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When Faith Eclipses Hope; Forgiveness Within Reparation

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Abstract

This paper, which was a result of the author's personal and clinical experiences, explores the concept of forgiveness within the Kleinian positions of paranoid schizoid functioning and depressive position thinking. The author begins her discussion by considering if the suicide of Primo Levi (1919–1987), who had suffered from a lifelong depressive illness, was in part a consequence of his avowal never to forgive the Nazis for their atrocities. She attempts to link this with the work undertaken by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa and the difficulty of incorporating third position thinking within the roles ascribed to victim and perpetrator. Finally, the author uses a clinical example of a 'perpetrator' of a serious accident who felt (unconsciously) persecuted by the offer of forgiveness from one of the victims. The author suggests that forgiveness can exist within a paranoid schizoid position – keeping victim and persecutor separate but capable of acknowledging a wrongdoing or crime against humanity. This acknowledgement, she proposes allows for reconciliation between the pair, but may not necessarily lead to healing or further growth as the couple can remain 'split'. This effort at forgiveness she establishes as a form of 'hope' – which she states maintains split position thinking. She compares reconciliation with an experience of forgiveness that can be located within the reparative depressive position thinking, exemplified by the statement; 'There, but for the grace of God, go I'. The author states that this kind of reparative forgiveness within organizations, groups and/or the individual can only occur in moments of 'faith'[1] – which she links to Levi's autobiographical accounts of his experience of a shared humanity, in his book *Moments of Reprieve* (2001).

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PREMISE OUTLINED: GUILT, CULPABILITY, FORGIVENESS AND REPARATION

> In response to the statement that General Groenewald [during the TRC hearings in South Africa] made that he would confess to God not to Tutu [Emeritous Archbishop Desmond Tutu], he replies; "Jong [young man], if you've had a fight with your wife, it is no use your only asking forgiveness of God. You will also have to say to your wife you are sorry as well. The past has not only contaminated our relationship with God, but the relationship between people as well." (Walker and Unterhalter, 2004, p. 292) [author's additions]

The TRC, as personified by Tutu, gave opportunities to all members of South African society publicly to testify about their experiences of victimisation or to account for their merciless actions. In this forum, Tutu and the commissioners believed that a 'truth'[2] when spoken could release the victim from further suffering (through an acknowledgement of their reality) and the perpetrators of the apartheid crimes could take responsibility for their actions through publicly declaring their guilt and seeking forgiveness.

This article explores the concepts of guilt, culpability and forgiveness within the Kleinian concepts of paranoid–schizoid functioning and depressive position thinking (Segal, 1988; Steiner, 1993).

The paranoid–schizoid position, initially identified by Klein in her observation of children and later applied to all ages and stages of a person's development, is typified by 'split position' thinking, in which the person views objects as either all good or all bad. This experience is a reflection of their projected inner states, and therefore mirrors their internal objects that, in their split positions, can be unconsciously felt as persecuting or nurturing. The difficulties experienced in this mode of functioning is the person's inability to experience a wholeness and often being consumed by one or other of the split states – i.e., either feeling persecuted or in a situation of idealised love. This is equivalent to a form of concrete thinking in which any experience of guilt would be one of persecutory anxiety threatening to overwhelm the individual and any creative or symbolically reparative acts cannot be considered. 'Paranoid schizoid defences also have a powerful affect on thinking and symbol formation. Projective identification leads to confusion between self and object, and this results in a confusion between the symbol and the thing symbolised (Segal, 1957)' (Steiner, 1993, p. 27).

The depressive position, which heralds a move to a more mature level of functioning, recognises that good and bad belong to the same object and there is an acknowledgement of ambivalence towards those who are able to offer succour and comfort (e.g., the present feeding

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mother) or be seen as harsh and punitive (e.g., the absent mother). This leads to 'a shift in primary concern from survival of the self to concern for the object' (Steiner, 1993, p. 27) and the individual is able to experience guilt at damaging the loved object and this promotes their desire for reparation.

My premise is that any actions that a person has taken (e.g., from causing a car accident to torturing and/or killing a victim) that would result in their experiencing guilt cannot be tolerated in a paranoid–schizoid mode of functioning and so is defended against through a denial (a kind of immobilisation – as if they are devoid of any feeling) or through a form of narcissistic self torment as described in the clinical example presented later in this paper. However, if the person is able to move towards depressive position thinking they are able to tolerate their feelings of guilt and experience remorse in which they are able to take responsibility. This process I have distinguished as leading from a feeling of guilt (persecutory) to feelings of culpability (taking responsibility). With this taking of responsibility they are able to consider actions (real or symbolic) that can repair or restore the other.

The conscious experience of guilt is considered a sign of the maturing ego (Carveth, 2001) and can assist the person in considering reparative actions that are aimed at healing the wounds of past hurts, transgressions and injurious actions. Carveth (2001) distinguishes between guilt feelings that cannot be experienced consciously, and are thereby defended against through the use of defensive processes that result in various forms of self punishment, linked to the Kleinian paranoid–schizoid position thinking. He maintains it is this repression of guilt feelings that prevents the individual from acknowledging their feelings and thereby having an opportunity to work through their painful experience.

> Freud's equation of the unconscious need for punishment with unconscious guilt has obscured the defensive function of unconscious self torment and its role in the chronic evasion of the mental functioning, depressive anxiety, guilt and remorse that must be contained in working through the depressive position. (Carveth, 2001, p. 5)

It is in the depressive position that the person is able to experience reparative wishes and thereby engage in reparative actions, the simplest of which may be to ask for, or offer, forgiveness.

This paper examines the difficulty in engaging in this 'simple' task – my hypothesis is that forgiveness cannot be conceived of – i.e., offered or accepted – when a person is filled with paranoid–schizoid anxiety. I attempt to explore some of these difficulties from different

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viewpoints: crimes which 'cannot be forgiven' (e.g., the Holocaust), a clinical example where an offer of forgiveness from a victim heightened the (unconscious) feelings of persecution of the perpetrator, and finally a personal experience to highlight the difficulty of maintaining depressive position thinking.

'AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE, WHAT FORGIVENESS? THINK NOW' (ELIOT, 1920)

In 2000, while on holiday in South Africa, I was fortunate to meet a distinguished and thoughtful sociologist, Ray Hartman. I had been speaking of my recent (and nascent) understanding of a psychoanalytic view on 'difference', linked to race, gender and class. I said I felt that the psychoanalytic approach to working with organisations could promote healing within a country (South Africa) that had been divided and traumatised by the recent past. Ray listened to my effusiveness with a patient attention and on my departure asked me if I had any thoughts on why Primo Levi had killed himself. On my enquiring further about his question, Ray explained that Primo Levi was a survivor of Auschwitz and had written several accounts of his experiences in books that had become a testimony of survival and humanity. Ray then repeated his question, 'Why then', he said, 'did Primo kill himself'. If this question wasn't enough for me to ponder over, Ray's parting words were, 'And never forget Rwanda.'

Wondering about (reading and reflecting on) Levi's death has brought me to think about the nature of forgiveness, an emphasis I have employed in this essay. Levi's sudden death does challenge us to consider what changes or healing may be possible when working with people who have been traumatised and damaged through experiences of personal and social trauma, from the extremes of physical violence and torture (the genocide of Holocaust) to the day-to-day experience of discrimination and deprivation that had been part of the South African's recent apartheid past.

PRIMO LEVI

On 11 April 1987, at the age of 67, Primo Levi was reported to have committed suicide by throwing himself down a high stairwell in his family home in Turin, Italy. There have been many possible reasons given for his death and there are divided opinions about its wilful intent. One author suggested that the recent change in his antidepressant medication could have made him unsteady (Bailey, 1988); another stated that Levi believed that suicide was the right of any person and

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that he (Levi) had indicated, in his last writings, that he no longer wished to endure his depressive illness and the responsibilities of caring for a physically dependent elderly mother (Thomson, 2002).

Levi is said to have suffered from a depressive illness from his early adolescence and prior to his incarnation in Auschwitz. Levi apparently reported that his depression began 'insidiously after the wave of success with *If Not Now, When?'* and was aggravated by [his] mother's illness' (Thomson, 2002, p. 440). His bouts of depression were also thought to be linked to his experiences of the horror in the concentration camps and his guilt at surviving. Levi had written that 'the best had perished in the gas chambers, and the worst had survived' (Bailey, 1988, p. xiv). These depressions in his later life were compounded by an anxious attachment to his mother, whose own health had been compromised by a stroke. At the time of his death Levi had concerns about his own health following an investigation of his prostate gland.

Levi had always lived with his mother, except during the period of his incarceration at Auschwitz and his journey back to his home in Turin. Although, following his return, he had married and raised two children, he never left his mother's house. Thompson (2002) suggested that Levi's close attachment to his mother had contributed to his depression and anxiety for the future; his mother was said to rely on him for many of her physical needs. He had said he felt trapped by her constant need for his ministrations, although others who met him were surprised at his expressed fear of leaving her for any period of time. Levi would often excuse himself early from social functions, saying that he needed to return home to see to his mother.

Levi's first book, *If This Is a Man*, was published in 1958 and was an account of his experience of being a *haftling* (prisoner) in Auschwitz. The book was praised as a testimony of man's capacity to survive, and it was Levi's ability to capture the moments of humanity within the horror of the camp that gained him his place in the great literature of this world. Levi's books spoke to many people: some were victims like him and saw his books as a confirmation of their experience, and others sought his help to write their own accounts of imprisonment and torture. The book also began a dialogue with the German people, some of whom wrote to Levi wanting to know more or to express their dismay at how the current German history was being portrayed in schools, which they said in part denied the reality of the Holocaust.

Levi's biography (Thomson, 2002) gives much detail of the individual Germans who corresponded with Levi, but I was struck in particular by two statements made by Levi to the German publisher of his first book *If This Is a Man*. The first avers that it was Levi's expressed wish to understand the Germans and the second statement gives vent

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to his anger at interpretations that had been made about the unconscious roles that could be assigned to perpetrator and victim. It appeared that Levi's wish to understand the Germans was not one which would necessarily lead to a deeper understanding of himself – through his examination of the unconscious mechanisms of projection and projective identification. Levi remained adamant that he could not identify in any way with the (German) perpetrators.

Bailey (1988) reminds us that it was Levi's act of writing *If This Is a Man* that gave him 'not only a maturity but a reason for living' (p. x). Bailey maintains that Levi never forgave the Germans but had a sincere desire to understand them. He quotes a letter that Levi wrote to the German translator of his first book:

> But I cannot say I understand the Germans: now something one cannot understand continues a painful void, a puncture, a permanent stimulus that insists on being satisfied. I hope this book will have some echo in Germany, not only out of ambition, but also because the nature of this echo will perhaps make it possible for me to better understand the Germans, placate this stimulus. (Bailey, 1988, p. xi)

His book, translated into German, did provoke a response from the German people and, according to Thomson (2002), Levi had many letters from the German youth who believed the history they were being taught in higher education was inadequate to explain what had happened during the Second World War. Another result of the book was the development of a correspondence and later friendship with a German woman who had resisted Nazism throughout the war, Hety Schmitt-Mass.

Hety was able to put Levi in touch with one of the chemists (Meyer) who oversaw the laboratory that Levi worked in during the last few months of his time at Auschwitz. The correspondence between these two men provoked Levi to declare that he did not trust that Meyer truly understood (accepted) the extent of the atrocities in the concentration camps. Levi was concerned that Meyer wanted forgiveness from him, but that he (Levi) was not able to provide that.

> It was clear to Levi, from reading his letter, that Meyer had found something in *If This is a Man* that was not there: Christian forgiveness . . . Meyer [and Amery] were wrong about Levi. Though Levi wanted justice, and the guilty to be judged, he never forgave the crimes committed, or those who committed them. (Thomson, 2002, p. 329)

This refusal to forgive was echoed in a letter Levi wrote to the author Wiesenthal in response to his book, *The Sunflower*, which

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invited reflections from European writers and philosophers on the moral problem of forgiveness. The central story (in *The Sunflower*) was that of a dying SS officer who 'begs for absolution' from a Polish Jew after confessing that he had burned Jews alive, 'but the Jew walks away leaving him an unforgiven man' (Thomson, 2002, p. 343). Levi agreed that the Jew had taken the right moral stance and said that the forgiveness requested by the German officer was probably in response to his fear of eternal damnation and it would have been an empty and meaningless gesture for the Jew to offer forgiveness.

Levi was concerned that a revisionist history would be made of the events in the Second World War and he saw his memory and writing as a way of warning the world that the genocide could happen again. In Levi's last book, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1988), completed two years before his death, he sought 'to understand the nature of contemporary barbarism, and to explain to the world once again his mission to bear witness' (Thomson, 2002, p. 504). Levi believed it was only those that had survived the camps that had the right to condemn or forgive – and those who had truly suffered were not there to forgive, because they had died. This last book of his describes his abhorrence of the notion that victim and executioner were unconscious roles ascribed by society to the individuals, both interchangeable and unavoidable.

> I am not an expert of the unconscious and the mind's depths, but I do know that few people are experts in this sphere, and that these few are the most cautious; I do not know, and it does not interest me to know, whether in my depths there lies a murderer, but I do know that I was a guiltless victim and I was not a murderer. I know that murderers existed . . . and that to confuse them with their victims is a moral disease or an aesthetic affectation or a sinister sign of complicity; above all, it is precious service rendered (intentionally or not) to the negotiators of the truth. (Levi, 1988, p. 32)

Levi explicitly stated that he would not forgive the Nazis for what they had done, and yet his seeking to understand them (through his published works and talks) provided him an opportunity for dialogue with some of these perpetrators. These exchanges did not allow for him to consider that the German and the Jew carried each other's projections (through a series of unconscious mechanisms of projection and projective identification) and as such were held in a polarised position of victim and perpetrator. I have wondered if Levi's inability to forgive the Germans was both his fear that the truth of the atrocities would be 'negotiated' and thereby lost and his own difficulty in acknowledging his capacity for damaging or doing harm to others. This denial of his own culpability may have prevented him from an

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understanding of the German that could have assuaged his painful void (quoted above).

I am not suggesting that Levi should have forgiven the Germans for their actions or that he (or the other victims) had provoked the sadistic aggression (unconsciously or consciously) he had been subjected to. It seemed to me he had equated forgiveness with the notion of condoning what had occurred. I am saying that an offer of forgiveness may be possible when an individual (in the depressive position) is able to experience themselves as capable of harming an 'other' and thereby is able to experience guilt and concern for the other. There may be times in person's or a country's history where the extent of the damage done is beyond understanding. I quote further from the poem that headed this section;

> After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, . . .
>
> Eliot (1920)

FORGIVENESS THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

In writing about forgiveness, the authors Enright and North (1998), state that some crimes are so horrendous (for example, the torture and murder of children) or of such vastness (such as the Nazi genocide) that they are beyond any comprehension. They say it is the 'scale and extent of the wrong which prevent victims and their families from attempting to understand and to forgive' (p. 27). Here they link the capacity to understand something with an ability to forgive. Levi stated a heartfelt wish to understand the Germans, but this did not lead him to forgive.

In considering Levi's statement that he was a 'guiltless victim' (above), I have wondered if it was his inability to experience himself as capable of murder, something psychoanalysis suggests we are all capable of, that made it impossible for him to forgive the perpetrators of the violence and murder. Levi, although he had consulted doctors for medication to alleviate his depression, did not seek an analysis or ongoing psychotherapy for his dark moods. His biographer, Thomson (2002), stated that Levi, shortly after he had an operation for his prostate difficulties, saw a psychotherapist but 'broke off treatment when she tried to probe his feelings of aggression' (p. 527). Did Levi's steadfast denial of his potential capacity for murderous aggression or destruction make it impossible for him to experience any relief from the horror he had witnessed? In other words, could the healing that is

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necessary following a period of trauma be in part a forgiveness that comes from understanding the 'other'?

The desire of the TRC in South Africa was to provide a means for healing the deeply wounded and divided post apartheid society though a process of the public's witnessing the victims' testimonies and perpetrators' confessions. The TRC, which was established as a 'political compromise' (Haupt and Malcolm, 2000, p. 113) in the negotiations for a new government and constitution in South Africa, had three main tasks; to hear the testimonies of apartheid's victims, to offer these victims a compensation (known as reparation), and to hear the statements of the perpetrators, who had applied for amnesty for their crimes against humanity (Tutu, 1999; Haupt and Malcolm, 2000; Lubbe, 2000).

The accounts given of the hearings sway between the agonising testimonies of the victims and the cold and at times seemingly heartless confessions of the perpetrators (Tutu, 1999; Walker and Unterhalter, 2004). In this process there was seldom acknowledgement within the structure that those present could have been both victims of the politically motivated crime and perpetrators of the same. Reconciliation within this process meant that one person could forgive another because he or she acknowledged their guilt and/or expressed some measure of remorse for his or her actions. The hope was that this reconciliatory forgiveness would restore the victim. Tutu (1999) writes that forgiveness was sometimes offered by the victims even when they did not know who the perpetrators were, or if they had applied for amnesty. These acts of forgiveness, he writes, were humbling to witness and demonstrated the restorative potential of the Commission for South African society.

Tutu (1999) said that nothing had prepared him for some of the horrendous crimes and acts of violence and torture he heard from the victims, or from the testimonies of the perpetrators seeking amnesty. Haupt and Malcolm (2000) give an account of the 'emotional fatigue from months of public hearings' (p. 124) and they describe a breaking point when Tutu began to weep during one of the victims' testimonies as he could no longer hold back the unbearable sadness at what had been done. Tutu makes the point in his book, written after the submission of the report on the TRC, that there are no clear lines between victim and perpetrator, the powerful and powerless.

> As I listened in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to the stories of perpetrators of human rights violations, I realised how each of us has the capacity for the most awful evil – all of us. . . . This is not to condone or excuse what they did. We have to say to ourselves with deep feeling, not with cheap pietism, 'There but for the grace of God go I.' (Tutu, 1999, p. 76)

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As an illustration of how racism affects all sides of the racial divide, Tutu uses an example of his own anti-black [racist] thoughts when he was caught up in a turbulent plane trip with pilots whom he had seen were black before the plane had left the airport (1999, p. 204). He uses this example to encourage black South Africans to examine their prejudices about themselves (internalized oppression) and in this way understand how powerful the system of apartheid was. He says that if black people can recognise how easily they could have succumbed to the same conditioning that white people had been given, black people would not be too quick to judge the past actions of the white people.

Using the concepts of splitting and projection from object relations thinking, understanding the 'other' requires a capacity to encounter the other, as it can provide us with an opportunity to make contact with our split off parts, providing we can tolerate the painfulness of incorporating a previously hated aspect of ourselves (Cleavely, 1994). I have questioned whether an understanding of the other can allow for the act of forgiveness, deeply felt and contained within an acknowledgement of the possibility of good and evil in all of us: in other words 'There, but for the grace of God, go I'.

RECONCILIATION AND REPARATION

Reconciliation within the TRC required that the victim and persecutor were held in a bounded space of court and procedure. Reconciliation was said to occur when the victim was able to hear the application for amnesty by the perpetrator and could accept their full confession and apology. Reconciliation embodied forgiveness of and for the crime or atrocity, and one of the tenants of the commission was that 'most, if not all, things – if they are allowed to come out – can be forgiven' (Lubbe, 2000, p. 19). Although Lubbe is critical of this 'particular theological cloak under which the Commission appears to have often functioned' (*ibid*.), my concern about this form of reconciliatory forgiveness is that it requires that the victim and persecutor to remain in separate roles. Therefore reconciliation, as a process, could be explained as part of a paranoid–schizoid state of functioning.

The desire for reparation, as described by Segal (1988), which heralds the start of depressive position thinking, involves an acknowledgment of one's destructive impulses and through this process one contacts a need to restore the damaged object. This object is both internal (an experience of goodness) and external, seen in one's capacity to relate to others. These wishes to restore the object through the experience of guilt and depressive anxiety can 'lead to further growth of the ego' (*ibid*., p. 82). Reparation is different from reconciliation in that it

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recognises that the roles of victim and persecutor are interchangeable and that each person has the capability of doing great harm to the other. Guilt is not only acknowledged but can be tolerated, and this guilt can lead to different forms of reparative action, one of these being to ask for forgiveness or to be able to offer forgiveness.

Cleavely (1994), in her paper 'Satan's return to heaven: some reflections on the positive aspects of splitting', articulates the potential for an insight or 'new growth' to occur when opposites are held in a boundaried space. She describes the capacity that organisations (or a couple) can have if they are able to manage the disowned and introjected parts of the split, until such time as the person or persons are able to reintegrate those disowned parts. This usually occurs when they have been 'modified [and] relinquished' (p. 5). Each person's capacity to hold the other's projections in their separate togetherness (bounded space) allows for the material to be thought about and may allow for a growth of wisdom (thoughtfulness) between them.

Cleavely's description of the boundaried space, which could be created by an organisation's primary task or by a couple in an intimate committed relationship, provides 'a container "of" and "for" meaning' (1994, p. 3). Cleavely uses this description of a process in which people are able to use each other to contain their split-off their anxieties and then later re-own them to discuss the positive aspects of splitting. It is the space between them that allows for 'learning', which she says is 'the only source of true reparation' (*ibid*., p. 13).

> I cannot and would not wish to diminish the unforgettable and unforgivable horror of the holocaust of the Jew and Nazis during World War II, but yet neither can I believe in the innocence of the rest of the world. . . . I want to suggest, however that unconsciously the world produced a 'pair' upon whom it could rely to symbolise and grossly and obscenely enact the deeply terrifying human yearnings for cleansing – to be made pure – and to become The Chosen.
>
> Looked at in this way the 'pairing' of German and Jew becomes internally and universally necessary. And if for a moment, such a thought can be tolerated, the system created by the tension of the 'pair' offers a space-between in which the continuation of learning – the only source of true reparation – may be experienced and discovered. (Cleavely, 1994, p. 13).

ACCEPTING FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness may restore both the victim and perpetrator of a crime sufficiently for them to continue their lives, and there are examples in the TRC hearings and in further studies on forgiveness that attest to this process (Enright and North, 1998). There are countries and courts that

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are exploring the role of victim and perpetrator hearing each other's stories that can allow for an understanding of the other to further the process of healing for the victim and help for the perpetrator (see the account by Dickey, in Enright and North, 1998, of a rape victim confronting her rapist, p. 113). This process may reflect Cleavely's discussion of the possibilities of thought (understanding) emerging from opposites being held in relation to each other within a boundaried space.

An individual's or a group's acknowledgement of a wrongdoing, may allow for the person/s involved, through an experience of guilt and remorse, to engage in reparative action through work. However, if the person who has acknowledged culpability in an event or crime has a powerful and punitive inner object, he or she may not be able to feel any restoration through an offer of forgiveness. This punitive inner object may hamper such a person's ability to heal through an engagement with the victim or to begin any reparative work.

I have used an example from my clinical work to look at how forgiveness was experienced (unconsciously) as a persecution. It made me wonder if forgiveness could be experienced as a punishment, caused or created by an inability to move from a paranoid schizoid to a depressive position thinking.

> In January 1997, in my role as a student counsellor at a university in South Africa, I was asked to help a young white undergraduate nursing student who had developed an acute anxiety syndrome that prevented her from sitting her exams. This young woman had entered the health science course the previous year with an excellent school record and had achieved high marks at her mid-semester exams. However, at the end of the academic year she was unable to tolerate sitting her exams as she had become consumed with a neurotic fear that she had contracted an HIV infection, and these obsessive ruminations prevented her from studying for her exams. She had been granted a second attempt at these exams but was advised to seek counselling to help her overcome her obsessional fear.
>
> The student (I shall call her Jenny) had had two HIV tests in the previous six months, both of which were negative but she remained convinced that she carried the infection and she had been referred for some anxiety management training to learn how to counteract her negative thoughts sufficiently to be able to concentrate on studying for her forthcoming exams. When I first met Jenny I knew very little about her except that she had done very well until the middle of her first academic year, and that she was now ruminating over an HIV infection that seemingly had no grounds in reality.

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When we met I was struck by her youth, her fast speech, and her imploring gaze. I asked her to tell me something of herself, and with that she began the tale of a car accident which had occurred seven months earlier. The story that she told (and retold in subsequent sessions) was remarkable because it carried the possible (unconscious) reasons for her having developed a fear of some (symbolic) form of reprisal because of her unresolved guilt and grief at having caused some considerable injury to the people involved in the crash.

She had not made the conscious link between the events of the crash and her subsequent symptoms, but when she recalled the details of the crash she was able to identify the point at which she became aware of her fear of an HIV infection. It was at this point she and I discussed forgiveness; although she was full of remorse for her actions she wasn't able to believe she was forgiven. It seemed her overwhelming guilt had been substituted, unconsciously, into a punishment that was an incurable virus (HIV).

Although Jenny told me the bare facts of the accident, it wasn't until we examined the detail of the events that she began to remember the extent of the trauma and her actions in assisting the victims. Jenny had been driving home after a party; in turning a corner she had lost control of the car and skidded across a grass verge, crushing three black itinerant workers against the garden wall of a large fenced property. Jenny, who had not been hurt in the crash, had immediately called the emergency services and stayed with the victims until they had all been taken to hospital by local ambulances. As Jenny told me the story of this accident, she wept and said that her parents had told her to forget about it as she had done everything she could have at the time and in subsequent visits to the hospital to see one of the victims. It appeared that Jenny had been highly accountable for the accident and had maintained a communication with an older woman who had been badly injured by the impact of the car. Jenny said that shortly after the accident the woman's employer had asked Jenny not to call the worker any more, saying her worker would prefer to 'forget all about it'. It wasn't until Jenny told the full story of the accident to me that she made the conscious link between the accident and her anxiety about her own health, which had led to her inability to attend her exams at the end of the academic year.

In the subsequent retelling of the story Jenny remembered an important detail, which helped her make the connection between her obsessive fear of an HIV infection and the trauma of the crash. After the injured workers had been taken to hospital Jenny had been taken to the police station to give an account of the accident. While

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she was there a police officer suggested she wash her face. Jenny went to the bathroom and saw her face was smeared with blood; she said she was shocked as she didn't have any injuries.

When I asked Jenny how she thought the blood had got on to her face, she recalled that after she had called the emergency services, she had sat with the injured workers and had taken the older woman's head on to her lap to reassure her that help would be coming soon. Jenny told me that she while she was telling the woman how sorry she was, the woman said, 'Don't worry my child we are all victims.' It was at that point both Jenny and I realised that the woman most likely put her hand up to brush Jenny's tears away and give Jenny comfort – thereby leaving Jenny with blood smeared on her face.

Jenny had been offered forgiveness by the victim of her crime, but she couldn't experience any relief from this (or any subsequent) action(s). Jenny had unconsciously converted her guilt into a punishing (symbolic) illness, and in this way prevented herself from being able to take any possible reparative action; for example, pass her exams and work in a field of health that would allow her to help others.

Jenny was able, through the process of talking about the accident and her feelings of culpability (which had been previously been preempted by her parents and the older woman's employer), to become more aware of her guilt and fear of her own death that she had experienced at the time of the crash. She thought, spoke, and wrote about the nature of forgiveness and by so doing began to recover sufficiently to write and pass her supplementary exams.

As can be seen in the example of Jenny above, forgiveness as an action by a society or an individual may not be sufficient to assuage the perpetrator's guilt, or create opportunities for further growth and healing for that person. The process seems to require, for some people, a chance to talk through what they were doing, thinking and feeling before, during and after the events. If we remain polarised as a society, as Cleavely was suggesting above, we are more likely to give that reflexive time to the victims and deny the perpetrators the experience of exploring their inner selves.

Forgiveness, then, could be experienced within the two positions of paranoid–schizoid or depressive position thinking. It appeared that Jenny was stuck in a paranoid–schizoid position and could only experience her guilt as a punishment. If forgiveness can be supported by a society that acknowledges human frailty (as Tutu was suggesting in drawing attention to his own racist thoughts above) there may be opportunities for this to lead to reparative action through good work.

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WHEN FAITH ECLIPSES HOPE, FORGIVENESS IN THE DEPRESSIVE POSITION

While reading the Haupt and Malcome (2000) article, 'Between hell and hope . . .', I began to muse on the words they had used in their title and thought of the Morgan (1998) article 'Between fear and blindness . . .', which so clearly articulated the difficulties the therapist experiences (and is tempted to deny) when working with a client who is racially different to him or herself. I wondered if South Africans in a post apartheid society were caught between 'fear and faith'. Fear of a retaliatory violence from 'black'[3] people who had experienced a sanctioned violence, oppression, and discrimination in the recent past, and a faith that with good work and a new justice (through the human rights constitution) healing could occur. It had seemed to me the word 'hope' was not adequate to express the change of heart that many people needed to experience. It was from this analysis of the words and their possible meanings that I was reminded of an event of great personal anguish in which I had to confront my own internal belief system, swinging between a narcissistic hope (for a instant change in my circumstances) and my difficulty in having any faith (i.e., believing that with time relief was possible).

In July 1996 I had undertaken a foolhardy journey to see Everest by trekking the 'Hilary route' from Jiri to Lukla in Nepal. The journey was foolhardy because I had gone during the monsoon season and was walking an unnecessary number of miles, since most people flew in to Lukla to begin their trek to see Everest. But I, in my misguided stubbornness, believed that I would get fitter and more acclimatised by walking to Lukla before embarking on the final part of my journey to see Everest. The result was that, after walking for eleven days in torrential rain and thick mist, I arrived in Lukla with swollen, painful knees and wasn't able to walk any further. I was, in fact, marooned there, as the unseasonable weather had prevented any flights from coming in or out of Lukla. There had been no flights for the previous three weeks and the situation seemed unlikely to change. I was stuck, I couldn't walk back, it was pointless going on and so I was left waiting for a plane that didn't arrive.

Because it was the monsoon season there were few other trekkers in the village and my sense of isolation was heightened as I was the only guest at a large travel lodge, the 'Everest View Hotel', which was adjacent to the only runway. I experienced a painful existential void and in order to cope I wrote a note to myself to look at when I felt the waves of panic sweep over me. The note said 'A life without hope is one filled with fear'. I looked at this note a few times over the next few

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days and decided it wasn't quite right. I crossed out the word hope and wrote instead the word faith. The note read; 'A life without faith is one lived in fear'.

It seemed to me that while I lived a life in which I simply wished for (hoped for) the things that would change my immediate circumstances, I was living superficially. The real purpose of a life, I decided, was to believe that there was something to be learned from every situation. If I could sustain myself sufficiently during times of hardship, then the purpose of the situation may become clearer and that would be the thing that would help me. Hope seemed to me to be a balancing act between something you wished for and something you feared (like passing or failing an exam) but faith required a deeper understanding of one's place in the universe, particularly one's vulnerability and dependence on others.

Although these were lofty sentiments, the truth was that it was only in brief moments that this thought, and reading the note, calmed my panic – for most of the time I just hoped a plane would come and I could leave Lukla. In other words, it was only in moments that my faith (belief) could eclipse my hope that a plane would simply arrive and I would no longer have to wait.

A plane did come and I did return to Kathmandu, then London, and finally South Africa, but the thought that hope itself was not enough to sustain me in times of extreme hardship remained an intellectual and emotional challenge for me. Did hope belong in a paranoid–schizoid position of thinking? Could hope exist in depressive position thinking, with a recognition of whole objects and the destructive impulses we have towards those whom we depend on – or was that a deeper form of hope, something I had felt was faith?

Hopper (2001) distinguishes between infantile and mature hope and perhaps my version of 'faith' fits more clearly into his description of mature hope. He stated,

> . . . mature hope has been distinguished from 'infantile' hope . . . Mature hope is regarded as authentic, and even as 'realistic'. In contrast, infantile and childish hope involves excessive idealisation, fantasy . . . [*a*] form of omnipotent grandiosity. . . . When infantile hope is thwarted, feelings of bitterness and denigration are likely to arise. In contrast, when mature hope is thwarted, feelings of disappointment and vulnerable sorrow are likely to be followed by the emergence of new hope. (Hopper, 2001, p. 214)

What I realised is that it was only in small moments of time that I felt comforted by this idea of faith (or as Hopper described it, a mature form of hope); in other words, it was as if a sense of purpose had

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eclipsed the bigger, overarching anxiety with its concomitant hope of immediate rescue.

I wondered if forgiveness, as the story of Jenny demonstrates, is sometimes experienced in a split position (as fear of retaliation – conscious and unconscious) and thereby offers little comfort or possibility of change. What would forgiveness within depressive position thinking bring? If forgiveness was part of a reconciliation process, would that require the split position of perpetrator and victim to remain polarised? The victim would offer the assailant forgiveness when and if the attacker could confess the full extent of their complicity in the actions. This binding of the two may have assuaged some of the guilt experienced by the perpetrator and been a release for the victim, but it did not require them to see themselves in the other.

Within the TRC structure, 'reparation' was understood as some kind of compensation for the victims of apartheid, the form of which would be determined by the needs of the individual and/or family 'whose fundamental human rights had been invaded during the conflict of the past' (Tutu, 1999, p. 56). This compensation was envisaged as an action that would facilitate that person's or family's healing; for example, a bursary for a young person in the family, payment for complex surgery for those whose bodies had carried the trauma of a beating or torture, or a subsidy to enable a family to rebuild their home. Reparation was therefore a payment of some kind offered to the victim(s) as a form of compensation for and acknowledgment of what they had suffered or lost.

Reparation, as understood by Kleinian psychoanalysis, is an internal unconscious process and is a defining moment within the depressive position. It is considered a mature defence (Segal, 1988) in which a person is able to recognise 'whole objects', integrating the split position of good and bad objects, and with this integration comes the recognition that the person's destructive impulses have been directed towards the whole object, leading to an experience of guilt, grief, and mourning.

> The infant comes to recognise that the breast which frustrates him is also the one that gratifies him, and the result of such integration over time is that ambivalence – that is, both hatred and love for the same object – is felt. These changes result from an increased capacity to integrate experiences and lead to a shift in primary concern from the survival of the self to a concern for the object upon which the individual depends. This results in feelings of loss and guilt which enable the sequence of experiences we know as mourning to take place. The consequences include a development of symbolic function and the emergence of reparative capacities . . . (Steiner, 1993, p. 27)

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The capacity for experiencing guilt, alongside a concern for the object, allows for reparative action, which Segal (1988) suggests is the basis of 'creative activities' (p. 92). I am proposing that it is also a place where forgiveness can be felt and offered. The depressive position, which heralds the individual's ability to contain (i.e., understand and accept) their ambivalence, may allow the person to say to those people who have perpetrated crimes against themselves or humanity, 'there, but for the grace of God, go I.'

In his article on Lincoln and Mandela, Young (2003) describes their desire to bring together countries divided by the past. He analyses their personal histories and suggests they developed capcacities to remain 'stoical'. He describes stoicism as similar to the definition that Winnicott gives to the depressive position, 'acceptance of responsibility for all the destructiveness that is bound up with living, with instinctual life, and with anger and frustration' (p. 450). Young states that Mandela and Lincoln are excellent examples of the concept of reparation.

> I ought to make quite explicit that the attitudes of Lincoln and Mandela towards their enemies are excellent examples of what Kleinians mean by the concept of reparation – constructive concern for their object, seeking to repair the damage that has been done, compassion, not bearing a grudge, not seeking vengeance. (Young, 2003, p. 450)

MOMENTS OF REPRIEVE

Perhaps, in the same way as in Lukla that I could only, for moments, hold on to the idea that a 'faith' (i.e., an acceptance of what was and could be) was more important than a selfish 'hope', in what I have termed an eclipse of hope by faith, people or organisations can only experience depressive position forgiveness (i.e., an acknowledgement of their shared humanity) in moments of their work. In organisational life, it may be impossible to remain concerned with the other as an ongoing state of mind.

Steiner (1993) describes the two positions of paranoid–schizoid functioning (primarily concerned with the self) and depressive position thinking (concern for the other) as constantly shifting, where 'neither dominates with any degree of completeness or permanence' (p. 27). This shift between positions is normal in any person or organisation, but there may be pressures in some organisations to maintain more paranoid–schizoid position thinking.

Foster (2001) and Lousada (1994) describe consultancy work with health staff, when there may be moments in which the staff can

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manage to engage in depressive position thinking. The projections that staff use (on to outside agencies) may serve to preserve the goodwill that staff have towards their clients because they are able to 'split off' their hatred. Forgiveness then, as an experience of shared humanity, may only eclipse the forgiveness that is more commonly offered, i.e. that of an acknowledgement of the other's wrongdoing, in individual circumstances. Perhaps these are what Levi termed *Moments of Reprieve* (2001). His novel, which he said he felt compelled to write from his memory of individuals and events, offers the reader glimpses of the relationships between the prisoners and between prisoners and guards. These stories, he wrote, arose 'spontaneously' and were 'hardly ever tragic. They are bizarre, marginal moments of reprieve, in which the compressed identity can reacquire for a moment its lineaments' (2001, p. 10). Levi was saying that his stories held moments of humanity, perhaps a description of a capacity for depressive position thinking, in the mad schizoid existence of the Nazi regime.

SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS

As Craib (1994) writes, 'There is much about our modern world that increases disappointment and at the same time encourages us to hide from it' (p. vii), and I think there is much in our personal lives and work that we are responsible for, but are encouraged by modern society to ignore. For example, the burden placed on some staff to ensure the safety of vulnerable clients when there are not adequate resources is unrealistic, creating the risk of overwhelming anxiety and burnout, particularly when things go wrong (e.g., the untimely death of a resident in care, or the persecuting inquiries that take place when a staff member is injured or killed by a patient). This 'blame culture', which can identify individuals as responsible for systemic failures, does much to encourage staff to hide from their guilt or sense of culpability, never allowing for a team to 'learn from mistakes' or relatives to be offered an apology for fear of the wider organisation being seen as responsible (due to the litigation culture). There was a popular book in the 1970s which held sway in many organizational training courses titled *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty* (Smith, 1975). But I say that it is a failure of humanity not to be able to experience guilt and thereby consider actions that can repair or assist the other in a process of recovery.

In our role as citizens, therapists, or organizational consultants we may want to consider how to incorporate feelings of culpability and the desire for reparative action that may emerge following a client's suicide, the loss of colleagues during a retrenchment exercise, or the ending of a personal relationship. By containing these feelings, we

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may find thoughts or discussions about accepting or offering forgiveness will emerge. Forgiveness cannot be a goal imposed on a group or individual as a moral imperative, but its presence, like an eclipse, can be acknowledged for all concerned. I believe that forgiveness, like Shakespeare's description of mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*, is a quality that is not strained and is evidence of reparation. These moments may assist groups or individuals to mature and regain a purpose in their future work or relationships.

During my early work on this paper, in 2004, I read the following poem on a London underground train (the serendipitous 'Poems on the Underground'), and it spoke to the heart of my thinking and I finish with it now.

The Long War

Less passionate the long war throws
its burning thorn around all men,
caught in one grief, we share one wound
and cry one dialect of pain.

We have forgot who fired the house,
whose easy mischief spilt first blood,
under one raging roof we lie
the fault no longer understood.

But as twisted arms embrace
the desert where our cities stood,
death's family likeness in each face
must show, at last, our brotherhood.

Laurie Lee (1914–1997)

Notes

1. The author is using the word faith within its secular meaning, e.g., 'a firm belief without logical proof, things believed or to believed' (*Oxford Dictionary*, 1995).
2. The matter of how truth was conceived is discussed in Haupt and Malcolm (2000).
3. By using the word 'black' I include all those who suffered under apartheid, including all those whose skin colour precluded them from access to education, health services, housing, and justice.

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