

**Athens Institute for Education and Research
ATINER**



**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
EDU2017-2343**

**Ethical Formation: A Philosophical Reflection on
Forgiveness from the Peace Processes in Colombia**

**Claudia Giraldo Agudelo
Professor
Universidad Santo Tomás
Colombia**

**Ángela Niño Castro
Professor
Universidad Santo Tomás
Colombia**

An Introduction to
ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. This paper has been peer reviewed by at least two academic members of ATINER.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

Giraldo Agudelo, C., & Niño Castro, A. (2017). “Ethical Formation: A Philosophical Reflection on Forgiveness from the Peace Processes in Colombia”, Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: EDU2017-2343.

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
www.atiner.gr
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm
Printed in Athens, Greece by the Athens Institute for Education and Research. All rights reserved. Reproduction is allowed for non-commercial purposes if the source is fully acknowledged.
ISSN: 2241-2891
06/12/2017

Ethical Formation: A Philosophical Reflection on Forgiveness from the Peace Processes in Colombia

Claudia Giraldo Agudelo
Professor
Universidad Santo Tomás
Colombia

Ángela Niño Castro
Professor
Universidad Santo Tomás
Colombia

Abstract

In the recent history of Colombia and of several other countries around the world, which have armed conflicts between the government and illegal groups, the act of forgiveness has gained relevance in the legal-political context as a valuable alternative to overcome the state of civil war and repair the damages caused to the victims. In Colombia, after half a century of systematic violence and waiting thirty years for national reconciliation, in 2005 the Justice and Peace Law was approved and a process of demobilization of the paramilitary groups began. This law included the request for forgiveness as one of the resources to repair victims and to reach peace. Up to now, more than 1000 requests for political forgiveness have been made, and consequently, there are also several doubts and uncertainties because of the relevance of its presence in this area. For this reason, this research seeks to contribute with an interdisciplinary reflection from a philosopher and an anthropologist using a review of philosophical literature and the analysis of specific cases of requests for forgiveness made by some former paramilitaries. We thus specify the place of forgiveness in the legal-political context and its pedagogical value. This research uses the tensions that the political sphere generates to analyze the conditions of forgiveness in this scenario, bearing in mind that the fundamental purpose is to achieve the effective reparation for the victims of appalling harm and, finally, to clear the way for national reconciliation.

Keywords: Political forgiveness, Ethical formation, reparative justice

Introduction

This article is part of the research project "Policies of Forgiveness in Colombia", carried out between 2014 and 2016 by members of the research group Studies in Philosophical Thought in Colombia and Latin America - Fray Bartolomé de las Casas of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at Universidad Santo Tomas. The main purpose of the study was to provide a philosophical analysis of the figure of forgiveness within the peace processes in Colombia (South America). Two studies make up the body of the larger project, the first is the book "Forgiveness: A Difficult Possibility"¹ in which the philosophical, legal, anthropological and theological approach of political forgiveness is explored. The second is this study, the objective of which is to explore the possibilities and limitations of the political forgiveness figure as an element of ethical formation within the framework of reparative justice.

Since the promulgation of the Justice and Peace Law², the process of demobilization of paramilitary groups began. One of the fundamental purposes of this law is to provide integral reparations for the victims of the conflict, claiming the need for processes that show regret, understanding or recognition of the damage caused, as well as a rejection of the motives that drove their actions, a promise not to commit new crimes, a willingness to make these reparations to the victims and the public act of forgiveness.

In this article, we analyze the incorporation of the forgiveness figure, study the forgiveness requests that ex-paramilitaries have made, and examine the assumptions about reconciliation and the formative value of such events. We join the literature that sees forgiveness as an important moral possibility in the restitution of the victims' dignity and in wider processes of social reconciliation that involve civil society in general.

This analysis is relevant if we consider the duration and persistence of the conflict in Colombia and the magnitude of the crimes and acts committed by armed groups. Velázquez (2007) points out that it was in the 1970s that these illegal armed groups, which aimed to eliminate guerrilla groups, emerged and ever since have been supported by wealthy people, businessmen, governments, politicians, and military forces. According to the report of the Historical Memory Commission (Comisión de Memoria Histórica -Basta Ya-) (2013) "All armed actors have incorporated the attack on the civilian population as a strategy of war. However, the forms of violence that have been used and their degree differ according to the analysis of each of the territory, of the moment of the war and of the strategies deployed, in which civilians are involved" (p.34). The report informs that the practices most used by the paramilitaries

¹ Its original title in Spanish is El perdón: difícil posibilidad.

² Law of Justice and Peace (Law 975 of 2005) in which the request for forgiveness is required in the measures of reparation. These measures were extended in the Victims' Law (Law 1448 of 2011) and ratified with Law 1592 of 2012 (reform to the Law of Justice and Peace).

were selective killings, forced disappearances, massacres, torture, threats, massive forced displacement, and sexual violence³.

Requests for political forgiveness are mediated by the interests of different groups and the sincerity of the words cannot be measured. Furthermore, the damages caused are unimaginable. Despite these factors, however, our results reveal that these acts of forgiveness are a foundational step in the beginning of a process whose purpose is to give back to society the search for the common good through sincere regret and long-term reconciliation.

Literature Review

Philosophers who have studied forgiveness agree that its inclusion in the legal-political sphere generates tensions. The first tension comes from the religious origins of forgiveness being integrated into a secular sphere and from the debates about the conditionality of forgiveness. Joan Carles Mèlich (2012) states that forgiveness is a gift rather than an exchange, because it is free and unconditional. Therefore, forgiveness cannot belong either to the sphere of the political or to the sphere of morality, because its unconditionality requires neither a duty to forgive nor a right to forgiveness. Forgiveness thus emerges as an event placed in a space between the ethical, understood as the locus of face-to-face relationships, and the religious, defined as the transcendent or divine (p.129).

For the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit (2004), forgiveness cannot be separated from its religious notes. He explains that there are several forms of forgiveness taken from the Bible, and mainly discusses two that have to do with the intention of the subject who asks God for forgiveness. One form occurs when God helps to assuage guilt and the offender wishes to have their faults erased through the petition that he makes to God, who is the only one with the power to free them from their burden. The second form also resorts to a divine being, who is asked not to consider the damage caused and to repress the desire for revenge. In both cases, the action of forgiveness falls on God, which again reflects the unconditional and absolute character of forgiveness. It is this logic of love and compassion that clashes with the logic of political

³The Commission affirms that it is difficult to measure the violence experienced in Colombia, however, due to the collected information, they determined that because of the conflict between 1958 and 2012, approximately 220,000 people died. They also report "the violence of the armed conflict has a non-lethal dimension that carries equally serious consequences. Until March 31st, 2013, the RUV (Unique Record of Victims by its name in Spanish) reported 25,007 missing people, 1,754 victims of sexual violence, 6,421 children recruited by armed groups, and 4,744,046 displaced people. The work of *Cifras & Conceptos* (Number & Concepts) for the GMH (historical memory group by its name in Spanish) reports 27,023 kidnappings associated with the armed conflict between 1970 and 2010, while the Presidential Program for Integral Care against Antipersonnel Mines (PAICMA by its name in Spanish) reports 10,189 victims of anti-personnel mines between 1982 And 2012 "(p.33). It should be numbers correspond to the number of victims of the conflict and not only to the victims of the paramilitaries. These numbers are shocking because of the type of violence used and because of the average Colombian population that in the last 33 years is 38 million.

relations. Jankélévitch (1996) puts it very clearly in saying that it is a struggle between a hyperbolic ethic and an ethic of minimums, rights and duties.

Contrary to the abovementioned statements, we find authors like Griswold and Comte-Sponville who believe that the existence of forgiveness in a non-theological sphere is possible without losing its ethical possibility. Griswold (2007) says that, although forgiveness is commonly related to the religious sphere, it is possible to identify it as a secular virtue. Nevertheless, he warns, it is not because of this possibility that tension disappears when we pass from personal to political forgiveness. Perfect forgiveness is only possible in the interpersonal relations of reciprocity and has attached conditions, such as the virtue of the person who grants it and of the one who asks for it. All conditions must be met in order to reach its objective, which is to ease resentment, eliminate the desire for revenge, and generate reconciliation processes.

Comte-Sponville (2005) also defines forgiveness as virtue or "the effort to behave well" (p.15). It is a way of being, a way to excel, and a power of humanity. This author argues that virtues are needed precisely because human beings are imperfect. In this study, we consider that both in the interpersonal and in the political arenas, virtues and the struggle to possess certain values remain relevant. In this text, we argue that the tensions resulting from the transfer from the religious to the secular, from the interpersonal to the political arena, and the contradiction between the conditional and unconditional dimension of forgiveness, are the primary resources for an ethical education.

The second tension indicated by philosophers is that which is the product of the relationship between forgiveness and justice, which is especially complex in the context of terrible harm. Apparently, they are opposite concepts because the first is directly connected with a sense of benevolence and pity towards the aggressor, and the second is linked to correctives by punishment and condemnation against the offender.

Terrible damage is that which destroys the world of the victim. Carse & Tirrell (2010) identify that such damage has serious implications for the victim. From this contemporary philosophical conception, three fundamental concepts are noted: *environment, medium, and world*. While the environment is the physical space in which inanimate beings exist, the medium is the place of animate beings that provides them with a set of necessary elements for the development of their life. Unlike these, the world is a horizon of possibilities where beliefs, values, and in general all the dimensions and capacities of man take on meaning. The world is a necessary condition of human life because it is in it that realization with others is projected.

The serious insult caused by the aggressor breaks the world of the victim, which, for Carse & Tirrell (2010), leads to the loss of moral orientation and the impoverishment of value norms. In short, all meaning disappears. This mutilation of the world causes, for Wiesenthal (1969) loss of faith in the world order, including the formerly definite place occupied by God, and for the victim, the disappearance of any moral value of forgiveness. For Claudia Card (2002), the response to harm is summarized in feelings such as resentment,

anger, and indignation, but the response to the truly dreadful damage is inexplicable through language, withdrawing any possibility of forgiveness.

As we have presented, there are different profiles of the unforgivable damage that ends up destroying the idea of the world for the victim. Those crimes against humanity, in the words of Jankélévitch (1996), deny the human essence itself and thus are unforgivable, not only because of the damage to a physical or material perspective, but also because of the break with the moral horizon that allows the construction of the good. Therefore, terrible harm is a crime against forgiveness.

It is obvious that trying to understand forgiveness in the political arena is difficult after seeing the abovementioned considerations of forgiveness. In fact, the degree of relationship between morality, politics, and ethics must be limited by the scope of each aspect because in a liberal society determining moral principles can be understood as a limitation of freedom. However, forgiveness is shown as a valid path out of violence, especially because it helps the state to free itself from the responsibilities of corrective justice. Indeed, it would be relatively easy to establish forgiveness as a legal option in relation to the massive cases of violent acts. On the other hand, in the legal-political sphere there is a tendency towards a restorative perspective in which societies choose to restore relationships that have been violated because of the aggressors' harm (Walker 2006a). To this end, actions such as forgiveness, which have great value when it comes to repairing relationships, appear. In other words, the emphasis is on reparative or restorative justice and not on corrective justice.

From this point of view, the relationship between forgiveness and justice is about complementarity rather than antagonism. To understand how the restorative approach gives account of this relationship, it is convenient to review the damage caused by the war and the ways to react to it. The aim is to reconsider the approach of justice that establishes the relations between the legal-political and the ethical or religious fields, and in that way to position forgiveness as an invaluable tool in processes of reconciliation. Thinking about the damage necessarily refers to its countless extents, but it also refers to uncommon cases, as considered by De Greiff (2006) when he states that criminal justice was thought to penalize specific and concrete damage that is unlikely to happen again. In the case of incalculable damage, the devastating effect on victims and the resulting attempt to repair them in the criminal justice system would prove to be not only inadequate, but also endless. De Greiff (2006) understands that corrective justice fails to encompass vital conditions, such as the restoration of civic trust, recognition and solidarity, for however much it punishes and corrects, it is unable to compensate damages without prior recognition of these values.

Margalit (2004) points out that the understanding of justice in the West is strongly linked to the meaning of harm and its corrective action, in such a way that whoever executes some type of damage is bound to whoever suffered it. Justice can either pay off the debt by condemning the perpetrator or by compensating the victim for the damage.

Margaret Walker (2006a) thinks the idea of corrective justice is guided by moral rules and basic rights established by all members in a political community. The damage caused to the victim may be due to ignorance of these agreements that have authority over all the members of the community. In that sense, justice would consist in correcting the damage caused by the aggressor through the virtue of agreed upon stability. Corrective justice punishes the aggressor based on the damage caused by using a criterion of correction, and so an offense in the legal-political field appeals to justice and not to forgiveness. Derrida (2003) explains it clearly, saying that forgiveness is not interchangeable in the understanding of corrective justice, and on the contrary, forgiveness happens when there is no possible reparation regarding the harm received. Forgiveness cannot be conditioned by any legal demand; it is absolute in the sense that it is not determined by a prior cause, but rather is spontaneous and does not go with the logic of the exchange related to justice. Because of the incalculable value of forgiveness and its unconditionality, it is impossible to frame it within the limits of virtues and institutionalized justice.

Restorative justice, on the contrary, takes special care of the massive and profound damages that are impossible to calculate and repair from the perspective of corrective justice. Reparative actions, from the restorative approach of justice, work towards the construction of a world where new moral relations signify peaceful coexistence. However, the mere idea of reparation as an effective practice becomes problematic once it is looked at more closely. Teitel (2003) clearly sees the problem by questioning what can fairly be repaired, to whom the reparation is directed, under what circumstances it is repaired, how long this reparation lasts, and other aspects still under discussion.

In this study, we consider the restorative approach that defends, even in the face of a condition of impossibility, the figure of forgiveness in the legal-political sphere. The focus of this approach is cooperative work (Walker 2006b), which repairs moral relationships damaged by terrible harm. Similarly, forgiveness should be part of this reparative work. In this way, Griswold (2007) and Corbí (2012) assure that when we are faced with cruel violence, interpersonal forgiveness is not enough because the damage is such that it must be reconsidered in the light of a new member. For Corbí (2012), it is the third agent (the community or group) that reacts to the reassured fact that it cannot be accepted because it is not human. The most important aspect in the reconstruction of a shared world with morally appropriate relationships is that values such as trust and hope are revived, including the possibilities of correcting, coping and avoiding harm (Walker 2006b).

Methodology

This research has a dialectical-hermeneutic perspective that is shown in the three sections of the results: first, the evaluation of the value of forgiveness in legal-political contexts based on philosophical resources; second, the emphasis on empirical work through critical reading of some public requests for forgiveness

by ex-paramilitaries demobilized under the Justice and Peace law, which were videotaped and published on the Internet and in national newspapers; and third, the discussion of philosophical reflections within the study of concrete cases of political apology. These are all used to identify the pedagogical value of forgiveness in the context of terrible damage and from the perspective of reparative justice.

The question that arises in the first part of this study is: Is forgiveness a valuable alternative for a political community marked by serious and terrible damage? And, if it is, under what circumstances should it be considered once it enters the legal-political sphere? As the research progresses, it is clear that thinking about forgiveness becomes problematic, for forgiveness only should arise just when there is no possibility of forgiving.

For the analysis of the apologies, we identified four conditions of political forgiveness. These conditions were the interpretive key to the petitions that allowed us to separate the request for forgiveness from the granting of the same for analytical purposes. Our objective is to understand the requests for political forgiveness within the framework of conditioned forgiveness and to analyze the text itself and the social meaning of the event. In the third section, the guiding questions were: What kind of preparation do you get through these requests for forgiveness? What future tasks do these types of measures set for us? To what extent do these concrete requests help to rebuild collective values?

There is no precise information on the number of people who were part of paramilitary groups in 2005 when the Justice and Peace Law came into force. According to government and media reports, the numbers range between 15,000 and 30,000 men. Because of the false demobilizations and the demobilized paramilitaries who relapsed, we do not have exact information on the number of demobilized people and, therefore, we could not establish how many requests for forgiveness have been pronounced between 2005 and 2015.

According to the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (Codhes by its name in Spanish), until February 2011, 654 paramilitaries had asked for forgiveness under the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975 of 2005). At that time, more than 1900 petitioners were waiting to be called to begin their free versions. It would have been expected then, that at least 2000 demobilized people would have made requests for forgiveness. However, we could not confirm this information.

For this study, we used the recording (11 minutes) that was broadcasted on November 1st, 2013, in which the paramilitary chief Salvatore Mancuso apologizes from prison in the United States. We transcribed the requests for forgiveness of Oliverio Isaza, Luis Eduardo Zuluaga, Walter Ochoa and J. Fredy Gallo, four leaders of the *Magdalena Medio* block, recorded in the same video (10 minutes) and uploaded on November 29th, 2011. We also tracked and used digital fragments of statements made in different media by former paramilitaries Julián Bolívar, Ernesto Báez, Pablo Sevillano, and Pablo Emilio Quintero, conducted between 2014 and 2015.

Findings

The Scenario of Restorative Justice

Regarding the doubts generated by the presence of forgiveness in the field of politics and justice, we wonder if it is possible to understand the act of forgiving as a valuable alternative for a community or communities to overcome broad and deep episodes of violence. If this is possible, under what conditions should it be part of the legal-political sphere? The answer to these concerns can take two directions: the first is from the corrective or retributive justice approach, which endorses the inclusion of forgiveness in legal and political scenarios due to the inability of the state to respond to massive requests for corrective justice, regarding the dimension of the offenses suffered by the victims. In other words, in view of the shortcomings of the legal system and the need for reconciliation, the state resorts to forgiveness as a mechanism that facilitates the reintegration of criminals into society and overcoming the armed conflict. The second direction is considered from the perspective of restorative justice, which incorporates the public request for forgiveness in legal-political scenarios, only so long as we recognize that overcoming massive experiences of violence depends on the capacity of societies to create and repair relationships that have been ruined by terrible damage.

This research defends the importance of the restorative justice approach in the frame of Colombia post-conflict. It is a valuable alternative to the difficulty of calculating and individualizing the extent and depth of the damages caused by long and systematic experiences of violence. For obvious reasons, the damage inflicted on an individual is not comparable to the damages suffered by a community. Thus, attempts to compensate victims from the corrective approach of justice are indefinite and insufficient because of the impossibility of guaranteeing equal access and quality of benefits to all victims, as well as the necessity of modifying structural conditions of society in order to compensate damages.

From the restorative approach to justice, on the other hand, we take special care of the incalculable and indeterminable experiences of violence and suffering caused by the armed conflict. For this reason, in the case of trying to satisfactorily compensate a community affected by the conflict, it is essential to raise awareness of general actions aimed at strengthening shared moral relations. This is where the acts of moral reparation include the figure of the forgiveness. Society cannot function properly if it is regulated only by methods of coercion and reward in proportion to the suffering caused, without trying to strengthen respect, citizenship, solidarity, compassion, trust, and hope, which need to be recognized and reaffirmed by all members of the community to overcome the conflict.

The damage caused by war threatens the human condition of the victims by denying the moral agreements that have been established in society, moral agreements that maintain peace and coexistence. In this way, when the moral ties that sustain a community are broken, corrective justice advocates both for

punishing the offender and for compensating the victims with the purpose to restore the moral state prior to illegal acts.

Nevertheless, once we accept the key role of restorative justice as it promotes scenarios that call for collaborative work in the reestablishment of moral relationships, we necessarily must consider the dilemma that repairing the suffering caused by appalling harm implies. Appalling damage causes the destruction of the world, and if the world of each individual gives meaning to all beliefs and values, the destruction of the world entails the destruction of the horizon in which all these beliefs and values receive meaning. In other words, a crime is committed against forgiveness and against all those interpersonal, civic, moral, or religious values, when the world of the person is destroyed. Faced with this, the question arises: how can we use requests for forgiveness as a mechanism to symbolically repair the victims, if the same act of forgiveness has lost all meaning with the destruction of the world?

Forgiveness in the Legal-Political Sphere

At this point, the fundamental question is: how do we reconcile the need for symbolic reparation offered by forgiveness, and which restorative justice finds indispensable, with the impossibility of forgiving once caused terrible damage? The hypothesis made in this study is that it is necessary to make a distinction, although not radical, between interpersonal forgiveness and political forgiveness. The purpose of making this distinction is to preserve the strength that each concept has in each area and to clarify the scope of use in the reparative framework.

Although several thinkers confirm that there is no antagonistic relationship between interpersonal forgiveness and political apology, they, however, make clear distinctions between the two. In this research, based on different authors (Corbí 2012; Carse and Tirell 2010; Griswold 2007; Govier 2006) we have established differences:

As we have already mentioned, in the political context and in the face of the dimension of the terrible harm inflicted, political forgiveness involves the interests and perspectives of different groups and institutions. As Griswold argues, in the political apology there are feelings that go beyond the interpersonal dimension to a more corporate dimension, which makes the expression of forgiveness more complex because it involves the interests of more than two people. Another difference that arises from the previous one is that in the political apology the representation of the parts makes sense because it is a broad process that is not limited to the relationship between victim and offender, but also involves political community. This point leads to the third difference, the political apology aims to reshape the collective feelings. In particular, feelings such as the repudiation of the facts reaffirming that the inflicted harm cannot be accepted, that it is inhuman, and, to call for solidarity that are likely to be shared by the whole community and that motivate collective actions to face and compensate the harm, including protecting the victims from being re-victimized thus.

The answer to our question is that it is possible to propose the political forgiveness of terrible damage based on the difference it acquires in the legal-political sphere. Here, it is not understood as an interpersonal act between two interlocutors, but rather as an act that requires the joint building of a shared moral world where human relationships that give meaning to the same possibility of forgiveness are reinforced. In other words, the power of political forgiveness, in a context marked by appalling harm, lies in the categorical rejection of the criminal logic that justifies illegal actions as necessary for the attainment of legitimate ends. Its validity appears only if it is integrated into the collaborative work that seeks to replace the immoral horizons, which promote appalling damage, with normative horizons, which make reconciliation viable.

From the above statements, it can be inferred that this framework to build morally appropriate relationships implies that victims, offenders, and the society begin a process of understanding and recognition of the extent of the damage caused, as well as an initiation of subsequent regret and the due request for forgiveness. Without these commitments, there will only be room for the request for an immoral forgiveness that legitimizes forgetfulness, re-victimization, and finally, non-reparation.

In this way, we must resort to the figure of a conditional political forgiveness. We have defined four conditions of political forgiveness from the perspective of Walker (2006b) and other authors. As will be shown, these conditions are related and their differences are inconclusive.

1. Accepting responsibility for the damages caused, and recognizing and repudiating acts: From the perspective of Corbi (2012), the immediate reaction to damage is denial. This is because the world is abruptly affected, and thus, the moral relations that served as a basis to face reality are devastated. There is an attempt to ignore the damage caused by the difficulty of assuming that the world itself has been replaced by an inhuman world. In addition, as Govier (2006) adds, the recognition of damages may be insufficient if it brings attempts to justify what happened. For the task of recognizing responsibilities to be adequate, not only is the participation of the whole community necessary, but also the constant reinterpretation of what happened; therefore, the work of recognition cannot be taken as finished.
2. Recognizing the victims, the different levels of harm caused by extreme violence, and degrees of participation: For Govier (2006), the dichotomous understanding of the damage involves only the victim and the perpetrator, but this dichotomy is insufficient because it denies the different levels of affectation caused by extreme violence. Thus, Govier would consider various degrees of victimization and perpetration. Regarding those that were affected, there are primary victims, those who were directly affected, secondary victims, those related to or close to the primary victims, and tertiary victims, the larger communities that have been affected by threats or by elimination of members. Concerning the degrees of perpetration, it must be said that the concrete

and direct agents of violence at are the first level, as well as the leaders who induce these crimes. Those perpetrators who are not directly involved are at the second level, because they do not commit crimes with their own hands but do approve, contribute, or support violence. There are also tertiary participants, who can be communities or groups that, without supporting the violent act, justify it. The restorative approach considers that there are extended responsibilities, meaning that all individuals should strive to intervene in the processes of reparation.

3. Regretting what has been done, acceptance, or the promise to stop doing it: This condition petitions the need to point out that past acts should undoubtedly be considered as evil, improper and illegal. Also, it asks perpetrators to make evident that there is a change in their beliefs and selfish ideals, which were used to justify violent behavior, and that the person has been transformed and now pursues shared ethical ideals.
4. Declaring that there will be no repetition: This statement is one of the mechanisms to restore confidence in shared moral standards and in the capacity we have to respond and take care of such normative agreements as a community. These two points, in light of the restorative approach, have to do with fostering two virtues, trust and hope. To trust means to have the capacity to understand that there will be no agents to cause damages, that the victimizers will not do this type of act again and that they will be able to be part of the community again. To hope means that, once the damage has been suffered, the presence of a third party is expected to remedy what happened.

Based on the above-mentioned conditions, we read the requests for forgiveness of some ex-paramilitaries. We focused on the analysis of requests that were recorded on video, as it is not easy to access the videos of the public acts of forgiveness in which the victims participated.

*The Requests for Forgiveness*⁴

In this section, we analyze the requests for forgiveness made by Salvatore Mancuso⁵, Oliverio Isaza⁶, Luis Eduardo Zuluaga, Walter Ochoa, Fredy Gallo⁷,

⁴To ensure clarity, citations of what is said by the paramilitaries are in italics.

⁵Mancuso has been accused of 10,000 murders, 60 massacres, 600 forced disappearances and 19,000 displaced families (The forgiveness that Mancuso seeks-El Perdón que busca Mancuso, 2013). He is currently extradited and remains in jail in the United States.

⁶Oliverio Isaza Gómez voluntarily surrendered to justice on May 6th, 2008. He led the Isaza's Heroes Front of *El Prodigio* in the *Magdalena Medio* region. He has been convicted for forced disappearance, forced displacement, qualified and aggravated theft and conspiracy to commit crime. (Open Truth -Verdad Abierta- Nov. 22, 2011).

⁷John Fredy Gallo Bedoya called the bird, is the former commander of the *Celestino Mantilla* Front of the *Autodefensas campesinas* of *Magdalena Medio*. He joined the paramilitary groups in 1989 and demobilized in February 2006 (Truth Open-Verdad Abierta-, August 25, 2009). The bird was sentenced in May 2014 along with Ramón Isaza Arango, Luis E. Zuluaga and

Alias Julián Bolívar⁸, Ernesto Báez⁹, Pablo Sevillano and Pablo Emilio Quintero.

The first condition in political forgiveness is that it must be stated that there has been damage, which is morally and legally banned, and, therefore, that these cruel behaviors must be stopped immediately. Alias Julián Bolívar stated that: "(...) *we make a declaration of solemn awareness for the violation of human rights.*" And S. Mancuso said: "*In the first place, to publicly admit the quantity and magnitude of war crimes and appalling crimes was as to nail a thousand daggers in my chest...*" He later takes responsibility for acts of persecution, threats against students and union leaders, and forced displacement. On this last crime, Isaza Gómez A.K.A "terror" is also responsible. Zuluaga Arcila admitted to murders, saying, "*we did not have the gift or the autonomy to take the life of any person.*" Ochoa Guisao asked for forgiveness "*for everything he has done.*"

In the analyzed requests, there was widespread acknowledgement that there had been damages. All the offenders agreed to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions by mentioning the suffering and pain caused. The demobilized people uttered phrases such as "*The physical, emotional, and psychological pain that we inflict on the victims forces us to show remorse*", "(...) *every day when I wake up I confirm that it was not that, it was a fatal chapter in my life and in the lives of the human beings to whom I caused damage, pain and suffering*" (Mancuso). "*I caused them harm*" (Isaza G.). In the requests there is emphasis on the great damage that was done, but they do not specify the acts or the type of damage that occurred.

It is repetitive in the petitions for the demobilized to state that using weapons was the wrong way. Mancuso says: "*I was driven by human and political principles supposedly well-intentioned, altruistic but permissive and lax with the use of violence and illegality, which today I judge totally wrong and, at that time, I falsely suggested that the end justifies the means. Doing justice, doing injustice.*" Pablo Emilio Quintero acknowledged that "*the desire of justice with my own hands was something that did not belong to me,*" and Zuluaga Arcila said "*Today we have understood that, even though we fought an*

Walter Ochoa, ex-commanders of the paramilitary forces of Magdalena Medio, to 40 years in prison for the crimes of homicide and torture in protected person, exactions, arbitrary contributions, acts of terrorism, forced displacement and disappearance, and illicit recruitment, committed between 1977 and 2006. He benefited from the alternative punishment of eight years of deprivation of liberty. (Office of the Attorney General, February 17, 2015).

⁸ Rodrigo Pérez Alzate is a former paramilitary who led the Bolivar South Block, he belonged to this group from 1998 to 2005. He is part of the Justice and Peace process and after eight years in jail he is in partial freedom, has participated in 115 free versions and so far, has confessed 1500 violent facts. He has been convicted for 102 criminal acts; in 2014 another 313 were legalized; in 2015 he was charged with 451. (El Tiempo newspaper, May 22nd, 2015).

⁹More than 3,800 cases of homicide, forced disappearance and displacement, gender-based violence, illicit recruitment, torture and illegal financing were charged against Iván Roberto Duque Gaviria, A.K.A. Ernesto Báez, affecting approximately 6,100 victims of the departments of Nariño, Putumayo, Caquetá, Bolívar and Santander; Rodrigo Pérez Alzate, alias Julián Bolívar; Guillermo Pérez Alzate, A.K.A. Pablo Sevillano, and 270 other members of the Central Bolivar Block of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia. (General Prosecutor's Office, July 19, 2016).

irregular struggle with awareness that by that time surely we were doing it (...) to understand that we were somehow wrong that the inhuman submission we had to some populations was not the way out”.

Thus, we can say that this first condition is met. However, the recognition of damages, actions and motivations is poor because the demobilized do not mention specific facts, or concrete damages, and they do not radically dismantle the logic that motivated such behaviors. On the contrary, they try to justify their actions mentioning the search for justice, using the word error or mistake. For Comte-Sponville, it is clear when he says that forgiveness is not the recognition of an error, "for every mistake is involuntary: it must be corrected rather than punished, apologized rather than forgiven" (2005: 131). Neither is it the recognition of human slavery in the face of circumstances, because this would justify the action and present it as inevitable; therefore, it should be accepted and not forgiven. Forgiveness is necessary in the face of evil, which "is in the will, not in ignorance. In the heart, not in the intelligence. In hatred, not in the stupidity. Evil is not an error, which is nothing: evil is selfishness, evil, cruelty ... That is why it requires forgiveness, with which error has nothing to do "(p.131). This type of awareness was not observed in the petitions, the recognition of acts, damages and motivations that cannot be justified under any circumstances.

When analyzing the requests under the second condition, we find this same shortcoming. In the petitions the ex-paramilitaries do not specify to whom they caused these sufferings, or they do so in a generic way. All of them agree to address the victims and civil society in the areas where they operated. Mancuso apologizes to the inhabitants of the region of Cordoba and especially to the academic community of the Universidad de Cordoba. Gallo Bedoya says "*My apologies to God and to all direct and indirect victims who have been harmed by the special action of the Celestino Mantilla front*" and Isaza Gómez apologizes to "*Colombia and the whole world, especially the victims of the region where I had control*". Perez Alzate apologizes for the damage caused to "*(...) the victims of Nariño and specifically of the municipality of Tumaco, where I had the center of operations.*" This can be understood as a way of addressing direct and indirect victims, or it may be that the details give to them in the truth sessions with the judges of Justice and Peace. Whatever the reasons, which we cannot know, recognizing the victims and the harm done in a petition for political pardon, according to Honneth (1992), is part of the process to end the contempt represented by serious harm. This is because the offender did not know the integrity of the person. Although the responsibility assumed in the field of political apology is not the truth that is expected in the area of justice (both instances in the context of the law are complementary), it is necessary for the perpetrator to give back the dignity that they took from victims by recognizing them as peers, and as human beings who deserve respect.

Regret and declaration of non-repetition are the third and fourth condition. In the requests, we find expressions of regret, Mancuso says "*(...) I would have liked to be physically present among you, among all the victims, to be able to look at them in the eyes and express our sorrow, shame, intention to compensate,*

from the deepest part of our heart." Zuluaga Arcila states that *"In the process we have many people from the same bloc and from the same front that are completely sorry;"* and A.K.A Julián Bolívar states that *"The physical, emotional and psychological pain we cause to victims forces us to Manifest remorse, forgiveness, a deep regret and an innocuous moral shame for everything we did in this fratricidal war."*

In the context of political forgiveness, it is common to commit to the non-repetition of what was done, accepted or failed to do. Past acts are highlighted as evil, improper and illegal; in other words, it is a way in which the offenders recognize the terrible damage as result of their actions. In this sense the petitions would fulfill this condition. Sorrow is also a manifestation of changes in beliefs and ambitions, and their transformation towards shared ethical ideals.

In the petitions the commitment to non-repetition is reiterated and they state that they have changed or that they are aware that they must change. They commit themselves to not being cruel people who produce terrible damages again. Mancuso says that *"my hands will never again wield a weapon..."* Isaza Gomez adds that *"I also want to tell the world that I am a new man with different thoughts and ideas,"* and Ochoa Guisao says *"(...) I want to tell the country that it will not see repetition on our part."* These words represent an intention of change and are evidence that they do not want to be the person who commits those actions again. It is an implicit communicative action in forgiveness that demonstrates its rhetorical character and strengthens the argument of its social meaning.

We conclude that the political apologies analyzed fulfill the conditions outlined: there is a recognition of the damages, the acts and the motivations; regret is expressed; and there is a talk about a process of personal change and there are non-repetition commitments. However, we find that there are still traces of justification of the acts committed during the conflict by referring to the circumstances that provoked them. The conditions for the linguistic act to display its full potential are unfulfilled because, by justifying the harm caused, they legitimate their purposes and it re-victimizes and extends the suffering of the victims, as well as the logic of the elimination and use of arms. In this way, the requests for forgiveness are incomplete.

In the following section we propose that although these petitions are rudimentary, reiterating and complementing them with the other measures of reparation, justice and truth, makes it is possible to construct a shared narrative. Such a narrative allows us to specifically express respect for normative agreements, the radical repudiation of ideology related to the thought that that the end justifies the means, that ambition and self-interest can be imposed through violence, and that human beings can be treated as things. Additionally, it should prevent that under the same circumstances any person, whether ex-paramilitary or not, would choose and promote the illegitimate use of arms.

Ethical Formation and the Pedagogical Value of Political Forgiveness

The purpose of the request for political forgiveness is to be a foundational linguistic act that frames the beginning of the commitment to the search for common ends that pursue the common good. The materialization of an action that does not seek forgiveness, but the opening and defense of forgiveness is again an interpersonal possibility. Thus, a request for forgiveness is a formative act.

In times of post-conflict and within the framework of reparative justice, the concept of formative education takes on a central role. For the philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer, to educate oneself is to follow the own impulse, to develop one's own possibilities to the maximum. To educate is to form.

Hegel understands education as opening oneself to the other and facilitating the rise of the human spirit. This is perhaps the core of our proposal. For Hegel, and also for Gadamer, education is a way out. How do we shape ourselves? How do we form ourselves? Exposing ourselves to what we are not, to what we do not know, to what is strange to us, to the other. In contexts of violence and damage to humanity this seems impossible because we are overwhelmed by a sense of shock, incomprehension, and especially of enclosure. We are in the opposite disposition to expose ourselves, to form ourselves.

Due to the presence, although imperfect, of the conditions of political forgiveness, the requests for forgiveness of the demobilized are a formative act in the sense that it prepares and exposes us to the other. It confronts us. This preparation is not theoretical but practical, because it is stated that acts of political forgiveness express a desire, as Comte-Sponville (2005) argues, a desire for humanity. These events of forgiveness represent the putting of a form of being and of acting that in principle is wanted. Although we cannot know if regret is sincere, and even though we cannot demand that the victims forgive, we all manifest our willingness to do good and in the act, we try to live that possibility.

This preparation must be constant and must be accompanied by other acts and other measures that form us in the ability to work collectively and in the capacity and willingness to pursue respect, citizenship, solidarity, trust and hope, and to be open towards the other. That is why education never ends. Not if we are willing to open ourselves to new experiences, to other worlds.

We cannot evaluate whether requests for forgiveness are pedagogical actions. Rather, we can only in the future evaluate the materialization our desire for humanity. However, in light of this formation objective we propose the following pedagogical tasks:

1. Each new request for forgiveness must become material for understanding what happened and in recognition of the different ways in which the world of the victims and the social world in general were destroyed.
2. Requests for forgiveness, declarations of regret, and non-repetition commitments should not only point to responsibilities regarding

complexity at the levels of victimization and perpetration, but also should question us about indirect participation in the conflict, the ideologies that supported it, and the way in which this participation contributes to the loss of confidence in humanity.

3. Requests for political forgiveness should be read as acts of compensation of the agency. At least the victims should be given the option of deciding to forgive or not to do so. To the victimizers give them the possibility to work actively in the repair. It also brings back to society the opportunity of redefining agreements and restoring moral ties.
4. The last task is for monitoring and self-evaluation of the three previous points. Education is constant and requires permanent practices. If we lose confidence in others and in ourselves to respect others and the agreements that safeguard our integrity, we lose hope of building a world that revitalizes our human possibilities, and in the process, strengthen institutions, mechanisms of law and politic participation.

Discussion and Conclusions

From a theoretical review, we could see that forgiveness has gradually gained a place within philosophical reflection, which is why this investigation widely reviewed literature that significantly contributed to the explanation of the questions raised. However, particularly in Colombia, the debate generated in this discipline has been scarce, which in our view constitutes a serious problem. If the Colombian government and groups outside the law have opted to end the armed conflict, we believe that the fairest effect of these events is the appropriate reflection and contribution of the academic world on the conditions, advantages and disadvantages that the requests of forgiveness involve in the country. In this way, we suggest this interdisciplinary exercise.

Since the inclusion of forgiveness in the Colombian legal-political sphere, we have witnessed several public acts of forgiveness that we are yet to evaluate and understand, especially, in terms of place, contributions, and difficulties, specifically in the face of effective guarantees of reparation. For this reason, we consider it mandatory to reflect on the value of these requests for forgiveness as acts that require the collaborative work of the whole society.

Our conclusion, based on philosophical reflections and the analysis of requests for forgiveness, is that political forgiveness should not be understood as an end in itself but as an act that acquires valuable meaning only within broad processes of integral reparation. This is because forgiveness is actually given as a real fact, and what really matters is to understand forgiveness as a foundational act of commitment to the pursuit of the common good, to understand that the end of requests for forgiveness is to be an act of formative education.

The review of the literature suggested several methods, but this research remains positive regarding the restorative approach. This is because it is in it that forgiveness of the terrible damage can emerge as a possibility, in the

framework of the moral compensation of the reconstruction of the interpersonal ties and dignity.

In this context, it is essential to differentiate the political apology from interpersonal forgiveness and to expect from each one certain effects. It is also fundamental to respect the absolute and unconditional character of interpersonal forgiveness that places it in the ethical-religious sphere and that protects it from any instrumental form, and, at the same time, to be able to recognize the value of their presence within broader frameworks of moral reparation. It is in these tensions that their formative condition lays. The sincerity of the words and authenticity of the feelings of the demobilized who have asked for forgiveness do not matter as much as what their presence means in the legal-political sphere, to express that the will to possess certain values as solidarity, trust, mercy and hope remain relevant. This is an exercise in re-founding agreements, especially the agreement to act humanely.

Bibliography

- Card, C. F. 2002. *The atrocity paradigm: A theory of evil*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Carse, A. L., & Tirrell, L. 2010. Forgiving grave wrongs. In *Forgiveness in perspective*, Eds C. Allers & M. Smit, Rodopi Press, Amsterdam, 43-65.
- Comte-Sponville, A. 2005. *Pequeño tratado de las grandes virtudes*. Paidós, Buenos Aires.
- Corbí, J. E. 2012. *Morality, self-knowledge, and human suffering*. Routledge, London.
- De Greiff, P. 2006. Justice and reparations. In *Handbook of reparations*, Ed. P. de Greiff, Oxford University Press, NY, 457-470. DOI:10.1093/0199291926.003.0013
- El perdón que busca Salvatore Mancuso. 11 de julio de 2013. Revista Semana. Recuperado de DOI= <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/el-perdon-busca-salvatore-mancuso/350449-3>
- Griswold, C. 2007. *Forgiveness: A philosophical exploration*. Cambridge University Press, NY.
- Govier, T. 2006. The apology initiative. In *Taking wrongs seriously: Apologies and reconciliation*, Eds. Barkan & A. Karn, Humanity Books, NY, 67-88.
- Centro de Memoria Histórica. 2013. *Basta Ya. Colombia: memorias de guerra y dignidad*. www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co.
- Jankélévitch, V. 1996. ¿Should we pardon them? *Critical Inquiry*, 22(3), 552-572.
- Mancuso, S. 5 de noviembre de 2013. Mancuso pide perdón a las víctimas, [Archivo de video]. Recuperado de <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJMZz-k1Kro>
- Margalit, A. 2004. *The ethics of memory*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Mèlich, J. C. 2012. *Paradojas. (Una nota sobre el perdón y la finitud)*. Ars
- Teitel, R. 2003. Genealogía de la justicia transicional. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 16, 69-94.
- Velásquez R. E. 2007. Historia del paramilitarismo en Colombia. *Historia*, São Paulo, 26 (1), 134-153.
- Walker, M. U. 2006a. Restorative justice and reparations. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 7(3), 377-395.
- Walker, M. U. 2006b. *Moral repair: Reconstructing moral relations after wrongdoing*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Wiesenthal, S. 1969. *The sunflower: On the possibilities and limits of forgiveness*. Schocken Books, NY.