore dignity to victims.

Observers of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission note that although many who were victimized are prepared to forgive or reconcile with police officers and government officials from the apartheid regime, the survivors recoil when perpetrators greet victims with open arms and handshakes.[43] In these cases, forgiveness is assumed, rather than granted. A survivor may think, "should you not wait for me to stretch out my hand to you, when I'm ready, when I've established what is right?"[44] Forgiveness is a power held by the victimized, not a right to be claimed. The ability to dispense, but also to withhold, forgiveness is an ennobling capacity and part of the dignity to be reclaimed by those who survive the wrongdoing. Even an individual survivor who chooses to forgive cannot, properly, forgive in the name of other victims.[45] To expect survivors to forgive is to heap yet another burden on them.

Perhaps forgiveness should be reserved, as a concept and a practice, to instances where there are good reasons to forgive. To forgive without a good reason is to accept the violation and devaluation of the self. Some acts of forgiveness raise questions about

whether the victim has enough self-respect or strength to view the injury as a violation.[46] If forgiveness involves letting go of warranted resentment, then the forgiver needs a good reason to let go. If the offense injured and devalued the victim, then the victim must have some very good reason to overcome the anger and hatred toward a person who committed such unjustified and inexcusable harm.[47] Expressing outrage, making clear what is unacceptable, and refusing relationships with those who commit evil are responses especially justifiable after mass violence.[48] There may be no good reason to forego blame and condemnation. "[H]ow could one even *consider* reconciling oneself with people such as Hitler or Stalin or Charles Manson, who really may not have any decency left in them—nor even any possibility of decency?"[49]

In ordinary, everyday instances of wrongdoing, a reason to forgive arises, for some, when a wrongdoer changes, becomes "a new person" who repents his or her wrongs. But repentance for participation in a mass atrocity may simply be insufficient. Because no subsequent change of heart or regret could begin to be commensurate with the violations done, forgiveness seems out of place.[50]

Yet, especially for some people working from a Christian tradition, forgiveness may not even require repentance by the wrongdoer. Instead, they hope that the act of forgiving may transform the wrongdoer, softening her or his heart and reinviting her or him into the moral community of humanity.[51] Left with the unrepentant and apparently indecent offender, the victim who considers forgiving must abandon hope for the offender's own contrition, or else vest in the act of forgiveness inspiration, or pressure, to change that wrongdoer.[52] Some religious traditions support such stances; some do not.

Hoping that the process of forgiveness can itself transform the wrongdoer depends upon a script that must be shared by the forgiven and the forgiver. John Reed explains: "The forgiven must act likewise and be forgiving. Moreover, to be forgiven, one must first acknowledge fault."[53] If both participants play their part,

the process can heal the offender and also restore a sense of dignity and self-respect to the offended person.[54] Thus, a reason to forgive might be to set in motion this process, and thereby seek to break cycles of violence by transforming perpetrators and victims. Yet many people do not share this script. Pardon does not transform all perpetrators. Making contrition a precondition for pardon simply increases the likelihood that contrition will be feigned. Granting forgiveness to transgressors who show no contrition or regret cannot be justified in hopes of changing the unrepentant offender. If the initial angry thirst for retribution was righteous, then it rightly calls for a restoration of the balance of rights and wrongs. Simply forgiving the recalcitrant wrongdoer does not accomplish that task, although it may aid the victim's own process of healing.

Victims have much to gain from being able to let go of hatred, even when the perpetrator is unrepentant. Rabbi Harold Kushner argues that victims should forgive not because the other deserves it but because the victim does not want to turn into a bitter resentful person.[55] Victims should release the anger for their own sake.[56] Indeed, especially after mass atrocities, life could seem so precious that not a moment should be wasted in grudges or hatred toward the perpetrators. Dumisa Ntsebeza, a commissioner of the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission who himself spent years incarcerated under the apartheid regime, explained that there could be generosity toward perpetrators because "there is so much to do in the time that remains of one's freedom."[57]

Some psychological or religious views suggest that forgiveness can help to transform perpetrators and victims, or simply victims. Even bystanders, advocates claim, can be helped by forgiveness in ways they cannot by judicial action.[58] The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission created a register for submissions and comments by people who are neither direct victims of apartheid atrocities nor direct perpetrators. In the flood of comments initially received, a recurring refrain was "I should have done more to fight the atrocities."[59] In participating in a pro-

cess that combines truth-telling and a spirit of forgiveness with personal contrition, even bystanders can join the effort for reconciliation.

A general endorsement of the therapeutic benefits of forgiveness, though, confuses "specific acts of deserved forgiveness with a policy of unconditional forgiveness."[60] A victim consumed with hatred and revenge fantasies could find some relief directly through professional psychological help rather than forgiveness of the murderer. Learning to manage or extinguish pain and resentment, becoming able to sleep and get on with life, to coexist with former enemies, are valuable goals; but they do not require, entail, nor necessarily accompany grants of forgiveness.[61]

Fundamentally, forgiveness cannot be commanded. No friend, cleric, or official can force another to grant forgiveness to an offender. A victim who considers forgiving must summon compassion, benevolence, love, or a profound sense of the flaws shared by all human beings, victims and offenders alike.[62] Some victims instead summon righteous indignation, an urgent need to condemn and punish, or a generous desire, coupled with passion to bear witness and to prosecute, in order to prevent any repeated horror for anyone else.

Individual human beings are just that, individual human beings, both before and after anyone is victimized and then labeled as a victim. Individuals respond uniquely and differently to horror. At least the responses are their own. To demand different ones may be yet another form of degradation and denial of their very being. If forgiveness is announced by someone who was not wronged, perhaps by a public official claiming to speak on behalf of victims, it is a call to forgetting or putting aside the memories, not the act of forgiveness itself. Forgiveness can slip into forgetting or else elude those from whom it must come. Geoffrey Hartman, scholar of literature and the Holocaust, writes: "Amnesty is lawful amnesia; and what takes place at this highly formalized level may also take place in the domain of the social or collective memory."[63] Perhaps amnesty conditioned upon acknowledgment of the particular acts of violence takes a different shape.[64] If vengeance risks ceaseless rage that should be tamed, forgiveness requires a kind of transcendence that cannot be achieved on command or by remote control.[65]

Vengeance and forgiveness are marks along the spectrum of human responses to atrocity. Yet they stand in opposition: to forgive is to let go of vengeance; to avenge is to resist forgiving. Perhaps justice itself "partakes of both revenge and forgiveness."[66]

So I return to the central question: Might paths lie between vengeance and forgiveness? Susan Jacoby suggests:

> A wife need not forgive an unashamedly brutal husband in order to avoid dousing him with gasoline and setting him on fire; a concentration-camp survivor need not pray for God's blessing on the Nazis in order to refrain from personally settling scores in the manner of spy-novel avengers; a society need not set murderers free if it refuses to put them to death; the leaders of adversary nations need not throw their arms around one another in order to restrain themselves from destroying the world in a nuclear holocaust.[67]

Jacoby urges a search for the right forms of retribution and the right forms of forgiveness.

I suggest a similar spirit but—an expanded—scope of possibilities. What responses do or could lie between vengeance and forgiveness, *if legal and cultural institutions offered other avenues for individuals and nations?* For nations recovering from periods of massive atrocity, the stakes are high, the dangers enormous. Members of those societies need to ask not only what should count as a good reason to forgive, and not only what are the appropriate limits to vengeance. They need to ask, what would it take, and what do our current or imagined institutions need to do, to come to terms with the past, to help heal the victims, the bystanders, and even the perpetrators? What would promote reconstruction of a society devastated by atrocities? What could build a nation capable of preventing future massacres and incidents or regimes of torture?

One path between vengeance and forgiveness pursues therapeutic goals. Promoting healing for individual victims, bystand-

ers, and even offenders points to potential aims in response to mass atrocity. Recognizing healing as a value prompts new questions. What relative importance should the therapeutic goals have for victims, bystanders, and offenders, and what weight should therapeutic purposes bear in relation to the search for truth, the demand for justice, the urge for retribution, and the call of forgiveness? What place should a psychological frame of analysis have in assessing alternative responses to collective atrocities by individuals and societies? What if any sense is there in drawing analogies between the psychological needs and therapeutic responses appropriate to individuals, and issues involving entire groups of people, and even societies?

The striking prevalence of therapeutic language in contemporary discussions of mass atrocities stands in contrast to comparable debates fifty years ago. What is gained, and what is lost, through the attention to psychological healing, in contrast with gathering facts or securing punishments? Does the effort to overcome denial and to search for a complete factual picture deserve the highest priority after genocide? When is the language of healing itself an insult to those whose devastation is inconsolable, untellable, unassimilable? Therapeutic purposes contrast starkly with political ones, although in practice the two influence one another. The topic of forgiveness, for instance, is sometimes addressed in political terms. Who should have the power to forgive, or to withhold forgiveness, who should be forced to beg for it?[68] The most important political response to mass violence, some argue, is to change the political structure. Restore democracy, dismantle the military that presided over torture cells, remove the officials who ran the bureaucracy of oppression. These changes could have great psychological consequences for those removed from power and for survivors of their abuses. Yet the point of such intervention is political; the method of response is institutional.

Political concerns are often aimed at another set of goals, also lying somewhere between vengeance and forgiveness. The first is creating a climate conducive to human rights, a democratic process that seems to many a crucial rejoinder to mass violence. To

mark the defeat of terror; to set in place safeguards against future collective atrocity; to communicate the aspiration that "never again" will such abominations happen—these are all significant human rights accomplishments that may be set in motion by political means. When terror was state sponsored, vital responses would establish the legitimacy and stability of a new regime.

Promoting reconciliation across divisions created by, or themselves causing, the collective violence is still another goal. Such reconciliation would assist stability, and democracy, but it also would require other measures: restoring dignity to victims would be part of this process, but so would dealing respectfully with those who assisted or were complicit with the violence. Otherwise, new rifts and resentments are likely to emerge and grow.

Each of these purposes propels and repels alternative responses that a nation can pursue when emerging from mass atrocity. Potential responses to collective violence include not only prosecutions and amnesties, but also commissions of inquiry into the facts; opening access to secret police files; removing prior political and military officials and civil servants from their posts and from the rolls for public benefits; publicizing names of offenders and names of victims; securing reparations and apologies for victims; devising and making available appropriate therapeutic services for any affected by the horrors; devising art and memorials to mark what happened, to honor victims, and to communicate the aspiration of "never again"; and advancing public educational programs to convey what happened and to strengthen participatory democracy and human rights. What can be hoped for, and what cannot, from these responses to collective violence?

Observers of contemporary Western art suggest it resists the paradigm that contrasts punishment and forgiveness, a paradigm that dominated earlier Western art. For example, the novels of Joseph Conrad never depict forgiveness nor even render it conceivable, but instead manifest the cruelty of human existence.[69] In even more recent chronicles of revenge, no public punishment nor prospect of forgiveness appears. Instead, people who have

been victimized have no expectation that anyone, human or divine, will assume their psychic burden. Thus, they must discharge it themselves or be crushed, with no legitimate outlet for rage.[70]

There is in these stories a lack of closure, and the impossibility of balance and satisfaction, in the face of incomprehensible human violence. Saul Friedlander, a historian who attempts to address the Holocaust, argues that it is imperative for people to render as truthful an account as documents and testimonials will allow, *without giving in to the temptations of closure*, because that would avoid what remains inevitably indeterminate, elusive, and inexplicable about collective horrors.[71] Crucial here, Friedlander reminds us, is an effort to introduce individual memories and individual voices in a field dominated by political decisions and administrative decrees.[72] For all who would know the history, the voices of individual victims can puncture seeming normality and prevent flight from the concreteness of despair, pain, and death.