

AMÉRY AND THE TWILIGHT OF BEING

A Tale of Resentment, Protest, and Forgiveness

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A dissertation

submitted to the Faculty of

the department of Philosophy

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College

Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences

Graduate School

Fall 2021

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ABSTRACT:

The topic of resentment has experienced a resurgence recently in various fields (philosophy of race, moral psychology, transitional justice, critical theory and political philosophy). The republication and English translation of Jean Améry's work *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne: Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten* [*Beyond Guilt and Atonement: The Effort to Overcome by One Who Has Been Overcome*], better known now as *At the Mind's Limit: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*, is in large part credited for such a resurgence. Much of the literature takes Améry's chapter on "Resentments" as being geared towards establishing an "embodied ethic of resistance" which defies the "hegemony" of forgiveness in the Western tradition. What I argue is that Améry's own usage of the term implies a plurality of meanings, which itself forces us to go beyond this discussion. As we explore each facet of his Resentments, we come to see that it is only through a larger conceptual framework that we can make sense of their plurality and as well as what is ultimately at stake for Améry in them. Through doing so we can see that Améry's "resentments" are much more oriented towards establishing what Arendt defines precisely as "forgiveness": an *action* which requires a radical re-conception of time and a re-presentation of the past within the present, directed towards the future. This dissertation will show how accepting the virtues of Améry's Resentment

does not require forgoing forgiveness as a political concept, even in the context of genocide. In contradistinction to some of the literature on Arendt, it will also show that even in such circumstances, when punishment is impossible or inadequate, the virtues of Arendt's conception of forgiveness still shine forth. In fact, counter to what we might initially assume to be a limit of forgiveness, it is in the context of genocide that we can see the real possibility of “power”—as Arendt defines it within the context of the potential of people coming together to create something new—through the process of “forgiveness” writ large on the world stage. The limits of forgiveness come to appear as the conditions of its possibility. We will illustrate how Resentment and “forgiveness” in fact exist in a complementary relationship which binds them together. Améry's “resentments” manifest themselves as a call for repentance, but also in the realization of a need for such a call to be answered in turn. This call is not limited to the capacity to punish. We will conclude with an exploration of how ‘Resentments,’ ultimately guided towards reconciliation and processes of communal forgiveness, can be understood as serving a vital function in contemporary contexts of post-conflict and post-genocide societies.

One wants to break free of the past. Rightly, because nothing at all can live in its shadow, and because there will be no end to the terror as long as guilt and violence are repaid with guilt and violence; wrongly, because the past that one would like to evade is still very much alive.

Theodore Adorno, *Critical Models*

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PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of years of thinking in the company of friends, colleagues and professors at Boston College and the New School for Social Research. Being introduced to Améry quite early on, when very few philosophers even heard about Améry, much less wrote about him, was what led me to ultimately take up philosophy in the first place as an undergraduate. So I would firstly like to thank Jeffrey Bernstein for providing me that introduction. Secondly I would like to thank Jay Bernstein at the New School for Social Research for not only teaching me so much about Hegel, but also providing me with the crucial link between the history of philosophy and important 20th century political thinkers like Améry. I would like to thank Grace Hunt at the New School, who was a doctoral candidate at the time writing on Améry and led me towards a plethora of literature on Améry. Her own work also helped challenge my perspective on the figure in many crucial ways, as can be seen in this dissertation. Lastly, I would like to thank Gregory Fried for his patience and attention to detail as well as his positive reinforcement, guiding me to hone my work, come full circle and produce a dissertation of which I can be proud. At the same time, he made me understand that although there is much work to be done in further exploring Améry, and that we might have just scratched the surface with this dissertation, that is to be expected with a thinker as nuanced as Améry. I'd like to thank Améry for his bravery to tell his story as well as his brutal honesty in doing so. Lastly, I would like to thank my extended family, who have provided me with the greatest motivation to pursue this path.

A Note on Terms

Jean Améry uses the word “resentment(s)” in different ways:

- In a conversational, normative way, describing a set of feelings and reactions to situations;
- As the name of a philosophical concept with moral and practical applicability to individual and communal life;
- As the title of a chapter in his book, *At the Mind's Limit*, that chapter is a major focus of this dissertation.

For clarity, this dissertation marks these uses as follows:

- Standard, conversational usage: resentment(s)
- Conceptual usage: “resentment(s)”
- The book chapter: Resentments

INTRODUCTION

Routing Resentments

Resentment is something we all experience as human beings. We might even say it is essential to *human* being itself. We experience resentment both as human individuals and in the larger communities which we are engaged. To put it differently, it is a phenomenon in a multitude of contexts: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and communal. Jean Améry, writer and Auschwitz survivor, perfectly reflects this in his chapter Resentments, in *At the Mind's Limits*. Améry states that his primary concern, above all, is elucidating “the subjective state of the victim.”¹ As a Holocaust survivor and a victim of torture, Améry sees his own experience in the camps as putting him in a unique position to express several truths revealed by those experiences. Although an intellectual prior to these experiences, Améry’s writing seems to emanate from a master story-teller much more so than from a philosopher interested in presenting a treatise. In writing this chapter, his initial goal is to give a “description” of this subjective state of the victim — a phenomenology of the victim — and nothing more. At the same time, we cannot help but notice that his subjective account is inextricably bound up in, and also effectively comes to reveal, larger interpersonal and political forces at play during the time it was being written. His experience allows him to realize that human-being is shaped by time; namely, by the ability to be grounded in the present and directed towards the future. Both

1 Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations of a Survivor of Auschwitz and its Realities* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980) 64.

he and Arendt acknowledge this. However, what Améry's resentment also requires is, despite this realization, the simultaneous reversal of this natural "time-sense," which we might otherwise describe as the natural way we normally experience time.² As Améry states, "it nails every one of us onto the cross of his ruined past ... demanding that he resist the urge to join in the unisonous chorus which compels him to march towards the future."³ He at once understands what ails him, and what the apparent remedy is.

Nonetheless, he resists it. This may initially strike the reader as an act of self-sabotage on the part of someone whose experience of trauma has caused him irreparable damage, both mentally and physically. But giving into this impression would fail to take seriously Améry's own warning against this reading of his work. It would also neglect a crucial aspect of the work which this dissertation aims to uncover. Although Améry is completely submerged in subjectivity and his individual experience — a truth which the secondary literature does a fantastic job of describing — his story has a dual character which simultaneously reveals vital truths about the collective, or public realm, outside of that subjectivity. As such, to use an Arendtian turn of phrase, we might say that his resentments, which resulted from his experience in the camps, force Améry to exist in a twilight state, between both the private and public realms, at once straddling and perhaps even challenging the rigid distinction Arendt makes between the two.

Though resentment is ubiquitous, it has largely been neglected in philosophical circles as a topic worthy of intellectual inquiry and examination, at least in proportion to

2 Ibid., 68.

3 Ibid., 68-69.

the degree to which it seems to play a role in our daily lives. One may argue that the philosophical value of a phenomenon is not necessarily predicated on its predominance in our daily lives. If this were the case, we would have to say that frying an egg or going to the restroom would be just as philosophically relevant. What is it about resentment — and more specifically, Amérian resentment — which makes it a worthwhile topic academically and, furthermore, a relevant topic to philosophy today? It seems that even if it were proven that resentment is a topic worthy of intellectual exploration, we might be hard pressed to deny that its potential as such might be more effectively unearthed within the frame of another discipline. Psychology might study the cognitive or psychological aspects of how it affects the individual in his daily life and interaction with others. Anthropology or sociology might show how it is a phenomenon that is experienced in all cultures, but expressed differently from culture to culture depending on different conditions or circumstances. Why does resentment present us with a dilemma which is best explored through the lens of philosophy, and more specifically, political philosophy? Likewise, we might ask the same question about Arendt's treatment of "forgiveness," which has largely been understood as occupying a space outside the realm of politics.

What this dissertation will explore and explicate is how Améry, in his description of resentment, and how Hannah Arendt, in her own description of forgiveness, engage in fundamentally phenomenological endeavors, even if neither explicitly describes their work in this way. Both Améry and Arendt stress the importance of lived experience as the basis for knowledge. As Arendt notes, "without personal experience," thought is not even

possible.⁴ The phenomenological accounts presented in both authors also have, interestingly enough, vast political implications. However, as will be shown, while these accounts inform their politics, politics does not inform their accounts.

Resentment seems to fill the public sphere in what has become an increasingly politically polarized America. Political engagement is also on the rise in cities and towns across America, but in a manner which Arendt would have neither predicted nor approved. In that space, resentment seems to occupy an interesting position. It is ever-present, but at the same time neglected and ignored. We very often hear the term uttered in the public sphere, but almost always negatively, as a pejorative to describe those across the political aisle. For the Right, resentment represents the freeloaders of the Left who, due to their supposed financial or ideological shortcomings, feel resentment for the harder working, more virtuous and more financially successful members of society. For the Left, resentment seems to represent the old guard of rich white males, as well as poorer whites identifying with them, who feel threatened by the inevitable changing demographics of the country and therefore resent all those who seem to represent that change.

Without affirming or denying, assessing, or critiquing the truth and validity of each side's projection of resentment onto the other, this study will reveal something quite important about resentment and how it is understood today. Neither side truly affirms or takes ownership of resentment; neither ultimately recognizes it as a politically value-

4 Hannah Arendt. "What remains? The Language Remains: A Conversation with Günter Gaus" in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. Edited by Peter Baehr (London: Penguin Books, 2003) 19.

laden concept itself. As a result, we fail to form any positive definition of the term, leaving resentment simply as a placeholder to describe our political opponents, who are negatively defined as everything we are not. It is a term bound up in feelings of envy, hatred, anger, and fear — feelings which themselves seem inextricably bound to vice. As Nietzsche puts it in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, “the man of *ressentiment* is neither upright nor naive nor honest and straightforward with himself. His soul squints, his spirit loves hiding places”.⁵ It is hard to believe that we, no matter how noble and righteous, indeed do feel resentment and are in fact compelled by it. If Nietzsche is correct, it would therefore be reasonable to assume that it causes us, ourselves, to go into hiding, particularly from the other — the object of our resentment. Nietzsche seems to hold out the possibility that at least some can free themselves of resentment. It is also fair to say, in Arendtian language, that this “hiding” may result in closing “the space” in the public sphere, restricting the *polis* and limiting the possibility of genuine politics. Perhaps that is why she can be seen as having a relatively negative view of resentment. Dialogue is key to the political process for Arendt. Resentment seems an impediment to dialogue, rather than something which can actually motivate it. Rather than action through dialogue, which Arendt highly praises, what resentment catalyzes for her is the enactment of violence and revenge, something which she strongly opposes.

Resentment still seems to have a social stigma about it, not unlike Nietzsche’s description of the phenomenon in the man of *ressentiment*. We seem to assume that the

5 Améry, 67.

person or party motivated solely by resentment is indubitably the morally inferior one, for reasons which seem obvious and yet go completely unspecified. Interestingly enough, despite vast political differences between them, both sides of the American political spectrum equally affirm this reality surrounding the term. This may be because resentment is, historically, a term which is normally associated with the lack of personal or political virtue. The main victim of this popular usage of the term, however, is neither the Left nor the Right, but the term “resentment” itself and how we understand it. It is here that we can see how this is fundamentally a philosophical issue. What we aim to establish in this dissertation, in opposition to the common understanding of the term, is a positive definition of “resentment”. We will assume that a positive definition is a necessary condition for establishing “resentment’s” virtue, which is indeed the overall goal of this philosophical study. The failure to understand the nature of “resentment”, as Améry argues phenomenologically, is equivalent to the failure to understand its virtue. Failing to understand its virtue prevents us from its potential usefulness as something virtuous, and from our ability to reap the rewards of such virtue in the political arena. The main question remains however, what is “resentment’s” virtue? There is now substantial secondary literature on Améry’s defense of “resentment”, but very little agreement on what his “resentment’s” virtue actually is. This provides a testimony to the depth of his description and nuance in his usage of the term.

The basis for true political action for Hannah Arendt, and effectively the basis for her political philosophy, is free association in civic society — the public sphere. The potential for political action is centered on promise-making and keeping. *Natality* — that

is, the potential to engage in the *polis* and create new relationships, thereby giving birth to new enterprises with one's fellow citizens, charting new courses of action together — is the lifeblood of politics as a whole. For Arendt, politics is also necessarily a voluntary process. That being said, it is hard to think how resentment is in any way tied to Arendt's work. As mentioned above, in parts of her writings it seems as if Arendt herself is largely opposed to it. But in contemporary American society, one thing seems evident: resentment can stifle our ability as a society to gather together in the public sphere and make political decisions together. Could the rise of resentment in the current day, and the underlying issues surrounding it, pose a great challenge to Arendt's conceptions of politics and the political process? Does it even make Arendtian politics obsolete, in this regard?

This dissertation aims to defend “resentment.” In so doing, it will breathe new life into Arendt's understanding of the political process, one that affirms rather than denies the virtue of resentment in the political public sphere. To do this, we must question a deeply-seated understanding of the term which we have inherited in modern western society. The way we will accomplish this task is to offer a reading of Améry's short chapter Resentments, in light of Arendt's short section on “forgiveness” in *The Human Condition*. We will discover that both thinkers have idiosyncratic understandings of these respective terms. Through acknowledging these idiosyncrasies, we can bridge the gap between these thinkers and provide a basis for understanding how “resentment” (that is, the notion of resentment as expressed by Améry) and “forgiveness” (that is, the notion of forgiveness as expressed by Arendt) can enter into a productive dialogue, rather than

existing in direct opposition. We can also infer how this dialectical relationship between Améry's understanding of "resentment" and Arendt's understanding of "forgiveness" — which will hereafter be referred to as "resentment" and "forgiveness" to acknowledge their idiosyncratic use — can provide insight into current issues in transitional justice world-wide.

The following provides a brief description of each chapter in this dissertation:

1. Historical Background

As stated above, Améry sees "resentment" as a term which has been largely historically misunderstood. He suggests that pivotal to arriving at a proper understanding of "resentment" is to understand not only *that* it has been misunderstood, but *how* it has been misunderstood. For this reason, the first segment of this dissertation will delve into the historical background of the term. Acknowledging the historicity of the term requires us to go beyond etymology. It requires us to acknowledge it within the movement of history, particularly the history of philosophy. Although his writing is at times obscure and difficult to grasp, Améry himself suggests that the greatest obstacle to coming to a proper understanding of "resentment" is the historical monopoly which exists over the term through Nietzsche's usage of the term *ressentiment*.⁶ Although many in the secondary literature put great emphasis on Améry's allusion to Nietzsche, I argue that Nietzsche is only part of the phenomenological puzzle Améry presents us. In this chapter we will briefly explore the history of philosophy and its understanding of "resentment,"

6 Ibid, 67.

as well as the space it leaves open for its possible virtue. A portion of the secondary literature understands Améry to be critiquing a philosophical hegemony which opposes “resentment.” As we will see in the following chapter, some of the literature reads “the protest” which Améry is making through his Resentments to be equivalent to a protest against this hegemony. The first assumption we must test is whether such a hegemony exists. Framing the portion of the history of philosophy which opposes the virtue of “resentment” as being a hegemony would suggest that the negative and dismissive view of resentment has a preponderant influence or authority over all others. In this chapter we will show this to be unsubstantiated since, in a brief exploration of the history of philosophy, we can establish that two equally dominant schools of thought exist regarding resentment and its potential virtue or vice. The idea that Améry’s main contribution to the philosophical discourse is in opposing the historically predominant view that resentment lacks virtue, would ignore the rigorous opposition to this view which is already present in the tradition. As Améry states, his resentment is a protest to the world which plagues him.⁷ We start to open up the possibility that “the world” here is not simply the Western philosophical tradition. What he means by “world” here requires further exploration.

2. Contemporary Literature and the Binary Opposition

The former chapter works to illustrate how a substantial portion of the history of philosophy can be seen to recognize a conception of “resentment” as potentially virtuous.

7 Ibid 75.

The apparent binary opposition between Améry and the history of philosophy has effectively been largely dispelled. However, this gives way to another binary opposition, one which exists between “resentment” and forgiveness. This binary is very much stressed in a portion of the secondary literature, where the idea of forgiveness takes the form of Christianity for some. The hegemony which opposes “resentment” is now expressed in the opposition between the idea of “resentment” and the idea of Christianity. In this chapter, we will explore the ways in which this critique is correct, as well as the ways it is incomplete and unsatisfying. We will discuss the topic of “cheap grace,” which Améry alludes to, and how it stifles resentment at its conception. We will also substantiate Améry’s concern with “cheap grace” with current issues in the field of transitional justice, which Brudholm, Hunt, and Tutu bring to light. Part of Améry’s “protest” is a protest against cheap grace, ultimately a cheap form of forgiveness. One assumption we will come to challenge in this chapter is whether his protest is ultimately against “forgiveness.” Even though we can substantiate the claim that a cheap form of grace is at odds with Amérian “resentment,” we have not proven that Amérian “resentment” is at odds with all forms of forgiveness. Améry seems troubled by the forms of forgiveness which are synonymous with the process of forgetting. For Nietzsche, the process of forgiveness is synonymous with the process of forgetting. It would stand to reason that Améry, however, would not principally be opposed to forms of forgiveness which do not seek to forget. We will proceed to open up space for a new conception of “forgiveness” that Améry might find acceptable. We will do so by asking the following questions: What was it about the particular instance of “forgiveness” evident in his time

that made it insufficient for Améry? What might this reveal about the demands a movement of political forgiveness would have to meet in order to be sufficient to him?

3. Améry's battle with Nietzsche: Interpretations of Améry's supposed misinterpretation

The philosopher to whom Améry most directly alludes in his chapter Resentments is Nietzsche. We must therefore explore the relationship that Amérian "resentment" has to Nietzschean *ressentiment*. If there is a hegemony at work behind the term for Améry, it is fair to say that such a hegemony can be traced to Nietzsche's writing on the subject. As Améry himself states, his understanding of "resentment" is a response to Nietzsche, who Améry sees as being given the last word on the subject.⁸

A portion of the secondary literature interprets Améry to be operating from a misunderstanding of Nietzsche. These writers therefore begin their reading of Améry by applying a certain corrective to him. By doing so, they attempt to justify Améry's insights, and effectively present a Nietzschean reading of Améry. Ultimately, a significant portion of the literature is able to read Améry's protest as one against mass culture. To continue in the language we have been employing, such readers claim that the protest which Améry is engaged in is a protest against mass culture as such; a *performative* ethic of individualization from the collective and mass society. The resistance and obstacles which Améry faced from German society and the world beyond it are thereby interpreted as being those necessarily presented to him by the collective, *qua* collective. Although this can be seen to fit with the apparent thrust of Améry's argument, this chapter starts to

8 Ibid, 67.

throw into question whether this reading sufficiently substantiates Améry's teleology (with respect to the end goal of his "resentments") or whether he indeed even has one. If his Resentments is a protest, it seems unlikely that the protest is one against the collective, which we will further develop in later chapters. The following chapter will present what Améry's protest might alternatively be about. If this can be properly substantiated, then it will also lay the groundwork for establishing a crucial connection between Améry and Arendt.

4. A "Protest Against Time" - Améry's Desire to Go Beyond Nietzsche

As we can gather from the original title of Améry's *At the Mind's Limits*, which is *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* ("Beyond Guilt and Atonement"), Améry suggests that his work is not simply intended to oppose Nietzsche but go *beyond* what he sees Nietzsche has to say about "resentment". We will bolster the claim that Améry's critique of Nietzsche does not arise from a misunderstanding, and maintain Améry's contention that his work does in fact provide a true critique of Nietzsche. In doing so, we open up the possibility of his Resentments concerning something far different from what the Nietzschean reading of Améry can provide. We reveal the possibility of his "protest" being one not against forgiveness, the collective, Christianity, etc. but rather one against "time" itself.⁹ Améry's "resentments" require him to adapt a sort of unnatural relation to time almost akin to Augustine in his *Confessions* — one which keeps him bound to his past.

9 Ibid, 77.

5. Arendt's Protest Against Time (and Forgetting)

In this chapter we will briefly explore Arendt's dissertation, *Love and Augustine*, to reveal crucial connections between her conception of memory and Améry's conception of resentment. Following Augustine, Arendt sees the human being as situated between past and future. The past is never recalled as "past, pure and simple," but is always recalled with relevance for the present and future.¹⁰ Améry's Resentments reveals that the past is not past. His very act of recollecting his painful past is something which ultimately concerns not only his own past, but also all those who hope to share a common future with him and "live [together again] as fellow human beings".¹¹ His protest against the past is not simply an embodied resistance to the so-called hegemonic powers that be (whether Christian, capitalist, or other), as much of the literature has it, but a call to action — one predicated on the possibility that in some sense, the past can be changed and undone. For Arendt, memory "transforms the past into future possibility" by depriving the past of its "bygone quality".¹² It is here that we will further think about the implications of the fact that Améry's original audience — those whom he originally intends his Resentments to address — are the German people, the overwhelming majority of whom he is forced to see as having trespassed against him. Their trespass, left untouched, in the aftermath of his torture, has worked to extend his experience of torture into the present, nearly two decades after the liberation of Auschwitz.

10 Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 48.

11 Améry, xiv.

12 Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 48.

6. Between “Collective Guilt” and “Collective Innocence”

Améry indeed faced many obstacles when speaking about his resentment towards Nazi Germany and those who failed to negate their effect on the world in their wake. First and foremost, he ran the risk of being seen as one of the many *Ressentimentsträger*; a spiteful man lost in resentment and harboring a “barbaric, primitive lust for revenge,” and nothing more.¹³ The political environment he faced in the years following the Holocaust was a polarized one, similar to the one we face today in America. It was divided into two camps: those who were in a rush “to forgive and forget” the past, and those who resisted the urge to do so. Améry saw far too many Germans of the post-war years falling into the latter camp, and far too few into the former. In fact, a culture of forgetfulness seemed to encompass the majority of German society, and even the larger world itself, for Améry. He defines his “resentments” as his protest not only against his torturers, the capos and officers of the S.S., and the upper echelons of the Nazi party. In a shockingly bold manner, Améry claims that it is the world itself which afflicts him, more specifically the one which “forgives and forgets”.¹⁴ His protest is against the world itself — his world. It is against the masses which surround him and who wish to sweep his individual story into the dustbin of history. We will discuss Arendt’s understanding of collective guilt, and at the same time shed light on the grey area which exists between moral and legal guilt. We will use Brudholm and other researchers interested in contemporary issues in transitional justice in order to reveal Améry’s insight on this point, which is that a major part of the

¹³ Améry, 69.

¹⁴ Améry, 75.

problem is that the majority of Germans at the time existed in this grey zone between moral and legal guilt.

7. Re-integration through differentiation; Arendt and the power of “forgiveness”

In contrast to “the unisonous peace chorus all around him, which cheerfully proposes: not backward let us look but forward, to a better, common future,” Améry’s “Resentments” differentiate Améry’s own narrative from the prevailing narrative which many Germans were increasingly falling into, namely, that the Nazi past had already been overcome.¹⁵ This chapter will aim to show how differentiation, though important, is not Améry’s ultimate goal. German is Améry’s mother tongue. His connection to German literature, culture, and history is something he cannot eradicate. Therefore, a complete break from it is neither preferable nor even possible for him. We will explore how this break is better framed by Améry’s metaphor of an unopened “wound,” which he actively keeps open for the world to see.¹⁶ Putting it in the Arendtian language of “forgiveness,” this open wound allows Améry to create a break in time and present the opportunity for the world — his world, namely the German people — to enter into their shattered past together. By doing so, he is giving them with the opportunity to make good on their former egregious failures: the trust they have violated, the promises they have broken. In light of this, we will further explore Arendt’s understanding of “forgiveness” as a process which does not negate the past by forgetting it, but rather makes the future possible by revealing in the past something always “to be continued.” Améry’s understanding of

15 Améry, 69.

16 Ibid, 72.

“resentment” and Arendt’s conception of “forgiveness” do not aim to negate or revolt against the past, but rather strive to create new possibilities of recognition within the past for the present, directed towards a common future.

Conclusion

Resentment is part of an inter-subjective process which makes claims and demands. Resentment is, for Améry, a call for recognition. However, the call which Resentments manifests goes well *beyond* the quest for recognition (for example, of one’s subjectivity, individuality, etc.); rather, it is a call for reconciliation, but not without conditions. The failure to understand this project as *beyond* guilt and atonement, on the part of the German people at the time, is the main problem. Their initial failure to recognize such a call results in a grave misrecognition of Améry as a human being. The act of misrecognition results from a profound misunderstanding of the term “resentment”, and, effectively, the virtue to be found within it. In the wake of the Holocaust, Améry chose to present his story to a Germany which was in political turmoil. Rather than ignoring the tensions present in that environment, Améry sought to highlight them and cast light upon them. Doing so caused Améry to be the target of a less-than-virtuous kind of resentment himself by a significant number of Germans at the time who wished to forget the shattered past Améry highlights, or reflects, for them.

In many ways, we face a similarly divided America today. We will reflect on the benefits of adapting an Amérian understanding of “resentment,” which can allow us to tackle our racial challenges, themselves so embedded in our own relationships to the past. The discussion on the topic of race can be seen as being sullied by the same type of

insufficient understanding of resentment which plagued post-war Germany. It is noteworthy to conclude the dissertation with a reflection on how productive such a conversation in our own day could be if we took Améry's understanding of the term seriously. If only we could understand resentment in a similar light.

CHAPTER 1 – THE FLOOD OF RESENTMENT

Although Jean Améry's body of work is minuscule compared to that of Arendt, since its translation into English, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities* has had an increasingly important influence today on those engaged in moral psychology, transitional justice, critical theory, and political philosophy. In particular, the chapter entitled Resentments is short and concise, providing an intricate, nuanced, and vivid phenomenology of resentment that few since Nietzsche have been able to provide the world. Today, it is a work cited frequently by many philosophers, from Acampora to Žižek. Dense with psychological, philosophical, political, and literary insight — all while straddling the lines between prose and poetry — there is little wonder why there is so much ambiguity in the secondary literature surrounding Améry's discussion of "resentment"; what he understands it to be and how it functions. This ambiguity has produced great variety of interpretations of Resentments, an ambiguity Thomas Brudholm lays out in great detail in *Resentment's Virtue*. A thread present among all his interpreters is that Améry successfully shows that "resentment" is not simply a fleeting feeling to be dismissed, repressed, or overcome, but is a philosophically rich idea in its own right, worthy of our attention. In short, these various interpretations all show how, in light of Améry, "resentment" can be considered a virtue. However, these interpreters differ in *how* and *why* they conceive it to be a virtue *for* Améry. To put it differently, the literature is ambiguous about what makes it so that resentment is something virtuous for Améry personally. It is noteworthy that Améry's chapter Resentments has drawn attention from both analytic and continental thinkers alike. Some

thinkers conclude that the virtue of Resentments lies in the way it provides a vital case study for exploring a theoretical moral defense of “resentment,” explicated in the language of virtue ethics. Others stress the phenomenological nature of Améry’s work, the historicity of Améry’s claims about resentment, and the historical philosophical background out of which they can be seen to arise and towards which his claims are a response. The latter camp sees Améry as best understood in the language of Hegel and Nietzsche. For those like Slavoj Žižek, Jay Bernstein, and Grace Hunt, who take this approach, the virtue of Resentments lies not in merely providing fertile grounds to discuss ethics, but in challenging the long-established understanding of ethics they see the world as having inherited historically from Kant and Plato. For them, Améry not only provides us with a crucial break in how we understand “resentment,” but also in how we understand ethics as a whole. We might say that for them, Améry’s great insight lies in how his narrative implicitly turns Kantian ethics, and the Platonism they see implicit in it, on its head. My own account of Améry’s chapter Resentments ultimately differs from both schools of interpretation, but this is not due to any perceived lack of textual evidence for either approach. Both approaches are valid in certain respects, both are necessary towards coming to understand Améry, but neither is sufficient. As Améry himself states, Resentments is defined by “the task of defining anew our warped state, namely as a form of the human condition that *morally as well as historically* is of a higher order than that of healthy straightness”.¹⁷ Both the moral approach (analytic) and the historical

17 Améry, 68 (my emphasis).

(continental) approach towards Améry seem necessary for coming to an adequate understanding of Améry's Resentments. With the exception of Brudholm, who references thinkers from both sides of the analytic-continental divide in his cataloging of the many interpretations of Améry's Resentments, this divide is rarely crossed by the interpreters themselves. There are also advantages to both approaches, as we shall see. We will start with the historical approach, precisely where Hegel himself starts, namely, in his *Early Theological Writings* where his opposition to Kant is most clearly evident:

The impression made on men's hearts by the flood in the time of Noah must have been a deep distraction and it must have caused the most prodigious disbelief in nature. Formerly friendly or tranquil, nature now abandoned the equipoise of her elements, now requited the faith the human race had in her with the most destructive, invincible, irresistible hostility; in her fury she spared nothing; she made none of the distinctions which love might have made but poured savage devastation over everything ... If man was to hold out against the outbursts of a nature now hostile, nature had to be mastered.¹⁸

“The Flood” represents the “destructive, invincible ... hostility” of nature — the threat which nature presents man.¹⁹ Noah represents “man” and man's confrontation with this threat, and his response in attempting to free himself from the threat and master over it. It is “Law” — divine “Law,” and authority, by God, through “the Covenant” — that allows “man” to be freed from the threat of nature and its “man-slaughter.”²⁰ As Hegel continues, “against the hostile power [of nature, Noah] saved himself by subjecting both it and himself to something more powerful; Nimrod, by taming it himself,” by building

18 G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*. T.M. Knox, trans, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996, 182-183.

19 Ibid., 182.

20 Ibid. See Genesis 9. ‘The Covenant’ being referred to here is the one between Noah and God (not the covenant between Moses and God, although that covenant might also be implied).

the Tower of Babel.²¹ And yet unlike “a more beautiful pair” — Deucalion and Pyrrha, who after the flood of their own time, “invited men once again to friendship with the world, to nature, made them forget their need and their hostility, made a peace of *love*...and made their age the mother of a new-born natural life which maintained its bloom of youth” — neither Noah nor Nimrod “was reconciled with it;” both made “a peace of *necessity* with the foe and thus perpetuated the hostility”.²²

As the young Hegel astutely shows us, in the Flood *and* man’s response to it (“Law”), we see the creation, and reaffirmation, of the duality between man and nature. In a way we might even say that *man’s* very response to the Flood — the creation of “the Ark” itself, which is made possible through “the Covenant” he makes with God, and the assumed authority and capability he gains through it — relieves man from the evils of nature. In many ways this “peace of necessity with the foe [i.e.: nature]” has been perpetuated in many forms in the history of philosophy. We might even trace this all the way back to the famous myth that Protagoras presents us in the Platonic dialogue, *Protagoras*, regarding the evolution of man, society, and human culture. In it, Protagoras shows the establishment of cities, and the invention of the arts, arising out of man’s need to survive, up against the horrid resistance ‘Nature’ provides him. The preservation of man — his survival — is ‘the measure of all things.’ That is to say, “the measure of the value of [all] things.”²³ As Versenyi states, in this myth although man is endowed with an ability by:

21 Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 184.

22 Ibid, 184-185.

23 Laszlo Versenyi, *Socratic Humanism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, 24.

...other than human agents, the invention and development of the particular arts themselves (religion, speech, domestic and social arts) is man's own work. Having received his portion (no matter how divinely) *man stands on his own feet*. The mythological account, far from destroying man's centrality, gives it further emphasis."²⁴

In this myth we see something which is very much in line with one of the founders of modern philosophical thought: Hobbes. For Hobbes, similar to the way "the city" is described in Protagoras' account, the state is a construction created out of man's need. In the creation of the state, man witnesses the product of his own work and, in turn, realizes that he 'stands on his own feet,' standing above, and apart from, the horror and, perhaps, even the 'evil' of the natural world itself.²⁵ In Hobbes we see this duality between man and nature manifested in the very creation of the state; "government," more specifically, in the form of an absolute monarchy. For Hobbes, man is originally in a "state of nature" — one characterized by death and destruction — and it is "the State," so constructed, which inevitably provides him his [only] salvation from its wrath.²⁶ The founding of "the State," and the opposition against 'nature' it is founded upon, creates

24 Ibid. We might also see a connection here between 'man,' here in the Protagorean context, and, Hegel's depiction of 'Noah.' As Hegel notes, "It was in a thought-product that Noah built the distracted world together again; his thought-produced ideal he turned into a Being and then set everything else over against it, so that in this opposition realities were reduced to thoughts, i.e., to something mastered. This Being promised him to confine within their limits the elements which were his servants, so that no flood was ever again to destroy mankind" (Hegel, 1996, p. 183). As Richard J. Bishirjian notes, Noah "created a Being to master nature, but over whom Noah himself had mastery." See "Hegel and Classical Philosophy" in *Modern Age* 35:2 (Winter 1992)126-134.

25 It is interesting to note the connection between the definition of "fear" as "the expectation of evil," given by Socrates in Protagoras (358d-e), and Schmitt's noting of the phrase used by the young Engels, "The essence of the state, as that of religion, is mankind's fear of itself" (Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 51).

26 Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan: With selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994, 76-77,

and recreates this duality between man and nature. In effect, it also creates “duality” itself — that is, the positing of a duality — as the very condition of human freedom.

While a great many modern philosophers adopt this idea in some form, few in the history of philosophy depict the movement behind it better than Fichte, one of Hegel’s most immediate influences. Fichte, of course, has a similar idea to the Hobbesian conception of “the State” in his own conception of the conquest of the unruliness of nature by “the tyrant,” through which the state becomes an “educational factory” (a factory that civilizes man, who was by his original nature [supposedly] uncivilized and savage). Yet the movement itself — the way that “duality” itself (i.e.: the positing of a duality) can be set as the very condition of human freedom — is, however, shown nowhere more clearly than in the Fichtean conception of “the need to act” (the positing of the “not-I”) in *The Vocation of Man*. For Fichte the positing of the “not-I” to everything which lies outside of one’s “self” is a necessity, both on the level of the individual (because it is that which allows man to establish his identity as a human individual) and on a universal level (because it is that which allows ‘man’ to establish his identity as ‘man,’ distinguished from everything that is *not*-man). In effect, for Fichte, it is the positing of the “not-I,” what he terms “the need to act,” and placing it as necessarily prior to consciousness that is not only required for one to establish one’s own identity (and, hence, be able to separate subjects and objects),²⁷ but also that which marks the necessity of mankind to

27 *The Vocation of Man*. Peter Preuss, trans. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, 79; For Fichte positing the “not-I” is what allows one to set apart subjects and objects. He states that this positing of the “not I”—this “need to act”—must precede consciousness. What Fichte fails to realize is the imminent danger in doing this: namely, when we set this priority, we ultimately come to posit everything [and

realize its *Gestalt* and walk in its “Uprightness,” above and beyond (and against) the natural world.²⁸ For Fichte, it is in his rising up out of the deadness of nature (in effect realizing his *Gestalt*) that man comes to be.²⁹

It is important to realize that Noah’s reaction to the Flood — the Covenant — does not only protect man from nature outside of man, but from nature within. This is a point Hegel makes clear in this passage. This covenant does not merely allow man to protect himself from the dangers of the natural world on the outside (‘the Flood’), but from the mirrored reflections the natural world has within man himself: his natural instincts, bodily impulses, desires, etc. The mastery which man requires through accepting ‘the Covenant’ entails a mastery over his internal nature. In fact, to put it bluntly, that is part of the covenant — the deal, the contract, he makes with God. God allows Noah a certain mastery over the dangers of the natural world (represented by ‘the Flood’), *if and only if* Noah agrees to master his own natural instincts and urges within. Kant’s understanding of “Practical Reason” and its relationship to the moral law is illustrated by Hegel in this example he presents here. The moral law — and, in fact, the main condition for ‘freedom’ itself for Kant — is actualized when man replaces his

everyone] as a “not I.”

28 It should be noted that this approach is also very much embraced to some degree by developmental psychology today. For an infant, it is only by way of negating objects outside of himself as “not-I” that he can come to an understanding of himself as a human individual, separate from the objects surrounding him.

29 This idea carries over into Hegel as well. For Hegel, as Stanley Rosen states in relation to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, “Freedom, in short, is the making of the self in the activity of producing the world. The world is not produced by sheer imagination or mere subjectivity, of course. Hegel is referring to man’s appropriation of nature” See *G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, 163, my emphasis.. It is man’s exclusion of nature which in many ways defines Left Hegelianism.

natural inclinations with those of the moral law. Man comes to exemplify the fulfillment of his end of the bargain, with respect to the covenant, when that adherence to it becomes natural and practically instinctive for him. For Kant, man becomes in tune with the moral law when he replaces his natural desires, impulses, and proclivities with those of the ‘Moral law’; however, we might ask, as a consequence, what happens to those original natural instincts? What happens to them in the individual human being, and what happens to them in human history in the wake of accepting this covenant? How are we to look at natural instinctual attitudes which might include hatred, anger, and resentment, which it would seem the covenant would have us suppress?

As we will shortly explore in greater detail, this is the main problem which Améry’s work on “resentment” highlights in the eyes of Žižek, Bernstein, and Hunt. They see Améry’s claims about the virtue of resentment providing fierce opposition to Kant’s understanding of moral law, which they see as greatly prioritizing theoretical reason over embodied experience and the instinctive drives that govern it. Insofar as theoretical reason is prioritized over carnal experience, embodied experience, desires, and drives are all fundamentally suppressed by Kantian moral law. This is effectively Hegel’s own critique of Kantian morality, according to Bernstein. In his article entitled “Love and Law: Hegel’s Critique of Morality,” Bernstein argues that Hegel’s critique of Kantian morality is most clearly seen in Hegel’s “The Spirit of Christianity.”³⁰ It is here, according to Bernstein, that we are presented with “the most direct and eloquent

30 “Love and Law: Hegel’s Critique of Morality” in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 70: 2 (Summer 2003) 393-431.

presentation of the logical structure and moral content of Hegel's ethical vision".³¹ As Bernstein states, "In working out the substance of ethical living, above all in opposition to Kant's morality of universal law, Hegel is simultaneously elaborating the structural contours of human experience."³² He continues, "Hegel wants to construe practical, ethical life as somehow continuous with organic, biological life, with the living word."³³ As Bernstein states, "while Kant's philosophy contains a moment of religious or theological excess, Hegel's does not."³⁴ This is the crux of Hegel's critique of Kantian moral law, which Bernstein sees as excessively abstract and insufficiently grounded in concrete embodied reality. Jesus — particularly as 'the body' of Christ — represents the covenant of Noah becoming flesh; God becoming man; abstract law becoming concrete reality, with no theological excess. "Christianity" as such represents a movement quite distinct, however, from this proper understanding of Jesus. For Bernstein, regardless of the apparent "God-talk," this essay is fundamentally "anti-theological," such "God-talk has its ultimate substance solely in ethical life."³⁵ Law and instinct, once seen as distinct, are sublimated in the character of Jesus. Adherence to the old covenant (dietary laws, social laws, and so on) is no longer necessary. On the face of it, this may seem like Hegel is simply positioning Christianity as the fulfillment of Judaism. In fact, some have criticized the young Hegel for the bias he displays towards his own faith, in opposition to its predecessor. As Bernstein states, this is the wrong way to read Hegel. The Absolute is

31 Ibid, 393.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 396.

34 Ibid., 395.

35 Ibid., 394-395.

revealed in the body of Jesus, not in the institution of modern Christianity, which Hegel sees as a historical extension of the same mistakes inherent in Judaism with respect to its blind adherence to Kantian law.³⁶ Insofar as the institution of Christianity follows in the footsteps of Judaism, it falls into the same theological excesses, according to Bernstein. As Bernstein comes to state in his chapter on Améry, it is very much this theological excess which he sees Améry protesting.

Améry does in fact state that he has little interest in theological matters from which other survivors attain solace — things like grace and atonement, for instance. Améry also makes known his antipathy to movements rushing survivors towards forgiveness, compelling them to surrender their resentments. Rather than reflecting a Kantian ethic which relies upon abstract universal principles that Bernstein sees as necessarily containing a theological excess, Améry's story perhaps does reflect the embodied ethic a certain reading of Hegel might allow. Améry entered the concentration camp as an atheist; this much is clear. The act of being tortured leaves Améry an agnostic when it comes to his belief in human dignity. Améry states, "Not much is said when someone who has never been beaten makes the ethical and pathetic statement that upon the first blow the prisoner loses his human dignity. I must confess that I don't know

36 As Bernstein states, "Hegel thinks there is an ethical content embedded in the emergence of Christianity, above all in the Jesus narrative, that Kant misses and misrepresents altogether; so fully does Kant mistake the fundamental ethical logic of Christianity that his doctrine is not Christian at all, but rather a rationalized version, of the very Judaism biblical Christianity aimed to supplant. Hegel's method is nonetheless akin to Kant's, with a twist: his ambition is not to interpret Christianity in the light of an already secured moral theory, as Kant did, but rather to make manifest the ethical logic, the ethical content of the logic of experience" (Ibid, 395).

exactly what that is: human dignity”.³⁷ It seems that the only semblance of human dignity for Améry in the camps is revealed in the moment he strikes back his at foreman Juszek who himself struck Améry for no apparent reason. As Bernstein interprets it, “The hitting back is not an act of self-defense ... Juszek’s crushing — at least here — implicitly recognizes Améry’s dignity (as what becomes manifest in his self-respecting action) as what is to be denied and destroyed. The stakes of hitting back are solely moral”.³⁸ As Bernstein notes, “The hitting back takes the physical fact of his body and attempts to give to it a metaphysical worth by claiming it”.³⁹ As Carol Quinn, who comments on Bernstein’s interpretation here, writes, “The first of Améry’s examples suggests that dignity requires control over one’s body. Even stronger, as Bernstein points out, on Améry’s view dignity is *rooted* in the body, rather than being external to it”.⁴⁰ As Quinn states, “By hitting back, Améry demonstrated his value; he demonstrated that he possessed dignity and was not a mere *Muselmann*”.⁴¹ It is in the act of striking back that Améry reclaims his dignity, in Bernstein’s reading. In reclaiming it, acting upon a certain feeling of resentment, Améry also implicitly rejects Kantian morality in favor of Hegelian morality, so understood.

Let us take a moment to defend Kant here. Kantian ethics can accommodate Améry’s action of striking back his foreman, if only on the basis of self-defense. There is

37 Améry, 27.

38 Magdalena Zolkos. *On Jean Améry: Philosophy of Catastrophe*. Lanham Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011, 58.

39 Ibid, 58.

40 Carol V. A. Quinn. *Dignity, Justice, and the Nazi Data Debate: On Violating the Violated Anew*. Lanham Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011, 50.

41 Ibid.

also literature which shows how Kant can accommodate for a process of recognition, not wholly unlike that which the Hegelian interpretation seems to afford us. Bernstein and Quinn seem to demand something more than this, however, which Kantian ethics cannot perhaps accommodate. As they have it, Améry's dignity and value is established solely through the violent act itself. The violent act is not simply a reminder to the foreman of Améry's inherent dignity or value, granted by a universal principle or code of ethics. Rather, in Bernstein and Quinn's perspective, the violent act is the foundation of human dignity and value. That is to say, to use Quinn's words, the concept of human dignity and value is *rooted* exclusively in Améry's act of striking back — a particular "contortion" of the body become manifest — rather than in any principle, covenant, or moral law *external* to it. The experience of being a victim of the Holocaust, for Bernstein, reveals not only a departure from these universal principles — the idea of human rights, human dignity, an inherent moral code — but rather something far more radical: it reveals the system upon which these ideas are based to be wholly empty and hollow, purely theological with no actual content. As Bernstein states:

Implicitly, Améry recognizes that the work of dignity and self-respect must locate itself in the relation between his involuntary body — 'My body, debilitated and crusted with filth, was my calamity' — and his voluntary body — 'My body, when it tensed to strike was my physical and metaphysical dignity'⁴²

42 Zolkos, *On Jean Améry: Philosophy of Catastrophe*, 58. Hunt echoes this sentiment when she states, in her interpretation of Améry: "Against moral theorists and feminists alike who believe that the notion of human rights violations give us sufficient conceptual resources for explaining and counteracting the wrong of extreme interpersonal harm, I argue that resentment via defensive practices, creates empowering new values and as such remains an untapped resource for combating systematic denials of social standing" (Hunt, 10). "Embodied practices of resistance generate novel understandings of empowerment that challenge the universalist model of human

If human dignity and value is manifest exclusively in violent act of striking back, then the virtue of resentment for Améry would seem to be necessarily limited to its embodiment in the external world as that violent act. That is to say, the virtue of resentment remains dormant until it becomes actualized through an act of violence. As we will see later on, Zizek and Hunt too follow from the same grounds of a Left-Hegelian interpretation of “resentment’s” virtue.⁴³

One of the main questions we will explore in this dissertation is whether resentment itself can be seen as being virtuous, in light of Améry *and* Arendt. Whether Améry should be read as a Left-Hegelian can be disputed. However, there is little dispute that Arendt herself is a Kantian; she in fact identifies as such in much of her writing. This presents an apparent problem for our task at hand. If those who take Bernstein’s approach towards Améry are correct (or what can be understood as a Left-Hegelian approach, more

dignity” (Ibid, 154). “The defensive body, in other words, communicates moral harm in a way that abstract moral theories of duty, recognition, and utility cannot” (Ibid, 18).

43 I use the phrase “Left-Hegelian” here deliberately since I believe that not all interpretations of Hegel lend themselves so well to the reading of Améry put forth by Bernstein. To clarify this distinction, the Left-Hegelians interpreted Hegel’s idea about the promise of history to be the total negation of everything conducive to the restriction of freedom and reason. After the death of Hegel, the Left-Hegelians proceeded to engage in radical critiques of religion and, eventually, the Prussian political system. Religion and established politics, in turn, seem to be the main focus of those like Bernstein, Zizek, and Hunt in their readings of Améry. It is for this reason I choose to refer to this group as Left-Hegelians. As will be clear later on, I, too, will advocate for a variation of a Hegelian reading of Améry, but in many ways one based on a more traditional understanding of the figure. Whereas a traditional understanding of Hegel does not seem to share much in common with the more Nietzschean approaches those like Zolkos, Zizek and Hunt take on Améry, a Left-Hegelian reading of Améry does share quite a bit. Bernstein himself notes, “Hegel’s deployment of life in ‘Spirit’ has profound consonances with Nietzsche’s critique of morality” (Bernstein 2003, 396). As we will show, Zizek and Hunt take what can be understood as a hybrid Nietzschean-Hegelian approach towards Améry. As we will also show later, all this proves to be problematic since it can be clearly demonstrated that Améry rejects some major tenets of Nietzschean philosophy. I will eventually propose taking a more traditional Hegelian-Aristotelean approach.

generally, seen also in Žižek and Hunt), then it stands to reason that there is an inherent schism between Améry and Arendt. One of the major hurdles we need to overcome is that for Kant, particularly with respect to “Practical Reason,” something is only *virtuous* insofar as it undergoes this process of coming into adherence with the moral law. However, if that process of attuning oneself to the moral law itself excludes the very emotive attitudes and passions we are attempting to find virtue in (namely, resentment), then it seems that, for Kant, the answer is a blatant “no” to the question of resentment’s possible virtue. To put it differently, if the *suppression* of violent emotion, such as resentment, is a requirement of the covenant and the moral law, it seems that Arendt cannot acknowledge “resentment’s” virtue. Accordingly, there are two main hurdles when it comes to substantiating an Arendtian defense of “resentment’s” virtue. First, it is not self-evident from any of Arendt’s writings that resentment can be seen as virtuous in any sense of the term. Arendt does not speak much on resentment. When she does speak about it, she does so in a relatively dismissive manner. Secondly, if the connection between resentment and an act of violence is such that resentment’s virtue only becomes manifest in an act of violence, it is clear that Arendt would not accept resentment’s virtue. Arendt goes to great lengths in *On Violence* to harshly criticize those who see virtue in violence. She gives a thorough analysis of the dangers of sanctifying violence, and dismissively refers to contemporaries who do so as “preachers of violence”.⁴⁴ Their ultimate sin is, according to Arendt, conflating violence with “power.” Power is a crucial

44 Hannah Arendt. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Books, 1969, 30.

theme for Arendt. Unlike violence, power involves the *polis*; the collective acting together. Power creates a break in the automatic processes of the realm of human affairs (the private). Violence, in isolation, simply arises out of and furthers these automatic processes.⁴⁵ Arendt states, “Violence can be justifiable, but it never will be legitimate”.⁴⁶ It can destroy power, but it can never create it.⁴⁷ One might argue that Kant’s “theological excess” lurks in the shadows of Arendt’s discussion here.

Much like Arendt, Kant does not discuss “resentment” at any length in his works, but his thoughts on hatred provide useful background that can help us expound upon these claims. After all, this is precisely what we find in Kant with respect to his understanding of hatred. As Kant states, hatred is a passion that ignores the autonomous exercise of reason.⁴⁸ Like many philosophers before and after him, Kant sees it as one of the greatest threats to Reason — that which, to the philosopher, should matter most. In fact, for Kant, we have a “duty of *apathy*, a duty to strive to be without affects [*Affekten*] and passions [*Leidenschaften*]”.⁴⁹ For Kant, this is not just limited to the passion of hatred. Passions and affects themselves are “illnesses of the mind” which hinder the

45 For Arendt the body, and all bodily functions, are restricted to the realm of the private and not the realm of politics, which lies outside the body and its natural automatic processes. As we will soon see, the realm of politics necessarily is that which at once excludes and transcends the body and man’s embodied nature. This is not necessarily at odds with Améry’s thinking. We discover that some sort of transcendence of the body is indeed necessary if we are to come to a more robust understanding of Améry’s Resentments, which this dissertation aims to uncover .

46 Ibid, 52.

47 Ibid, 53.

48 Immanuel Kant, “Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*. Edited by Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 409.

49 Paul Formoso, “A Life Without Affects and Passions: Kant on the Duty of Apathy” in *Parrhesia*, 13 (2011) 96.

sovereignty of Reason.⁵⁰ But “passions” take “affect” to another level. As Kant states:

If affect is a delirium, then passion is an illness that abhors all medication. Therefore, passion is by far worse than all those transitory affects, which stir themselves at least to the good intention of improvement; instead, passion is an enchantment which also rejects improvement ... Passions are cancerous sores for pure practical reason, and most of them are incurable because the sick person does not want to be cured and avoids the dominion of the principles by which alone a cure could be effected.⁵¹

Passion, unlike affect, has a *lasting* inclination, according to Kant.⁵² It opposes and, in fact, threatens reason if not kept at bay. Although Miriam Leonard and Derrida restrict their discussions of Noah’s reaction to the Flood — namely, ‘the Covenant’ — as representing the notion of Reason in the Enlightenment and in Kantian ethics, reflections of its failure can be seen throughout the history of philosophy. It has even become commonplace to portray the entire history of philosophy itself as making this failure in some way with respect to the body and the passions concerning it.⁵³ This is certainly something the Hegelian approach towards Améry outlined above does it fact suggest.⁵⁴ It

50 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Robert B. Loudon and Manfred Kuehn, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 149.

51 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Victor Lyle Dowdell, trans. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996, 172-173.

52 There is an uncanny resemblance in language here between Kant’s understanding of “passion” and Nietzsche’s description of *ressentiment*, which he also presents as a sort of illness or delusion of the mind.

53 As Raja Halwani claims in his article on sexuality for the Stanford Encyclopedia in Philosophy, “Sex has received little attention in the history of western philosophy, and what it did receive was not good: Plato denigrated it, arguing that it should lead to something higher or better (*Phaedrus*, *Symposium*), Aristotle barely mentioned it, and Christian philosophers condemned it: Augustine argued that its pleasures are dangerous in mastering us, and allowed sex only for procreation (*City of God*, bk 14; *On Marriage and Concupiscence*), while Aquinas confined its permissibility to conjugal, procreative acts (*Summa contra gentiles* III.2; *Summa theologia* IIa-IIae). Immanuel Kant (*Lectures on Ethics*) considered it the only inclination that cannot satisfy the Categorical Imperative.”

54 One gets the impression from the Left-Hegelian interpreters of Améry that Hegel was the first philosopher in history to discover a system of philosophy which adequately incorporates the

can be argued that in much of the philosophical tradition from Plato to Kant, the placeholder for the Covenant seems to be the idea of Reason itself, particularly an understanding of reason which subordinates the body, natural urges, and passions.

It is the pursuit of reason, to the neglect of bodily desires and passions, that define Kant as well as Socrates himself in their personal lives, as it is commonly portrayed.⁵⁵ Likewise, we might conclude that the role of the one who is said to most faithfully pursue Reason — the philosopher — is defined by this pursuit. However, the philosopher's role is not only to pursue Reason, but to protect it from that which threatens it. Interestingly enough, Plato seems to have, in some way, a very similar view to Kant's own view towards hatred, as well as nearly all other emotive attitudes under which "resentment" would seem to fall. As Plato states in the *Phaedo*, one of the greatest evils that can befall man is misology. Misology can be translated as hatred, but a very specific kind of hatred: the hatred of logos or reason, more specifically, hatred of reasoned speech and argumentation. It is the pursuit of logos for Plato, through the character of Socrates,

body and bodily urges. At the same time, it is quite common for philosophers from Plato to Kant to be interpreted as failing in this regard. For a counter-narrative which defends Kant in this respect, see Angelica Nuzzo's *Ideal Embodiment* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008). In it, Nuzzo argues that the all-too-common idea that Kant disregards sensibility for the sake of reason is ultimately unfounded. For an alternative reading of Plato with respect to the issue of embodiment, see *Plato and the Body: Reconsidering Socratic Asceticism* by Coleen P. Zoller.

- 55 I do not necessarily agree with this common portrayal. However, I will discuss it in order to introducing Arendt's own idiosyncratic understanding of Plato. What I find most interesting regarding her reading is not the accuracy or rigor of her interpretation of Plato, but rather the way her attack on Plato gets at the very issues the Hegelians see at issue with Kant, all the while remaining distinctly Kantian. Her response to Plato serves to give a foundation for creating a reading of Améry which addresses many of the issues brought up by the Left-Hegelians, without any of the negative side effects of an ethic of embodiment that we will explore in more detail later.

which is the highest good. Anything which gets in its way is seen as a distraction from this pursuit which supposedly defines him. If we take this a step further however, we can recognize that, in the specific case of Socrates, the very means through which this pursuit occurs (the “Socratic method”) is argumentation or reasoned speech. We can see that for Plato, argumentation is the means through which the true model of a philosopher, Socrates himself for Plato, makes this pursuit. In turn the very construction of ‘the republic’ for Plato, according to Arendt, is not simply to defend Reason or pursue it in and through the construction of a political society, but to protect the philosopher in his pursuit — to defend him from all other threats which would get in the way. However, the importance of reasoned speech and argumentation does not go unnoticed by Arendt. In fact, she too recognizes it as a crucial aspect of both power and political action, which always relies on persuasion and speech. In this sense, speech is always tied to action for her. As Arendt states, “this ‘wooing’ or persuading corresponds closely to what the Greeks called *peithein*, the convincing and persuading speech which they regarded as the typically political form of people talking with one another”.⁵⁶ Arendt’s gripe with Plato (, more accurately, the character of the philosopher king presented in the *Republic*) is a matter of excess. For Arendt, reason and, by extension, contemplation is vital for *action*; but when taken to the extreme and isolated completely from the collective, contemplation is powerless and in fact dangerous. Even though Arendt seems to conflict with Plato, they

56 Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Political Significance” in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. (New York: Penguin, 1977) 222.

both share the opinion that reason is expressed more fruitful in the context of dialogue.⁵⁷

The primary guiding force for the construction of ‘the republic’ within the *Republic* for Plato, according to Arendt, is not what it seems to be on the surface. It appears to be aimed at creating and defending the *polis*: but its true aim, according to Arendt, is to defend the philosopher himself in isolation, in his pursuit of Reason, over and above all other things. This is the crux of Arendt’s opposition to Plato, or more accurately, to Platonism, as expressed in *The Human Condition*. She sees Plato subordinating action to the external realm of Ideas, all the while leaving the world of human affairs in the shadows and darkness of the cave.⁵⁸ For Arendt, Plato’s Achilles heel lies in subordinating the sphere of action to the sphere of contemplation. In fact, she argues that the entire tradition arising out of Plato’s *Republic*, specifically with respect to

57 Arendt sees Plato as elevating the sphere of contemplation over the sphere of action, and thereby freeing himself from the action’s entanglements and obligations. I do not necessarily completely agree with Arendt’s view on Plato, but I do make this point about dialogue here to highlight an important similarity between Arendt and Plato. Plato writes in the form of dialogue. Arendt sees *action* as dialogical. We will explore this in later chapters with reference to Améry’s Resentments.

58 In light of Highland’s reading of Plato, it is interesting to note the possibility of this whole project of creating ‘the republic’ being driven by fear—and a well-founded one, at that—on the part of the philosopher king. Engaging in that realm as a philosopher king, and, as such, presumably re-entering that darkness with a certain wisdom which one’s fellow travelers may not have, puts him in a completely vulnerable position to them. They most certainly would misunderstand him, if not greatly resent him, or even do him harm. In relation to this threat, the thought that he must be protected by guardians, completely removed from the public sphere, and be allowed to completely absorb himself in the isolation of contemplation, makes sense in one respect. Fleeing the realm of human affairs would seem to be the natural response to the imminent danger it poses him. Arendt sees Platonism, Stoicism, and in part Christianity following suit in their abandonment of this realm. Arendt proposes a different approach: the political philosopher must engage directly in this realm, no matter the dangers, entanglements and risks involved in doing so. Two faculties crucial to mitigating these dangers for Arendt are the capacity for forgiveness and promise-making, which in turn mitigate the irreversibility and unpredictability of action. I ultimately see this dynamic playing out in Améry’s ‘Resentments’ as well, however this will take some time to completely flesh out.

political philosophy, is guided by this misstep.

Continuing from the standpoint of the far more common (yet equally, perhaps, incomplete) reading of Plato's *Republic*, what seems to be the greatest threat to the philosopher is nature. Central to this project, in numerous forms throughout the *Republic*, is the effort to defend against nature: both beyond the city's gates and within the private citizen. Socrates himself seems to be the embodiment of reason and the Western tendency to prioritize it over man's darker inner nature, including his emotions, emotive attitudes, body, and even natural bodily functions. Many even criticize Socrates in the *Republic*, and by extension Plato himself, for being an authoritarian or tyrant, to the extent he aims to control these passions, natural instincts, and bodily functions⁵⁹. Regardless of how fair this reading is to Plato, it should be noted that Socrates does outwardly, on a personal level, seem to fit this stereotype and be indifferent to all things carnal. The *Republic* starts with Socrates on his way to the port of the Piraeus with Glaucon, embarking on a journey to observe a religious festival honoring the gods.⁶⁰ His plans, however, are cut short. He is suddenly stopped by a group of men who invite him to a symposium at Cephalus's home, where there would be abundant food and drink. Only after being compelled to join

59 Karl Popper's *Open Society* comes to mind, but there are also many others who portray Socrates in this light, conflate him with Plato, and give a similar reading of the *Republic*. I personally, however, agree with David Roochnik whose *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's "Republic"* argues that this work has been largely misunderstood by modern readers because of their failure to read it dialectically, understanding its parts as forming a unified whole. As I will go on to explain, I believe reading Améry in just such a manner is equally essential to understanding what is at stake in Resentments.

60 I am using Drew Hyland's interpretation of the *Republic* here. See chapter one of *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

them, does he do so.⁶¹ He politely declines at first, but for the sake of good manners ends up going, having to stay there for an extended period of time. This constraint Socrates feels to stay, although not necessarily physical, Hyland argues is a joke but a serious one which reflects the nature of real political life.⁶² It is clear Socrates wishes to continue onward to the Piraeus with Glaucon alone. One might argue this further buttresses Arendt's claim that Plato prioritizes contemplation over the *polis*. For Arendt, it is the public sphere, where men of influence gather and discuss political matters, that should take priority over the lonesomeness of quiet contemplation, which Socrates seems to represent in so many dialogues, at least for Arendt. Be that as it may, Socrates begrudgingly stays put and eventually gives them an account of what a "just" city would look like.⁶³

It is peculiar that the first city Socrates arrives at in the *Republic* is not the model he eventually presents, the "just city" or "the beautiful city," which occupies the bulk of the nine chapters that follow. Rather, the first city, and the one towards which Socrates himself shows preference is "the healthy city," which Glaucon comes to call "the city of pigs."⁶⁴ This is a city which is simple and rustic, and one based on a moderation of

61 Hyland sees such "compelling" to include constraint, a theme he sees prevalent throughout the *Republic*. The philosopher king must be "compelled" to rule (Ibid., 18-19). Included is an implicit threat of violence towards Socrates, who did not seem to readily give consent until he was all but forced to.

62 Drew Hyland. *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, 18-19.

63 Although it may not be apparent yet, there are some important similarities between the position Socrates is put in, or rather puts himself in, with regard to Athens and the position Améry's Resentments put him in with regard to the larger collective society, Germany, or the larger human society as such.

64 *Republic*, 372d-e.

pleasures and desires. In turn, through moderation it is free from excess — what Glaucon seems to prioritize over everything else, “relishes.”⁶⁵ It is little wonder that Socrates, who is often portrayed as the quintessential ascetic, prefers this city. We should not forget that he may have a valid point in preferring it, specifically when we acknowledge the nature of our bodily urges, instincts, and desires. Wine, food, and human sensuality all have their place in society, in moderation and in the ambit of reason. In moderation, they can be considered healthy. However, in excess they produce diseases which destroy the body. The desire for moderation of the body Plato expresses may have less to do with his supposed hatred or neglect of the carnal, but much more to do with what is necessary for keeping a human being, or a city for that matter, intact.⁶⁶ Socrates in fact says as much. He gives a warning to Glaucon that to fully incorporate these relishes — luxuries, natural desires, human want of excess — would require a new construction of the city which would most likely leave it in a “fevered” state.⁶⁷ As Socrates states, this proceeds “from the same desires that are most of all responsible for the bad things that happen to cities and the individuals in them.”⁶⁸ As soon as these desires are incorporated by Socrates, at the bequest of Glaucon, the fevered city comes to be. The remainder of the *Republic* can be seen as the summation of various attempts to master those desires and natural impulses that may have already gone out of hand, at which point the beautiful city is born. As they

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ This would be in keeping with the city-soul analogy, present throughout the *Republic*. The truths revealed in the establishment of the just city shine through as truths evident in the just or healthy (or, as we might suggest, virtuous) individual.

⁶⁷ *Republic*, 372e.

⁶⁸ *Republic*, 373e.

agree at the beginning, if to be *virtuous* is to be just, and to be just is to live according to something approximating the *Logos* — Reason in its primordial form — then Reason is to be given utmost priority. A whole line of commentators on the *Republic* have questioned the extent to which *Eros* is repressed and individual freedom is restrained as a result of this prioritization.⁶⁹ However, at the same time none suggest that completely unrestrained eros could be capable of harmony with civic life. It seems that some restraint of individual freedom is necessary to avoid the issues embedded in the fevered city. Excess is without doubt dangerous for both the individual and the city, and any working relationship between them which the city-soul analogy would suggest. Although many criticize Plato for being tyrannical in suggesting this restraint, what he reveals is that the body alone, left to its own devices, has its limitations for providing the basis for a just city. Even though the body must be taken into account, it cannot be prioritized over reason, which itself serves as a tool for moderation of excesses which would otherwise lead the city, and the individual, astray.

As Strauss interprets the *Republic*, it is the sanctity of the individual which is threatened if and when the state becomes excessive in its attempt to impose limits on those natural aspects of human being. As Strauss shows, it is the individual's *ownership* over one's body, family, property, and personal freedom which is put in jeopardy by the state if it becomes tyrannical.⁷⁰ The fruits of the craftsman's labor are taken from him and become swallowed up by the state; his children are taken from him and, presumably,

69 Leo Strauss, Stanley Rosen, Drew Hyland all express this view.

70 Leo Strauss, *The City of Man*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964, 103; 115; 122; 127.

become lost in the larger whole. Decisions regarding whom one can engage in sexual relations are also strictly constrained by the state. “Justice” for and within the *individual* citizen is sacrificed for “justice” of the larger whole and *collective*. This is a theme we will find embedded in the relationship between resentment and forgiveness, particularly as it comes to be defined by much of the literature surrounding Améry.

Arendt herself is quite skeptical of the project of the beautiful city launched in Plato’s *Republic*. However, her skepticism rests on different grounds. It does not arise from the perceived injustice done to the individual by stripping him of his desires, passions, sexual nature, etc. Rather, her skepticism arises from the creation of the philosopher-king, which she sees as Plato’s effort to prioritize philosophy over and above politics. Plato’s original sin, for Arendt, is that he prioritizes contemplation over *action*. It is the subordination of the realm of action to the realm of contemplation which infects all political philosophy from that point forward, according to Arendt.⁷¹ However, it is *not* the subordination of nature to reason which most offends her. In fact, as she expresses in her discussion in *The Human Condition* of the *vita activa*, the division between man and nature is itself necessary for *human* being. Arendt speaks of the body and its biological nature as occupying the bottom rung of the tripartite hierarchy of human activity (Labor, Work, Action). “Labor,” the bottom rung, represents necessity: “what men share with all other forms of animal life [which is] not considered to be human”.⁷² Because “Labor” is

71 See Miguel Abensour, “Against the Sovereignty of Philosophy over Politics: Arendt’s Reading of Plato’s Cave Allegory” in *Social Research*, 74:4 (Winter 2007)955 – 982.

72 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 84.

bound by necessity, it is characterized by unfreedom.⁷³ It is restricted to “the private realm” of the household, which it is absolutely necessary to hold in distinction from “the public realm” of the *polis*. These two realms must remain separate, for Arendt. The higher form of human activity, “Work,” requires a split from nature; in this split, “Work” creates a firm boundary between these two realms.⁷⁴ Through work, man realizes himself as *homo faber* — the craftsman, the builder, the legislator — all of which serve to create distinctively human spaces and institutions which block nature from without.⁷⁵ For Arendt, man *is* greater than the carnal bile of which he is made. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Within Arendt’s separation of the private from the public realm is also, as some have argued, the subordination of everything bound up by the private: child-birth and rearing, sex, the body, etc.⁷⁶ In turn, it can be argued that Arendt is not challenging the traditional role of reason, as we have discussed it — and the priority it has over the body, emotions, our natural instincts — but rather, she is simply transposing its reign to the realm of the political. If she follows Kant and sees Reason as the *sine qua non* for human freedom — that which allows us to be the kind of being that can operate within a community, live in the kind of community in which there is a respect for the rights of the

73 Ibid., 84-85.

74 Ibid., 86-87.

75 Ibid., 91.

76 Benhabib (2003) , Richard Bernstein (1986), and Pitkin(1995)) all articulate problems with Arendt’s distinction between “the private” and “the social” specifically in its [supposed] limitations for accounting for some of the greatest achievements in modern politics, in which the borders between these realms seem more permeable than Arendt’s depiction would portray. Political conservatives could still suggest, on Arendtian grounds, that this matter is up for debate.

individuals who make up the community, and be free through an acknowledgment of a duty towards the community itself — one might, on Hegelian grounds, accuse her of falling into the same trap into which Hegel sees Plato, Kant, and Noah falling. In turn, she might be seen as ultimately having the same view towards emotive attitudes like hatred as Kant and Plato. As we have said, “hatred” as *misology* for Plato (the hatred of reason or reasoned argumentation) is one of the greatest evils to befall man. For Kant, it is passion which provides a great threat to our pursuit of Reason. We might say that for Arendt, anything that gets in the way of the pursuit of reason as realized in our ability to create human communities, in contrast to nature — namely through discursive argumentation in the public sphere — is the greatest possible threat to mankind. As Arendt concludes in her last work, *The Life of the Mind*, mankind’s ultimate potential is not realized in the body — something which is arguably restricted to the realm of the private and of necessity — but in the mind, more specifically in thinking or reasoning (*Vernunft*). As she states, it is revealed in our capacity for judgment. It was “the authentic inability to think” which made Eichmann such a banal and yet inhuman individual.⁷⁷ But where does that leave nature, particularly our inner nature: our emotions, passions, and affects?

Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was arguably her most famous work, and certainly the work that caused her to be considered one of the most famous and well-known political philosophers of the 20th century. It was also the work that led her to be

77 Hannah Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture” in *Social Research*, 30:2 (Fall 1970), 417.

perceived as one of the most infamous philosophers of her time. The reasons why it was considered such a controversial book were based directly on how she comes to portray and judge Adolf Eichmann, the man responsible for leading scores of Jews to their deaths. Rather than portraying him as an outwardly sadistic “monster,” Arendt saw Eichmann as a strikingly mundane man, best characterized by his ‘banality’ and ‘normalcy’.⁷⁸ As Arendt states, “The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together”.⁷⁹ Eichmann was, as Arendt saw him, a man whose evil nature was bureaucratic, whose motives seemed to arise more out of professional promotion than any inherent ideology. During his trial, Eichmann even cites Kant’s categorical imperative, claiming that he always tried to abide by it his entire life. He used Kant for the purposes of his own defense. He stated that he acted in a manner in which his actions best coincided with general law. He held “duty” towards the general law, through his reading of Kant, to be of utmost importance. In this sense, we might even say that Eichmann was the very embodiment of why Hegel had to launch a critique of Kantian ethics. As Eichmann went on to explain, once he was charged with carrying out the Final Solution, he was no longer “the master of his deeds,” consoling himself with the thought

78 *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York: Penguin Books, 1994, 55.

79 *Ibid.*, 276.

he was unable “to change anything”.⁸⁰ In his blind obedience to the commands of the state (or the Führer) at the time, in line with the *mores* of Nazi Germany, Eichmann claimed that he did what was morally expected of him. He suggested that he was not guilty of any real crime. As many sources have stated, Eichmann was entirely dispassionate the entire duration of his trial. Arendt, in her final judgment of Eichmann, was similarly dispassionate:

And just as you [Eichmann] supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations — as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world — we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, *and the only reason*, you must hang.⁸¹

Primo Levi’s assessment of Eichmann, however, takes this critique of Eichmann one major step further when he states

80 Ibid., 136.

81 Ibid, 279. My emphasis.

Oh son of death, we do not wish you death.
May you live longer than anyone ever lived.
May you live sleepless five million nights,
And may you be visited each night by the suffering of everyone who saw,
Shutting behind him, the door that blocked the way back,
Saw it grow dark around him, the air fill with death.”⁸²

Here we see Levi’s visceral reaction to a man he did not consider simply banal, but one worthy of the greatest scorn and resentment. It was not enough that he be hanged. His execution by hanging, justified for many reasons and not reducible to a single pragmatic one, was only part of the solution. If justice were to be met, as Levi poetically puts it, Eichmann would have to face atonement after the fact and be forced to endure millions of sleepless nights. This stands in great contrast to Arendt’s emotionally restrained and seemingly dispassionate, measured judgment. After all, it was not in the name of anger, emotion, passion, or hatred which that Arendt judged Eichmann, but in the name of reason. Is it possible, however, that her constrictive disposition towards the passions guides her depiction of Eichmann and in fact skews it entirely?⁸³ Could her philosophical predisposition towards reason have gotten in the way of making a proper judgment of him? Her commitment to reason seems to be paramount over all the feelings which would otherwise be most natural to express, especially by a victim, against Eichmann, against who he was and what he did — his unnaturally grievous crimes. Is this

82 Primo Levi, *Collected Poems*, trans. Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann (Faber&Faber, 1988).

83 Cesarani criticizes Arendt for giving what he sees as a skewed view of Eichmann. He even argues that her own preconceptions influenced her perception of him as a simply “banal” man. The image Cesarani paints of Eichmann is not one of a non-ideological bureaucrat, simply dispassionately following orders, but rather a hate-filled, dedicated anti-Semite. See Cesarani, David (2006). *Becoming Eichmann: Rethinking the Life, Crimes and Trial of a "Desk Murderer"*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

her fatal flaw? Does Levi's response usher in emotions which could not, in some way, be considered "virtuous"? Is his response perhaps more virtuous than Arendt's?⁸⁴

Arendt wrote many works on political philosophy. Curiously enough, she did not write much on the topic of resentment. However, she does write about forgiveness. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt sees "forgiveness," something embodied by "Jesus of Nazareth," playing a fundamental role in her conception of politics and life in the *polis*, which is itself defined not by the realm of necessity but by *natality*. For Arendt, "forgiveness" allows us to create a kind of break with or release from (*aphienai*) the past.⁸⁵ As Arendt states, "the freedom contained in Jesus' teachings of forgiveness is the freedom from vengeance, which encloses both doer and sufferer in the relentless automatism of the action process, which by itself need never come to an end".⁸⁶ As we can see here, "forgiveness" involves freeing ourselves from vengeance and any other purely *reactive* responses to injury, presumably including resentment, responses which bind us to a re-active mode of being, which itself constricts us to the realm of necessity — that very realm and sphere from which the realm of politics is to *release* us, according to Arendt. This *release* accomplished by forgiveness, according to Arendt, ultimately allows for all parties involved in the original trespass to continue onward towards a

84 Cesarani's reading of Arendt is not uncontested. Berkowitz maintains that nowhere does Arendt deny Eichmann was an anti-Semite, and the thought that she believes that Eichmann was simply following orders is also highly contestable and does a certain violence to Arendt's work. Berkowitz, Roger (July 7, 2013). "Misreading 'Eichmann in Jerusalem'". *The New York Times*. Retrieved June 26, 2014.

85 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 240-241.

86 Ibid.

common future together.⁸⁷

In Resentments, Améry, Auschwitz survivor and writer, seemingly stands in the greatest possible contrast to what some would characterize as the dis-embodied, painfully speculative, overly-reasoned and emotionally restrained approach Arendt takes towards Eichmann. Inasmuch as Arendt restricts the body to the private sphere in her distinction between the private and public, Améry holds up his own tortured body, keeping his wounds open for the whole world to see.⁸⁸ Up against the world which wants to forgive and forget, his resentments are his “protest, the revolt against reality, which is rational only as long as it is moral. The moral person demands annulment of time — in the particular case under question, by nailing the criminal to his deed”.⁸⁹ In sharp *contrast* to Arendt’s understanding of the virtue of forgiveness as what allows us to enter an appropriate relation to time once again, in the present and directed towards the future together with those who trespassed against us, “the man of resentment cannot join in the unisonous peace chorus all around him, which cheerfully proposes: not backward let us look but forward, to a better, common future!”.⁹⁰

It would seem that Améry’s focus on the visceral aspects of his experience of being tortured, and his undying defense of resentments that keep his wounds open reverses the priority set by those like Kant, Plato, and Arendt of reason over the body, instinctive drives, and emotions such as resentment. As we discovered in our brief

87 Ibid.

88 Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits*, 72.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., 69.

overview of Plato, and as David Roochnik suggests in his work, perhaps in order to understand Plato's *Republic* most effectively requires understanding it as a dialectic, understanding the parts in relation to a larger, unified whole. Although it is not a prevalent idea in the secondary literature, it is perhaps appropriate to take the same approach towards Améry, treating his work Resentments as a dialectic. As Wolfgang Treitler astutely notes, "Améry was not interested in formalistic thought, but in a way of thinking that evokes such contradictory experience; in this sense he was very close to ancient philosophers such as Socrates or Plato".⁹¹ As Treitler continues, "Améry offered a declension of his dialectic and the contradiction of life and death when he wrote (1999 [1976]: 27): 'I die, therefore I am.'".⁹² Although this is an obvious allusion to Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, it is interestingly similar to Plato's understanding of the task of philosophy as "learning how to die."⁹³ When one comes to challenge things which one formerly thought were completely self-evident, giving way to completely different understandings of those things which may completely contradict our prior understanding of them, we experience a sort of death *and* rebirth. One thing which is not stressed enough is the significance of the fact that Améry's chapter is not titled "Resentment," but rather Resentments. His resentments are plural. It is clear that Améry's own understanding of resentment changes and evolves over the course of the chapter, which took over a decade for him to write. His discussion, as a result, is profoundly nuanced and multifaceted. The resentment he speaks about in the beginning of the chapter bears

⁹¹ Zolkos, 268.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Phaedrus, 64a.

little resemblance to the type of resentment he speaks about in the middle or end of the chapter. Likewise, it makes little sense to focus on one claim about what resentment is for Améry without considering all other claims he makes about it. His divergent claims about “resentment” can only be understood as parts in relation to a larger unified whole. By appreciating this nuance in Améry’s chapter, we come to another similarity between Plato and Améry. Just as it is not accurate to suggest that Plato himself definitively wishes to eliminate bodily desires from the city and soul, it is equally possible that Améry himself leaves ground for a more nuanced understanding of “resentment” that is bound by certain constraints outside the body and a politics of embodiment. When we become open to this possibility, we can start to see Améry not as an enigma in the history of thought on “resentment,” but a thinker who shares much with many thinkers in history who write on the virtues of “resentment.” Let us now explore this possibility by first sketching out a version of a history of philosophy which does appreciate resentment’s virtue, albeit in different ways.

Taking the specific sort of Hegelian approach Bernstein takes towards Améry, particularly one which recognizes the importance of dialectic for the latter, is not only helpful in coming to an understanding of Améry’s Resentments, but also a necessary part of this challenge. Viewing it as the one and only way to understand Améry — or to put it differently, a fully sufficient way — does prove to be problematic, however. Seeing how Améry conforms to the greater Hegelian project and viewing him through a Hegelian lens does work to uncover crucial revelations about the importance of the body, passions, and natural instinct. But an excessive reliance on Hegel, particularly one which causes us to

view Hegel as the first in the history of philosophy to come to a sufficient understanding of embodiment, can equally conceal other aspects of Améry which are not necessarily apparent on first readings. A key recognition is that for the Hegelian approach to allow resentment to be considered virtuous, the body (natural emotions, passions, instincts) must not be neglected. Améry's use of imagery involving the twisted body, health, and sickness, itself suggests a crucial link between resentment and the body. Even though it can be argued that Kant and Plato fail to provide an adequate foundation for understanding Améry due to their supposed neglect of the body and its passions, we have noted the possibility of alternative readings of these figures with respect to embodiment. One figure which we have ignored thus far, who much more obviously opens up space for virtue to be found in passions such as anger, hatred, and resentment, is Aristotle. One of the major criticisms Hegel has of Kant is being guilty of a certain "platonism" with respect to his prioritization of theoretical reason over practical experience.⁹⁴ Unlike the case with the standard interpretations of Plato and Kant, there is overwhelming consensus that Aristotle reverses this priority and uses practical experience as his starting point.

Giving a brief overview of Aristotle in the context of forming a reading of Améry's Resentments is crucial for two reasons. The first is that Aristotle provides a clear way to understand how emotive attitudes (including anger, hatred, resentment, etc.) can be considered virtuous, without any appeal to external and abstract principles, theories, or

94 In *Questioning Platonism: Continental Interpretations of Plato* (Albany: State University Press, 2004), Drew Hyland disagrees with the common usage of the term "Platonism," which casts a disparaging light on Plato. He persuasively argues that Plato's work, when the literary dimension to his work is understood, was himself not a "Platonist." I tend to agree with him.

forms that make them so. This would seem to assuage the young Hegel's main concern with Kant. Secondly, considering that one of the main tasks of this dissertation is to explore how Améry's resentment can be understood as virtuous, Aristotle provides one of the most robust explanations of the nature of virtue and what makes something virtuous (or at least potentially virtuous). If we are to conclude that Améry's resentments are indeed virtuous, it is helpful to rely on Aristotle's definition of virtue, which can provide a firm footing to discuss what it means to say that something has virtue or is virtuous, or is a vice and lacks virtue.

For Aristotle, every virtue is a mean between two extremes, both of which are vices.⁹⁵ One of those vices is a vice of excess, the other is a vice of defect. To be courageous is a virtue. The excess of courage is the vice of foolhardiness. The defect of courage is the vice of cowardice. It is in the context of Aristotle's understanding of virtue that we can understand his view on anger and, presumably, related emotive attitudes like resentment. Aristotle is not the only philosopher to recognize excessive anger as a vice — a sickness, or a sin, as others express it.⁹⁶ Unlike many others, however, Aristotle not only recognizes the danger of excessive anger but also equally recognizes the vice connected with the lack of anger in situations or circumstances which may very well call for it. As Aristotle wrote, the bad-tempered man is known not only by his failure to be angry at the right things with the proper level of intensity, but also by his inability to let

⁹⁵ Ethics, 1106a26–b28.

⁹⁶ Seneca and the Stoics can also be included in this group.

go of anger when the right length of time has been reached.⁹⁷ As Brudholm states:

One may position Aristotle as the “founding father” of a long line of thinkers who have argued that anger should not be seen as absolutely bad. To the contrary, they posit that anger — when justified and appropriate — is a valuable aspect of a virtuous person and of life in society.⁹⁸

There are many philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition, as well as outside of it, who follow in the lineage of Aristotle with respect to his ideas on hatred, and apply it to a discussion of resentment, including Adam Smith, Peter F. Strawson, Jeffrie Murphy, Margaret Walker, and Richard J. Wallace.⁹⁹ An overarching theme that unites them is that resentment is indeed virtuous, but it is virtuous only when it is situated in some larger context. The Aristotelian understanding of the mean, as what defines virtue between two extremes, is evident in each thinker. Each will therefore admit that, when resentment is excessive, it has the potential of becoming a vice. What keeps it from becoming a vice? What they all suggest is that a resent-filled virtue has to do with a series of conditions, or ends, that these resentments are to achieve, be guided towards, or themselves *enact* and reveal. For Smith, it is clear that the lack of resentment or anger in the face of a situation which calls for it is a vice, just as is the case for Aristotle in his view on anger. As Smith states, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

The insolence and brutality of anger, in the same manner, when we indulge in fury without check or restraint, is, of all objects, the most detestable. But we admire

97 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1125b30–1126b10

98 Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue*, 9.

99 Peter F. Strawson. *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*. (London: Routledge, 1974). Jeffrie G. Murphy. *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Margaret U. Walker, “The Cycle of Violence. Human Rights and Negative Emotions” in *Journal of Human Rights* 5:1 (2006) 81–105. Richard J. Walker. *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

that noble and generous *resentment* which governs its pursuit of the greatest injuries, not by the rage which they are apt to excite in the breast of the sufferer, but by the indignation which they naturally call forth in that of the impartial spectator ... which never, even in thought, attempts any greater vengeance, nor desires to inflict any greater punishment, than what every indifferent person would rejoice to see executed.¹⁰⁰

Smith claims that “resentment” is virtuous when it does not become excessive, at which point it becomes the vice of rage, and is virtuous no more. “Resentment” allows us to acknowledge injustice and pursue ends so that perceived wrongs may be made right. “Resentment’s” virtue, accordingly, for Smith, lies in the way it fuels the pursuit of the “administration of justice,” on the public level, which can and often will include legal punishment. Outside of the context Aristotle lays out for us, it might seem that the only way to prevent a resentment from being a vice is to artificially impose restrictions on it, which would somehow necessarily constrict the claim we can make on its virtuous-ness. This is something Hunt seems to argue¹⁰¹. However, it is *not* the excess of resentment *per se* in such a situation that *causes* resentment to become a vice (revenge, malice, etc.), but its misdirection or misappropriation. That is, according to these thinkers, it is when such a resentment comes into being without being enacted in the awareness of a larger context which grounds it, that it becomes a vice. For Aristotle, the larger context is the pursuit of becoming a virtuous human being, which requires practical wisdom for implementation in contingent circumstances. Each thinker in this group has his or her own variation on

100 Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1854) 27.

101 As Hunt suggests, even if such theories can be celebrated for their accounts of the moral value of resentment, they “in the end cannot accommodate the political potentialities of “resentment” as a mode of active dissent since it is only in the service of universal benevolence that the emotion can be morally justified” (Hunt, 20).

what this larger context might include. For Smith, that larger context can be seen as involving the pursuit of “justice,” stemming from a sort of reaction to injustice. At this point we arrive at the very place the Republic begins, which is the pursuit of a just city. It is useful, however, to examine the thinking of others who have a distinctly Aristotelian take on “resentment.”

For Jeffrie Murphy, the larger context around “resentment’s” virtue is “self-respect,” one through which resentment can provide “emotional testimony” *and* “allegiance to a moral order ... represented by clear understandings of what constitutes unacceptable treatment of one human being by another”.¹⁰² For Strawson, that larger context is “social life”: how resentment allows us to discover ourselves in a “social life,” and reveals a susceptibility which is fundamental to what it means to be in “human” relationships, namely “interpersonal ones”.¹⁰³ Insofar as it operates in relation to these ends and to the extent it succeeds in meeting them, resentment is virtuous. Insofar as it fails to meet these ends, the feeling we are experiencing as resentment at a given time is likely misdirected or excessive, and in fact not properly “resentment” any more but rather malice or “revenge.” This is equivalent to doing harm for harm’s sake. “Resentment” is defined by its function for these thinkers. Even for Aristotle, the virtue of anger — a more rudimentary form of the feeling of resentment — seems to be tied to function. The lack of anger in one given situation may be a vice, but the excess of anger (either in degree or length of time it is employed) is a vice for Aristotle. Additionally, whether the feeling is

¹⁰² Murphy, *Getting Even*, 20.

¹⁰³ Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, 9.

itself excessive or inadequate is always context-related. What may seem excessive in one situation may be inadequate in another. What may be seen as a lack of resentment in a given situation, may be excessive in another. What may seem to be excessively holding onto anger far too long in one given situation, may not be long enough in another context. Therefore, according to Aristotle, we might assume that it is not possible to say that anger, or its function, is *necessarily* virtuous. That function is always embedded in the context which makes it virtuous or lacking virtue; outside a given situation it makes no sense to speak of virtue, for Aristotle. This is something we can conclude from all of these thinkers in one form or another about “resentment”. In this sense, their approach towards “resentment” comes from an Aristotelian understanding of virtue. From this point forward we will refer to this group of interpreters as “the Aristotelians.”

As briefly sketched above, the context surrounding commonly-held beliefs about Kant and Plato’s supposed failures to account for embodiment might lead us to dispel these figures from our discussion of Améry’s resentments, which can be seen as emotive attitudes or affects whose virtue cannot be understood outside the body or a modern embodied ethic as outlined above, via a Left-hegelian approach like that of Bernstein. But there is evidence that the criticism that Kant and Plato fail to account for embodiment is,

in fact, incomplete and perhaps invalid.¹⁰⁴ Although it is not this dissertation’s objective

104 There is debate within Hegelian circles as to how to read Hegel. Some Hegelians, such as Robbert Pippin see Hegel’s project to be a continuation rather than a reversal of the Kant. Others like J.M. Bernstein see Hegel engaging in a much more radical critique, effectively turning Kantian metaphysics on its head. Bernstein’s reading of Améry seems to arise out of his more radical reading of Hegel.

to fully explore and provide evidence for and against these claims, it is useful to consider this possibility and then frame Kant and Plato's discussions of hatred in light of the Aristotelian understanding of virtue and Aristotle's particular advice on how one can set about to reach virtue, the mean between vices.

First, let us consider Kant's understanding of hatred. As stated earlier, Kant sees passions and affects as "illnesses of the mind" which hinder the sovereignty of reason.¹⁰⁵ As Formoso puts it, Man, for Kant, has a "duty of apathy, a duty to strive to be without affects [*Affecten*] and passions (*Leidenschaften*)."¹⁰⁶ We might conclude that, since hatred is a passion for Kant and resentment is a form of hatred, it therefore seems that resentment is nothing more than a sickness for Kant, rather than something exemplifying virtue; resentment, too, is thus something to be avoided. *However*, Kant makes another seemingly contradictory claim about hatred and other passions in the same text. He states: "So hatred arising from an injustice we have suffered, that is, the desire for vengeance, is a passion that follows irresistibly from the nature of human being."¹⁰⁷ Firstly, Kant recognizes that hatred is connected with the desire for vengeance, which is itself something which much of the literature surrounding Améry sees as connected to "resentment." But here there is another important recognition of Kant's that must not be overlooked. If hatred is something which arises from the nature of man, then Kant himself understands that a human being cannot *actually* be without it, regardless of his

105 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 149.

106 Formoso, 96.

107 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Robert B. Louden and Manfred Kuehn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 170.

duty to strive towards being without it. Then why strive to be so, knowing that affect will never be completely eliminated? Here, Kant may be recognizing in his own way Aristotle's practical advice on how one can find virtue, particularly if entrapped by one vice or another. If one is consumed by a vice, say, for example, malice, for Aristotle it is not the case that aiming for the mean is a proper way of arriving at the mean. One must aim for the opposite extreme in order to achieve the mean. By striving to rid malice or anger from one's life, one will inevitably fall somewhere approximating the mean because malice and anger, no matter how hard one tries, can never be eradicated from the human soul. A similar point is made in Plato's *Republic*. Some criticize Plato's constriction of the body — *eros* and all associated functions, emotive attitudes, and desires — as being extreme, or even sliding into tyranny. But the nature of the characters in the *Republic* is an important factor in understanding the work as a whole. The fact that Plato's primary, or at least preferred, interlocutor is Glaucon is essential here. He is a man bound by *eros* and excessive pleasure-seeking in and through the body.¹⁰⁸ What seems to be an excessive reliance on the constriction of bodily pleasures is balanced out by the nature of the person, Glaucon, to whom he is directing his speech. We again see here an understanding of virtue as moderation, analogous to Aristotle's understanding. It is moderation which is key to the creation of a healthy city and soul, and justice for both. It is on the topic of justice that we can now segue to Kant. Kant *does* in fact recognize the connection between the passions and justice. As Kant says in his discussion of hatred,

108 See Debra Nails, *The People of Plato* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002) 155-156.

“malicious as this passion is, maxims of reason are nevertheless entwined with the inclination by virtue of the legitimate appetite for justice, whose analogue it is”.¹⁰⁹ As Kant recognizes, hatred is — at least in principle — connected with a legitimate appetite for justice. These terms are not diametrically opposed, but, as Kant suggests, even analogous or comparable in some general or specific sense. Just as Adam Smith spoke of the virtue of resentment as being embedded in the context of the pursuit of justice, so does Kant speak of hatred in relation to justice. He continues, “This is why the desire for vengeance is one of the most vehement and deeply rooted passions: even when it seems to be extinct, a secret hatred, called *resentment*, is always left over, like fire smoldering under the ashes”.¹¹⁰

Kant recognizes an inherent link between resentment and the desire for justice. He neither praises nor denounces the feeling in and of itself, but gives a more nuanced view of it. Just as the Aristotelians understand resentment’s virtue as embedded in a context which makes it virtuous, Kant puts forth a view of resentment as something which has potential for virtue, but is *not necessarily* virtuous. Being so, it is both potentially helpful and harmful, virtuous and vicious, an elixir and a sickness, venom and anti-venom, all wrapped up into one. Regardless, two things can be noted. Firstly, Kant does not condemn resentment. Secondly, he does not speak of it in relation to some out-of-touch abstract platonic form which the moral law supposedly dictates. His view on resentment does not suffer from any theological excess but is, rather, ultimately grounded in practical

109 Immanuel Kant. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Mary J. Gregor trans. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1974, 137.

110 Ibid.

experience, just like Aristotle, bounded by a certain context. It is on a practical level that “resentment” expresses itself as being both helpful and deleterious. No appeal to theology is necessary. Likewise, Plato’s own thoughts on hatred can also be made to be seen far more relevant to the discussion at hand than initially seems to be the case.

In the context of the common reading of Plato as a thinker who excessively privileges reason over embodiment, and one which is concerned with the abstract at the expense of all things concrete, we might incorrectly deduce that his understanding of hatred (as *misology*, or the hatred of argumentation) is bound by this same prioritization of reason over nature Kant is accused of setting. What may appear to be an outright rejection of eros, or man’s “inner nature” as Hegel puts it in his critique of Kantian ethics, is in fact the effort to moderate eros rather than eradicate it. Like Kant, Plato recognizes passions like hatred as embedded in human nature and therefore recognizes the impossibility of eradicating them. One of the main critiques against Kant which the Hegelian interpreters of Arendt make is that by abstracting from the body, Kant’s moral law takes on an abstract character which lacks a grounding in the here and now. As Bernstein states, Kant’s main failure stemming from his apparent Platonism in this regard is ignoring the nature of practical life: our relationship to others and all the social relationships to other beings.¹¹¹ It is our relationship to the other and their relations to us, rather than abstract tenets of universal moral law, which must be recognized as primary in our ethical considerations. In this regard, however, Plato’s view on misology contains

111 “Love and Law: Hegel’s Critique of Morality” in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 70: 2 (Summer 2003) 396.

great nuance and is particularly relevant to our discussion. We come to see this when we acknowledge the curious connection Plato makes between misology (the hatred of argumentation) and misanthropy (the hatred of one's fellow man), which he sees as analogues in some sense. Both arise, for Plato, in the same manner. As Plato writes:

Misanthropy creeps in as a result of placing too much *trust* in someone without having the knowledge required: we suppose the person to be completely genuine, sound and trustworthy, only to find a bit later that he's bad and untrustworthy, and then it happens again with someone else; when we've experienced the same thing many times over, and especially when it's with those we'd have supposed our nearest and dearest, we get fed up with making so many mistakes and so end up hating everyone and supposing no one to be sound in any respect.¹¹²

There are two things to gather from this discussion. The first is that just because reason fails us in one particular circumstance or another does not give grounds for us to revolt against it or characterize it as hollow and empty, devoid of any value. For Plato, misology, the hatred of reason, makes this exact error. Reason may fail us in one particularly circumstance or another, or even in many, but this does not negate the validity of reason itself. A defender of Kant may equally state that just because Améry's experience revealed a failure with respect to moral law, such experience does not entirely negate the moral law or the necessity for it. If we are to transpose this same argument to misanthropy, we might state it as follows: even if a particular human being may fail us morally, we must resist the tendency to lose faith in all human beings as such. And yet, in practice, this proves difficult. Certainly, children who are abused by family members have a difficult time *not* extending this experience to their interactions with others later in life. As we will see in coming chapters, Susan Brison notes how the experience of rape

112 Plato, *Phaedo*, 89d-89e

imprints a loss of trust in the mind of the one who is raped. This imprinting occurs not simply with respect to “men” as such, in Brison’s perspective, but upon specific men in her life, including her future romantic partners from that point forward and, eventually, her husband. As we will discuss, Brison recognizes overcoming this as both incredibly difficult but also absolutely necessary if one is to overcome one’s own experience of rape. As we shall see in later chapters, the loss of trust in the world is a problem Améry acknowledges with respect to the people and greater society around him, which he cannot help but see as ultimately failing him *and* continuing to fail him after he is liberated from the camps. What is quite interesting, and pertinent to the discussion of Améry’s Resentments in particular is Plato’s association of misogyny with trust or faith, but not an overly theological understanding of the term. As Drew Hyland states, *pistis* (which can be translated as trust) is a central concept for Plato. It can be defined as “the affirmation of an experienced dependability, and a willingness to count on that dependability in an always uncertain future.”¹¹³ It is this loss of trust in the world which we will see is ultimately at stake for Améry’s Resentments more than an attack on a particular theology or theological excesses per se, which we explore more in the next chapter. In this sense, his Resentments is a response to something, but not necessarily one confined to the bodily degradation the experience of torture has caused him. Rather, it arises as a response to a more abstract sense of trust or faith in the world that was stripped from him.

113 Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence*, 186.

CHAPTER 2 – THE BINARY OPPOSITION: RESENTMENT AND “FAITH”

Through his chapter, Resentments, Améry attempts to legitimize something that the world which faces him scorns. His resentments serve as his own “protest” towards this world.¹¹⁴ As he states, “the world, which forgives and forgets, has sentenced me.”¹¹⁵ Améry seems to set up his defense of “resentment” in diametric opposition to “forgiveness.” Although there is no consensus on what Améry means by this, some writers of the secondary literature posit that this very binary opposition between “resentment” and “forgiveness,” which Améry’s resentments seem to enact, is key to understanding his work. This would seem to follow from the common way resentment and forgiveness are understood or defined. As Merriam-Webster defines it, to forgive means (1) to cease to feel resentment against (an offender): pardon/forgive one’s enemies; (2a) to give up resentment of or claim to requital for: forgive an insult (2b) to grant relief from payment of: forgive a debt.¹¹⁶ In all three cases it seems as if resentment and forgiveness are inherently at odds with each other. It might even seem that bolstering one would require negating the other. Améry’s own criticisms of “forgiveness” in the text further work to solidify this for some in the secondary literature. Rather than immediately attempting to challenge this binary, let us see what is at stake in it for those who propose it.

¹¹⁴ Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits*, 72.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹¹⁶ Forgive. (2003) In *Merriam-Webster’s dictionary* (11th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Grace Hunt begins her work, *Affirmative Reactions: In Defense of Resentment*, by framing her discussion of Améry's Resentments around a recent court case. As she states:

On July 2, 2012, Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) Officer Robb Gary Evans was convicted by a jury of a felony charge of sexual abuse. On the night of the assault, Evans was off-duty: he drank eight beers, drove to a bar, flashed his badge to get in, approached the victim, put his hand up her skirt and groped her. After having been convicted, Evans was fired from the DPS and faced between six months and 2 ½ years in prison. Republican Superior Court Judge Jacqueline Hatch instead gave him probation, for which he was eligible. He was not required to register as a sex offender. At the sentencing, Judge Hatch, advised the victim to be more vigilant, and said that she hoped the victim could learn from this experience. "If you wouldn't have been there that night, none of this would have happened to you...I hope you look at what you've been through and try to take something positive out of it," Hatch said to the victim in court. "When you blame others, you give up your power to change".¹¹⁷

This is an interesting story to consider in light of what we have just discussed. If we are to define forgiveness as it is commonly defined (i.e.: as the release of resentment), then we can interpret Judge Hatch as being compelled to far too quickly *forgive* the officer's actions. Instead of sentencing the officer to a harsher punishment, she opts for *letting him off* with a slap on the wrist. The judge also displays a sort of callousness towards the young victim, by not sentencing the man to a more severe punishment and thereby minimizing the nature of the crime. Furthermore, by emphasizing the victim's own possible culpability in the matter, in Hunt's eyes, the judge comes close to what we might call "victim-blaming" in modern parlance. The judge comes quite close to blaming the woman herself, making her feel guilty for the crime and therefore punishing her on a psychological as well as social level. Her lack of severity in relation to the officer's sentencing reflects a deficiency in punishment appropriate for the crime. All this Hunt

117 Hunt, *Affirmative Reactions*, 1.

recognizes. Implicit in the example is the thought that the assignment of guilt and enactment of appropriate punishment are necessary if justice is to be served here. The problem is that guilt is not properly assessed; rather, it is misdirected, whether intentionally or not, by the judge. As Hunt suggests, it is almost as if it is attributed to the wrong party completely, namely, the young woman. This all must have been quite difficult for this individual. Let us put ourselves in this young woman's position to explore how difficult it must have been. She is groped by an off-duty police officer, a person who is normally seen by society to represent law and order. Instead of protecting her, and the rest of the population, he commits a grave infraction against her. This alone would have to be a shock to her worldview, as a middle-class white woman who had no reason to view the police or a policeman as untrustworthy or dishonorable. Even without the knowledge that this man was a policeman and was in a position of authority, it surely took courage for her to take the time to find the man and press charges against him. It would be fair to say that something approximating resentment for what had been done to her was a decisive factor which motivated her effort towards the pursuit of justice. If her resentment was geared towards the pursuit of justice, it would be hard to see that resentment as anything but justifiable or virtuous. She presses charges in the hopes that the crime will be punished, and she implicitly recognizes that it is only through punishment that this man's crime against her can be overcome, both for herself and for the larger society. The connection between punishment and guilt is quite evident in the example given here; perhaps it is even obvious. What is less obvious is the connection this has to "forgiveness." To see this connection, it is useful to reference Hegel's

understanding of punishment and its relationship to his own understanding of “forgiveness,” which he explicates in the text with which we started our own analysis, “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate.” Zizek puts Hegel’s point on punishment here as concisely as anyone can, in *Violence*. Interestingly enough, he presents it at the heart of his discussion of Améry’s Resentments. As Zizek states, “The only way truly to forgive and forget is to enact a revenge (or a just punishment): after the criminal is properly punished, I can move forward and leave the whole affair behind”.¹¹⁸ As Hegel notes, punishment reaches its ultimate potential — we might say, it actualizes its ultimate virtue — in those circumstances when it can “leave no wounds behind”.¹¹⁹ The crime is “‘undone [*ungeschehengemacht*],’ retroactively canceled, erased, in what Hegel sees as the meaning of punishment”.¹²⁰

Although it may feel difficult to speak of forgiveness in the context of a crime, especially a crime like rape, Zizek and Hegel have a point here about proper punishment and its potential virtue. Susan Brison, a philosopher we will discuss in further detail in coming chapters, documents her experience of rape and the aftermath. Both Bernstein and Hunt cite Brison in their readings of Améry, and rightfully so. Brison’s *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* and Améry’s *At the Mind’s Limits* both document their traumas and provide their own phenomenologies of what it means to be a victim of trauma. Interestingly enough, Brison’s narrative gives credence to Zizek’s take on

¹¹⁸ Zizek, 190.

¹¹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*. T.M. Knox, trans. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996, 230.

¹²⁰ Zizek, 190.

Hegel's conception of punishment presented above. She notes that the knowledge that her perpetrator was sufficiently punished for the crime, by being given ten years in prison, was a crucial part of her ability to overcome what had been done to her. It was even the case that his release from prison, at the end of his prison sentence, coincided with the completion of her own personal recovery and return to a normal life.¹²¹ Whether her story, or what is ultimately at stake in the story cited above that Hunt references regarding the court case, are directly analogous to Améry's experience is something that we will access in later chapters. As we will argue, Améry's situation is far more complex and "forgiveness" in any traditional sense of the term is far more difficult, if not impossible in the context of the Holocaust. However, the point here is well taken. If resentment is directed towards the pursuit of justice, and justice is not met, then forgiveness remains an irrational act which also appears immoral.

Hunt connects the issues that seem pertinent in this court case to similar issues evident in the dealings of international courts and commissions with societies embattled by genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. She cites Thomas Brudholm's findings about the problems inherent in advocating universal platitudes of "forgiveness" above all else in post-conflict societies like Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and other places where such crimes were plentiful and have left many victims full of resentment for what had occurred to them personally, and to their family members and loved ones. Brudholm highlights a prevalent idea: "in current discourses of forgiveness and

121 Susan Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

reconciliation after mass atrocity ... that forgiveness and compassion are morally superior to anger and resentment.¹²² As Jeffrie Murphy puts it in his preface to Brudholm's work, the thought that "some resentments may be justified and healthy ... [is] ... a point that may be missed [by] the often uncritical boosters of universal forgiveness (a group that sometimes includes the famous and influential South African Bishop Desmond Tutu)".¹²³ Instead, as Murphy continues, they "heap praise on what they take to be the moral, spiritual, and mental health exhibited by those who forgive".¹²⁴ While praising forgiveness and those who forgive, they "thereby tacitly condemn even those who will not forgive grave wrongs by unrepentant perpetrators as exhibiting serious moral, spiritual, or even psychological problems".¹²⁵ Brudholm echoes Murphy's sentiment here. In the wake of the work of Bishop Desmond Tutu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), ICTY, and much of the literature which spawned from it, a prevailing tendency is evident for Brudholm: "forgiving is studied and promoted with a nuanced attention to its nature and benefits, but anger and resentment are either rejected without serious analysis or examined mainly to understand what forgiveness is and why it is desirable" (Govier 2002:50)".¹²⁶ To the extent this is the case, a "near-hegemonic status ... [is] ... afforded to the logic of forgiveness in the literatures on transitional justice and reconciliation (Fletcher and Weinstein 2004:574,Kritz 1995,Teitel 2000)".¹²⁷

¹²² Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue*, 2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Mirroring some of the critiques launched by Bernstein and Hunt in the name of Améry, and in the spirit of Hegel, Murphy notes a “platonic” character common to these commissions. As Murphy states:

[F]or the most part the workings of that commission have been portrayed almost as a Platonic form of how morality, religion, psychology, and basic human decency can combine to produce a nearly perfect response to mass atrocity. In his less cautious moments Bishop Tutu has served as a cheerleader for this interpretation of the TRC”¹²⁸.

Brudholm states that the purpose of his book is to provide a “counterpoint” to the “near-hegemonic” status forgiveness seems to have been given in this regard.¹²⁹ It is important to note that Brudholm does not call these commissions and the associated literature an actual hegemony, but rather nearly hegemonic, something which is almost a hegemony or has the appearance of hegemony perhaps, but not a hegemony in actuality. What this might imply is that, in some manner, it does not fulfill the necessary conditions to be a hegemony; that is, it appears to be a hegemony in some ways, but, presumably, not in others. The same can be gleaned from Murphy’s take on Desmond Tutu. There is a certain “Platonism” at work, and Tutu is, “in his less cautious moments,” a “cheerleader” for it. Tutu’s advocacy of forgiveness is approaching hegemony, in his less cautious moments, but is not part of, nor does Tutu represent an actual hegemony in his advocacy of forgiveness. This alone sheds light on the distinction, which we will explore shortly, between Brudholm and Murphy’s takes on the relationship between “forgiveness” and “resentment,” and Hunt and Zizek’s view on this relationship. Nevertheless, let us

¹²⁸ Ibid., x.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 3.

explore one of those “less than cautious moments” with respect to Tutu’s understanding of this relationship. As Tutu states:

... there is a deep yearning in African society for communal peace and harmony. It is for us the *summum bonum*, the greatest good. For in it, we find the sustenance that enables us to be truly human. Anything that erodes this central good is inimical to all, and nothing is more destructive than resentment and anger and revenge.¹³⁰

To the extent that Tutu, the international courts, and surrounding literature admonish resentment, ignore resentment’s potential virtue, and fall into a “uncritical boosterism of universal forgiveness,” as Murphy puts it, both Brudholm and Murphy offer a strong critique. Tutu can be seen as praising forgiveness and admonishing resentment. Both Brudholm and Murphy ultimately show that resentment is a legitimate moral sentiment that should not be discounted in favor of forgiveness *a priori*. Portraying resentment as necessarily and universally vicious is, as we can glean from their research, just as damaging as unconditionally praising universal forgiveness. As we have explored in the context of Aristotle, Smith, and even Kant, they too see resentment as intimately connected to a feeling of injustice after suffering harm at the hands of another. Just as Kant himself recognizes, Brudholm and Murphy realize that this feeling of resentment and the pursuit of justice it can be directed towards are analogous. In this sense, Brudholm and Murphy recognize that a victim’s resentment expressed towards his or her perpetrator, on the one hand, and the feeling that amends *ought* to be made for that transgression, on the other hand, are intimately related. Under the correct conditions, a certain degree of resentment is required for virtue, and an excessive reliance on

130 Brudholm, 47.

forgiveness, at the expense of resentment, proves to be vicious.

What Brudholm also discovers through his research of war crimes and crimes against humanity is that the very denial of a victim's claim to resentment can do also great damage to the victim. Often, this denial begets further resentment on the part of the victim. This second wave of resentment, however, is not directed at the perpetrators themselves but towards the courts or international commissions that are perceived as making this denial of their right to resent. As Brudholm ultimately points out, a major issue regarding resentment in the wake of mass crimes is that not only is resentment evidently expressed by victims towards their perpetrators, but that victims even come to resent the local and international courts themselves. He states:

Ironically, however, resentment or righteous anger can be caused by imprudence in the manner in which forgiveness is advocated. Instead of facilitating the overcoming of resentment, the advocacy of forgiveness can create new and justified resentments among victims as well as observers ... resentment could be caused by victims' experience of being pressured or expected to forgive unpunished perpetrators of gross human rights violations. Another cause of resentment in victims and others is the pathologization or condemnation of anger in the advocacy of forgiveness".¹³¹

In this sense, by stifling resentment, the courts themselves become in some sense guilty, or are, at the very least, perceived as such by the victims. We can certainly see this in the case of the ICYT in the former Yugoslavia. The tribunal is intended to bring justice to war criminals in the wake of crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and of genocide in the case of the massacre at Srebrenica, but local populations also express resentment towards the tribunal for failing to recognize and punish these crimes

¹³¹ Ibid., 50-51.

adequately. War criminals still live among the population anonymously, never having faced adequate punishment for their crimes. Whereas the people of the Balkans are often depicted as being entrenched in resentment due to ethnic feuds, and those resentments are portrayed as dangerous insofar as they might ignite further violence, lingering resentments can also be seen in a more positive light. They are both the fuel for justice to be achieved — pinning their deeds to war criminals — and a useful litmus test for progress made towards that end by the international courts. What we see as a problem in the international courts we also see in the context of the Judge Hatch court case. In the pursuit of justice, what is right and just — bringing resolution to what had been done to the young woman at the nightclub — Hatch too inevitably becomes the object of resentment by the young girl and others after her insufficient ruling and sentencing. The resentment felt in the aftermath of the ruling, we must suspect, played a role in the effort to popularize this case in the media and shed a certain light on the injustice which was committed, both by the policeman and, to a certain degree, by the judge. There are no details which can confirm whether the following was the case; however, we might suspect that the young girl's resentment, a sort of righteous indignation for the ruling, may even have been subtly picked up by Hatch and further motivated the latter's additional public statement to the young woman after the ruling, rebuking her for blaming others and advising the young girl to instead focus inwardly, effectively silencing her. Brudholm's further findings, although directed in the larger context of war crimes, still ring true in this example. As Brudholm states:

In short, under certain circumstances, ‘third-party’ advocacy of forgiveness can wrong the victims and be a cause of a new layer of resentment. It is not simply a matter of adding insult to injury. As Margaret Walker writes, “To coerce in any way a person already harmed or disrespected by a wrong into relinquishing her own need to grieve, reproach, and make demands may itself be harmful or disrespectful.”¹³²

The resentment the young woman felt towards the police officer is most assuredly redirected towards Judge Hatch for what amounts to her missing the mark in judging the case. A conflict between the two is surely evident if not inevitable. Although the story began with the conflict between the young woman and the policeman, it ends with a new conflict between the young woman and the judge. Whereas, ideally, such proceedings are intended to bring resolution and closure to the crime committed, this particular crime (that of the police officer) remains in limbo. To use Hegel’s language, the “ghost” of the past still lingers. The judge’s ruling adds insult to injury, creating not only additional harm but bringing an additional conflict to light.

It is interesting how similar the court-case involving Judge Hatch looks to another court case, a famous one, in fact: the one Hegel presents in his analysis of the ancient Greek tragedy, *Antigone*. Surprisingly, despite numerous references to Hegel, Hunt seems to neither recognize nor make any similarities explicit. Neither does Zizek reference Hegel’s analysis of *Antigone*, despite referencing Hegel’s conception of punishment and transgression in the “Spirit of Christianity,” which themselves are key themes in this analysis. We might even say that these themes are not even fully hashed out prior to Hegel’s analysis of *Antigone*. Before delving into this and bringing to light its relevance

¹³² Brudholm, 51.

to Améry's "Resentments," it is important to discuss the ultimate revelation of this modern case for Hunt and the solution Hunt finds to the issues brought up in it. A similar solution is proposed by Žižek, in his reflections on Améry in light of Hegel's conception of punishment. When we explore this, we quickly come to realize that their analyses of resentment go beyond the scope of Hegel and also beyond Brudholm and Murphy's analyses of resentment in a major way. First, we will provide a bit more detail about Brudholm and Murphy's analyses.

Brudholm and Murphy have both been greatly influenced by Améry and his writings. It is also important to point out *how* Améry's "Resentments" influenced their work, particularly in how it served as a counterbalance with respect to their own views about resentment prior to reading Améry. Steeped in the field of transitional justice, with an interest in concepts like "political forgiveness" and "restorative justice," particularly in relation to the proceedings of the TRC in South Africa, Brudholm, the young sociologist, came across Améry's *At The Mind's Limits* by pure happenstance. As Brudholm notes, little did he think at the time that this "thin little book" would be the "turning point" in his interests and inspire his own book, *Resentment's Virtue* (Brudholm, xiii-xiv). In summation of his own book, he states,

This is a book about unforgiveness. More precisely, it is about the moral dimensions of the victims' resentments and resistance to forgiveness in the aftermath of mass atrocities. Drawing on the works of Jean Améry, it aims to demonstrate that the "negative" emotions and attitudes are not only understandable but that they can also possess a moral component".¹³³

It would seem Brudholm himself creates a binary here between forgiveness and

133 Ibid., xiv.

resentment by defining resentment as “unforgiveness.” He makes it clear, however, that this is not his intention. Being absorbed in the collective, large scale, political aspects of reconciliation, he did not in the years prior to reading Améry realize the full importance of the resentments of the individual victims of such atrocities. After having been exposed to Améry, and in particular Resentments, he discovered certain inefficiencies in discourses and institutions promoting forgiveness and reconciliation. As Brudholm puts it,

What I found missing was a lack of interest, nuance, and fairness with regard to victims who are unwilling to forgive or let go of resentments, and I gained the desire to give a fairer hearing to such “negative” attitudes and actors. Feeling that enough had been written about healing and forgiveness, I wanted to explore the unpleasant attitudes as human responses worthy of examination in their own right.¹³⁴

Brudholm’s book, *Resentment’s Virtue* (2008), was one of the first to bring Améry’s “Resentments” back into prominence, particularly in the academic world. Although largely considered more of a work of popular literature since its original publication in 1966, Brudholm helped to bring Améry to a new group of readers and interpreters in the academic world who wrote numerous articles and books in the decade which followed, all citing Améry as a pivotal component to their own particular takes on this emotive attitude which was previously largely ignored. One among many in this regard was Jeffrie Murphy.

Although the destination Améry’s work brought Murphy was roughly the same place it left Brudholm, the point of origin for Murphy was very much different. We might

¹³⁴ Ibid.

say that Murphy came from the exact opposite direction in that he already been writing about the dangers of forgiveness for many years prior to being introduced to Améry. He co-edited, with psychologist Sharon Lamb, *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views on Forgiveness in Psychotherapy* in 2002. He also published his own book, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and its Limits* (2003), which some of the literature surrounding Améry cite in their exploration of what might be at stake in Améry's ultimate gripe with Nietzsche, which will be the topic of discussion in the next chapter. Regardless, as Murphy recounts, these works were confined to discussions from the "interpersonal" context of forgiveness — as Murphy puts it, "forgiveness of betrayal by a friend or lover, forgiveness by a crime victim of the perpetrator of that crime, or even the problems involved in asking God for forgiveness for one's own personal sins" — rather than the political context of transitional justice, which Améry caused him to later consider.¹³⁵ Noteworthy is how Améry's narrative highlights the differences between the nature of interpersonal crimes and mass crimes, but also establishes common ground through which both can be discussed. By doing so, Améry's work has served as a counterbalance for Murphy and Brudholm, with respect to their prior work. The mysterious part is that he served as a counterbalance for both thinkers who were themselves coming to the issue of forgiveness from opposite perspectives, one thinker exclusively focused on the collective nature of mass crimes, and the other focused on the interpersonal nature of individual transgressions or crimes. The virtue of Améry's work therefore can be seen in the way it

135 Ibid., x.

serves as a counterpoint not only to one perspective or the other (be it the societal or the personal perspective towards forgiveness), but a counterpoint to more than one perspective simultaneously, thereby unifying and ultimately sublimating the two which are otherwise seemingly disparate. What follows from both Brudholm and Murphy's readings of Améry is also a unification of two claims which are seemingly disparate, namely the claim for forgiveness, reconciliation or resolution on the part of the collective (the state or international court's primary objective), and the claim for resentment put forth by the individual victim. What both Brudholm and Murphy suggest, through their readings of Améry, is that both of these claims are important.

Despite both Murphy and Brudholm being fervent advocates for Améry and the virtue of resentment, a reality reflected in the titles of their own works, they maintain a surprisingly balanced approach towards resentment and forgiveness. We might say that they remain perfectly within the bounds set by Aristotle both in his description of what virtue is (namely, a mean between extremes) and for how emotive attitudes like resentment can be considered virtuous. Although they open up a space for resentment's virtue in the literature, all in the name of Améry, Brudholm and Murphy do not do so in a manner which denies forgiveness' possible virtue outright. In fact, they even come close to suggesting a possible working relationship between forgiveness and resentment. As Murphy puts it in the opening statement of his forward to Brudholm's *Resentment's Virtue*,

We live in a time in which the virtue of forgiveness (conceived as transcending certain resentments) risks becoming distorted and cheapened by various movements that advocate it in a hasty and uncritical way. Selective and

considered forgiveness may indeed reveal virtue in victims of wrongdoing, may legitimately free those victims from being consumed by unhealthy resentments ... None of this, however, shows that forgiveness is always a virtue, that all resentments are unhealthy.¹³⁶

There are several important points we can glean from Murphy's statement here. First, despite the fact that forgiveness can be virtuous does not itself negate nor make a claim on resentment and its own possible virtue. What he also suggests is something crucial about the relationship between the two: resentment and forgiveness are not in diametric opposition. Proving the validity of one does nothing to disapprove the validity of the other. To some degree, the truths of both can exist simultaneously. As Brudholm himself states, his work is about "unforgiveness," that is, resentment as a "resistance to forgiveness".¹³⁷ This might suggest that Brudholm considers forgiveness and resentment to be opposites, however he too does not hold forgiveness and unforgiveness in diametric opposition but rather suggests an almost dialectical relationship between them. Although he focuses his time almost exclusively on resentment's virtue rather than that of forgiveness in his book, his main aim seems to be achieving a balance between them in a field which evidently suffers from an imbalance in this regard. As he states, it is because of the excess of material he sees already written about forgiveness that he chooses to limit his focus to resentment. To the extent that this *excess* goes untempered in the literature, its position in the literature remains "near-hegemonic" for Brudholm. However, this is a far cry from claiming that the relationship between forgiveness and resentment is that of an actual hegemony. To explore this distinction in the context of its further relevance to

136 Brudholm, ix.

137 Ibid., xiii.

Améry's "Resentments" and how we might interpret Améry, it is now prudent to introduce Hunt and Žižek back into the conversation.

As we have already stated, the primary aim of this dissertation is to arrive at an accurate, textually grounded reading of Améry's "Resentments" and the virtue he sees in them. Despite it being a short text, there is no consensus on this in the literature. Because Améry's "Resentments" is entrenched in the historical, philosophical and political context which inspired its being written, to explore this text correctly requires us to take into account all of these factors in our own reading. At the same time, we must also be equally careful to avoid eisegesis or reading into Améry, attributing philosophical frameworks to him which the text itself might not support. In this regard too we must remain balanced in our approach towards Améry. There is a plethora of philosophers in the secondary literature on Améry who attempt to provide philosophical justifications for what is perceived to be Améry's main claim in this chapter, "Resentments," namely that resentments are moral, ethical, and ultimately virtuous. Few interpreters seem to focus on a fundamental question which would seem to have to come prior to any such enterprise, which is: what does Améry himself consider to be the essence of virtue, ethics, and morality in the first place? In order to make any claims about "Resentments" and their virtue, it would seem we would have to make a claim on Améry's understanding of ethics, morality, and virtue as well.

Both Brudholm and Murphy offer what we might call an Aristotelian analysis of resentment, revealing virtue to exist as a mean between extremes: that is, between the obligations of international courts who wish to facilitate reconciliation, resolution to

conflict and peace-making, and, on the other hand, the objective of the individual victims themselves, expressed through their resentments, which aim to lay a claim to their subjective suffering, which itself often lies outside the bounds of the collective's main objective and escapes its judgment. In the conflict between forgiveness and resentment, Brudholm and Murphy recognize a conflict of obligations. International war crime tribunals and commissions aim to bring peace and resolution to communities wounded by war and mass crimes. Resentments, on the behalf of individual survivors, aim to, as Améry puts it, keep those wounds open for the world to see.¹³⁸ In the context of mass crime and the societies plagued by these crimes, Brudholm and Murphy agree that rather than blind advocacy of universal forgiveness, a balance must be made between the collective and the individual — the drive for community and reconciliation on the one hand, and the space for resentment and subjective truth to be revealed, on the other. Žižek and Hunt's readings of Améry's "Resentments", although on the surface similar, differ greatly from Brudholm and Murphy's in that they do not see virtue as a mean between these two claims but see each claim as defining a distinct system of ethics or morality.

Améry suggests that his resentments create a certain relationship between the individual victim and the collective. This relationship, on the surface, looks to be a purely oppositional one. Resentment "nails every one of us onto the cross of his ruined past ... [and] ... blocks the exit to the genuine human dimension, the future".¹³⁹ Améry continues, it is "for this reason the man of resentment cannot join in the unanimous peace

¹³⁸ Améry, 64.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 68.

chorus all around him, which cheerfully proposes: not backward let us look but forward, to a better, common future!”.¹⁴⁰ Hunt notes the alienation which Améry feels from society at the time — from his town, Germany as a whole, and even the world at large which seemed far too interested in “overcoming” all too hastily what occurred. Améry’s experience in Auschwitz alienates him from the world he knew and trusted. In the aftermath, Améry feels a further alienation, spurred by this unanimous peace chorus which his resentments make it impossible for him to join. Why do his resentments resist this chorus? What is it precisely about this chorus that makes Améry opposed to it? Améry leaves much of this shrouded in mystery. One paradox is clear however. Améry recognizes that his resentment “blocks the exit to the genuine *human* dimension”.¹⁴¹ Yet, he chooses resentment regardless. That is to say, his resentment is consciously chosen rather than being some passive psychological condition which rules over him. Resentment is therefore active, and is enacted, at least in some sense. Counter to some of the literature that overlooks the nuance evident in Améry’s resentments, which this dissertation will explore over the coming chapters, Améry does in fact fully recognize the potential downsides to resentment as well here. Even though keeping his “wound open” for the world to see allows him to express some truth to the world, nonetheless he is perfectly aware of the painful and therefore undesirable consequences of doing so. Therefore, in choosing resentment and allowing his wounds to remain open, we might say that he is paradoxically both engaging in a protest to the world but also offering

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 69.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 68.

himself — his own body — as a sacrifice to that very same world he apparently resents. What is this sacrifice? To what ends is his resentments directed? For what cause does he make this sacrifice? For Hunt, it is the cause of individualism and the preservation of who he is as a individual, set in distinction from the crowd around him.

For Hunt, the further alienation Améry feels in the aftermath of Auschwitz is caused not by alienation from the greater society of which he was a part, but by the “conformism of forgiveness” which this unanimous peace chorus demands of him as an individual. In this way, Hunt epitomizes the tendency among some in the literature to read Améry along Nietzschean lines. As Hunt states, “Améry shares with Nietzsche a deep commitment to individualism and non-conformity that ... protects their thinking from being appropriated by popular (Christian or liberal) politics”.¹⁴² Žižek echoes Hunt when he states “the resentment for which ... [Améry] ... pleads is a Nietzschean heroic resentment, a refusal to compromise, an insistence ‘against all odds.’”¹⁴³ Améry refuses to reconcile with a world that wishes to move forward.¹⁴⁴ Zolchos and Hunt remain skeptical of the attempt to read Améry in the context of transitional justice, which they see as invariably hegemonic itself, grounded in morality based on forgiveness and therefore conformism to power structures which eradicate the subjective experience of victimhood by attempting to objectifying it.¹⁴⁵ Hunt suggests that Améry illustrates that “Negative affects such as anger and resentment ... do not ‘fit’ within the progressive and

¹⁴² Hunt, 139.

¹⁴³ Žižek, 190.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid; Hunt, 145.

¹⁴⁵ Zolchos, 30; Hunt 132,

normalizing time of reconciliatory politics and transitional justice,” and quotes

Chakravarti to further elaborate on this point.¹⁴⁶ As Chakravarti states:

[R]esentment and anger disrupts the temporal narrative suggested by liberal political institutions, a narrative marked by progress and greater efficacy and objectivity. The expression of anger often brings aspects of the past into the present in way that does not fit with an optimistic view of the future.¹⁴⁷

Hunt’s interpretation of Améry’s protest against “the unanimous chorus all around him” is that it is in the spirit of individualism that Améry protests — that it is in the spirit of individualism that he maintains his resentments and reveals their virtue — up against the conformism of forgiveness.¹⁴⁸ It is not particular aspects of this crowd which are at issue in this reading of Améry but rather the nature of the crowd itself, which is future-directed. The crowd wishes to overcome the wounds of the past, the individual victim wishes to keep them alive. In contrast to Brudholm and Murphy, Hunt portrays the problem *not* to be the specific actions or judgments in transitional justice courts and commissions, but their inherent nature, out of which these actions and judgments are made. Quoting Zolkos, Hunt states, “We get from Améry’s work the sense that ‘the very project of people’s reunification or the restoration of harmony [sic] is *hegemonic* and potentially suppressive of victim’s individuality.’”¹⁴⁹ For Hunt this hegemony is Christian, “the mass psychology that privileges charity, pity, and forgiveness as virtues of the ascetic ideal”.¹⁵⁰ For Hunt, insofar as politicians, courts, international commissions

¹⁴⁶ Hunt, 119.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Zolkos, 184; Hunt 119.

¹⁵⁰ Hunt, 90.

or states suppress and subjugate the subjective truth of the victim, they are blindly following the commands of the hegemonic Christian ideal of forgiveness. According to Hunt, in this way “Christian forgiveness ... normalizes injustice”.¹⁵¹ In contrast, “Resentment is an active self-affirmation against hegemonic rule”.¹⁵² It “interrupts the legacy of Christianity by introducing a new type of reaction ... [it] resists oppressive collective culture”.¹⁵³ In turn, according to Hunt, “resentment disrupts the whole fabric of psychological types that share a common history of Christian morality”.¹⁵⁴ She implies that what she characterizes as the liberal global political order and the field of transitional justice are also included in that history, suggesting that they too are part of this hegemony which rules in direct opposition to the individual and his resentments. As Hunt states, “Améry’s criticisms of reconciliatory culture themselves betray a Nietzschean sensibility about the importance of an individual’s self affirmation against mass culture”.¹⁵⁵ As Nietzsche himself states in *Twilight of the Idols*, “Liberal institutions cease to be liberal as soon as they are attained ... Their effects are known well enough: they undermine the will to power; they level mountain and valley, and call that *morality*; they make men small, cowardly ... every time it is the heard animal that triumphs with them.”¹⁵⁶ Améry’s resentments are in fact teleological for Hunt, Zolkos, and Zizek. However the aim of resentment, according to their interpretation of Améry, is

151 Hunt. 119.

152 Ibid., 77.

153 Ibid., 103.

154 Ibid., 77.

155 Ibid., 139.

156 Friedrich Nietzsche, “*Twilight of the Idols*” in *The Portable Nietzsche*. Edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 541-542.

not simply to preserve the individual's subjective experience of victimhood, but also to preserve it "from being appropriated by popular (Christian or liberal) politics".¹⁵⁷ The very attempt to account for Améry's resentment within the field of transitional justice is itself an extension of this hegemonic logic of forgiveness for Zolkos and Hunt since it too attempts to subjugate the victim's subjective experience of victimhood and negate it. Resentment, and its virtue, is rendered *reactive* as a result. Améry's "resentments" become manifest as a reaction to this greater homogenizing hegemonic force which forgiveness represents, in their eyes. The collective becomes perceived as a threat to Améry; Améry comes to be perceived as a threat to the collective. Forgiveness is seen as a threat to the victim who resents. In turn, the resentful person is perceived as a threat to those who call for forgiveness. Ultimately, what Žizek, Zolkos and Hunt come to suggest is that there is a binary opposition between the Christian (or liberal) order and Améry, and, effectively, between forgiveness and resentment. The two represent a clash of obligations. Forgiveness and resentment come to define two diametrically opposed understandings of morality. Forgiveness represents the slave morality of mass psychology. Resentment represents the morality of the Nietzschean hero who resists the collective's judgment and escapes its attempted dominion over her. As Žizek notes, resentment is marked by the refusal for compromise (Žizek, 190). Hunt states, the refusal to forgive "refuses to forgive on the grounds that [...] resentment protects [...] moral particularity".¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Hunt, 139.

¹⁵⁸ Hunt, 67.

Although Žižek, Hunt, and Zolkos give a somewhat persuasive Nietzschean reading of Améry — itself philosophically loaded and in need of further explanation in the coming chapter — they also seem to heavily rely on Hegel’s conception of virtue. In the transvaluation of Nietzschean *ressentiment* they attempt to perform through their readings of Améry, they seem to equally rely on Hegel’s conception of transgression and punishment as well, two main themes in the young Hegel’s “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate” essay. Although Hunt references this essay, and Žižek in fact sees Hegel’s conception of punishment in it as being the key which unlocks Améry’s “Resentments,” neither expands much on Hegel’s conception of transgression and punishment. They also fail to note that, as many Hegel scholars agree, these two themes are not fully developed until Hegel’s later work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, specifically in his analysis of the Greek tragedy, *Antigone*. It is useful to give a brief overview of Hegel’s analysis in order for us to explore resentment, forgiveness, and punishment in greater detail. This may provide us with an alternate way to frame Améry’s conception of resentment (the subjective) and its relationship to forgiveness (the collective).

For Hegel, virtue requires conflict. As Hegel defines it, “*virtue* in the strict sense of the word is in place and actually appears only in exceptional circumstances or when one obligation *clashes* with another”.¹⁵⁹ In the readings of Améry’s “Resentments” just considered, resentment’s virtue can be said to be revealed in its clash with forgiveness, and resentment’s virtue is equated to the virtue of protecting one’s subjective truth from being negated by the conformism of the collective. According to Hegel’s analysis of

¹⁵⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §150.

Antigone, the relationship between Antigone and Creon is manifest in just this sort of clash. In fact, the template Hegel lays out in his analysis seems to fit perfectly. Antigone herself represents the “individual” or “subjective,” for Hegel, while Creon represents the “collective” or the state. On the face of it, *Antigone* seems to lend itself to a Nietzschean truth. The young woman is confronted with the passing of her brother, who dies on the battlefield. Acting out of her subjective moral instincts, she defies the state’s edict (that of Creon, the ruler) which denies him a proper burial. Instead of conforming to crystallized power structures which the state and its edict represent, Antigone discovers and acts upon her personal truth rather than the empty universal truths the state seems to rely upon. She actualizes herself as an anarchic rebel and pursues her subjective truth against the state’s hegemony, in full resistance to it, without compromise. By attempting to punish her, the state (in the person of Creon) reveals its moral vacuity and invalid claim to what is truly right. Creon fails to recognize the truth, which lies inside of Antigone, and wishes to simply silence her, seeing her as a threat to his power and dominion. It is quite difficult for us to at all empathize with Creon, who represents the judgment of the collective. *However*, this is precisely what Hegel asks of us.

Although it is tempting to be rather one-sided in our approach towards the two characters represented in this tragedy and side with Antigone, this is precisely the wrong way to read this tragedy according to Hegel. Rather than seeing one party as blindly upholding the law and the other party as righteously breaking it, Hegel sees the two parties each enacting and therefore legislating their own law. This is in fact the main problematic in *Antigone*. Antigone lays claim to the subjective or “the law of the heart”

(represented by the family, the private sphere, the body, etc.) by burying the deceased body of her brother who was killed in battle. Creon, the ruler, lays claim to the collective (represented by the community, the state, etc.) by prosecuting and punishing Antigone's action of breaking the law, namely the law of the land, by burying someone who was deemed a traitor to the state. To understand why the situation Creon is presented with is problematic, it is helpful to consider Hegel's understanding of transgression in the context of the criminal or penal justice in "The Spirit of Christianity." Criminal justice, as Hegel notes, functions on the premise that every human action is legislative: that every action presupposes that such an action is right, and in effect lawful; that every action makes a legislative claim. When a criminal commits a criminal act — one which opposes a particular law in society — a criminal is at the same time legislating a law of his or her own, and in effect, destroying the content and threatening the authority of the law, our law. If we believe in our law, then we must find a way to destroy the legislative authority of the criminal act. The only response criminal law has to transgression is punishment. Once one becomes a legislator by one's transgression in the face of law, one puts oneself outside the community. At this point, as Hegel states, "Punishment becomes inevitably deserved; that is inescapable...The law cannot forgo the punishment, cannot be merciful, or it would cancel itself".¹⁶⁰ As Hegel puts it in *The Philosophy of Right*, "The sole positive existence which the [criminal] injury possesses is that it is the particular will of the criminal. Hence to penalize (or injure) this particular will as a will determinately

160 Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 226.

existent is to annul the crime, which otherwise would have been held valid, and to restart the right.” (PR, §99). In normal circumstances, criminal law can be seen to function well. Under exceptional circumstances, like those we find in *Antigone*, it proves to be insufficient. The conflict between Antigone and Creon is exceptional because in the context of Ancient Greek *Sittlichkeit* such a conflict between the subjective and the collective could not exist. In Ancient Greece, as Taylor notes, Hegel saw a society of individuals who “lived fully by their *Sittlichkeit*”.¹⁶¹ *Antigone* represents a break in those circumstances because her transgression against the law ushers in a law which has an equal claim to what is “right.” In the act of Antigone, what is ‘right’ is bifurcated. This clash represents the first time the virtues of family, the individual, and the private were seen in conflict with those of the community, the collective, and the state. In the split between the individual and the collective, portrayed as Antigone and Creon, what results

161 Charles Taylor, *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 385. Although this term, in reference to Hegel, is often translated as “ethical life,” Hegel’s use of the term in German reflects two aspects of the word, and the relation between them, which this translation leaves out: the first aspect (1) is the meaning of the etymological root the term: *Sitten*, which we might translate as “custom;” the second aspect (2), the meaning of the whole term, *Sittlichkeit*, as such—what is in fact the German word for “Ethics” as such. [Curiously enough, the Greek root for “Ethics,” is *Ethos*, meaning “custom,” “character,” etc.] In this very term *Sittlichkeit*, in effect, we see the juxtaposition of (1) communal practices (“customs,” etc.)—the ‘public’ realm, manifested through a community, its laws, traditions, religious observances, etc.—and (2) ‘ethical’ existence; in the term *Sittlichkeit*, hence, we see (1) and (2) joined as one. To be sure, Hegel is not against this juxtaposition, but in fact quite fond of it: in form, that is. Indeed, as Taylor also notes, Hegel follows Aristotle in putting *Sittlichkeit* at the apex of his discussion (Ibid, 378), effectively understanding the great insight behind Aristotle’s analogy of “the hand” being cut off from “the body”: the point that, cut off from the city (or communal), the individual is an ‘individual’ in name only (Aristotle, *Politics*, I. 1253a 19-28). After-all, it is not the case, to be sure, that it is the idea of Greek *Sittlichkeit* itself that Hegel has an issue with, but rather its (insufficient, primitive) expression. The unity which Greek *Sittlichkeit* offered the Greek world is something Hegel in fact very much admires, like many of his contemporaries (Taylor, 378). As Taylor notes, Hegel’s main philosophical ambition in fact was to bring back to the Modern world this sense of ‘unity’ which Greek *Sittlichkeit* offered the Greeks, albeit in a modern context (Ibid).

is a situation where two obligations have an equal stake in what is right, but at the same time a partial one which is in some sense lacking and insufficient. As Hegel states, it is in each side understanding (or misunderstanding) their partial claim to truth as absolute that each side errs. Through their inability to understand the truth in the other, and therefore their dependency on the other, they each meet a tragic fate. Punishment is enacted, but to a tragic end in the case of Creon and Antigone; their truths are reconciled, but only in their mutual destruction. We the audience are left understanding both claims to truth, seeing that the tragedy was preventable.¹⁶²

Analogous to how Antigone (the subjective) and Creon (the collective) function for Hegel, Brudhom and Murphy see both resentment and forgiveness functioning best when the truths of both are recognized. The obligations of international courts to, in some fashion, reconcile conflict and restore order must be met. This is especially evident in the context of the aftermath of ethnic conflict, war crimes, and mass murder. However this ought not be done at the expense of the individual victim's claim to resentment being completely overlooked. Zizek and Hunt illustrate this point in their reading of Améry and should be commended for it. However, their excessive stress on resentment and the moral particularity of individual causes their overall interpretations of Améry to be less convincing. The binary they set between forgiveness and resentment causes them to conflate Christianity and forgiveness; it also causes them to hastily conflate Judaism and

162 As Taylor puts it, "We who stand outside it can see the conflict; we see Sophocles' Antigone, and we can understand both Antigone's arguments and Creon's;" we can understand the two claims as potentially complementary, and the bloody conflict between them as "tragic," and completely avoidable (for us moderns), in hindsight (Taylor, p. 175).

resentment. As Žižek states, “The first thing to do here is to assert the priority of the Jewish principle of just revenge/punishment — an ‘eye for an eye,’ the *ius talionis* — over the standard formula of ‘we will forgive your crime, but we will not forget it’”.¹⁶³ Hunt echoes his point in stating that forgiveness remains a “Christian ideal introduced to us ... against a history that had hitherto understood retaliation as the natural and just response to injury”.¹⁶⁴ Hunt and Zolchos speak of a hegemony at work. Hunt and Žižek suggest that Christianity is the root cause of the propagation of forgiveness in our local and international courts. If there is a hegemony involving Christianity, it is one which they give Christianity by effectively granting it a monopoly over forgiveness. In the name of Améry’s “Resentments,” Hunt cites Brudholm’s reference to the group of academics in the field of transitional justice who place a seemingly undue emphasis on forgiveness in the international courts. She criticizes them as necessarily Christian. Upon further investigation, when we take note of the specific authors Brudholm is referring to, we notice quickly that it is not an exclusively Christian group. Many members of this group are in fact Jewish.¹⁶⁵ This gets to a further issue in Améry’s own critique of forgiveness. Reading Žižek and Hunt we might suspect that the figures Améry has in mind when he criticizes the concept of forgiveness are exclusively Christian. Two of the main figures he directly calls out, however, are Victor Gollancz and Martin Buber; both of whom are

¹⁶³ Žižek, 190.

¹⁶⁴ Hunt, 49.

¹⁶⁵ As Brudholm states, a “near-hegemonic status ... [is] ... afforded to the logic of forgiveness in the literatures on transitional justice and reconciliation” (Brudholm, 3). Brudholm refers to Kritiz, Teitel, Fletcher and Weinstein here (Brudholm, 3).

themselves Jewish.¹⁶⁶ Bernstein suggests that Améry's discussion is post-theological.¹⁶⁷ We might therefore think that the divide between these thinkers and Améry represents a divide between religiosity and secularism. Améry mentions his admiration for the religious among the inmates, however states that whatever solace is available to the religious at Auschwitz is not available to himself.¹⁶⁸ This leads us to believe that whatever truth Améry's experience unveils is one particular to the *secular* Jewish survivor of Auschwitz in particular. Therefore it would seem that Améry and Primo Levi, himself an atheist and a Holocaust survivor, would share common ground. As we discussed earlier, Levi was not shy in his advocacy of capital punishment when it came to Eichmann and those like him. As Levi stated, Eichmann deserved not mercy but swift justice by hanging and, in addition, millions of sleepless nights beyond it. Nonetheless, Levi directly criticized Améry outright and dismissed his philosophy as one of merely "returning the blow."¹⁶⁹ To a certain degree, this is how Améry's resentments have been commonly understood. Although Levinas did not himself directly reference Améry in his work, it seems that he too would have a critical view of the philosophy of "returning the blow" Améry was purported to have by so many.

¹⁶⁶ Améry, 65.

¹⁶⁷ Bernstein, 78.

¹⁶⁸ As Améry states, "One way or the other, in the decisive moments their political or religious belief was an inestimable help to them, while we skeptical and humanistic intellectuals took recourse, in vain, to our literary, philosophical, and artistic household gods" (Améry, 12). As he continues, "Not that I desired their political or religious belief for myself or that I even would have held this to be possible. I was not in the least bit curious about a religious grace that for me did not exist, or about an ideology whose errors and false conclusions I felt I had seen through. I did not want to be one with my believing comrades, but I would have wished to be like them: unshakable, calm, strong" (Améry, 14).

¹⁶⁹ Primo Levi, *Collected Poems*. Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann trans. London: Faber & Faber, 1988.

It is interesting to point out that Levinas and the interpreters just discussed (including Zizek and Hunt) seem to share common ground in the thought that the truth of Judaism and its morality is revealed in the destruction of institutions. The main difference between them is that Levinas does not see that truth revealed in the dissolution of social order, the celebration of the individual and the virtue of his passions and natural instincts; rather, he sees it revealed in the perseverance of social order — that which still rules over those natural instincts and passions — despite institutions being dissolved. As Levinas states,

The fact that settled, established, humanity can at any moment be exposed to the dangerous situation of its morality residing entirely in its ‘heart of hearts;’ its dignity completely at the mercy of a subjective voice, no longer reflected or confirmed by an objective order — that is the risk upon which the honor of humankind depends. But it may be this risk that is signified by the very fact the Jewish condition is constituted within humanity. Judaism is humanity on the brink of morality without institutions.¹⁷⁰

Levinas, like Arendt, was opposed to the glorification of violence. He also recognized the necessity for violence in circumstances where justice cannot be achieved without it. For Levinas, Judaism encompasses both truths. As Levinas has it, Judaism is rooted neither in extreme pacifism nor divine violence, but a delicate balance between the two extremes. Just like is the case for Zizek and Hunt, justice is indeed the end goal for Levinas. However the path towards that goal is quite different for the former and the latter. As Levinas states, “In the just war waged against war,” what is needed is the ability

170 Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*. Michael B. Smith trans. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, 122.

“to tremble or shudder at every instant ... because of this very justice”¹⁷¹. As he similarly states in *Difficult Freedom*, “The hand that grasps the weapon must suffer in the very violence of that gesture. To anesthetize this pain brings the revolutionary to the frontiers of fascism”.¹⁷² Justice, and the violence inherent in its, no matter how appealing, can never be something we find ultimate comfort in, even when enacting justice is ultimately necessary. The moment we fail to “tremble or shudder,” is the moment we fail to be human. The Jewish people are an elected one precisely in their election to, in the wake of the moral collapse of the world into a deprecated world, resist the world as such and lead it out of the desert. This resistance — manifesting itself, at the very center of such circumstances, in finding “a way to behave amidst total chaos as if the world had not fallen apart” — is what defines the Jewish people, and the memory of what being Jewish means.¹⁷³ For Levinas, it is very important for the Jewish people to “revive” this memory, not only for the sake of their own future but for the future of mankind. As Moyn states, “Levinas’ essay makes this much clear: the true heroism of the Jews, if they are to be understood as heroes, is their preservation in thought and action of a moral code ultimately separate enough from institutions and society to survive their breakdown (and in that case to be cherished until their resumption)”.¹⁷⁴ For Levinas, as Moyn puts it, “Jews’ highest duty lay precisely in...the refusal of the virile and warlike hero-ethic ... in

171 Ibid., *Otherwise than Being*, Alphonso Lingis trans. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991, 185.

172 Ibid., *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Sean Hand trans. London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, 155,

173 Levinas, *Proper Names*, 121.

174 Samuel Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005, 118.

the name of the return of true ethics in the future”.¹⁷⁵ As Levinas states, “The true problem...is not so much to refuse violence as to question ourselves about a struggle against violence that, without blanching in non-resistance to evil, could avoid the institution of violence out of this very struggle”.¹⁷⁶

In reaction to what they see as the institutionalization of forgiveness in the judicial system, Žižek, Améry, and Zolnos booster Améry’s “Resentments” in order to combat the platonism they see inherent in forgiveness and its institutionalization in international courts, peace and reconciliation commissions and tribunals. What they fail to realize is that in their very struggle to do so, they go to an extreme in institutionalizing resentment and, as a result, provide an understanding of resentment which is equally platonic. Levinas reveals Judaism’s virtue as paradoxical one, full of nuance. The Jewish people are to remain at a certain distance from the world, while at the same time preserving the world for the future. Žižek, Hunt, and Zolnos all acknowledge Améry’s resistance towards the future. His experience causes him to lose trust in the world he formerly knew, and so his faith in the future was a tentative one. He resists the chorus “which cheerfully proposes: not backward let us look but forward, to a better, common future!” *However*, at the same time, he recognizes the fact that the only way to be human is to be directed towards the future, since the future is, after-all, the genuine human dimension.¹⁷⁷ The literature overlooks this paradox present in Améry’s work and instead accepts Améry’s protest against the collective, this chorus, at face value. They create a

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 177.

¹⁷⁷ Améry, 69.

binary between the individual and the collective, resentment and forgiveness, and between Jew and Christian. They further work to cement the common understanding of Améry as a philosophy of “returning the blow,” completely overlooking the fact that this was a dangerous caricature of Judasim in Germany during Améry’s era, rather than expanding on the nuance so evident in his resentments.¹⁷⁸ They suggest that forgiveness belongs to a Christian hegemony. Resentment can be defined as a force opposing forgiveness, as much of this literature defines it. But if we define the relationship between the two not as a hegemony but rather a dialectic, then we see that Judaism has just as much a claim on forgiveness as Christianity does. If we do so, upon further investigation we see the virtue of forgiveness as going beyond the Judaeo-Christian tradition, reflecting a much more universal truth than previously appeared to be the case.

While the aura of Christian hegemony on forgiveness still lingers, it is best to consider perhaps its best apparent enforcer, Desmond Tutu. Hunt implies that Tutu is the mouthpiece of the hegemony of “Christian morality,” and therefore, through the conflation she makes between forgiveness and Christianity, a mouthpiece of the hegemony of forgiveness. This would seem to make sense at first. What Hunt overlooks is the *possible* context of Tutu’s own approach and the concerns governing it, within his own specific cultural context in his native Africa. Tutu is an African bishop of the church; he is a man who, seemingly by definition, acts only out of a hollow command of a force alien to him. By submitting and replacing his natural inclinations (to use Kantian

178 See Cesarani, David. 2001. *Justice Delayed: How Britain Became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals*. London: Phoenix Press. 254

language, in the perspective of Hegel) with those of the church of Rome, he effectively alienates himself from a more authentic ground. Interestingly enough, however, Tutu is an Anglican, which already signifies a break from Rome, a break significant for Hegel himself. Furthermore, even more puzzling, as Brudholm states, “Desmond Tutu’s statements on anger and resentment should not be interpreted as representing *the* Christian — or even Anglican — position on those emotions”.¹⁷⁹ It turns out that Tutu frames his discussion of forgiveness not around a supposedly empty theological *concept* (as Hegel would put it, an *ought*), but also a concept rooted in African *culture* (what *is*). This concept is *ubuntu*. Tutu’s concern with revenge, anger, and resentment has less to do with the threat they pose to the abstract Christian command to “love your enemies” or to “judge not,” and much more to do with *ubuntu* and the role it plays in African culture. Interestingly enough, *ubuntu* resembles what Hegel terms *Sittlichkeit* in reference to the Ancient Greeks and the bonds which held them together as members of their city-communities. *Ubuntu* represents two aspects of being human. The first, the pursuit of human virtue as revealed by the individual in his disposition to be generous, hospitable, open, compassionate, sharing, and self-assured. The second, how that individual virtue is revealed and guaranteed through the collective: namely, in *interdependency*, in the fact that “we belong in a bundle of life” and that “the fate of each of us is inextricably intertwined with our relationships to others”.¹⁸⁰ As Tutu describes it in his own words:

My humanity is caught up in your humanity, and when your humanity is enhanced — whether I like it or not — my humanity is enhanced as well. Likewise, when

179 Brudholm, 49.

180 Ibid., 46.

you are dehumanized, inexorably, I am dehumanized as well. So there is a deep yearning in African society for communal peace and harmony. It is for us the *summum bonum*, the greatest good. For in it, we find the sustenance that enables us to be truly human. Anything that erodes this central good is inimical to all, and nothing is more destructive than resentment and anger and revenge. In a way, therefore, to forgive is the best form of self-interest, because I'm also releasing myself from the bonds that hold me captive, and it is important that I do all I can to restore relationship [sic]. Because without relationship [sic], I am nothing, I will shrivel.¹⁸¹

Evident in Tutu's words here is a nostalgia for the past, "a deep yearning" still present "in African society for communal peace and harmony." Tutu's nostalgia is quite reminiscent to that of Hegel's nostalgia for *Sittlichkeit* in the Ancient world.

As Taylor notes, Hegel follows Aristotle in putting *Sittlichkeit* at the apex of his discussion,¹⁸² effectively understanding the great insight behind Aristotle's analogy of "the hand" being cut off from "the body": the point that, cut off from the city (or communal), the individual is an 'individual' in name only (Aristotle, *Politics*, l. 1253a 19-28). After all, it is not the case that it is the idea of Greek *Sittlichkeit* itself that Hegel has an issue with but rather its (insufficient, primitive) expression. The unity which Greek *Sittlichkeit* offered the Greek world is something Hegel in fact very much admires, like many of his contemporaries.¹⁸³ As Taylor notes, Hegel's main philosophical ambition in fact was to bring back to the modern world this sense of 'unity' which Greek *Sittlichkeit* offered the Greeks, albeit in a modern context (ibid). In realizing the Ancient conception as being insufficient, he realized the necessity of creating a far more rigorous and robust version of it — the main impetus, as Taylor notes, behind the formation of Hegel's entire

181 Brudholm, 46-47.

182 Taylor, 378.

183 Ibid.

system, which itself aimed to shed new light on such a conception and re-awaken its possibility in a profoundly new manner in the Modern world.¹⁸⁴ Just as Tutu, Levinas, and Hegel look towards the past's former glory in order to project hope onto the present and towards the future, Améry himself can be seen to be operating out of the same nostalgia. He rejects the crowd which hastily marches towards the future, but remains steadfast with an inkling of his former trust in the world and belief in mankind. Améry's resentments are geared towards a confrontation with his native Germany for its complicity in the terror of the Third Reich, forcing them to acknowledge their guilt in the matter. As Améry goes on to state, curiously enough, "It would then, as I sometimes hope, learn to comprehend its past acquiescence in the Third Reich as the total negation not only of the world that it plagued with war and death but also of its own better origins".¹⁸⁵ This aspect of Améry's resentments are greatly overlooked in the literature. It will be the task of the remaining chapters of this dissertation to hash out what exactly Améry has in mind. Doing so will clearly require positing a different relationship between resentment and forgiveness than the one posited in Žižek, Hunt, and Zolkos.

We will accept Brudholm's premise that there is a tendency for international tribunals, such as the TRC and the ICTY, to lay excessive emphasis on forgiveness. This is something upon which much of the literature so far considered seems to agree. But rather than this mistake being seen as arising out of a hegemony of neo-liberal or Christian politics, is it not more reasonable to assume that their sins in this regard arise

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Améry, 78.

out of simply “missing the mark,” as the Jewish teaching on sin would have it? As Bruce Vawter notes:

In the Hebrew Old Testament, the word most commonly used for sin, the word that we customarily translate ‘sin’ in our Bibles, is *hattah*, which literally means ‘to miss the mark’. The mark that is missed need not be a moral mark, nor need it be missed immorally. The author of Prov. 19: 2 uses ‘missing the mark’ of the hasty traveler who loses his way through inadvertence to road signs.¹⁸⁶

As Aristotle himself admits, achieving virtue is exceptionally difficult because it is bound by two extremes, not only one. Pursuing either extreme in excess results in one becoming “lost from the path” (*rasha*). To the extent that Tutu and those engaged in transitional justice advocate forgiveness as a universal moral good, all the while ignoring the claims of the individual victims, they are guilty of a great transgression against these victims and can be said to stray off the path towards virtue. At the same time, we can understand fully why this might be the case. Tutu, who served as chair of the TRC, and all those involved in the workings of the war crime tribunals have an objective which very much differs with the objectives of the individual victims of crimes. We might say that their objective, in fact, completely and directly opposes that of the individual. But Zizek, Hunt, and Zolkos overlook that though the former’s objective contrasts with that of the latter, this does not necessarily mean that the objective of the former is *sinister*. Their role is to resolve conflict and bring back order when order is threatened, in cases of

186 Bruce Vawter, “Missing the Mark,” in *The Way* 2 (January 1962)19-27.

moral, social, or inter-societal collapse. They may themselves be driven to excess, and be led off the path, when they prioritize forgiveness for the sake of the collective over resentment of the individual victims. Doing so displays not *evil* intentions, but much more so a sort of blindness quite akin to that of Creon in the *Antigone*. As Taylor states:

The tragic character who belongs to this stage of unreflecting *Sittlichkeit* is one who acts only half-conscious of what is at stake. He sees one law; he doesn't see the other which is tied to it, whose violation lies in the realization of the first. He is blind in the very possession of sight, like Oedipus who fails to see his father in the stranger he fights or his mother in the queen he marries.¹⁸⁷

Despite their failures, Tutu and the others guilty of the “boosterism of forgiveness” in the workings of the international criminal courts display a sort of blindness to the subjective truths of the victim. However, if we are to continue the analogy with Hegel, we must not forget that they too represent an equally valid truth, however partial. Just as Creon, who is well aware of the threat which the dissolution of law and order brings forth, this group is also well aware of the dangers of untethered resentment in the populous. For Alessandro Ferrera, the “trap of resentment” is not a theoretical issue but a very practical one, particularly in the case of mass violence.¹⁸⁸ Fearing such a trap, rather than being a figment of theological excess, is in fact justifiable in practical terms — the threat it poses is evident in the here and now. Although resentment can be seen as being virtuous, at other times it can be vicious. Tethering resentment is, in some sense at least, a practical necessity. As Ferrera states, how else “do we defuse the perverse circle of mutual unfamiliarity and estrangement breeding

¹⁸⁷ Taylor, 175.

¹⁸⁸ “Introduction” in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 38 (4-5), 344.

diffidence, misrecognition, then resentment not just for the political initiatives of ‘the other’ but for its very existence, then outward hostility and confrontation, then retaliation and consequently an ever increased estrangement?”¹⁸⁹ If we are to attempt to find some universal truth behind Améry’s Resentments, and not a wholly particular one, and apply it to the field of transitional justice beyond the gates of Auschwitz and the borders of Germany, it seems that reading his philosophy as simply being one of “returning the blow” may become self-defeating. Memory, that which resentment conjures up, seems to be a double-edged sword. Although Améry shows us how memory is essential in his own context, we have other historical contexts that illustrate how much horror can be actualized, on a political level, through conjuring up memories of past suffering and pain. Slobodan Milosevic’s inflammatory speeches in 1991 revived memories of atrocities committed upon his people in the past and used memory to effectively pave the way for aggressive war and ethnic cleansing in a culturally mixed, cosmopolitan society in the center of Europe.¹⁹⁰ Less than two decades earlier, in order to prevent something analogous to what would occur in the Balkans, the *Pacto del olvido* (Pact of Forgetting) was a decision agreed upon by the Left and the Right in Spain to put the past behind them, surrender lingering resentments, and concentrate on the future.

Améry maintains that forgetting is a moral impossibility and resentment is the primary way that history can be made moral. What does he mean by this? He also

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ David Bruce MacDonald’s account in his article “Globalizing the Holocaust: A Jewish ‘useable past’ in Serbian Nationalism” provides a background to the Milosevic speeches, but also puts our discussion of “collective memory”—a topic we will discuss in Chapter 7—in context.

suggests that the truth his Resentments puts forth is not simply subjective truth particular to who his is as an individual survivor of Auschwitz, but also a universal one: *his* resentments “concern all those who wish to live together as human beings”.¹⁹¹ What makes Améry’s understanding of “resentment” so different from our usual understanding of the term? What makes “resentment” a moral necessity for Améry, Germany, and the wider world, while in different global contexts resentment seems to be a moral, or at the very least a practical impossibility? Answering these questions will require us to think of “resentment” in an entirely different way — that is in fact what Améry himself demands from us in his critique of Nietzsche. As we have discussed, much of the literature has defined Améry’s resentments’ main adversary as the concept of “forgiveness.” By doing so it has ignored a much more important conflict, namely Améry’s self-proclaimed protest against Nietzsche.

We started this chapter with the supposition that Améry’s Resentments was written in order to resist a hegemony, and this is indeed the case. However, the epicenter of this hegemony is not forgiveness but Nietzsche’s own appropriation of *ressentiment*. Next, we will explore Améry’s statements on Nietzsche, consider the interpretations made by the secondary literature, and proffer our own reading of this conflict. Ultimately, we will reveal Améry’s conflict with Nietzsche to be a genuine one, and central to any effort to understand what Améry’s own resentments are in the first place.

191 Améry, xiv.

CHAPTER 3 – THE NIETZSCHE QUESTION: INTERPRETATIONS OF AMÉRY’S SUPPOSED MISINTERPRETATION

On the surface, Améry and Nietzsche seem to have striking similarities. Both thinkers employ a writing style which effortlessly transgresses the border between philosophy and the poetic, the theoretical and the phenomenological. As a result, both thinkers present us with works which are exceptionally difficult to decipher. Filled to the brim with irony, satire, inner monologues, and emotionally fueled philosophical diatribes that seem to emanate in no particular order, both thinkers’ works present an element of irreconcilable obscurity. Both Améry and Nietzsche say as much. As Améry himself tells us in the preface of *At the Mind’s Limits*, his methodology:

... embraces more than just logical deduction and empirical verification, but rather, beyond these two, the will and the ability to speculate phenomenologically, to empathize, to approach the limits of reason ... an occasion for reflections that extend beyond reasoning and the pleasure in logical argument to areas of thought that lie in an uncertain twilight and will remain therein, no matter how much I strive to attain the clarity necessary in order to lend them contour. However — and in this I must still persist — enlightenment is not the same as clarification. I had no clarity when I was writing this little book, I do not have it today, and I hope I never will.¹⁹²

Nietzsche’s work betrays a similar viewpoint towards the limits of reason and logical argument. As Babette Babich says, “It is a truism that Nietzsche is difficult to read ... [his] ‘elusiveness’ and ‘difficulty’ are polite synonyms for obscurity”.¹⁹³ As Babich further notes, Nietzsche’s most popular work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, carries the subtitle “A Book for Everyone,” yet is further described as an inaccessible book: “A Book for

¹⁹² Améry, xi.

¹⁹³ Babette E. Babich, “Self-Deconstruction: Nietzsche’s Philosophy as Style” in *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 73:1 (Spring 1990) 105.

Everyone and No One.”¹⁹⁴ Echoes of Nietzsche are heard in Améry’s contention that very few, if any, will be able to grasp his own work and what it aims to reveal about the phenomenology of the victim, more specifically the Holocaust survivor. There is a great tension between Améry’s insistence on telling his story and communicating what that experience was like, on the one hand, and his fears that his story will be completely misunderstood — fears arising from the recognition of the near-impossible task of communicating the phenomenology of victimhood, in the context of the Holocaust to those who have not themselves experienced it personally. In that sense, Améry’s work too can be described as a book for everyone and a book for no one. Babich ultimately concludes in her article on Nietzsche that “the obscurity of Nietzsche’s style is less a matter of mannered or obscure expression, or of an unwieldy architectonic, than of his effort to detain or restrain the reader so that the reader becomes one equal to the text”.¹⁹⁵ Many others have supported the claim that Nietzsche’s works should be read the lens of a dialectic (in the ancient Greek sense) rather than as a straightforward argument. What I will suggest in this dissertation is that this is perhaps precisely how we must read Améry.

The search for similarities between Améry and Nietzsche comes to an abrupt end when the reader takes into account that Nietzsche is the philosopher Améry most vehemently criticizes in his work, particularly with respect to the issue of “resentment.”¹⁹⁶ However, at the same time, Nietzsche is effectively the one and only philosopher Améry continually references and engages over the course of his

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 116.

¹⁹⁶ Améry, 8; 61; 67; 68; 71; 81

phenomenological account in *AML*. Whatever Améry's own special kind of resentments are, he constantly returns to Nietzsche to express them. He repeatedly references Nietzsche throughout his chapter Resentments, but does so always in reference to the claim that there is something about resentment that eludes Nietzsche in his well-known portrayal of *ressentiment*. This is a point that many in the literature do not dwell upon or, for that matter, even adequately consider. To put it more strongly, it is the case that, for whatever reason, many in the literature overlook the dialectical nature of Améry's relationship to Nietzsche. This dissertation claims that it is not simply the case that Améry, and his greater philosophy, is entirely antagonist to Nietzsche, nor that his philosophy can be understood to neatly fit within a Nietzschean framework, which some of the literature suggests. Rather, understanding this relationship as part of a greater dialectic allows us to reveal a more accurate portrayal of Améry and his philosophy of resentment, and also reveals certain elements that may be lacking in Nietzsche's portrayal. Améry is less clear on what those elements might be, and, as we noted earlier, there is no consensus in the secondary literature either. This is a problem. Nonetheless, one thing is clear from the text: Améry contends that his own resentments — what he himself recognizes as “a special kind of resentments” — is something that escapes the grasp of Nietzsche entirely; it is also something which he and others like him (i.e.: Scheler) are unable to have any notion.¹⁹⁷ Améry's original title of his larger compilation of essays, *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* (“Beyond Guilt and Atonement”), is an obvious allusion to Nietzsche's work. Despite being somewhat obscure in his

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 71.

presentation in Resentments, Améry remains clear on the point that coming to an understanding of his own resentments requires him to “delimit” and “shield” them from two explications of the term, the first being Nietzsche’s.¹⁹⁸ What we are presented with here, in the attempt to come to a greater understanding of Améry’s resentments, is what I will call the Nietzsche question. This question is multifaceted and can be stated as follows: What bearing does Nietzsche ultimately have on Améry’s Resentments and the greater compilation of essays which make up *At the Mind’s Limits*? How are we to deal with Améry’s disparaging treatment of Nietzsche in this work, particularly when we note the blatant similarities Améry has to Nietzsche in style, subject matter, and presentation? Ultimately, what are we to do with Nietzsche in our effort to understand Améry’s special kind of resentments and what they reveal to him? What this dissertation contends is that a large portion of the secondary literature on Améry does not adequately consider the importance of Nietzsche to Améry’s argument, either ignoring his significance for Améry entirely or attempting to overlook the rigor of Améry’s critique of the figure.

At this point it is useful to delve briefly into the widely accepted understanding of Nietzsche’s conception of *ressentiment*. As Nietzsche states in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the “man of *ressentiment*” is one characterized by a kind of emotionalism which leaves him in a state of self-deception and self-poisoning. If we look at *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we see that the man of resentment is the one who falls to the bite of the tarantula. Nietzsche associates the bite of a tarantula and tarantism (the disease associated

198 Ibid., 68.

with it in southern Italy, reaching prominence in the 16th and 17th centuries) with a dance called the tarantella, named after the disease. The dance itself is characterized as a fast-paced, wild dance. The disease, in turn, was associated with melancholy, stupor, madness, and the desire to engage in a kind of dance which itself expressed all of these

¹⁹⁹ characteristics. Interestingly enough, it was also understood at the time that the only cure for the disease was to dance off the venom. Hence if we consider the analogy Nietzsche makes between *ressentiment* and this disease, we see that for Nietzsche the self-deceit of *ressentiment* lies in the confusion between a symptom of the disease and what was considered the cure. The man of resentment is helpless to find a way out of the vicious cycle of resentment. He is overcome with emotion, with malice, hatred, vindictiveness, envy, and spite. He poisons himself with a preoccupation with the past and the evils done to him, becoming bound up in his past. Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment* is reflected by Dostoevsky's depiction of the underground man in *Notes from the Underground*:

There, in its loathsome, stinking underground, our offended, beaten down, and derided mouse at once immerses itself in cold, venomous, and, above all, everlasting spite. For forty years on end it will recall its offense to the last, most shameful details, each time adding even more shameful details of its own, spitefully taunting and chafing itself with its fantasies. It will be ashamed of its fantasies, but all the same it will recall everything, go over everything, heap all sorts of figments on itself, under the pretext that they, too, could have happened, and forgive nothing.²⁰⁰

199 See Goldblatt, David. "Language on the Lam(b): Tarantula in Dylan and Nietzsche," *Bob Dylan and Philosophy*, with Edward Necarsulmer IV, Eds. Peter Vernezze and Carl J. Porter, Open Court, January 2006, p. 157

200 Dostoevsky, 11.

David Goldblatt contends that Nietzsche's critique of resentment arises out of the realization that resentment, particularly resentment against one's own past — a past which Nietzsche, unlike Arendt, believes one cannot change in any meaningful way — is a poisoning of the soul. In this context, Zarathustra calls out in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, save me from revenge.²⁰¹ As Goldblatt states, Nietzsche recognizes how much artistic will is wasted on *ressentiment*, and sees that loss of will represented in the slave class in the master-slave dichotomy.²⁰² *Ressentiment* is a key feature of the slave for Nietzsche and, furthermore, one of the main things which enslaves him.

Just as *ressentiment* poisons the soul, it also poisons the mind. Although he does not expand upon it, Améry briefly alludes to Max Scheler and associates him with Nietzsche. Scheler illustrates the point about *ressentiment* poisoning the mind quite well. Expanding upon Nietzsche's line of thought, Scheler states:

Ressentiment is a self-poisoning of the mind which has quite definite causes and consequences. It is a lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions and affects which, as such are normal components of human nature. Their repression leads to the constant tendency to indulge in certain kinds of value delusions and corresponding value judgments. The emotions and affects primarily concerned are revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract, and spite.²⁰³

As Goldblatt contends, himself seeing Scheler's work as a continuation of

201 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. "For that mankind be redeemed from revenge, that to me is the bridge to the highest hope and a rainbow after long thunderstorms. But the tarantulas want it otherwise, to be sure. 'That the world become full of the thunderstorms of our revenge, precisely that we would regard as justice,' thus they speak with one another" (77).

202 For Goldblatt's take on this, see *Bob Dylan and Philosophy* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006).

203 Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*. Translated by William W. Holdheim, New York: Schocken, 1972, 45-46.

Nietzsche's on *ressentiment*, this envy is the result of the slave lacking the means to express it or let it out.²⁰⁴ The venom of the tarantula stays within him, but its repression is only temporary and short-lived, inevitably coming out in other ways. These ways include delusion, fantasies, and the creation of corresponding value judgments or moral systems, as Nietzsche would ultimately contend. Much of the secondary literature which aims to "Nietzscheanize" Améry contends that it is this repression itself — reified in the morality which guides modern western society today (which they signify as "Kantianism," "Christianity," "forgiveness") — that most concerns Améry.

Before delving into the possible pitfalls of their readings of Améry, it is important to note that the spirit of their arguments can be recognized as on the right track. Repression of negative emotions — emotions which even might not *necessarily* be negative — is, in some certain circumstances and contexts, unavoidably deleterious and even self-defeating for the individual who represses them. In recognition of this, we might even suggest another postulate: a negative emotion itself is not negative inherently but is certainly so when it is expressed in a negative, unproductive, or misdirected manner. We can use the example of the assistant who resents her boss for his blatant mistreatment of her through verbal or physical insult. Rather than immediately defending herself, which is seen as socially unacceptable in a traditional work environment, she later at lunch secretly spits in his food. Or, perhaps even worse, she tolerates it and allows the pent-up emotions caused by it to affect her children when she gets home. Repressing

204 Goldblatt's understanding of Scheler being intimately connected to and advancing Nietzsche on the topic of resentment is noteworthy, since Améry himself also sees the two as inherently linked. Améry still sees Schiller ultimately failing to grasp the nature of his resentments as well.

her natural emotions in response to injury, adhering to what ‘morality’ commands of her, she does a disservice to herself. What might otherwise be seen as an acceptable response to insult or injury (namely, defending herself against mistreatment by her superior) is morally condemned in her work environment. The desire to rebuke her boss, and even spit in his face, is not an unhealthy one *per se*. It is only unhealthy insofar as the morality of the time judges it to be. In reality, what is truly unhealthy is what this morality commands, which is the repression of these emotions, urges, and desires. Hunt echoes this point in stating that forgiveness remains a “Christian ideal introduced to us ... against a history that had hitherto understood retaliation as the natural and just response to injury”.²⁰⁵ What Hunt is suggesting is that the ideal of forgiveness is intrinsically linked to repressed resentment, and that repression is tied to Christianity. What she seems to neglect is that repressed resentment is not forgiveness. Secondly, it is not entirely clear that Christianity necessarily advocates the repression of resentment either. Putting this deeply problematic conflation aside here, it is useful to flesh out Hunt’s point. Freeing Hunt’s argument from the shackles which bind it to both Christianity and forgiveness, we discover there is a vital point to be discovered in what she suggests. Accordingly, let us restate her claim here as follows: [1] there is a type of morality which sees resentment as lacking virtue; [2] such a morality sees repression as the only way to remedy its dangers; [3] this morality causes moral harm. We might suggest that what this morality commands the woman to do upon being mistreated by her boss is to immediately excuse her boss for

205 Hunt, 49.

the offense and move on. It does not command her to react to the offense, but simply to ignore it and repress the feelings it causes. Understood as such, in opposition to action, “forgiveness” for Hunt remains a passive response to moral harm that further harms the victim and is therefore truly immoral. It is immoral because it represses emotions and desires that would otherwise, presumably, lead to a more ethical and effective response. Although this might seem to coincide with Nietzsche’s overall project in his critique of morality, which he sees as privileging the sacred over *eros* (the body, the carnal, desire, instinct), it does not seem to fully coincide with his discussion of *ressentiment* in light of the analogy of the tarantula bite. It is not simply a matter of repression but the way in which the venom is repressed that proves to be destructive and unproductive for the individual who suffers from it. If the cure was simply a matter of liberating these emotions rather than repressing them, the underlying assumption would have to be that, for Nietzsche, the solution to the tarantula bite (*ressentiment*) is opening the floodgates to all of the emotions associated with it, letting nature take its course. Presumably, this would imply that the proper prescription would be to allow the symptoms of the disease to persist, to allow the venom to take an increasingly serious hold over the bite victim’s body. Recognizing the depth of Nietzsche’s analogy to tarantism, particularly when one acknowledges the history of the disease and the tarantella dance, reveals a greater nuance in Nietzsche’s thought on *ressentiment*. It is not the dangers of the repression of natural urges which is displayed by this analogy, but the danger of a tragedy turning into farce, as Hegel would put it.

It is important to put *ressentiment* in its proper historical context, which Nietzsche

undoubtedly had in mind when making this reference to the tarantula, tarantism, and the south Italian province of Taranto in the 16th and 17th centuries when this disease peaked. This maniacal dance and the hysterical behavior associated with it was seen at the time to be the main symptom of the disease. What is vital here, particularly for Nietzsche's purposes, is that it was also deemed to be the only cure for the disease. Nietzsche references this historical occurrence of tarantism not to praise the actions of the people of Taranto, but to display the tragic comedy which enveloped them. The present (represented by the symptoms) and the future (represented by the prescription) become indistinguishable, and both become reduced to the past (the bite). Giving in to the natural urge to dance when one is taken over by the venom keeps the victim bound to the past rather than freeing him from it. The dance was an outlet for the venom, but one which also proved completely ineffective and even worsened one's condition. This thinking, though at the time it was partially true, it was also incomplete. The venom must have an outlet, but the outlet provided was incorrect. The solution proposed for the disease in Taranto was not to extract the poison out of the victim, which would have been far more effective, but leaving the venom in the victim and encouraging what amounted to a simple continuation of the symptoms which the disease caused. This continuation represented a continuation of the past — namely the bite, and its hysterical effects on the victim. A proper solution or cure would adequately allow one to forget the past in order to make way for more productive and *creative* courses of action in the future, as Nietzsche contends in his understanding of the virtue of forgetting, properly conceived. We might imagine that if the people of Taranto were not so bound up in the past, and in the old false

remedies for the disease which they continually embarked on despite their ineffectiveness, they would be able to arrive at a more creative and effective way of giving the venom an outlet by extracting it from the body. After all, it is not the dance itself which is repressed in the body and needs to be driven out, but the venom. Being blind to this fact is the tragic error of the people of Taranto.

As Goldblatt states, Nietzsche recognizes how much creative and artistic will is wasted on *ressentiment*, which so greatly binds us to our past that we become helpless to escape it. For a future to be possible, the past must be forgotten. For Nietzsche, of course, forgetting is not passive but active. Resorting to dancing the tarantella amounts to keeping the past alive. This brings us to another point of contention in the literature surrounding Nietzsche and what is assumed to be his take on forgiveness. Although it is reasonable to suggest that forgiveness represents a remnant of Christian morality that is very much tied to *ressentiment*, one must acknowledge the nuance involved in Nietzsche's stance on "forgiveness" as such. Even if it can be shown that Nietzsche rejects the Christian ideal of forgiveness, this does not necessarily imply that he is against all forms of forgiveness. Nietzsche's understanding of an active process of forgetting itself represents his elucidation of another kind of forgiveness. The analogy of the tarantula bite Nietzsche uses to describe *ressentiment* suggests as much. The solution to the bite is not simply ignoring the reality of having been bitten. Doing so would only serve to bring forth the symptoms of the disease, namely the urge to dance and behave hysterically. It is only when this urge is overcome that the true remedy can be revealed. Likewise, it is only when this remedy is revealed that the bite can be overcome. One must

forget the past in order to overcome it. But that forgetting is not passive. One must forget the past, but one cannot *truly* forget the past unless the past is in some way able to be given up or passed over. We might phrase Nietzsche's thesis here alternatively as follows: in order to forget, one must be in the position to properly for-give (that is, to give up on the past or at least see the past as past). Nietzsche suggests in the tarantella analogy that the past must in some way be for-given (i.e.: given up, passed over) if any genuine future is to be possible. If not, the past will tragically overwhelm us, over and over again in a vicious cycle.

In stark opposition to Nietzsche, who commands the victim to forget, Améry's defense of resentment is a defense of keeping his memories alive. As he himself interprets it, this is not only a defense of resentment on a moral level, but also on a historical as well as even a psychological level.²⁰⁶ Améry states that he must delimit his conception of resentment from two other explications: that of Nietzsche and that of modern psychology.²⁰⁷ Although many interpreters consider Améry's critique of Nietzsche and his critique of modern psychology separately, with a tendency to view the former as part of a moral critique and the latter as part of a psychological critique, it is important to note how interwoven both critiques are. It is clear from Nietzsche's diagnosis of the man of *ressentiment* how psychologically damaging resentment *can* be if its effects (namely the symptoms) are not in some way overcome or forgotten. Dancing the tarantella and finding solace in one's resentments is truly damaging to the individuals

²⁰⁶ Améry, 68.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

who do these things. What Nietzsche implies through this analogy is that the tarantula bite, and its effects, must be forgiven *and* forgotten, both by the individual and the wider society, if either are to be set free from its destructive grasp. We should not too hastily assume that Nietzsche's understanding of forgiving and forgetting amounts to Arendt's definition of forgiveness.

To be clear, what Nietzsche advocates is essentially akin to the modern vernacular understanding of forgiveness, namely, forgiveness as forgetting — a kind of forgiving which forgets. One thing that modern psychoanalysis and Nietzsche both underline, at least in part, is the propensity for victims to blame themselves for their victimization. They inadvertently become stuck in the memory of their past, imagine different scenarios in which they could have escaped or better defended themselves against their perpetrators, effectively blaming themselves (in part) for their experience of being victimized. The primary person whom one forgives in both the Nietzschean and psychoanalytic context — that is, when one forgives properly — is oneself, and one's own past, in order to make a present and future possible for their own sake. The perpetrator fades into the background, forgotten, becoming utterly insignificant. Forgiving oneself for putting oneself in the position of getting bitten by the spider does not necessarily imply forgiving the spider for biting us. When one does so properly, one expels the venom through an effective elixir, and one forgets the spider because the symptoms of its bite are no longer present, and therefore *can* be forgotten.

Forgetting is a virtue for Nietzsche. This is largely overlooked in the secondary literature on Améry, particularly the case with the literature which attempts to reconcile

Améry's understanding of resentment to Nietzsche's conception, or even into Nietzsche's greater project as a whole. Curiously enough, Žizek and Hunt both acknowledge the importance of forgetting for Nietzsche, but overlook the inevitable point of contention it presents.²⁰⁸ The one thing which Améry most clearly and vehemently opposes, forgiving and forgetting, is something which Nietzsche comes to praise and honor most of all:

To be incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long — that is the sign of strong full natures in whom there is an excess of power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget. Mirabeau had no memory for insults and vile actions done to him and was unable to forgive simply because he — forgot. Such a man shakes off with a single shrug the many vermin that eat deep into others.²⁰⁹

The secondary literature which attempts to Nietzscheanize Améry fails to take into account Nietzsche's own defense of a form of forgiveness, a form Améry cannot accept because it is bound up in forgetting. In opposition to the literature on Améry which attempts to bring Nietzsche and Améry together, most notably Hunt and Žizek, I argue that this main point of contention between Améry and Nietzsche cannot be overlooked and is, ultimately, irreconcilable. Whereas Nietzsche praises the human being's ability to forget, Améry's resentment can be understood as the very act of resisting this ability, capacity, and natural inclination of human beings. As Améry states in the preface, continuing onwards from his comments on clarification

208 Hunt and Žizek both acknowledge the importance of forgetting for Nietzsche (Hunt, 93; Žizek, 190). They also acknowledge that Améry cannot morally forget (Hunt, 150; Žizek, 189). Their readings of Améry insufficiently show how this contradiction can be reconciled, which would seem necessary if we are to read Améry as a true Nietzschean. We will explore their arguments in more detail in the coming chapters. (this is good.)

209 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, trans. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.

Clarification would also amount to disposal, settlement of the case, which can then be placed in the files of history. My book is meant to aid in preventing precisely this. For nothing is resolved, no conflict is settled, no remembering has become a mere memory. What happened, happened. But *that* it happened cannot be so easily accepted. I rebel: against my past, against history, and against a present that places the incomprehensible in the cold storage of history and thus falsifies it in a revolting way. Nothing has healed, and what perhaps was already on the point of healing in 1964 is bursting open again as an infected wound.²¹⁰

One major point of contrast between Améry and Nietzsche here is that the former sees forgetting as a natural inclination or process — just as the body attempts to close its “open wounds” — but Nietzsche sees forgetting an active process. Nietzsche sees forgetting as the elixir for healing wounds of the past, whereas Améry constantly battles what he sees as the natural disposition to forget, forever leaving his wounds open for the world to see.

This proves to be another problem for any who wish to read Améry through Nietzsche and reconcile the two. Although certain interpreters of Améry make their attempts to reconcile the two thinkers quite clear (Hunt, Žižek), others still *implicitly* draw the thinkers together on the concept of resentment, their resulting readings of Améry in some way assuming the viability of this reconciliation.²¹¹ Given what we have

²¹⁰ Améry, xi.

²¹¹ I am making a complex claim which will require further analysis in the coming chapters, but I argue that the Nietzsche problem lurks not only throughout Améry’s work but also continues to lurk in much of the secondary literature, both in the portion which directly addresses Nietzsche and in the portion which does not. This is because the problem Nietzsche presents is a real one. It prevents all of us from understanding the essence of Améry’s own resentments, hidden by what Améry sees as the monopoly Nietzsche has had over the term in the modern age. If we take Améry’s claim seriously, which I believe we should, Nietzsche presents Améry with a problem when coming to understand the nature of his own resentments, and also us as his reader. Vivaldi Jean-Marie makes a similar point in *Reflections on Jean Améry* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): “As the essay unfolds, it becomes apparent that Améry engages Nietzsche’s view of resentment in order to simultaneously situate and demarcate his experiences within the

just discussed, such attempts to Nietzscheanize Améry should strike the reader as a bit puzzling given the obvious contrast between Améry and Nietzsche. Before exploring whether reading Améry through a Nietzschean lens is the most accurate way to read Améry, particularly with respect to his chapter Resentments, it is important first to consider how this assumed reconciliation is even possible for some in the secondary literature. What can be seen is that the literature which aims to solve the Nietzsche question in just such a manner can only do so by appealing to Nietzsche's larger project, which opposes forgiveness as a negative remnant of a Christian moral worldview. It does so at the expense of overlooking the nuance in Nietzsche's own short and specific discussion of forgiving in the context of forgetting, which is particularly relevant in the context of Améry. Améry takes a multifaceted approach towards "resentment," elaborating on two or more distinct kinds of resentment simultaneously, and Nietzsche's approach to forgiveness is similarly multifaceted. We will now briefly explore the nuance in Nietzsche's discussion of forgiveness, in the context of his understanding of the virtue of forgetting and how that relates to *resentiment*.

It is appropriate to start our discussion with another apparent dichotomy: namely, the one between slave and master morality which Nietzsche presents in *The Genealogy of Morals*. Although we must acknowledge the multitude of accounts given on Nietzsche's

Nietzschean paradigm. Améry's choice to elaborate his account of resentment within and against Nietzsche's resentment is in order given its centrality in shaping modern ethical discourse. Modern ethics begins with Nietzsche's overcoming of resentment" (Jean-Marie, 70). This is what Améry, after some examination, cannot so readily do. Insofar as the interpreters propose methods of overcoming which are bound within a modern ethical framework, failure to come to an accurate understanding of Améry's resentments and his overall argument is inevitable.

distinction, in order to avoid an unnecessarily lengthy tangent we will discuss this distinction only insofar as it is relevant to the specific topic at hand, namely *ressentiment* and its relation to the concept of forgiving and forgetting for Nietzsche.

Ross Poole has a particularly concise and illustrative take on the matter:

The man of *ressentiment* hates; but he also fears, and therefore does not act. He internalizes his hatred, which comes to pervade all that he thinks and does. The noble acts on his emotions; he also forgets. It is not simply that the action dissipates the emotion; it is rather that forgetting is a sign of strength: it clears the way to live one's own life and create one's own values (GM I # 10)[Ross's citation]. The slave does not act, and does not have the strength to forget; so he remembers. Nietzsche remarks tellingly that the Christian knows how to forgive, but not how to forget.²¹²

It might seem that Nietzsche makes a rigid distinction between slave morality and master morality. As Poole notes, "For all his admiration for the masters, and his contempt for the herd and its morality, Nietzsche did not think of the contrast in antithetical terms. Here, as elsewhere, values do not come in simple oppositions"²¹³. As Nietzsche states, the man of *ressentiment* "is bound to become eventually cleverer" than all the rest and enter a form of existence through which "man first became an interesting animal," acquiring depth and becoming "superior to other beasts".²¹⁴ Nietzsche is not arguing against forgiveness as such, but rather a specific form of forgiveness which fails to forget. As Poole notes, the kind of forgiveness Nietzsche opposes is perhaps best expressed in Stevie Smith's poem 'I forgive you':

212 See Ross Poole, "Nietzsche: The Subject of Morality" in *Radical Philosophy*, 54 (Spring 1990), 5.

213 Ibid.

²¹⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, § 6, 10.

I forgive you, Maria,
Things can never be the same,
But I forgive you, Maria,
Though I think you were to blame.
I forgive you, Maria,
I can never forget
But I forgive you, Maria
Kindly remember that.²¹⁵

To forgive without in some way also forgetting one's offense appears to lead one directly back into Nietzsche's problem of *ressentiment*. What was forgiven was not forgotten and therefore the victim of the offense is left in a tailspin of psychological stress following the event. Despite being outwardly forgiven, the event still lives on in the mind of the victim. Nietzsche is not against all forms of forgiveness, but specifically the ones which fail to forget and effectively exacerbate the ailments of *ressentiment*. Even though Nietzsche does associate this form of forgiveness with slave or Christian morality, that does not necessarily imply that he opposes all forms of forgiveness. We might even say that Nietzsche's condemnation of this specific form of Christian forgiveness, or its inherent limitation, is part of an elaboration of another, superior form of forgiveness. We can restate Nietzsche's proposition as follows: if one is to forgive, one must also forget. One can rephrase Nietzsche's thought here according to the analogy of the tarantella: in order to resolve what ails us, we must actively forget the past *in a manner which makes it past*. Forgetting in such a manner involves forgiving the past in a manner which presents it as past — something which no longer dominates our present and future and therefore presents the past as something we can overcome. This clarifies Nietzsche's point about

215 Ibid, 9.

forgetting a great deal, but it also complicates any effort to connect him to Améry. For Améry, for forgiveness to be possible, it must be a kind which precisely does not forget. It is here that we further explore how many commentators attempts to deal with this contradiction, as well as other points of contention between Améry and Nietzsche.

The first problem which must be solved in order to read Améry as a Nietzschean is what we might consider the elephant in the room: the very much apparent contrast between Améry and Nietzsche on the topic of resentment. The word ‘forgiveness’, although employed in the works of both Nietzsche and Améry, is comparatively left unexplored in each author’s discussion of resentment. Since it is not always clear from the literature that this is the case, it is important to note that in Améry’s *At the Mind’s Limits*, of which the chapter Resentments is only a part, ‘resentment’ is mentioned fifty-four times; ‘forgiveness,’ only five. Although it is true that Nietzsche references what can be understood as a form of ‘forgiveness’ to a greater extent than Améry does,²¹⁶ it is important to note that the majority of those references, with few exceptions, are made in service of his larger discussion concerning *ressentiment*. As we have acknowledged, his discussion of forgiveness within that larger discussion of *ressentiment* concerns a very specific understanding of forgiveness that arises from self-deception. We might even say

216 Nietzsche himself seldom uses the word ‘forgive’ in his works. When we speak of the concept of forgiveness in reference to Nietzsche, it is analogous to speaking about “the theory of forms” according to Plato, which although assumed to be operative by the secondary literature, is not directly referenced in Plato’s texts (see John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020, 48-51). The one major exception in Nietzsche is in *All too Human*, where he speaks about forgiveness and what the necessary conditions for it would have to be. Aside from that, his discussion of forgiveness is limited to a specific type of behavior that *ressentiment* promotes, which he sees as a byproduct of the legacy of Christianity.

that the form of forgiveness which characterizes slave morality is a disingenuous one that does not properly do what it proposes it does, namely in for-giving: giving up on the past, or what amounts to making the past truly past in order to pursue a genuine future. Ross Poole's example of Smith's poem "I forgive you" illustrates this point well. The offended party states that he forgives his offender, Maria. Yet, he simultaneously displays that he does not actually forgive her. In fact, he continues to resent her, but keeps this hidden from view — from her, and even from himself. He claims that he forgives her, but at the same time does not release her from her past offense. Another interesting factor here is guilt. Maria is indeed guilty, but this man also presumably feels a sense of guilt himself, that is, guilt for *not* forgiving her. From where does this sense of guilt arise? Following from Hunt, we might suggest that social norms are the primary culprit forcing him to forgive her offense, even if he does not want to or is not ready to. But, surely, his own personal feelings of having loved this woman also come into play as well and force him into a process of forgiving, however premature or unmerited. At the same instance, these feelings are balanced with feelings of betrayal and animosity for the woman, which simultaneously prevents him from doing so. The dialectic requires no direct appeal to social norms. It is internal as much as it is external. The cadence of the poem is a hysterical one, to the point of being bipolar. He wants to forgive, but he cannot. He claims that she is free from her past offense, but then implies that she is not. The type of forgiveness which the man of *ressentiment* enacts is not forgiveness after all. It is a form of forgiveness which exists in words only, rather than one which is followed up by action. We can say the author of this poem forgives, but does he really? Of course not. More

importantly, does he himself believe that he forgives, or is he only attempting to deceive Maria and, above all, himself?

There is reason to suspect this is the case. Nietzsche discusses a counterfeit version of forgiveness here and does not speak in great detail, if at all, about forgiveness aside from this counterfeit version and how it fits into the larger discussion of *ressentiment*. In responding to the secondary literature which attempts to Nietzscheanize Améry and its tendency to present Nietzsche's critique of forgiveness within the discussion of *ressentiment* as a critique of forgiveness as such, it is important to ask whether it is even sufficient to claim that such a critique is representative of Nietzsche's larger body of work as a whole with respect to forgiveness as a concept, since getting over the past for Nietzsche even requires a sort of (more genuine) forgiving. To a great degree, the nuance we see in Nietzsche is reflected in the nuance we see in Améry. Ultimately, the failure of the secondary literature in question arises out of presenting forgiveness and resentment as an either/or in Améry and, for that matter, Nietzsche as well. What I suggest is that the relationship is dialectical. Thus, we can say that just as forgiveness itself is given a back seat to the discussion of resentment in Améry, the same can be said for Nietzsche with respect to any discussion of legitimate for-giving, at least with respect to his discussion of *ressentiment* throughout his works. While it is true that Nietzsche may suspect the Christian conception of forgiveness to embody just this sort of counterfeit — which would involve the connection between Christianity, *ressentiment* and slave morality — this does not mean that *ressentiment* is characterized and created by for-giving proper. Much of the literature on Améry fails to make this distinction in its

effort to generate a Nietzschean reading of Améry. As we saw in his analogy of the tarantula bite, escaping the cycle of *ressentiment* does not imply rejecting but rather directly *requires* a kind of legitimate forgiving. What would such a form of legitimate forgiving require? We will touch on this shortly, but first it is important to expand upon the obvious contrast between the two thinkers on resentment and its relevance to the secondary literature and how much of it has come to understand Améry in light of Nietzsche. The primary point of contention in Améry's work after all — the main battle Améry embarks upon — is not between resentment and forgiveness, but the different way each thinker looks at resentment. If we are to read Améry through Nietzsche, and reconcile the two on the issue of resentment, we must first face a major obstacle. This obstacle is what I will from this point forward refer to as “the elephant in the room.” The reason I do so becomes apparent when one notes the stark contrast evident in Améry's text between his conception of resentment and Nietzsche's, which makes it seemingly impossible to find any common ground between them.

As Améry makes clear, he believes that there is “general agreement that the final say on resentment is that of Friedrich Nietzsche,” and he suggests that this itself is a major problem.²¹⁷ Améry does not simply consider Nietzsche's influence over the term to be present only in academic circles or within universities, but also in popular culture — or even the entire Western world. The next point he makes is that Nietzsche must be answered by one who has experienced what he has experienced in Auschwitz and

217 Améry, 67.

thereafter.²¹⁸ Améry suggests that there is something about his experience which offers him insight on resentment which at the very least surpasses, if not totally negates Nietzsche's insights and, effectively, his hold over the popular conception of the topic. The disparaging tone Améry uses when referring to Nietzsche in several parts of *AML* would suggest that he wishes to negate Nietzsche's claim on resentment entirely and replace it with his own, but it is also at least conceivable that he wishes to go *beyond* Nietzsche's conception in ways which Nietzsche could not anticipate. The original German title of Améry's *AML* is *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne*, which can be translated as "Beyond Guilt and Atonement." This is an obvious echo and criticism of Nietzsche, implicitly referring to one of the author's best received works (*Beyond Good and Evil*). Améry is criticizing Nietzsche, no doubt. The nature of Améry's critique is still in question, however. Does Améry aim to illustrate the insufficiency of Nietzsche's claim on resentment in order to negate it, or simply to add certain correctives in order to supplement it? We will leave this question open in order to explore the possibilities of both readings.

Améry describes Nietzsche's conception, and what he sees as the monopoly the philosopher has had on the term, as follows:

[R]esentment defines such creatures who are denied genuine reaction, that of the deed, and who compensate for it through an imaginary revenge ... [T]he resentful person is neither sincere, nor naive, nor honest and forthright with himself. His soul squints; his mind loves hiding places and back doors; everything concealed gives him the feeling that it is his world, his security, his balm.²¹⁹

218 Ibid., 67-68.

219 Ibid.

We discussed above how Nietzsche sees *ressentiment* as an affliction. Like the tarantula bite, once stricken by it, one goes into a frenzy. Although much of the literature does not mention this possibility, it is as if Améry is directly alluding to Nietzsche's discussion of the tarantula bite when, following the passage above, Améry states, "nervous restlessness, hostile withdrawal into one's own self are the typical signs of our sickness".²²⁰ Just like tarantism causes one to enter a state of frenzy, fully retreating into one's self, perpetuating the causes and afflictions of such a sickness, resentment similarly affects its victim. Even though Améry comes to defend resentment, he also seems to recognize Nietzsche's point on the matter.

Firstly, he recognizes in some sense that it is a sickness. This is crucial. He effectively establishes that he understands Nietzsche's point about *ressentiment*. At the same time, Améry's recognition here must also strike us as a bit peculiar: he recognizes the sickness that is resentment and yet allows himself to succumb to it, fully aware of its consequences. This is certainly unusual, particularly in light of Nietzsche's analogy of tarantism. The one afflicted by the tarantula's bite is precisely unaware that his sickness is indeed a sickness, and he knows precisely nothing about the nature of that sickness. If this were not the case, he would not be so easily convinced, as he is, that the affliction (or its symptoms) is itself the cure. Becoming conscious of the nature of his sickness, and of the ineffectiveness of the way he has chosen to remedy it, would itself be the first major step towards true recovery.

²²⁰ Améry, 67.

We can even make a bolder claim: consciousness is the cure, that is, in the sense of an explicit awareness. Nietzsche's insight here also goes beyond the bounds of academic philosophy. What he is suggesting is a major tenet and underlying assumption of psycho-analysis and psychotherapy. A patient is called by his therapist to recall his past, present a narrative about it, in order to ultimately reveal certain elements of that past which remain hidden from him, continuing to ail him during the present, threatening the future. The past is hidden from the patient, as is its effects on his present and future. Becoming conscious of the pain and anguish these elements of the past cause one in one's present is essential to finding a real cure. Just as we saw in the case of the people of Taranto, it is not only the repression of the past that ails us, but also the denial of the ill effects such repression has had on us and continues to have. The alcoholic who unconsciously replicates his father's behavior can only hope to find a cure if he recognizes it as a sickness and recognizes the effects it has on his life, in the present, and the effects it will have on his future. Paradoxically, Améry recognizes all of these ill effects. He also recognizes what the *Zeitgeist* suggested about him and other victims of trauma: "that all of us are not only physically but mentally damaged ... the character traits that make up our personality are distorted ... that we are warped".²²¹ He makes clear that he understands how damaging resentment is:

In pondering this question, it did not escape me that resentment is not only an unnatural but also a logically inconsistent condition. It nails every one of us onto the cross of his ruined past. Absurdly, it demands that the irreversible be turned

221 Améry, 68.

around, that the event be undone. Resentment blocks the exit to the genuine human dimension, the future.²²²

Yet, in spite of this recognition, he defends his resentments. What much of the concerned literature suggests is that he does so as a heroic protest against society as such (the academic establishment, healthcare, its accepted philosophical and moral foundations, conscious or unconscious religious commitments, etc.). As Améry states:

It is said that we are ‘warped.’ That causes me to recall fleetingly the way my arms were twisted high behind my back when they tortured me. But it also sets me the task of defining anew our warped state, namely as a form of the human condition that morally as well as historically is of a higher order than that of healthy straightness.²²³

The claim that this passage reflects a tension Améry himself sees between himself and larger society is in fact a verifiable one.²²⁴ There is a tension between him and his larger society, which translates into a divide between him and his native tongue and land of birth, which no longer feels like home. Hunt, in reading Améry through her own Nietzschean lens, interprets this tension to be the foundational tension guiding Améry's chapter in question. Although she is partly correct, she frames the tension as “the individual” versus “The collective,” using Nietzsche as her guide. Really, as I want to show eventually, the actual tension is between Améry and what he deservedly believes is his homeland too (Germany) which rejects him and his resentments. As we will see, those resentments are not meant to spite the people of Germany, but reconnect them with him.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid, 68

²²⁴ See Améry. 73; 75; 76. Not only is Améry wary of Germany and the Germans in the aftermath of the Shoah, he continues throughout citing the voices of individual Germans who were wary of survivors like him who refused to relinquish their resentments.

If they can show remorse and make amends, there is hope he can return home once again. At the same time, we must acknowledge that this passage is a direct reference to and refutation of Nietzsche in his depiction of the man of *ressentiment*. Just with society at large in Améry's day, Nietzsche sees *ressentiment* both as a physical or psychological illness and as a moral and historical one. Keep in mind that Nietzsche's assessment of *ressentiment* is that it is an inferior form of morality: slave morality. As such, it is psychologically damaging to the one who harbors it and also represents a moral failure. It is a moral failure that may be expressed on the individual level, but ultimately, like tarantism, permeates the greater society. It is also a historical problem in that it is a moral failure which plays out over the course of human history, in a specific historical context. Améry inverts completely Nietzsche's claim that resentment represents a moral, historical, and psychological failure. He suggests that resentment is not an inferior state of being, despite its ill effects, but rather psychologically, historically, and morally "of a higher order than that of healthy straightness".²²⁵ What Améry might mean by this statement will take several chapters to discern. There is certainly no consensus on this in the literature.²²⁶ This much can be said so far: (1) Améry believes that he is in the

²²⁵ Ibid., 68.

²²⁶ There is a great range of different interpretations of Améry on this point. Bernstein's interpretation is that Améry wishes to "yield a moral truth that can withstand the requirements of pragmatic realism" which is revealed in the fight against "the rationalization of the forces of social normalization" (J.M. Bernstein, "Améry's Devastation and Resentment an Ethnographic Transcendental Deduction" in *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie*, 76:1 (2014) 12-13). Roy Ben Shai believes it is about the protection of a personal philosophy revealed as "bodily consciousness" (in "Reductio ad Moralem: On Victim Morality in the Work of Jean Améry" in *The European Legacy*, 12:7 (2007) 845; 849). Hunt, via Nietzsche, interprets it as the revelation of a new moral psychology which resists internalization of resentment, and promotes externalization and enactment instead of repression and projection of "conflict and difference" (Hunt, 105). W.G. Sebald believes that it is about revealing a moral truth,

position to answer the question posed by resentment historically, psychologically, and morally; (2) he sees that answer directly opposing Nietzsche on the matter of resentment and wishes to make that opposition known to the reader; (3) he defends his resentments and yet, at the same time, acknowledges the dangers and pitfalls of being in such a warped state, in some sense therefore still acknowledging the type of state Nietzsche describes by the term *ressentiment*. However, we must acknowledge the elephant in the room: given that Améry recognizes the pitfalls of *ressentiment*, it seems illogical that he would defend them. Part of Nietzsche's point is that the cure for *ressentiment* lies in this very recognition. Paradoxically, for Améry, making this recognition does not allow him to escape from his resentments, at least not with good conscience. This is an apparent contradiction in Améry's work thus far, a kind of dissonance which resonates throughout Améry's chapter on Resentments. The way much of the literature concerned deals with this contradiction is to posit a distinction in terms between what Améry calls resentment and what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*.²²⁷ What we will ultimately discover is that although this approach provides clarity to the conversation, it also works to conceal the

but one centered on a "unremitting denunciation of injustice" (Sebald, 157).

227 This is most obvious in Hunt and Žižek for whom setting this distinction is a fundamental step in setting up their methodologies (Hunt, 16; Žižek, 189-190). To a certain degree, this distinction is made in much of the literature as a way to explain the differences between Améry's resentments and those of the man of *ressentiment* in Nietzsche's critique. What much of the literature fails to grasp is that making this distinction alone does not solve the Nietzsche problem in Améry's work. The conflict between Améry and Nietzsche, as I will argue, is not simply linguistic. Given Améry's nuanced relationship with Nietzsche, I find Brudholm's nuanced approach towards the issue most effective. He acknowledges some important differences between Améry's resentments and Nietzsche's *ressentiment*, tracing the border between them, while at the same time suggesting the border is porous and noting some uncanny similarities between the former and latter (Brudholm, 173-174). Setting a firm distinction between the two, as Žižek and Hunt suggest, eliminates much of the nuance found in this relation between the former and latter.

great nuance inherent in Améry's work.

Zizek, Hunt, Zolkos, and Bernstein's readings of Améry are all framed by setting a firm distinction between *ressentiment* and resentment. Although some, like Brudholm, suggest that such a distinction cannot always be so clearly drawn when considering Améry's usage of the term,²²⁸ these interpreters show how doing so supposedly provides a clear and logically consistent reading of Améry on resentment, his wider philosophy, and ultimately the goals he has in writing Resentments and the other essays that accompany it. All of these interpreters arrive at what can be considered a Nietzschean reading of Améry.²²⁹ What I claim is that these interpretations rely, directly or indirectly, on Hegel in order to make such a reading of Améry possible. To put it differently, what these interpretations suggest, some implicitly and some explicitly, is that if we want to read Améry through Nietzsche, we must also read Nietzsche through Hegel. A fruitful way to approach these interpretations is to recognize how they answer the Nietzsche question in Améry's work and the elephant in the room. Paradoxically, the way each draws Améry close to Nietzsche is by setting the two figures firmly apart, at least initially.

As Zizek, introducing Améry to his discussion in *Violence*, states: "We need a

228 See Brudholm, 173-174.

229 Hunt and Zizek directly argue that Améry is a Nietzschean at heart, despite Améry's attack on the figure (Hunt, 16; Zizek, 190). Zolkos and Bernstein place much less emphasis on Nietzsche and instead take a socio-recognitive approach towards Améry. While they do not suggest we read Améry through Nietzsche, they still end up presenting what approximates a Nietzschean reading of Améry which ultimately falls victim to the Nietzsche problem. Why this might be the case we will explore shortly.

double strategy here; to begin with we need to rehabilitate the notion of resentment”.²³⁰

It is clear that Améry views something redeeming in his resentments, and that he also believes there is something inherent to them which must be revealed to everyone who lives in the shadow of Auschwitz. Zizek, in his defense of resentment, appropriates Améry and presents a case for what amounts to a Nietzschean reading of Améry. Like all the others who wish to read Améry through Nietzsche in the secondary literature, Zizek advances both a denial and affirmation of Nietzsche. In effect, Zizek clearly and concisely (although, perhaps, completely unintentionally) reveals the roadmap that all other Nietzschean interpreters of Améry must follow for their arguments to be logically consistent. He also serves to sum up concisely the ultimate conclusion a Nietzschean reading of Améry arrives at, and in a sense, would have to arrive at, if Améry and Nietzsche are to be reconciled. Hunt, Zolkos, and Bernstein reach some variant of this conclusion.²³¹

Zizek’s claim about Améryean resentment is two-fold. First, “one should give this stance its full anti-Nietzschean weight: here, resentment has nothing to do with the slave morality.”²³² Second, one should recognize that “the resentment for which ... [Améry] ... pleads is a Nietzschean heroic resentment, a refusal to compromise, an insistence ‘against all odds.’”²³³ The problem Zizek is attempting to address is clear, even if his solution is ultimately problematic and incomplete. How are we to save resentment from the grasp of

²³⁰ Zizek, 189.

²³¹ Hunt (2012), 145; Zolkos (2007) 26, 31; Bernstein (2014), 10.

²³² Zizek, 189.

²³³ Ibid., 190.

slave morality? Žižek's claim here can be restated even more concisely as follows: resentment has nothing to do with slave morality, but rather everything to do with master morality. In turn, resentment is revealed as something not self-destructive but, rather, self-empowering. It is no longer a characteristic of a slave, a man of the masses, the average Joe; rather, it is emblematic of the hero. Of course, it is not simply emblematic of any odd hero, but more specifically characteristic of what Nietzsche would describe as such. It stands to reason that Žižek is alluding to the Nietzschean ideal of the "the overman" (*Übermensch*). Before considering the context behind this claim in his reading of Améry's resentment as "heroic," it is important to touch on this ideal of "the overman" and its significance for Nietzsche.

The concept of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and how to best translate it have been contentious issues in academic circles for well over a century, ever since the original translation of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Thomas Common translated it, in 1909, as "superman." Walter Kaufmann translated it as "overman" in 1954, breaking with Common's translation. In addition to finding "superman" to be further from the original German term than "overman," another major issue Kaufmann had with the term was the way such a concept would inevitably be identified with Superman, the comic-book series character prominent in America at the time. Kaufmann's translation has been the most commonly accepted one since it was published. Kaufmann's translations of all Nietzsche's works are, in general, the common standard today. Considering the prominence of Kaufmann's re-translation of the term, we can conclude the following: if the *Übermensch* is a heroic figure, he (or she) is a heroic figure in a manner quite

different from the way we (particularly Americans and other native English speakers) have commonly come to understand what a hero is. In short, what we can grasp from Kaufmann's instinct here is that the commonplace understanding of being a hero, in the mid-20th century, in the West, perhaps best epitomized by 'Superman' (the American comic book character), is precisely *not* what Nietzsche intended. A far more nuanced understanding of the term was needed, and therefore "overman" was selected at the time by Kaufmann.

At first it may seem strange that Kaufmann, in his struggle to translate Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, allowed what amounted to a mere children's comic book to take so much precedence in dictating his translation. We see a very interesting parallel to Améry here, however, that should not be left unexplored. Améry insists throughout his text that the cultural and historical context behind a term — how it is received in a given culture, at a given time-period — is an essential part of how we come to define that term. What Améry shows in his confrontation of Nietzsche is precisely this reality. As Améry suggests, it is not resentment itself which is problematic, but the way the term has been shaped in modern times and how that cultural, historical, and political context has shaped our understanding of the term. If we look more into the historical context of the mid-20th century, the time both Kaufmann and Améry were writing, it is hard not to recognize another reason why the translation of *Übermensch* as superman might be seen as inappropriate. To some extent, this is another elephant in the room that Améry forces us to consider. As one could gather from the political climate of the time, it would be hard to imagine that any discussion of Nietzsche in the post-war period could occur without

some reference to how the term was utilized by the Nazis just a few years earlier. One could imagine how Hitler and the Nazi regime could conveniently use Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* in promoting their ideology of a biologically superior master race, namely the German or Aryan race. There is even some evidence that Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* and other aspects of his philosophy were used in Nazi propaganda.²³⁴ Whether this arose from a proper reading of Nietzsche or not, or whether it represented Nietzsche's original intent, is much discussed among Nietzsche scholars in the decades since.²³⁵ While there are a few scholars who provide an interesting case for how Nietzsche's work in part could lend itself to the Nazi regime, the current consensus is that the Nazi's appropriation was an idiosyncratic reading of Nietzsche at best, if not a complete misinterpretation of his concept of the *Übermensch*, which was not a biological or racial concept.²³⁶ Regardless, it is important to remember that the project of rescuing

234 I am not attempting to provide evidence for the claim the Nietzsche's philosophy is tied to Nazi ideology, but rather using this claim by Améry as a thought experiment to continue the philosophical discussion. In this sense, our task here is not exegesis on Nietzsche but phenomenological, as Améry experiences things personally. For more on Nietzsche's influence on the Nazi movement, see William Shirer. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1960. This book discusses the influence of Nietzsche on Nazi propaganda, which the author argues perverted Nietzsche's writings. Nonetheless, his influence on the movement was still evident, Shirer argues.

235 See Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich, eds. *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy*. Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2002.

236 There are a plethora of scholars who make great cases as to why the Nazi regime's appropriation was a misinterpretation. In addition to the above, see Santaniello, Weaver. "Nietzsche and the Jews: Christendom and Nazism." *Nietzsche & Jewish Culture*. Edited by Jacob Golomb. New York: Routledge, 1997. See also Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974. There are others who, while illustrating the overall missteps of the Nazi's misappropriation, at the same time show how Nietzsche's work could have lent itself to such an appropriation by the Nazi Regime. For authors who explore this topic, see Aschheim, Steven E. "Nietzsche, Anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust." *Nietzsche & Jewish Culture*. Edited by Jacob Golomb. New York: Routledge, 1997. Also see Hicks, Stephen R.C. *Nietzsche and the Nazis*. Ockham's Razor, 2010.

Nietzsche from the Nazis was a project only still in its infancy at the time in which Améry wrote. Therefore, we cannot blame Améry for this association if we consider this very important historical context, both of Nazi Germany which made such a devastating imprint on the world, as well as the history of how Nietzsche was interpreted at the time by the literature.²³⁷ For the purposes of this dissertation, this is a matter we cannot fully tackle. What is crucial to note is that Améry is adamant in blaming Nietzsche, at least in part, for what happened to him at the hands of the Nazi regime. What are we to make of this and why might it be crucial to Améry's argument? While pursuing this question, we must keep in mind that, for the purposes of exploring Améry and his comments on Nietzsche, whether or not they can be said to be 'correct' is largely irrelevant. We might now take a detour and explore the many ways Nietzsche can be exonerated from Améry's accusations here. Doing so, however, would be digressive for two reasons. The first relates to the nature of Améry's writing. As we have noted (and, it seems, others have neglected), Améry's style is quite often cryptic. His work is not a philosophical treatise, but a poetic reflection on past experience; experience that nonetheless has profound philosophical meaning. For this reason, his own intentions here in bringing up Nietzsche in the context of Nazism are unclear. It is possible that Améry is launching a philosophical critique of Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, which he sees as being overly complicit in National Socialism for whatever reason. It is also possible to read Améry's comments here as an ironic or sarcastic personal aside — a stream of

237 Ibid. This was particularly the case before Walter Kaufmann's work on Nietzsche. Kaufmann was one of the first to shed light on Nietzsche's intended meaning, freeing the material from its appropriation in Nazi propaganda.

consciousness-driven outburst of scorn towards Nietzsche. This scorn might not arise out of Améry actually believing Nietzsche was guilty for the rise of Nazism, but rather for the smallest possible infraction; providing, however unintentionally, a mere speck of inspiration for one of the most evil regimes mankind has witnessed, the brunt of which Améry himself was forced to endure. Whether he holds Nietzsche himself personally responsible is difficult to tell, one way or the other. To a certain degree, this is also irrelevant. Here we come to the second reason saving Nietzsche from Améry's scorn is digressive. Even if we assume the worst of Améry — that his interpretation of Nietzsche here is completely inaccurate or unfair to the philosopher — the insight he offers through this critique retains its full significance. In this manner we can consider Améry's usage of Nietzsche as a shorthand for a certain kind of argument about resentment that Améry is right to address and critique as a feature of what is philosophically at issue in Améry's Resentments. We will continue to explore this in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 – NIETZSCHE, THE ÜBERMENSCH, AND THE ZEITGEIST

Upon reading much of the secondary literature on Améry, the reader gets the impression that Améry's main point of contention with Nietzsche is primarily with his concept of *ressentiment*. What I will suggest is that Améry's critique of Nietzsche goes beyond this and in fact may amount to a far more totalizing critique of the philosopher. Although referenced elsewhere, the main thrust of Nietzsche's philosophical critique of *ressentiment* lies primarily in the *Genealogy of Morals*. If Améry's critique of Nietzsche were centered on this concept alone, it would seem that the *Genealogy* would be his primary focus. However, Améry references several of Nietzsche's work in his critique. "Beyond Guilt and Atonement," Améry's original title for *At the Mind's Limits*, implies a critique of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. Améry also implicitly references *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. At certain points in the text, Améry clearly critiques not only Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, but even the man himself. In reference to Nietzsche, in the context of the philosopher's critique of the man of *ressentiment*, Améry states:

Thus spake the man who dreamed of the synthesis of the brute with the superman. He must be answered by those who witnessed the union of the brute with the subhuman; they were present as victims when a certain humankind joyously celebrated a festival of cruelty, as Nietzsche himself has expressed it — in anticipation of a few modern anthropological theories.²³⁸

Again, it is important to stress that Améry wrote what is now known as *At the Mind's Limits* in German, not in English. The word that is translated as 'superman' is *Übermensch*. The reference to Nietzsche, particularly to his concept of the *Übermensch*,

238 Améry, 68

is more evident in German than it is in English. This being the case, especially considering what we discussed about the consensus around Kaufmann's translation of the term, there might be an error in translation here from German to English. Why translate *Übermensch* as 'superman' and not 'overman'? Considering that Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella Rosenfeld translated Améry's *AML* into English several decades after Kaufmann's translation of Nietzsche had become predominant, we are left to wonder whether the translators of Améry's work were simply unaware of it. Does the word 'superman,' in the context presented to us here in Améry, impose an English word upon the original German? After all, one might claim that the very problem we are discussing here is a byproduct of attempting to translate the word *Übermensch* into English in the first place. One might assume, in turn, that the blame might be more properly placed on the Rosenfelds as the translators of Améry's work. What this would assume, however, is that the problem does not already exist in German — in the language, the time, and the place under consideration. Indeed, by translating the word as 'superman,' the Rosenfelds succeeded very well in producing precisely the effect that Améry intends to convey. As we see in Améry's original German text, his passage here presents the term *Übermensch* but does so only through presenting the dichotomy between *Übermensch* and *Untermensch* (as the Rosenfelds translate it, "superman" and "subhumans"). Améry is referencing the very dichotomy the Nazis historically promulgated in propaganda and policy through their appropriation of Nietzsche. It was a dichotomy which was not only evident but one which dictated history during the period leading to war and then during the Shoah.

We face a dilemma here. Améry not only resents Nietzsche for his writings on *ressentiment*, but he also resents the philosopher himself for effectively providing the philosophical foundation for the Nazi regime which caused Améry such suffering. It is interesting to consider the manner in which much of the secondary literature on Améry deals with this issue. Some interpreters choose to ignore the issue of Nietzsche's influence on Nazism entirely, seeing other aspects of Améry's work as more relevant.²³⁹ Others address the issue by discounting entirely the Nazi regime's appropriation of Nietzsche, seeing it as illegitimate and therefore not a worthy topic of discussion.²⁴⁰ Effectively, this allows them to overlook the seriousness behind Améry's claim. It is important to note that the majority of the secondary literature on Améry comes from contemporary thinkers, due to the resurgence of interest in Améry in recent years noted at the beginning of this dissertation. In fact, Améry has become so popular in the past decade that the majority of the commentary on Améry also is from this past decade. The zeitgeist of Améry's era compelled him to write, just as we might suggest that the zeitgeist of our times compels us to read him. This is a point which we will expand upon and will become clearer over the course of this study; however, this also has some notable disadvantages. The distance that we have to Améry, with respect to the decades which have passed since the original publication of Resentments, also works to separate us from him and further complicate our task of understanding his overall aims.

239 See Bernstein and Zizek's account. The one notable exception is Brudholm, who acknowledges and even further provides evidence for the claim that Améry sees Nietzsche and Nazism as inherently linked (Brudholm, 91; 195).

240 See Hunt

This can be seen in this very issue of Nietzsche and his supposed relation to the Nazi regime, at the time and in the years that followed. The years of research and publication on Nietzsche, history, and issues in transitional justice have allowed us to uncover many new insights into Nietzsche and other issues that Améry was not privy to or aware of at the time. However, these years also work to conceal Améry's message, particularly about Nietzsche. To put it differently, we, the present-day commentators who have written on Améry, benefit from history, namely several decades of literature on Nietzsche that has largely saved the figure from the shame of having been formerly associated with Hitler's regime. We have discovered that Nietzsche *can* be read differently from how the Nazis read him; furthermore, he *should* be read differently, at least we should hope for the future's sake. If we approach Améry's claim here purely through logic, scientifically we might say, we can conclude something like what all of these interpreters conclude about Améry's association of Nietzsche with the Nazis: that it has been falsified by recent research.

If what Améry was presenting us with was a purely philosophical argument — purely logical, independent of history, culture and so on — this would be a completely plausible conclusion. After all, in such a context, if a premise of an argument is known to be flawed, and if there is consensus in academic circles that it has been proven to be flawed, then addressing or at the very least exploring that argument would seem utterly non-essential if not completely unproductive. This is precisely the way science, and analytic philosophy to some degree, operates and moves forward. One can study evolutionary science without necessarily having to take Lamarck's claim in his theory of

evolution (spontaneous generation) seriously. One can take a scientific approach towards Améry's work here in just such a manner. However, it is not clear that this is the most prudent way to read him.

While, to an extent, acknowledging and overlooking Améry's flawed conception of Nietzsche in his relationship to the Nazi regime may be the most proper course of action for those who read Améry — effectively forgiving Améry for what amounts to an obsolete reading of the philosopher — there is also a crucial flaw in doing so. This flaw is not rooted in missing an important detail in Nietzsche's own work. The flaw is rooted in overlooking and forgetting the nature of Améry's project itself. As Améry lays out in the preface, his goal in writing Resentments, in conjunction with the rest of his work, is present a phenomenology of the victim.²⁴¹ In that respect, we should consider that Améry's goal in exploring and discussing Nietzsche is not to make a contribution to Nietzsche studies. First and foremost, Améry's goal is to understand Nietzsche in a very particular manner — that is, to understand Nietzsche's effects on himself as an Auschwitz victim and, by extension, on Améry's own society, culture, country, and the entire historical milieu during Auschwitz and in its aftermath. If we understand his approach as defined by the act of providing a phenomenology of the victim, we can recognize that Améry's purpose is not to produce what may or may not be the most accurate reading of Nietzsche, but to reflect the reality that faces him onto his audience, all of us who are not in a position to experience firsthand what he did.

241 Améry, xiii.

Likewise, our goal in exploring Nietzsche here is not to make a contribution to Nietzsche studies, but first and foremost to understand him in a very particular manner — that is, in his effect on Améry. How Nietzsche *should* be read, what the thinker may have intended, takes a backseat to how he *was* read at the time. Even if we claim that Améry’s reading of Nietzsche, and by extension the Nazi Party’s reading of him, were flawed, that does not have much bearing on the influence this reading of Nietzsche had on the regime and, therefore, on its victims. Hence, we should read “Nietzsche” here in quotation marks, as it were, as shorthand for a reading of Nietzsche that had an important influence on an immensely powerful historical movement. Améry’s concern is not academic on this particular point, but practical. Améry casts Nietzsche in a certain light to suggest the responsibility he places on the philosopher for all readings and mis-readings of his work, specifically the readings made flesh in front of Améry’s very own eyes. In this sense Améry is anti-Kantian: he does not care about Nietzsche’s supposed moral intentions behind the term *Übermensch*, but rather the actual affects the term has had on the world surrounding him: Nazi Germany and its aftermath in the mid-20th Century).

One might criticize Améry for being unfair in blaming Nietzsche for what he, personally, had experienced, but such a claim would neglect the frame from which Améry is making his argument. The structure Améry employs in Resentments is not that of a traditional philosophical treatise. His skepticism of such a venture — and his pessimism about where logic can get us, particularly in light of his experience of the Holocaust — is in full display in the Preface when he states that his reflections “extend beyond reasoning and the pleasure in logical argument to areas of thought that lie in an uncertain

twilight”.²⁴² In this light, we can gather that Améry is not making a claim on how Nietzsche *should* be read. Rather it is a reflection on how Nietzsche *could* be read, and to a certain extent, *was* read at the time. And more than this, it is a representation of a way of thinking in that historical time, and now still in ours, that Améry correctly saw we must confront, whatever the correct way of reading Nietzsche might be.²⁴³

Considering the connotations of “superman,” Kaufmann may be correct that “overman” may be the most pragmatic translation when discussing the *Übermensch*. Because the nature of Améry’s project is different from that of an ordinary philosophical treatise, or the construction of a scientific theory, it is not necessary for us to choose one translation over the other. For our purposes in exploring Améry’s reading of Nietzsche, it is possible to consider two or more translations of the term in tandem, even if they seem to conflict with each other. Perhaps it is even necessary to do so to grasp Nietzsche’s term and its effects on history — namely, the history highlighted by Améry’s own past and present. A caveat: Just because Améry does not adapt the methodology of making a typical philosophical argument (or what might be more accurately considered a philosophical argument relying solely on logic), this does not mean we should conclude that what he presents us with is simply a first-person account of a historical experience. It was not Améry’s intention to simply provide a memoir.

As J.M. Bernstein notes, “Améry recognized that there already existed sufficient

²⁴² Améry, xi.

²⁴³ At the same time, we ought not dismiss Améry’s claim about Nietzsche as lacking philosophical merit. As Brudholm shows, the statement of the need “to answer Nietzsche” has been resumed in the work of the renowned moral philosopher, Jonathan Glover, in his book *Humanity* (cf. Glover 2001:40f).

documentary works and survivor testimonies; further first personal memoirs would not be useful”.²⁴⁴ This should initially strike us as counter-intuitive since Améry’s *AML* as a whole bears great resemblance to what would otherwise amount to a testimony or memoir: a subjective take on his experiences and a reflection on his emotions within himself, resentments included. Bernstein is correct here, nonetheless. The truths Améry comes to, although arrived at through and only through an examination of his own subjective experiences, are not subjective; they represent universal and objective truths which Améry wishes to convey to us, his audience, particularly through his discussion of resentment. This is Améry’s version of a non-academic phenomenology. His personal experience puts him in a “warped state,” one set apart from other normal, healthy people in society, but one that *also* requires him to “define anew [that] warped state, namely as a form of the human condition that morally as well as historically is of higher order than that of healthy straightness.”²⁴⁵ As Bernstein notes, this reveals something about Améry’s justification of resentment. Bernstein writes:

In suggesting this, Améry’s justification of resentment is neither a *purely* philosophical defense (like Bishop Butler’s in which resentment is the necessary immediate response to undeserved suffering), nor a *purely* first personal historico-psychological defense (as in a “trauma studies” analysis); it is neither a matter of conceptual necessity (pure transcendental talk) nor socio-historical, psychological necessity (pure ethnographically describable talk) that he seeks.²⁴⁶

This is not to say that Améry’s justification of resentment is not philosophical but rather first-personal. Rather, for Bernstein, the virtue of Améry’s project is that it is both

244 Bernstein, “Améry’s Devastation and Resentment,” 5.

245 Améry, 68.

246 Ibid., 12-13.

simultaneously: in my view, it is what makes Améry an unconventional phenomenologist. I think it is fair to say Bernstein would also agree more with “unconventional” than “non-academic” because he suggests Améry accomplishes the heavy lifting an academic phenomenologist accomplishes, but through different means, rooted in bodily experience and reflection. Although he does not mention Hegel or Husserl, Bernstein presents us with a distinctively Hegelian and phenomenological reading of Améry. In doing so, Bernstein ultimately concludes that Améry’s narrative reveals the possibility of a first-person account of an historical experience rising (the subjective) to the level of a philosophical argument (the objective). For Bernstein, Améry reveals the possibility of subjective experience making an objective claim on the world. Bernstein refers to this as Améry’s “transcendental deduction.” As he states, “[T]his essay argues that Jean Améry’s account of his suffering under the Nazis intends to generate a justificatory argument, a transcendental deduction of sorts, for the category of ‘resentment’ ...”.²⁴⁷ As Bernstein notes, in the Preface to the reissue, Améry claims that the “demands of enlightened reason require more than ‘logical deduction and empirical verification’, namely, ‘the will and the ability to speculate phenomenologically, to empathize, to approach the limits of reason’”.²⁴⁸ This transcendental deduction, according to Bernstein, is performed by the narrative Améry arrives at, namely, “an examination or, if you will, an essential description *Wesensbeschreibung* of the existence of the victim (*der Opfer-Existenz*)”.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Bernstein, 30.

²⁴⁸ Bernstein, 6.

²⁴⁹ Améry, xiii; Bernstein, 6. It should be noted that the text Bernstein cites, the Rosenfelds’ translation, actually uses the phrase, “a phenomenological description of the existence of the

Bernstein expands upon this point of the importance of victimhood in Améry. He highlights Améry's own suggestion that there is something about the experience of being a victim, particularly in the context in which he was made a victim, and his resentments, which gave him access to a truth. We might even add here that Améry is held captive by this truth. As we will discuss in further chapters, the consequence of resentment giving him access to the truth is that he is alone in his pursuit, at times even resented by the wider society for the truth (or truths) he harbors and wishes to express. We see an odd parallel between Améry and the philosopher in Plato's *Republic*. As he rises out of the cave, in pursuit of the good and true, the philosopher could also recognize the potential threat of presenting his former fellow prisoners with the unbridled truth he finds. Very much blinded to them, captive to their limited experience and insights, the residents of the cave present the philosopher a challenge he must overcome. The philosopher king must take great pains to reveal this truth to them and incorporate it into society. Doing so haphazardly, he will surely meet his doom. For Améry, this truth is not only a historical or a purely political truth, but a moral truth. Améry claims that one of the objectives of his resentments are to make history moral. For Bernstein, what Améry suggests is not only questioning a truth or truths, but questioning the perspective from which we approach it. As Bernstein states, "all morality, Améry argues, is the morality of history's victims. That is Améry's transcendental deduction of resentment".²⁵⁰

Bernstein expands on this interesting point. What Améry is doing through his

victim" (Améry, xiii). Bernstein is effectively using his own translation of "essential" here.
250 Bernstein, 16.

narrative is not only questioning a given morality, but the very foundation for that morality. As Bernstein states, “nothing in moral philosophy from the Greeks to the present has acknowledged devastation as a primary moral category requiring its own logic and articulation”.²⁵¹ Améry also is questioning the nature of his condition, which has the appearance of a psychic malfunction. As Bernstein rightly states, “Améry refuses to medicalize his condition”.²⁵² He continues, “it is not a psychic malfunction he is suffering from, but a moral injury”.²⁵³ Bernstein notes that trauma itself has only become a recognized psychic malady in the past century; it is only recently, however, that the social sciences have recognized trauma as “a moral injury lodging moral demands”.²⁵⁴ He cites Fassin and Rechtman, the sociologist and psychiatrist who, in *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into the Condition of Victimhood*, write about the relatively recent social emergence of trauma as a paradigm shift from history as the story of the victors to its becoming a historiography of the vanquished.

Bernstein claims that “for all intents and purposes, modern moral philosophy has not undergone this paradigm shift, remaining firmly in the victors’ territory”.²⁵⁵ Améry’s Resentments in particular, according to Bernstein, suggests that trauma is not simply an experience but something which itself makes moral demands: it’s a primary moral category requiring “its own logic and articulation.”²⁵⁶ We will soon describe what

251 Bernstein, 22.

252 Ibid., 21.

253 Ibid.

254 Ibid.

255 Bernstein, 22.

256 Ibid.

Bernstein interprets this logic and articulation to be in detail and whether it is in fact ultimately sufficient to define Améry's understanding of resentment. Putting that aside for now, Bernstein presents an important insight about Améry's resentment that we can expand upon. Resentment articulates the nature of victimization in a way which reveals both moral demands and moral truths. It is not subject to the conditions of Nietzschean *ressentiment* — the slave morality through which the man of *ressentiment* finds solace in his own hysteria, delusion, and fantasy. In conjunction with Bernstein, going back to what Žižek states about Améry's resentment being heroic, we might make the following claim: Améry's resentment, reflecting the nature of victimization and revealing the moral truths available through it, is heroic. In light of Bernstein's reading, Žižek's claim about Améry implies the following transcendental deduction: through resentment, the victim is no longer a victim but a hero. It is surprising that Žižek himself would have not made this leap.

A paradoxical idea, prevalent throughout the work of Dostoevsky, is that in order to be a hero, one must be a victim. Dostoevsky's concept here may be helpful in hashing out the implications of this statement, particularly in the context of Améry. Doing so might allow us to consider the possibility of another crucial paradox in Améry's work: the relationship between victim and hero. Through his usage of the anti-hero, Dostoevsky questions the distinction between victim and hero. Through the character of the underground man in the *Notes from the Underground*, Dostoevsky raises many questions in the readers' minds about heroism and what it requires. Is it courage, strength, or moral virtue? Is it one's ability to withstand adversity? Are these the traits that truly show and

create a hero? Is the light truly the source of darkness, or vice versa? Is the soul a source of hope, or of despair? Who are these so-called heroes and where do they come from? Are their origins in obscurity or in plain sight? The underground man, Dostoevsky's hero, is "neither wicked nor good, neither a scoundrel nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect."²⁵⁷ The hero in his novels take many forms, but is always flawed, empty, or broken. In some sense, Dostoevsky's hero is always a victim. His conception of a hero effectively involves great nuance. To understand what a true hero is for Dostoevsky requires us to understand what it means to be a victim. Usually, under normal circumstances, we are conditioned to think that "hero" and "victim" are two distinct concepts. It is the case that they are commonly associated, but not at all in the way Dostoevsky associates them. For example, we normally associate the hero as the one who saves the victim, or potential victims, from a dangerous situation or dilemma. The comic book character Superman can serve as the quintessential example of this. He displays his heroism in saving the damsel in distress, Lois Lane. However, this is a very different relationship than the one Dostoevsky suggests. Even though the hero is related to the potential victim, saving her from the villain, we would never say that the characteristics which define the victim also define the hero. In common parlance — that is to say, under normal circumstances, in popular culture — the hero is defined in a certain manner, while the victim is defined in a wholly other, even entirely opposite manner: the hero is strong; the victim is weak. This distinction seems self-evident to the point of standing in plain

257 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, London: Vintage Classics, 1994, 5 .

sight. For Dostoevsky, the truth is more nuanced. He suggests that a proper understanding of a hero involves questioning all such presuppositions. In order to be hero, one must be a victim. We might rephrase this as follows: the necessary condition for heroism is victimization. At the very least, one cannot be a hero without first knowing what it is like to be a victim.

Upon further inspection, we see this paradox evident in the original title, particularly the subtitle, of Améry's *At the Mind's Limits*. The subtitle Améry chooses, one which is lost in the English translation, is: *Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten*. This can be translated as "the attempts to overcome by one who has been overcome." Améry is neither what we would expect of a victim nor of a hero. Améry is not a hero, he is not a victim; and yet, he is both. That is to say, he is not *purely* a hero, and he is not *purely* a victim. Améry is both simultaneously: he is held captive in the space between the two concepts. His effort to overcome is framed by the fact that he has already been overcome; yet in recognizing that, the only hope for overcoming is revealed. It is an existence *at the mind's limits*; overcoming is shaped by his limitations. The perceived limitations on his condition are at once conditions for possibility.

In German the prefix in question, *über*, can imply several things. It can imply superiority, excess, or even transcendence, depending on the context. In common parlance, the adjective form of *übermenschlich* in German means super-human. A mother who is able to lift a car in order to save her child can be described as such. This is in fact an attested phenomenon, sometimes called "hysterical strength," where otherwise unremarkable persons use what seems to be super-human skill or strength to cope with an

emergency, such as a child pinned under a car.²⁵⁸ A mother's action in a case like this defies the bounds of what is considered normal human strength; it seems to transcend or go over and above the capacity of the rest of humanity. Her actions are superior to those of most others, if they were to be placed in such a moment of crisis. They transcend what we would expect most would be capable of. While her actions are *übermenschlich*, transgressing the bounds of normal presupposed human capacity, she also serves as an example for us mere mortals and our own possibility as human beings. In this spirit, an equally appropriate translation to consider, and which might seem particularly relevant to our exploration of Améry, is the original English translation in 1896 of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Alexander Tille, in which *Übermensch* is translated as "beyond-man." The woman who lifts a car represents the limitations of man and the transcendence of those limitations. She goes beyond what is expected of her — what society would normally assume about her and her capacity — and redefines herself. She becomes "superior" in the Nietzschean sense, but she does so not as a product of who she inherently or initially is, but through what she *becomes* through action.

It was in the spirit of superiority that Hitler and the Nazis used the term *Übermensch* to advocate their conception of a biologically superior human being, racially understood as the German or Aryan race.²⁵⁹ We should be careful here to note that the

258 This is a known phenomenon. See Newcomb, Alyssa (August 2012). "Superhero Woman Lifts Car Off Dad - ABC News". ABC News. Retrieved 12 January 2016. Also see "Oregon man pinned under 3,000-pound tractor saved by teen daughters". Fox News. 11 April 2013. Retrieved 12 January 2016. See also Associated Press. "Kansas dad somehow lifts car off 6-year-old girl", 18 December 2009. news.yahoo.com. Retrieved 19 December 2009.

259 See William Shirer. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc.,

main problem behind the Nazi's appropriation of the term was not simply due to stressing one definition of this prefix over another. It was not as if Nietzsche was against the conception of superiority in general. As shown in the discussion of master and slave morality, the notion of superiority is essential to Nietzsche. That said, we can both maintain the meaning of "superiority" here and also avoid the pitfalls of the Nazi appropriation. To understand Nietzsche correctly, perhaps our example of the mother is a useful one to flesh out this distinction. Even if we are to understand Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as someone who displays extraordinary strength or superiority relative to other human beings, there is an important distinction between how we express that claim of superiority in our example of the mother and how the Nazis perceived it. The Nazis perceived the Aryan's supposed superiority as something he is inherently born with, his race. Effectively, it is passively received. The individual mother's superiority is not a product of her race or background, something she cannot change, but her own individual demonstration of her ability to act. It is her actions which make her superior and in fact define her identity as such — one characterized by extraordinary courage, bravery, physical and mental fortitude, and strength.

It is important to note the differences between the superiority the mother displays and the superiority Superman displays. Superman is characterized by all of these traits, but in a far more one-dimensional sense. He is strong; but he does not become strong. In lifting the car, he does not transcend his own boundaries but rather acts in accordance to

his own nature by virtue of the fact that he is, and always was, superman. He was born with this ability. When he lifts the car to save the child, nothing unexpected occurs. He is defined by superhuman strength and therefore it is completely predictable that he could and would lift the car and save the child or damsel in distress. He is a hero: he does not will to become one, nor does he engage in a process of becoming one. In this sense, his heroism is one-dimensional. Aside from the slim chance that the car is filled to the brim with kryptonite, his heroism, in this instant, remains static.

In the case of the mother who lifts the car, the situation is entirely different. She transcends her normally recognized capacity. She transcends what society defines her as (namely, as a weak, petite woman) in willing that the car be lifted. Through will and extraordinary effort, she represents all the features Superman demonstrates but in a much more powerful fashion. If we go deeper into the concept of heroism here, we soon come to realize that although we are superficially correct in characterizing Superman as the quintessential hero (that is, one characterized by extraordinary courage, bravery, physical and mental fortitude, and strength), we are wrong as we are right in doing so. Insofar as he lifts the car and saves the person underneath it, he is the hero of the day. But does he represent the pinnacle of heroism? To be a true hero, one must also risk something. There must be something which the hero sacrifices or is willing to sacrifice by exceeding their normal limits and limitations. The man who jumps in front of a train to save a child's life is in fact much more heroic than Superman doing what is functionally the same action because Superman cannot be killed by the train (or a bullet, or a car, etc.), whereas any normal human being can be. The man, or the mother in this case, is made from human

flesh and blood, and experiences the world in a greatly different manner than Superman. Likewise, she displays far more courage, bravery, and fortitude than Superman. She can blow her back out trying to save the child under the car; she can get trapped under the car herself in the process of trying to save him. Through her vulnerability, frailty, and weakness, she displays a strength which transcends that of Superman. She simply is more heroic. But does she really represent what Améry is alluding to in his title?

As noted, Zizek sees Améry displaying a Nietzschean kind of heroism. The woman in the example above can serve to represent Nietzsche's conception of a hero, but can it represent Améry's effort to overcome? The mother, in the effort to save her child's life, takes it upon herself to act in a dire moment when the failure to do so would lead to the utter destruction of the child, an absolutely devastating outcome. Through sheer will alone she lifts the car, saves the child and, effectively, saves the day. She is faced with a seemingly impossible challenge and successfully overcomes it. Through having overcome this obstacle, she creates a new identity for herself — through her actions, she becomes a hero, no longer a helpless victim. Améry's story is not equivalent to the heroic story of this woman because his story is not actually the story of a victim becoming a hero — the weak becoming strong. It is not a narrative of his overcoming, but simply a description of his attempts to overcome. The fact that, for his subtitle, Améry writes "attempts" in the plural, rather than "attempt" in the singular, would also imply that several of his attempts are bound to fail, if they have not failed already. As Brudholm notes, the very subtitle of Améry's work is allusive. It ultimately raises the question of

whether any overcoming has occurred or even can possibly occur.²⁶⁰ To put it differently, in the very words Améry chooses here — *Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten* (“The attempts to overcome by one who has been overcome”) — implicit is the question whether overcoming itself is even possible for Améry and the wider world around him.

Brudholm also suggests that the word *Bewältigungsversuche* can be translated as “attempts to overcome,” but it can also be translated as “attempts to manage.” This is an important distinction to consider, with much at stake for establishing a proper reading of Améry. The act of managing something is very different than the act of overcoming it. I would suggest that “managing” even has a clinical connotation, as in managing a chronic disease. This is an important connotation to consider here, given what we have discussed earlier. Considering what he has to say about the psychological establishment, it is perhaps not entirely coincidental or unintentional on Améry’s part. The very word “managing” can have several connotations in the context of Améry’s Resentments. Is resentment, the way through which Améry attempts to manage the past, something which should be treated medically, as the modern medical establishment and Nietzsche himself might suggest? Is the process of overcoming the past even possible, or are we constrained to simply manage it? First, we must hash out a far more fundamental issue: what is the difference between managing and overcoming?

A disease can be overcome and cured in certain circumstances, unless it is a chronic disease, in which it is a disease for which there is no cure, or at least, no cure at

²⁶⁰ Brudholm, 71.

the present time. It is a disease which, despite treatment, stays with the sick person indefinitely. One can only treat a chronic disease by trying to ameliorate its symptoms, not by truly overcoming it – at least if no cure is yet available. Whether Améry is attempting to manage or overcome is in question. Whether he believes what he experienced can be overcome is also in question. I suggest the ambiguity around the word *Bewältigung* is intentional, in line with many other aspects of Améry's work. The subtle ambiguity continues into the second part of the word *Bewältigungsversuche*. As Brudholm points out, the word "*Versuche*" (attempts) also may have several meanings simultaneously. First, it can mean to attempt, to experiment, to try. As Brudholm notes, Améry refers to this work as a compilation of essays. In this sense, his essays are true to the originally meaning of the French "*essais*," which has precisely this connotation of experimenting or trying.²⁶¹ As such, Brudholm states, these attempts "try to unearth the past and the problems hidden beneath facile appeals to look to the future or to forgive and forget".²⁶² At the same time, it implies another meaning related to the German term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which was a catchphrase for Germany's efforts to manage and overcome the Nazi past. This is a meaning which is lost in the English translation, and even lost in the original German, if the historical context surrounding Améry is not fully recognized and taken into account. As Brudholm states

[T]he word *Versuche* (attempts) can be seen as a subtle critical comment on the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* itself, insofar as that concept implies a notion that the past can be overcome. More concretely, highlighting the essays as

²⁶¹ Brudholm, 72.

²⁶² Ibid.

“attempts” may be seen as a corrective to facile contemporary beliefs that the Nazi past could and had already been overcome ... ²⁶³

Brudholm, a sociologist by training, shows that the very term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* differed greatly in terms of how it was received by the German public, both soon after the war and now more recently. In the immediate aftermath of WWII, in the 1950s and 60s when Améry was writing, there was a prevalent assumption that Germany could not only overcome the Nazi past, but also that Germany had *already* overcome it. Although we will discuss this in further detail in Chapter 7, Améry’s critical reference to this process at the time is a further piece of evidence for the idea that Améry believed such a past to *not* have been overcome, neither by himself personally, nor by the wider community he claimed as his in Europe and in Germany. Not only does he allude to the fact that this past had not been overcome, he alludes to the very real possibility that it can never be overcome.

However, if the threat which faces Améry and the world that surrounds him is not overcome, how can Améry be considered a hero? The woman, the Nietzschean hero, becomes heroic in her act of overcoming, namely by lifting the car, overcoming the threat to and saving her child. She defies the limits placed on her as woman, transcends these limits by single-handedly lifting the car, and through the act of transcending them establishes a new identity. She becomes heroic, a hero characterized as courageous, brave, having mental and, most of all, physical fortitude which defies the bounds of human nature. However, she only does so through leaving, her former identity as a

²⁶³ Ibid.

helpless victim (weak, frail, powerless, vulnerable) behind. Even though the woman represents a far less one-dimensional version of a hero than Superman, it is still uncertain whether Améry resembles her at all. We might say that the necessary condition for the woman to become heroic in the first place is the unrelenting and steadfast belief that she can lift the car. We would have to assume that in order for her to have accomplished what she accomplished, there must have been no doubt in her mind that she was capable of lifting the car. Améry is by contrast doubtful in his efforts:

Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world. The shame of destruction cannot be erased. Trust in the world, which already collapsed in part at the first blow, but in the end, under torture, fully, will not be regained ... It blocks the view into a world in which the principle of hope rules.²⁶⁴

As Améry goes on to state, the only thing remaining is “fear — and also what is called resentments” (ibid). He acknowledges his resentments as being crucial towards his attempt to overcome, while at the same time fully acknowledging the almost inevitable reality that he will fail.

It might seem that what Améry is arguing is akin to Beckett’s “try again, fail again, fail better.”²⁶⁵ One might argue that the plural nature of Améry’s “attempts” to overcome, each chapter representing an attempt, lends itself quite well to such a reading. On the surface, this might seem to be an accurate association. Each of Améry’s chapters is an *essai* (a trial, experiment attempt) to overcome, and simultaneously represents a failure to do so. His chapter “Torture” represents the attempt to overcome torture:

²⁶⁴ Améry, 40.

²⁶⁵ Samuel Beckett, “Westward Ho,” *Samuel-beckett.net*. Available at http://www.samuel-beckett.net/w_ho.html Last accessed March 21, 2021.

however, what is revealed is the almost incontrovertible fact that 100% of “the tortured stay tortured.” His chapter “How much home does a person need?” represents the necessity of feeling at home in the world, and Améry’s failure to feel at home in his own home — in his case, Austria and greater Germany, perhaps even Europe as a whole. His chapter Resentments represents the struggle to overcome the past and the sour taste the past leaves in his mouth, particularly with respect to the actions and inactions of people he formerly trusted, and the failure to overcome. All of these attempts represent failures, but for a proper analogy between Améry and Beckett to work, there would have to be evidence that each failure fails better. This would force us to do violence to the text, ascribing a sort of progressiveness which is clearly not evident across the chapters. To put it differently, even though Améry himself sees each of these chapters as representing a failure, it is unclear for him (and for the reader) that the last chapter fails any less than the first with respect to its intended goal.

Alternatively, it might seem that Améry’s “attempts” reflect those of Sisyphus. Rolling a large boulder up a hill, only for it to roll down each time, his attempts prove to be as laborious as they are futile. Camus gives a more charitable reading of Sisyphus, allowing the character some saving grace. The agony he faces is negated by the possibility of ownership over his experience. Through the recognition that the rock is *his* rock, Sisyphus becomes a hero for Camus. When Sisyphus acknowledges the futility of his endeavor, he is free to recognize the absurdity of his plight. Through accepting it, he owns it, and reaches a state of contentment. It is in this manner that, according to Camus,

“one must imagine Sisyphus happy.”²⁶⁶ The persistence to overcome rescues him from despair, a rescue that empowers Sisyphus in full acceptance of his plight. While Améry may accept his own plight in a similar manner, one stark contrast is that accepting this plight does not lead to any contentment. The analogy to Sisyphus quickly reaches its limit. On a personal level, resentments do not empower Améry but rather bind him to a tortured, helpless, and vulnerable state. As he says, “it nails every one of us onto the cross of his ruined past”.²⁶⁷ It blocks each from “the genuine human dimension, the future.” This implies that Améry’s resentments are precisely what prevent him from overcoming in the first place, keeping him confined in a perilous state where no happiness or contentment is possible, by definition.

As suggested earlier, the most commonly accepted definition of a hero is a person defined by the act of overcoming. This is clearly evident in the example of the mother who acts to save her child. She overcomes her circumstances, re-defines herself and her capacity to act in a manner which displays courage, bravery, mental and physical fortitude. It is ultimately by the *act* of lifting the car that she becomes a hero. Action is crucial for Nietzsche, but it is also a pivotal concept for Fichte.²⁶⁸ There is, in a fact, a crucial analogy between this woman becoming a hero and Fichte’s description of man in his primordial state. In his description of the prioritization of action over consciousness, “the need to act,” Fichte states that it is action that defines man as a man, namely as a

266 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. New York: Vintage, 1995, 123.

267 Améry, 68.

268 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*. Peter Preuss, trans. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, 79. As we mentioned earlier, for Fichte positing the “not-I” is what allows one to set apart subjects and objects. He refers to this as the “need to act,” and states that action must precede consciousness.

being in distinction from all else. Acting in defiance of the natural world around him, man reveals himself as something distinct and superior to his surroundings (mere matter, inanimate objects, lower forms of life). Even though he comes from mere matter, a primordial soup, it is through action that man redefines himself and liberates himself from his former identity. Through action, man takes ownership; he becomes a master. He is no longer a passive product of his natural environment, but reveals himself through action as the type of being that can master that environment. Similarly, this woman reveals herself to be a hero through action. Potential means very little in such a circumstance. Even though this woman may have had the potential to be a hero, her heroism is only revealed (and can only really be said to exist) when this potential is actualized. The fact that she actualizes her heroic potential in defiance of society's presumed limits on her capacity to be one, makes her an even more pronounced example of a hero. Just as Fichte sees man as making himself distinct through action, from what he formerly seemed to be (mere matter), the woman becomes a hero only by overcoming a part of her past.

Even though it is far less obvious example, we should not discount Camus' assessment of Sisyphus as heroic. He too overcomes something. Rolling the boulder up the hill only to watch his efforts fail, fixing the boulder atop the mountain becomes less and less important. While he fails to achieve this goal, his success in achieving another goal makes the former goal insignificant. His heroism is revealed in his persistence and ultimately in his ownership of the experience. Through taking ownership over the experience, he reveals himself as the kind of being who can be heroic. In doing so, he still

overcomes his state of peril, albeit in a more subtle fashion than the mother who single-handedly saves her child. At the same time, we should also note the limits to the woman's act of heroics. Her heroism is not defined by lifting the car and suspending it in the air indefinitely. The car ultimately falls to the ground just like Sisyphus' boulder. In the process, nonetheless, she becomes heroic.

It might be tempting to impose the same structure of heroism onto Améry's narrative. Several commentators do just this, whether or not they are conscious of it. As such, his story can be read as one of endurance, independence, and strength, overcoming prior restrictive boundaries placed upon him by society at large, like the chains put on him in Auschwitz. His narrative, accordingly, would reveal those boundaries and limitations — the vulnerability, dependency, and presumed weakness inherent in him — as things to be overcome. Through transcending those boundaries and limitations placed upon him, he reveals his own possibility anew, or so such a narrative would go. The main problem, and we might even say the fatal flaw, with falling into this tempting reading would be the fact that Améry's own narrative suggests the exact opposite. Rather than breaking his former chains, shedding his former vulnerability to the other and his dependency on them, what is revealed is his absolute dependence upon them. To put it differently, what is revealed is that he cannot transcend the world around him. If anything, his resentments work to further highlight his weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and dependency on that world. To that extent, he is not a master of his fate. Taking ownership over it cannot lead to independence, but rather only to a fuller recognition of where his victimization (in his case, torture) had left him: separated from a world he was fully and

absolutely dependent on, an experience of “extreme *loneliness*”.²⁶⁹ If transcendence defines heroism, in light of this, how are we to understand Améry’s resentments as heroic? How are we to understand Améry as a hero? Does even the attempt to conceive him as heroic inevitably cause us to do a certain violence to Améry — and the text itself — in doing so?

Zizek claims that Améry’s resentments are the mark of the Nietzschean hero. Hunt and Bernstein seem to concur in this assessment. At this point in our discussion, we might be able to state more concisely what a hero means for Nietzsche. Over the course of considering several of Nietzsche’s texts, Nikos Kazantzakis concludes,

The definition of the “hero” in Nietzsche becomes clear: A “hero” is one who engages in life-transcending contests. A heroic life is an individual existence that struggles toward the Overman. Unavoidably, it is an existence that necessitates earthly and bodily action.²⁷⁰

The more we explore the Nietzschean conception of what a hero is, the more it seems that Améry does not fit the description. To further understand what being a hero means for Nietzsche, it is useful to reconsider what Nietzsche states about the primary distinction between a slave and a master. The master is active; the slave is not. As Poole notes, “slave morality is essentially reactive”.²⁷¹ Through action, the master distinguishes himself from the slave. He acts on his emotions; the slave does not. Action allows the master to forget (past injury, trauma, petty offenses), whereas inaction forces the slave to remember forever. The virtue of action, in the case of the master, is not simply in

269 Améry, 70.

270 Marinos Pourgouris, “Nikos Kazantzakis, Nietzsche, and the Myth of the Hero” in *International Fiction Review*, 32:1-2 (January 2005). Emphasis added.

271 Poole, 5.

dissipating his emotions, but in revealing the process of forgetting as a sign of strength: “it clears the way to live one’s own life and create one’s own values”.²⁷² The slave is unable to create his own values because he remains tied to the past: to the offenses against him, to the parties who have mistreated him. As Poole states, “the man of *ressentiment* hates; but he also fears, and therefore he does not act”.²⁷³ He directs all his energy towards the object of his fear. He becomes fully dependent on them, their opinion of him, their contempt of him.

In the aftermath of his experience, Améry recognizes that it was not simply the memory of his torturer Wajs that oppresses him, but rather:

... the malicious and vile, the shrews, the old fat ones and the young pretty ones, those intoxicated by their authority, who thought that it was a crime not only against the state but also against their own ego if they spoke with people like us in any other but a crude, domineering tone. The far-too-many were not SS men, but rather laborers, file clerks, technicians, typists — and only a minority among them wore the party badge. All in all, for me they were the German people.²⁷⁴

As we see from the text, it seems that Améry is more focused on the Germans than on his own need to personally overcome the experience in his own life, so that he himself can have a future, irrespective of them. He attributes to them his own inability to have a future. For him to overcome, they will have to undo the evils that have been done to him. He cannot accept what was done to him and demands that it is “undone”.²⁷⁵ For Nietzsche, the slave is trapped in the memory of the past offense made against him and cannot forgive it since he cannot truly forgive the misrecognition that such an offense

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Améry, 74.

²⁷⁵ Améry, 68.

makes of him and his own humanity. This misrecognition takes over his whole life; it comes to pervade all that he thinks and does.

As Poole shows us, the master is not put in a similar situation since he, by definition, puts himself in a position wholly separate from the slave. Any offenses made to the master are dealt with swiftly and decisively, in such a manner that no scars of the offense are left behind. The master, recognizing himself as superior, is in a position in which forgiving and forgetting the offense is much easier since he does not recognize any offense made by the slave as made by an equal to. As Nietzsche states, “Mirabeau had no memory for insults and vile actions done to him and was unable to forgive simply because he — forgot. Such a man shakes off with a single shrug the many vermin that eat deep into others”.²⁷⁶ The master is free from the slave, the other. He dismisses the slave, his thoughts and even his transgressions against him like he would dismiss an insect which bites him. The slave, however, is bound to the master — not only to what the master does, and has done to him, but what he thinks about him. Despite the predicament in which it seems to place Améry, the other’s opinion of him remains of great importance to Améry. It would seem more advantageous for him to view them, after the war, in the same manner Nietzsche did the “blond beast.” As Nietzsche states:

One may be quite justified in continuing to fear the blond beast at the core of all noble races and in being on one’s guard against it: but who would not a hundred times sooner fear where one can also admire than not fear but be permanently

276 Friedrich Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Walter Kauffmann and R.J. Hollingdale, trans. New York: Vintage Books, 1989, 39.

condemned to the repellent sight of the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied, and poisoned.²⁷⁷

The failure to see the Germans as deformed, atrophied, and poisoned relegates Améry to what would seem to be, according to a Nietzschean framework, the position of the slave rather than the master, the victim rather than the hero. He is, by all measures, on the winning side of history. And yet as Améry himself ultimately suggests, this is not enough.

In the immediate aftermath of Améry's release, however, the insufficiency of such an approach was not immediately clear to him. In that initial period, his feeling towards the Germans seems quite similar to how Nietzsche viewed the "blond hordes." As Poole puts it

Paradoxically, the slave revolt in morality which was brought about by the fear of action has come to dominate European moral sensibility. Fear and mediocrity has triumphed over courage and achievement. Almost all that is left of the noble morality is the image of the barbarian in its most extreme form, the "blond beast."²⁷⁸

Améry even states that the Germans, once seen as all-powerful overlords — at least in the eyes of those who suffered under them — were suddenly revealed as objects of contempt and, beyond that, a pitiful group of people who started to resent the occupation forces and survivors in turn. In the words of an anonymous German writer, directed at an American occupation forces newspaper, "Just don't act so big around here."²⁷⁹ Améry was liberated, the allies won, and the roles of master and slave seemed

277 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 43.

278 Poole, 5.

279 Améry, 66.

to have been reversed. It appeared that the Germans were the true progenitors of slave morality and would be fated to live as such. As Améry states:

Not only National Socialism, *Germany* was the object of a general feeling that before our eyes crystallized from hate into contempt. Never again would this land “endanger world peace,” as they said in those days. Let it live, but no more than that. As the potato field of Europe, let it serve this continent with its diligence, but with nothing other than that ... *Vae victis castigisque*.²⁸⁰

Coincidentally enough, Améry reveals that at that time, “There was no reason, hardly a real possibility, for resentments to form”.²⁸¹ This would confirm the distinction Nietzsche makes between the master and the slave with respect to the possibility of resentment. The slave is the one who resents. The master does not resent the slave, because he sees him as a moral inferior — as “bad”: pathetic, an object of contempt and, ultimately, indifference.²⁸² Améry’s attitude changes over the course of his own narrative. The temptation to declare himself on the side of victory, with the heroes, is overshadowed by the necessity to be a victim.

280 Ibid., 65.

281 Améry, 65.

282 Poole, 4.

CHAPTER 5 – AMÉRY, THE NATURE OF BEING OVERCOME, AND THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS OF OVERCOMING

Améry's resentments are characterized in some of the secondary literature as heroic and, more specifically, heroic in the Nietzschean sense of the term. Some, like Žižek, make this claim outright: Améry's resentments are "Nietzschean heroic".²⁸³ Others allow this belief to inform their readings of Améry, framing Améry's chapter around the Nietzschean concept of heroism and Nietzsche's greater critique of morality. This study questions that claim. Exploring such a reading further is necessary to reveal what an alternative reading of Améry might look like. One thing must be made clear at this point. To critique the claim that Améry's resentments are "Nietzschean heroic" is not to call into question that Améry's narrative is itself heroic. As we will discuss further, publishing his Resentments during the period he did, and doing so in the German language, required great courage and fortitude. To critique this idea that Améry is a Nietzschean hero is to call into question the framework such a reading imparts on Améry's narrative and the truths he aims to reveal.

Something easily overlooked when we ascribe to Améry this framework of heroism in general is the fact that being a hero — overcoming one's own perilous state — is evidently not Améry's primary goal nor his main intention. Améry's primary goal is, as he states, to reveal truth. Although his Resentments chapter is one of his attempts to overcome, it is not self-evident that overcoming is a necessary condition of truth being revealed. To the contrary, as we alluded to in the conclusion of the last chapter, being a

283 Žižek, 90.

victim is ultimately Améry's own choice. When the camps were liberated, the Germans punished, and the whole world quickly realized who were the moral victors and who were the moral losers on the world stage, it was quite tempting for Améry to join the victors in their celebration of a new era.²⁸⁴ He was certainly justified in considering himself a hero for surviving the camps and being on the right side of history.

What proves to be quite counterintuitive is that the foundation for Améry's narrative is not the moral truths revealed by the victory of the Allies, and his own liberation from the camps, but truths inextricably connected to his victimization prior to these liberating events. When the gates of Auschwitz fall, he runs away from the camp and his past — he accepts the warm embrace of the victors. Yet this is short-lived. He soon does what can be considered an about-face, back towards Auschwitz, over and above the fallen gates. He returns to his past, and actively embraces his former perilous condition. Something we must grapple with is that for Améry truth is tied to victimhood, so much so, perhaps, that overcoming becomes a threat to truth itself. To put it differently, overcoming (what defines a hero for Nietzsche) threatens truth, particularly the truth revealed to the victim, to the extent that it makes him forget it. What Améry suggests is that truth is tied to the experience of victimhood, not to the possibility of being an *Übermensch*. Améry's narrative is, quite literally, the tale of the *Üntermensch* rather than the *Übermensch*. We might even say, considering Améry seems to actively choose the former over the latter, it is the tale of the *Üntermensch* over and above the

284 Améry, 65-66.

Übermensch. As Brudholm notes, the obscurity of the original German title makes it unclear whether Améry even sees overcoming as an actual possibility. In turn we can say that his story is precisely not one of a victim becoming a hero, but of a victim revealing truth which only a victim is privy to as such. As evidenced in the title, in some respect, Améry suggests he personally *is already overcome*; in that sense, heroics are to a large degree a bygone concern. As Améry states in Resentments, he cannot escape his past so easily; the thought that he personally can do so is revealed as fantasy or “illusion” relatively quickly in the years following his liberation from Auschwitz.²⁸⁵

Améry’s conclusion is the exact inverse of Nietzsche’s conclusion in his discussion of *ressentiment*. Whereas being bound to the past causes the slave to enter a realm of self-deceptive illusion and fantasy for Nietzsche, binding himself to the past allows Améry to get a grasp of reality. Being a victim for Améry is a source of truth.²⁸⁶ Victimhood is something highly praised.²⁸⁷ For Nietzsche, it is something to be condemned and avoided. When we speak of the Nietzschean dilemma in Améry, this is something which must be grappled with. Although Nietzsche can appreciate the value of suffering, he only appreciates it secondarily. That is to say, suffering is only valuable in contexts where it is a stepping stone for and towards overcoming. For Améry, suffering is

²⁸⁵ Améry, 66.

²⁸⁶ As Améry states, “I belong to that fortunately slowly disappearing species of those who by general agreement are called the victims of Nazism. The people of whom I am speaking and whom I am addressing here show muted understanding for my retrospective grudge. But I myself do not entirely understand this grudge, not yet ... I speak as a victim and examine my resentments.” (Améry, 63).

²⁸⁷ As Améry continues later in the essay, “It is said that we are ‘warped.’ That causes me to recall fleetingly the way my arms were twisted high behind my back when they tortured me. But it also sets me the task of defining anew our warped state, namely as a form of the human condition that morally as well as historically is of a higher order than that of healthy straightness” (Améry, 68).

suffering *as* a victim, in the process of victimization in particular. It is in *being* a victim that truth is revealed. For Nietzsche, however, there is no truth in victimization itself. The main example Nietzsche deploys of the victim in his work is precisely the one he admonishes most: the man of *ressentiment*. In this regard we might say that victimization itself is something which must be actively forgotten for someone to become a hero. Becoming a hero, for Nietzsche, is manifest in the revelation that one is no longer what one was in the past. He overcomes his past entirely, forgiving it and forgetting it for another identity. For Améry, truth is held captive within him as a result of being a victim; for Nietzsche, truth appears through one mastering one's self and becoming a hero, revealing a new individual identity in society. The Nietzschean hero conveys truths about himself to the masses, his new identity, and the ability to create and recreate his identity in defiance of them and their presuppositions about him. The victim, Améry, conveys truths to the masses about themselves, over and above himself. He is bound to the thoughts, actions, and beliefs of his former oppressors. Under a Nietzschean framework, we would have to consider him a victim and perhaps even precisely in the manner Nietzsche's "man of *ressentiment*" would suggest.

The effort to reconcile Améry and Nietzsche requires first drawing them apart. Through establishing a *firm* distinction between 'resentment,' which some commentators attribute to Améry, and "*ressentiment*," which they attribute to Nietzsche, they attempt to open up space in Améry for Nietzsche's larger critique, and in so doing, hope to open up space in Nietzsche for Améry's insights. Žižek, Hunt, and Bernstein offer readings of Améry which display the possibility that Améry's outward critique of Nietzsche does not

negate the possibility of him presenting something inherently Nietzschean in and through his Resentments. Each of these commentators also incorporate Hegel into their efforts to elucidate Améry's chapter on the topic. They discuss Hegel and Nietzsche in such a fluid fashion in their assessment of Améry, in fact, that it stands to reason that they all assume that Hegel and Nietzsche are reconcilable. Of course, they would not be alone in this assumption. Walter Kaufmann — as well as others including Daniel Breazeale, Judith Butler, and Stanley Rosen — ascribes to what is commonly referred to as “the rapprochement thesis,” which itself posits what Kaufmann calls “a truly amazing parallel” between Hegel and Nietzsche. As Robert Williams notes, this is a “minority view.”²⁸⁸ The more conventional view is the one put forward by Habermas, Derrida, and perhaps, most notably, Deleuze, who states that “there is no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche.”²⁸⁹ It is important to note that the main point of contention is each of the philosophers' conceptions of the master-slave conflict. Given that Hegel and Nietzsche have been the philosophical backdrop of this dissertation's exploration of Améry, it is useful to describe what has been called “the Hegel Nietzsche problem.” Although much of the commentary on Améry discusses Hegel and Nietzsche in their attempted readings of Améry, none note the obstacles “the Hegel Nietzsche problem” presents for reading Améry as a Nietzschean.

For Hegel, both the master and the slave are bound by a certain blindness towards

288 Robert R. Williams. *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 3

289 Robert R. Williams. *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, Berkley: University of California Press, 2000, 371.

the truth; they both suffer from the misrecognition of the other, albeit in different ways. For Deleuze, Nietzsche creates a break in the Hegelian conception of the master-slave dialectic, precisely because he realizes that a master who is dependent on the recognition of the slave is not a master after all, but a slave.²⁹⁰ This is the core of “the Hegel Nietzsche problem.”²⁹¹ The implication is that a master requires a certain distance from the slave in order to be a master. His identity, if he is *truly* a master, is not bound by the recognition or misrecognition of the other. Unlike the slave, the master is therefore a free individual. Whether or not this is the most appropriate way to read Nietzsche is up for debate and cannot be fully discussed here. However, Deleuze’s reading does seem to be quite applicable to Nietzsche’s praise of the master’s ability to forgive and forget — what has been a central theme in our discussion of Nietzsche thus far. The master is able to forgive and forget precisely because he does not recognize the slave as a moral equal. That is to say, because the master sees the slave as morally inferior, the master is able to quickly act on — forgive and forget — the slave’s behavior and not allow it to fester in his own mind. In contrast, the slave is unable to understand himself at a distance from the

290 Williams perfectly summarizes Deleuze’s account as follows: “According to Nietzsche, the noble and the decadent types of morality are not simply distributed into different sociological groups, but can coexist side by side within the same human being, within a single self-consciousness. Thus any conflict between these types is not exactly a struggle for recognition in Hegel’s sense, where master and slave are determined from the outcome of a life and death struggle. And because Nietzsche’s type of moralities can coexist within a single human being, it is possible that Hegel’s master, who has prevailed in the struggle for recognition, might be servile or decadent in Nietzsche’s sense. That is why Gilles Deleuze believes Nietzsche’s analysis undermines Hegel’s account.” (Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, 7).

291 As Williams states, “Deleuze’s analysis of the topic of master/slave in Nietzsche and Hegel remains one of the most extensive to date; it presents a Nietzschean critique of Hegel that has helped to shape the current consensus. Deleuze contends that recognition is inherently servile, and that Hegel’s master, who depends on the slave’s recognition, is for this reason likewise a slave in Nietzsche’s sense.” (Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, 34)

master. His desperate need to be recognized and respected by the master makes the slave dependent upon him in a way in which the master is not dependent on the slave. This is another distinction we can see between Hegel and Nietzsche, according to Deleuze, and is what has become the conventional mainstream understanding of the relationship between the two thinkers.²⁹² Whereas Hegel sees the slave and master and equally dependent on each other, namely for recognition, Nietzsche sees the slave as markedly dependent, whereas the master is, at least superficially, independent. Nietzsche, accordingly, admires the master more than he does the slave. This is not to say that Nietzsche necessarily wants his readers to aspire to be the master. Even though Nietzsche shows preference for the master over the slave, he, like Hegel, recognizes the master's perspective as also incomplete. However, the nature of this *incompleteness* is different for Hegel and Nietzsche. The idea of independence, particularly for the master who is still dependent on the slave (and effectively slave morality), is erroneous and unsustainable. This is the master's fatal flaw for Nietzsche; it is what prevents him from being a true *Übermensch* or hero. Nonetheless, unlike Hegel who considers the hero as necessarily tragic, as we saw in the case of *Antigone*, Nietzsche still sees the hero as an ideal to reach for.

Although Nietzsche recognizes in the master certain defects to be corrected, while recognizing a few positive attributes in the slave, he generally displays a strong preference for the master, particularly in the area which most concerns our discussion:

292 See Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, 7-34.

forgetting-forgiving versus *ressentiment*. Even though the master and the *Übermensch* are not identical, there is a direct relation between the two, particularly with respect to this topic. Whereas a Hegelian reading of Nietzsche would suggest that the *Übermensch* develops out of a sublimation of the master and the slave, with history preferring neither specifically, Nietzsche himself does not seem to fully suggest this. In fact, the consensus in the literature has it that Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch* directly develops out of, or on the model of, the master, not the slave.²⁹³ For Hegel, neither the master nor the slave is able to personally overcome. Sublimation for Hegel, the overcoming of this apparent conflict, occurs on the level of history, not on the level of the individual. Rather than adapting a progressive account of history on the level of the collective spirit, Nietzsche, in contrast, focuses on the spirit of the individual. History is marked by the "cyclical appearance of individuals," heroes who give us examples of greatness. The function of the hero is not to be sacrificed to the larger culture and the collective spirit in its movement towards the telos of humanity, as is commonly understood to be the case for Hegel. Rather, "Nietzsche argues that the function of culture is the production of individual great men."²⁹⁴ In this respect we can see Nietzsche's conception of the hero as quite different from Hegel's. As Burnham argues, "the meaning of tragedy is the struggle of the individual against the 'prevailing order of things,' and yet also the

293 See Kain, P. J. "Nietzschean Genealogy and Hegelian History in the Genealogy of Morals," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 26 (1996), p. 123. Kain attempts to critique this position, but acknowledges it as the predominant one on Nietzsche's understanding of the master-slave conflict.

294 Douglas Burnham, *The Nietzsche Dictionary*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, 184.

‘consecration’ of the individual to something higher.”²⁹⁵ The master and slave do not both meet an equally tragic end for Nietzsche as they do for Hegel. In order for the master to *truly* be a master — that is, overcome his past — he must also be a hero. In order for him to be a hero, he must express a sort of separation, independence, and distinction from both his former self and also from society around him. The master’s mistake for Nietzsche was not simply that he considered himself to be independent, but that he claimed to be so while being still fully dependent on the slave. While thinking he is free, the master is still held captive by the norms of society which govern the slave. The liberation of the master, and the advent of the hero, is marked by the master’s rejection of the culture around him which blocks his potential to become a more robust, heroic version of himself. As Burnham notes, Nietzsche’s targets are “concepts of democratic equality, individual rights and the virtues of charity and pity.”²⁹⁶ It is fitting that these are targets Nietzsche shares with Žižek, Hunt, and Bernstein in their readings of Améry.

Žižek, Hunt, and Bernstein each provide unique interpretations of Améry. What sets these thinkers apart from other interpreters, particularly those approaching Améry from the Analytic perspective, is that they aim not to only provide an argument for the virtues of resentments but also, through their readings of Améry, aim to provide, like Nietzsche, a genealogy of morals. This is a distinction whose importance cannot be overstated. At the risk of repetition, let us restate the quandary such a distinction places

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

us in. To claim that resentment can be virtuous requires an argument for how resentment can participate in virtue. The task of Žižek, Hunt, Bernstein, and anyone else who takes a Nietzschean approach to Améry is quite different. They argue that morality itself, if it is to be legitimately conceived, must be grounded in the very structure of resentment, namely a structure characterized by the act of opposition to the mores of a given society. Next, their task is not simply to show how resentment is virtuous, but how resentment unveils the structure of a truer, superior way of understanding ethics or morality. They must show how virtue itself — manifest in a proper, grounded understanding of ethics or morality — must necessarily involve resentment or something like it. As Bernstein explains:

Améry understands the problem of resentment to be a function of the historical categories constituting the space of moral claiming between the victims and perpetrators of the Nazi atrocities. Even more precisely, he is attempting to demonstrate that the silencing of resentment is solely a function of an *historical a priori* set of assumptions that suppress moral truth in favor of social functionality.²⁹⁷

The first part of this statement is difficult to contest. It is quite clearly the case that Améry sees resentment as serving a moral role, making a moral claim by the victim against the perpetrator. Resentment as claim-making is not novel in the history of philosophy. Insofar as Améry can be seen to argue resentment's virtue in this manner, his argument can also be buttressed by many in the history of philosophy, particularly the branch stemming from Aristotle, as discussed earlier in this study. Améry's argument for the virtues of resentment continues in a well-regarded tradition of moral philosophy

297 "Améry's Devastation and Resentment an Ethnographic Transcendental Deduction" in *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie*, 76:1 (2014), 13.

rather than representing a hard break from it. This alone should not dictate how we interpret Améry, of course. The text should guide what reading of Améry is most appropriate. We note it simply to understand the additional challenges that such a ‘hard break reading would place upon us if we are to accept it. The trouble with the second half of Bernstein’s claim here is also that it sets moral truth and social functionality in stark opposition. It posits a rigid dichotomy between the two. It also presents the prospects of accepting the virtues of resentment as an all-or-none proposition. If we are to accept the virtues of resentment, and deny other aspects of it, are we ultimately doing a disservice to Améry, in his understanding of morality? It seems, under this reading, that it must be possible for Améry to accept certain aspects while denying others. Bernstein sees the act of silencing resentment as silencing the sanctity of the individual victim. However, to some degree if we are to take an Aristotelean view of resentment’s virtue, some aspect of silencing must be present if we are to arrive at resentment’s virtue in the first place. Resentment left untempered (by society, its mores, or other factors) becomes a vice. It is unclear that we can maintain this dichotomy and at the same time make this point.

Zizek and Hunt advance a similar argument and effectively pose dichotomies similar to the one presented by Bernstein above. Ultimately, the dichotomies put forth by these arguments are the dichotomies between mercy and justice, Christianity and Judaism, resentment and forgiveness. It should be noted that not only are such dichotomies inaccurate, they are also highly problematic, as we shall soon explore in greater detail. Nonetheless, Zizek makes this point quite concisely in his reading of Améry. As Zizek states, “Rigorous Jewish justice and Christian mercy, the inexplicable

gesture of undeserved pardon, stand opposed.”²⁹⁸ What Améry does, according to Žizek, is “to assert the priority of the Jewish principle of just revenge/punishment — an ‘eye for an eye,’ the *ius talionis*.”²⁹⁹ Hunt also advocates for a similar reading of Améry, through Nietzsche:

The third element of Nietzsche’s critique of Christian morality focuses on the legacy of the inversion of values: the mass psychology that privileges charity, pity, and forgiveness as virtues of the ascetic ideal ... At this level, Nietzsche’s critique of *ressentiment* is revealed as a critique of Christian morality as that which values and crystallizes certain responses to suffering.³⁰⁰

What Hunt does here, which is perhaps the weakest aspect of her argument, is bifurcate the virtues of charity, pity, and forgiveness, on the one hand, from that of resentment, on the other. What she overlooks is the possibility that although the former and the latter are separate in some respects, they have an intimate relation to each other — indeed they can work together, and perhaps are best defined in light of working together. Another paired dichotomy which Žizek and Hunt propose is the supposed dichotomy between Judaism and Christianity, which they express by the dichotomy between resentment and forgiveness, justice and injustice. As Hunt frames this dichotomy, “Against those who would rather punish, Jesus insists that there is duty to forgive.”³⁰¹ Hunt defines forgiveness as “a Christian ideal introduced to us by Jesus against a history that had hitherto understood retaliation as the natural and just response

298 Žizek, 190.

299 Ibid.

300 Hunt, 90.

301 Hunt, 55.

to injury.”³⁰² Perhaps unintentionally, this leaves a problematic remainder of what we touched on earlier. Hunt speaks about the moral hegemony Christianity has over our morals and values in the West, which, she posits, ‘forgiveness’ (that is, the conception of forgiveness) embodies. However, the suggestion that presents itself as a problematic remainder is the thought that Christianity has a monopoly over forgiveness and that Judaism itself cannot account for the concept. In the context of the issues involving Améry, this becomes particularly problematic. It was quite common during the time of Améry’s writing and prior, in Germany and the rest of Europe, to depict the Jew in a way that became a caricature: as a resentful toxic person lacking the very characteristics (mercy, charity, and empathy, etc.) which would make him fully human.³⁰³ To define Judaism and the Jewish people as simply those advocating resentment, and even revenge, as a founding principle of cultural or religious mores, we create an additional problem of having to explain how such a people did not fit the caricature of Jews by Nazi Germans and other fascists governments in Europe prior to and during Améry’s time in the camps. This is a theme Améry implicitly touches on in his discussion of resentment, and yet much of the secondary literature ignores this very real danger in their readings of him.

302 Ibid, 66.

303 See Brudholm, *Resentment’s Virtue*, where he discusses Améry’s own acknowledgment of the dangers of the German people perceiving him, through his works, as a “resentful jew”—one filled with “stagnant, Old Testament, barbaric hate,” quickly approaching the mistaken caricature many Europeans had at the time of the Jew and Jewish people (Brudholm, 145-146; Améry, 75). I contend that the fact Améry acknowledges this caricature and wishes to address it, providing an all-together different understanding of resentment this caricature would suggest, is crucial to Améry’s argument. As we will discuss later, it also brings Améry close to Arendt in her understanding of the importance of *persuasion* in the public square. In short, my reading of Améry suggests not that he wishes to “defend” resentment up and against the German opposition, but convince them too of its virtue and integrate that understanding into their culture as well.

Such commentators overlook the history and the political baggage behind this depiction. It is incontestable that the image of the resentful Jew bolstered hatred against the Jewish people, leading up to Auschwitz and genocide. When Hannah Arendt speaks about resentment, her primary focus is the resentment of the German people against the Jewish people. She therefore quite reasonably ignores the possibility of the virtue of resentment. Although it might be true that the idea of Améry as a Jewish heroic figure — the hero of resentment — may have a far different context today, and can be seen to have a positive connotation today that it did not have in Germany prior to, during, and shortly after the Shoah, it is also equally important to note the historical context behind this idea before promoting it without acknowledging such concerns. Resentment can be considered virtuous; it can even be considered in some sense heroic. We must also be careful to avoid some of the historical pitfalls of the term. That way, we may also avoid repeating very harmful stereotypes of Jews in the mid-20th century. *Our task is not only to present the ways in which resentment can be virtuous, but to do so in a way that allows us to both highlight the virtues and at the same time overcome these stereotypes.*

The effort to save resentment and its possible virtue from such a critique requires a different approach. In finding a different approach, we must also be charitable to Žižek and Hunt. In fact, the primary impetus behind their readings of Améry is not to advocate the same sort of resentment Arendt criticizes in the voices of the Germans prior to, during, and in the immediate post-war years — voices that she carries with her from experience and in imagination. The main target of Žižek and Hunt's arguments in their readings of Améry is, despite appearances, not Christianity itself. In order to understand

the virtue of Zizek and Hunt's critique of Christianity, we must first understand that Christianity (and 'forgiveness,' a concept they see as intimately related to it) serves a symbolic function for them. What Christianity and forgiveness represent for them, in their readings of Améry, is the danger of passivity and inaction. To the extent that Christian principles of mercy, charity, and sympathy cause us to respond to injustices with inaction, they contribute to immoral results. However, even in this case, the application of these principles is context-dependent. If we are to assume an Aristotelean approach to resentment's virtue, then we can recognize that it is not the principles themselves which are to blame but the improper application of these principles in each given situation. Charity, if properly actualized, is virtuous. An excess of charity, or deficiency, can lead to vice. This is the same framework we can adapt to Améry's understanding of resentment's virtue. The question about Christianity, Judaism, forgiveness, and resentment in Améry must be reframed. Rather than representing Améry's critique as a critique of a larger moral system or hegemony, it is more appropriate to question how the particular form of forgiveness Améry criticizes fails in its own particular way, in a given context and set of circumstances. Both Christians and Jews can join in a discussion to which both sides can contribute. This is preferable to starting with a premise which would exclude a given group of people from the discussion entirely because of a narrow conception about their cultural or religious beliefs. Doing so would present them with what Habermas terms a cognitive burden, but just as importantly, it would strip from us a more comprehensive analysis of the virtues of Améry's resentments — virtues that Améry himself makes clear can be understood by "a common world," not

simply by Jews or Christians, atheists or theists, liberals or conservatives.³⁰⁴

What Žižek and Hunt advocate, through their reading of Améry, is justice, which they each define as proper punishment for injustice. Both also emphasize the relationship between resentment and punishment. For Žižek, the virtue of resentment is ultimately expressed, and can only be fully expressed, when it leads to the enactment of “just revenge/punishment.”³⁰⁵ As Hunt puts it, “Justice is embodied in bodily resentments.”³⁰⁶ What Hunt means by bodily resentments is something we will explore shortly, but suffice it to say that it expresses a point akin to what Žižek is proposing: it is through the *act* of punishment that resentment’s virtue is ultimately expressed. It is in no way contradictory to state that we share common ground with these philosophers in advocating just punishment. Inaction in the face of injustice is wrong, whether that injustice take places in the context of moral harm occurring between individuals or among groups of people. If we are to conclude that Améry’s point in writing about resentment is primarily to vindicate just punishment, then is it fair to say that he at all

304 See Jürgen Habermas *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 2008, 126-129. In it, Habermas argues that religious convictions and worldviews ought not necessarily be excluded from the public realm in the liberal state, but rather embraced. Firstly, this is the case because, for many, religion is not simply a feature but central to how they live their life. To deny this right would deny a crucial right that liberalism guarantees. Secondly, and just as importantly, much of the time these religious principles can effectively be seen to support and provide a deeper foundation for the acceptance of liberal principles by those who adhere to them, while at the same time preventing its adherents from feeling as if a cognitive burden is being placed upon them in the perceived command to turn against such principles in favor of the secular. This also provides a possibility for these principles themselves to be modified, according to the demands of the times. *Liberal* arguments and principles can also be perceived as more *persuasive* if they can be further supported by such religious arguments. Given that Arendt considers persuasion to be of utmost importance in the realm of politics, we will develop this further, in the context of resentment, in the last section of the dissertation.

305 Žižek, 190.

306 Hunt, 177.

initiates a break with Western tradition and the history of philosophy for that matter? If Améry's primary concern is just punishment in the face of inaction, he is certainly not alone in the history of philosophy. We might even say that pigeon-holing ourselves into such a reading of Améry adds nothing novel to the very long conversation about justice in the history of philosophy. Even Levinas, characterized as a pacifist, believes that it is the duty of the third party to respond to injustice with violence, if violence is indeed necessary. In this sense, what Žižek and Hunt enact through Améry is not a rejection of the mainstream Western philosophical tradition, or even Christian tradition, though they at times wish to frame it as such. Rather, such a critique is in line with and, in fact, a continuation of both traditions.

Whether or not Améry brings something novel to this discussion is another matter. I argue that he does. Améry is making a philosophical argument which does not simply affirm or deny the history of philosophy on the topic of resentment but in fact adds to it in a major way. I will make the case for my reading of Améry in the final chapters of this show. There are, however, some issues with what Hunt and Žižek conclude from their discussions of Améry regarding the nature of resentment. However, these issues shed light upon our path towards creating an alternate reading. First, just because punishment and resentment are intimately related does not mean that the relationship between the two is necessary and sufficient. That is, it is one matter to state that punishment can be a goal of resentment. However, limiting resentment to punishment, even if enacting punishment is a necessary consequence of it — particularly in the context of mass crime — also proves insufficient in the context of Améry, a topic we shall explore in detail in the

coming chapters. The second major problematic assumption underlining Hunt and Zizek's approach to Améry is the assumption that establishing the connection between resentment and just punishment by itself establishes a break from the supposed hegemony of "forgiveness." The assumption is that "resentment" is a concept opposed to "forgiveness" rather than providing another form of forgiveness in its wake. To understand this, we must highlight a distinction that both Zizek and Hunt see as crucial to their arguments.

In order to address the Nietzschean elephant in the room (the issue of providing a Nietzschean reading of Améry, while at the same time acknowledging that Améry's main adversary in the work is, in fact, Nietzsche), Zizek and Hunt contend that an important distinction must be made. This is the distinction between two forms of resentment: resentment and *ressentiment*.³⁰⁷ Zizek also makes it clear that he bases his reading entirely on this distinction. Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment* is tied to slave morality; however, as Zizek contends, Améry's version of "resentment has nothing to do with the slave morality".³⁰⁸ Rather, Améryan resentment is a "Nietzschean heroic resentment, a refusal to compromise, an insistence 'against all odds'".³⁰⁹ But the "resentment" Améry speaks of is not the resentment that Nietzsche critiques. Hunt and Zizek, as well as many others in the literature agree on this point. Whether this can be understood as a hard distinction is something Brudholm contests, as we will explore in later chapters when we discuss the relevance of Améry's insights for current issues in transitional justice. Suffice

307 Hunt, 77.

308 Zizek, 191.

309 Zizek, 192.

it to say that drawing this distinction between “resentment” and *ressentiment* in reading Améry’s work is not entirely off base and perhaps, in some limited way, necessary if only to distinguish it from Nietzsche’s understanding of the term.

What nearly all of commentators on Améry, including Brudholm himself, can agree upon is that Améryean resentment and Nietzschean *ressentiment* are in some sense distinct. This distinction can be seen, first and foremost, by the different symptoms that characterize each. Nietzsche’s man of *ressentiment* is someone characterized by rage, feelings of vengeance, and most of all, *silence*. Rather than *acting* on the harms inflicted upon him, confronting his perpetrator in some way, he internalizes the suffering and pain and becomes a great problem unto himself. Furthermore, he fantasies about enacting vengeance upon his perpetrator in order to force him to atone for his crimes against him. Given that this vengeance is simply a product of fantasy, a grand delusion at its finest, such vengeance is never enacted. To use a Nietzschean turn of phrase, in light of our discussion of the tarantula above, the venom is internalized and slowly eats away at its unsuspecting subject.

“Resentment” for Améry is something quite different. Améry’s main task is to distinguish himself from this image of the man of *ressentiment*. In fact, Améry seeks to distinguish himself from this image to such an extent that a clear definition of what Améry means by “resentment” is difficult to grasp. He defines it negatively, which is why there is no agreed upon definition of Améryean resentment in the literature.³¹⁰ What is

310 Brudholm’s book on Améry, *Resentment’s Virtue*, has the most comprehensive overview of the secondary literature on Améry to date, and yet what he finds is that there is still no real

clear is that what the man of *ressentiment* internalizes, Améry externalizes. He publicizes his pain and suffering to the world around him, rather than allowing the toxic feelings of victimization fester. The question is, how does he externalize it, and if externalization is the goal, what is Améry seeking by advocating that such toxins be externalized by victims? How are these toxins to be expelled from the body? How is the person infected by them — by being victimized — to overcome his ailments? Améry makes clear that inaction is not a sufficient response to being a victim. The victim must not comfort himself in fanciful delusions, but rather *act*. How does Améry define action? This study contends that this is the primary question to ask when approaching Améry's work. Exploring this topic, rather than overlooking its nuance, is the only way we can hope to establish a comprehensive approach towards his understanding of resentments and their virtues.

The approach of Zizek, Hunt, and others is reasonable enough. If Améryean resentments share very little in common with the man of *ressentiment*, then perhaps the best way to elucidate them is to come to a definition of “resentment” by simply negating the attributes *ressentiment* has and the symptoms it causes. If *ressentiment* is characterized by passivity in the face of being struck in some manner, whether physical or psychological, then resentment in turn should be defined an active reaction to the strike —through striking back. In fact, Bernstein and Hunt both emphasize the passage where Améry describes being hit by his foreman and being able to muster the courage to

consensus on what Améryean resentment precisely *is*.

hit back.³¹¹ In the act of hitting back, he regains his sense of self-worth, dignity, and humanity. Although there is more to this point by Bernstein and Hunt than first meets the eye, their reading of Améry's understanding of resentment is clearly expressed. As Hunt explains, resentment is "expressed as an immediate riposte to insult or injury".³¹² She explains: "Resentment acts in the service of releasing the self-inflicted revenge (first developed in *Human, all too Human*) and thereby prevents the internalization of resentment and its transformation into a pathological condition".³¹³ Hunt's words here echo our previous discussion of the tarantula:

Actively carrying out revenge produces a sudden and brief illness that can quickly expel the poison of internalized revenge. Left as an unrealized desire, the condition becomes chronic. Revenge, in this passage is viewed as that which enables the poison of resentment to be released. Revenge, an enacted resentment, attempts to restore a balance of health.³¹⁴

However, as we learned from our former discussion, although externalizing the venom is the only way to overcome the illness, all methods of externalization are not equally effective. It is certainly not the case that all methods are sufficient; some methods are in fact wholly insufficient. Dancing the tarantella — externalizing, thereby expressing the venom and its symptoms within — does little, in fact, to cure the disease of tarantism. Such an enactment comes to delude the individual that its *apparent* effectiveness is in fact real and not itself a product of delusion, a symptom of the disease. Even if the enactment of justice — just revenge, proper punishment, as Žižek and others put it — is the ultimate

311 Améry, 90.

312 Hunt, 78.

313 Hunt, 100.

314 Ibid., 101

telos of resentment, there are still many questions regarding how we arrive there. The first question we must ask, accordingly, is: what is the *telos* of punishment, in this respect?

As Žižek and Hunt both argue, revenge plays a vital role. The *act* of revenge allows the poison of *ressentiment* to be released, according to their interpretations. They both also suggest that Christianity and the hegemony it imposes — a hegemony which, to be clear, is as much about Christianity as it is about liberalism and all other manifestations of Western culture — is set at odds with resentment *a priori*. Similarly, they see revenge opposing the hegemony of forgiveness. As Hunt states “Améry, like Nietzsche, understand forgiveness as the suppression of a base desire for revenge”.³¹⁵ It is for this reason that they each advocate, through Améry, eye-for-an-eye justice over turning the other cheek, revenge over forgiveness, punishing over forgiving and forgetting. As Žižek states, in his reiteration of Améry’s Resentments, “The first thing to do here is to assert the priority of the Jewish principle of just revenge/punishment — an ‘eye for an eye,’ the *ius talionis* — over the standard formula of ‘we will forgive your crime, but we will not forget it’.”³¹⁶ In attempting to distinguish between Christian mercy and Jewish justice, Žižek also highlights a crucial point as a byproduct of his discussion — the inherent connection not only between forgiveness and forgetting, but also between forgetting and punishment: “The only way truly to forgive and forget is to enact a revenge (or a just punishment): after the criminal is properly punished, I can

³¹⁵ Hunt, 123.

³¹⁶ Žižek, 190.

move forward and leave the whole affair behind.”³¹⁷ *Thus, when punishment is properly enacted, the suggestion is that forgiveness is not only in some sense possible, but inherently linked to the process of proper punishment.* When the criminal is properly punished for his crimes, both the criminal and the victim can be released from the crippling nature of the crime. In this sense, through punishment, the crime is forgiven. As Žizek says:

There is thus something liberating in being properly punished for one’s crime: I paid my debt to society and I am free again, no past burdens attached. The “merciful” logic of “forgive, but not forget” is, on the contrary, much more oppressive: I (the criminal who is forgiven) remain forever haunted by the crime I committed, since the crime was not “undone (*ungeschehengemacht*),” retroactively canceled, erased, in what Hegel sees as the meaning of punishment.³¹⁸

Žizek draws on Nietzsche’s own understanding of forgiveness as an act of forgetting here. The ability to forget is also connected to Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return. When one is able to forget — that is, when conditions permit one to properly forget the past — one can embrace the future.

Bringing Hegel to the conversation here is crucial. Punishment, a concept Hegel developed in his seminal work on “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate,” discussed earlier, provides us with the conditions to make this possible. However, punishment also has its limits, particularly in the context of the Holocaust. As we will come to see, Améry puts these limits on display in Resentments. Although there are some major differences, when we read this passage from Žizek, we cannot help but note the striking similarities it

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 190.

has to Arendt's writing on "forgiveness." Important to note is the common *telos* Zizek, and Arendt share, the former in his Hegelian-Nietzschean description of punishment, and the latter in her own description of "forgiveness." Although there are some important differences, both share the common goal of overcoming the past, even to the extent of using the same language of "undoing" the past offense in a way that liberates both parties.

Although much of the literature on Améry contends that the dichotomy between forgiveness and resentment is crucial, with this analysis we have reason to suspect that the apparent dichotomy is, in fact, much weaker. If punishment is embodied resentment, as Hunt and Zizek argue, but punishment can also be revealed as a form of forgiveness, then the rigid dichotomies Hunt and Zizek assume between forgiveness and resentment, mercy and justice, the New and the Old Testaments, also dissolve. As a result, we might reframe the conflict as one not between forgiveness and resentment, but between two forms of forgiveness: one bound in *ressentiment* and one bound in "resentment."

It is true that Arendt, on the one hand, and Zizek and Hunt, on the other, reject *ressentiment*. Zizek and Hunt advocate a resentment that entails externalization of the feelings that might otherwise lead to *ressentiment*: the internalization of the venom — the feelings of spite, anger, and revenge — that prove utterly destructive to the victim. As we will see in the coming chapter, Arendt herself, albeit in a different manner, is also an advocate for externalization, through action, in her conception of "forgiveness." Confronted with the possibility that both punishment (as Zizek, Bernstein and Hunt describe it) and forgiveness (as Arendt describes it) share the same ultimate goal —

namely, to in some sense transform the nature of past, its effects on the victim and perpetrator, and so on — we can access both possibilities in light of what Améry presents to us. Our ultimate goal in doing so is not to choose one over the other (namely, the approach via “punishment,” or the Arendtian approach via “forgiveness”), but to explore the advantages and disadvantages of each. In approaching the limitations of each, we can then determine their applicability to Améry’s own case and what his resentments primarily concern. To put this differently, what I contend is that both are at play in Améry, even though one might ultimately take priority over the other in what Améry’s experience reveals to him and us.

The virtue of resentment, just like any virtue, is context-dependent. Améry’s story, and his description of resentment, is also context-dependent — it is a context that must be fully explored prior to coming to a solid definition of his own particular, specific understanding of resentment. Améry reveals that his experience of being victimized is totalizing. As we will discuss in chapter 7, where we will highlight important distinctions between moral and legal guilt, and between individual and collective crime, “punishment” understood in the Hegelian sense seems to approach its limits. If forgiving is forgetting, and punishment allows us to forget, then some complicated questions arise in the context of the Holocaust. Nonetheless, the process of “forgiveness,” understood in the Arendtian sense, does not negate the possibility of punishment. In certain circumstances for Améry, regarding certain perpetrators he had interacted with, punishment is both necessary and sufficient. In other circumstances it is not. What is to be done in the face of this reality? It is in these circumstances that an Arendtian

understanding of “forgiveness,” quite specific in its own right, can serve a supplementary role. Furthermore, in this context, one crucial advantage to the Arendtian form of forgiveness is that forgetting is not crucial and necessary to the process, as it is in the type of forgiveness offered by punishment as just revenge.

Before addressing these concerns, however, it seems that the Zizekian, Huntian, and Bernsteinian approach also raises further questions regarding how punishment itself can be effectively carried out. All three argue that resentment is the fuel to achieve just punishment and, ultimately, justice. However, by their excessive attempts to incorporate Nietzsche into Améry’s project, just punishment becomes untenable. Although all three of these interpreters use Hegel as a backdrop for their analyses, the spirit with which they read Améryan resentment is remarkably Nietzschean. Zizek, Hunt, and Bernstein all express a deep mistrust of the masses, mass psychology, and the philosophical infrastructure of the world which faced Améry in his time. Hunt and Bernstein, in particular, see the failure of this infrastructure as the primary culprit for *why* Améry was put in the position he was in — for Auschwitz, and for his resentments. Améry describes his resentments as a “protest.” This is true, and is certainly an unavoidable fact when confronted with Améry’s work. What is less incontrovertible is the idea that this “protest” Améry speaks of manifests itself historically, against a hegemony — or, what might just as easily be termed in their interpretations, against the spirit — of Western civilization, the Judaeo-Christian tradition, morality, etc. This is the philosophical framework from which they interpret Améry’s resentments. Accordingly, it is not surprising that they interpret Améry’s resentments as a “protest” against all of these philosophical, moral,

ethical, and religious superstructures they critique and see Améry himself critiquing through his Resentments. As Bernstein states: “[H]e is attempting to demonstrate that the silencing of resentment is solely a function of an historical *a priori* set of assumptions that suppress moral truth in favor of social functionality.”³¹⁹ As Hunt contends, Améry helps us to “diagnose the trouble philosophers have in distinguishing resentment and *ressentiment* as a conflation within the concept of *ressentiment*.”³²⁰

This much is true, and is without a doubt a noble and noteworthy aim. However, where Hunt, as well as Bernstein and Žizek, lose textual support is in the claim that Améry sees *ressentiment* as an exclusively Judaeo-Christian phenomenon. As Hunt defines it, resentment (according to Améry) opposes the state of *ressentiment*. She defines this as “the individual psychological type (the phenomenon of the *ressentiment* of the weak), the slave revolt proper (the mobilization of the individual type by Christianity) and the contemporary mass psychology (the legacy of Christianity).”³²¹ Hunt continues: “Within Nietzsche’s moral psychology, I propose that we read resentment as the interruption not of individual *ressentiment*, but of the whole fabric of psychological types that share a common history of Christian morality.”³²² And later: “Resentment, I am suggesting, is an active self-affirmation against hegemonic rule.”³²³ Resentment performs a negation of *ressentiment*, for Hunt, Bernstein and Žizek. However, it does not

319 “Améry’s Devastation and Resentment an Ethnographic Transcendental Deduction” in *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie*, 76:1 (2014), 13.

320 Hunt, 77.

321 Bernstein, 77.

322 Ibid.

323 Ibid.

simply negate Christianity, the Judeo-Christianity religiosity in general, but also — and, as Hunt notes, perhaps even more importantly — liberalism as such.

This is an incredibly important point which might be overlooked in the project they see Améry encompassing. As we will discuss in the concluding chapters in further detail, Améry's main goal in Resentments seems to be integration, something which he saw could not be adequately accomplished at the time. But for Bernstein, Žizek and Hunt, integration seems to be the Great Satan which Western liberalism represents to Améry. As Hunt states, in this sense *liberalism* itself:

[S]eeks to shape a majority by integrating and homogenizing difference and in doing so it also shapes the minority, annexing it and relating to it as morally corrupt ... *Ressentiment* then, is not an exaggerated form of resentment, but rather a historical development that finds expression in current liberal responses to suffering such as victim identity politics.³²⁴

To reiterate this point, in Žizek, Bernstein, and Hunt's readings of Améry we see that what is at play is not only religion, but all political, moral, judicial structures which have arisen out of the Judeo-Christian traditions, first and foremost our current one in the West, liberalism. Hunt even suggests that it is not even Christianity as such which is at issue, but that it is the neo-liberal global order which is most problematic because it denies the importance of difference. Hunt may be correct that liberalism demands some form of reconciliation of difference, but it is unclear whether any alternative to it would be possible or even at all preferable on the practical level. Arendt, and perhaps even Améry, would not seem to think so.

We discussed earlier the connection between punishment and forgiveness.

324 Hunt, 71.

According to Hegel, forgiveness is inherent to punishment. When something is punished, it is automatically forgiven. Once a criminal serves the time, he in some sense undoes the crime — or at least pays for the burden which his crime has caused society. Žižek, Bernstein, and Hunt all advocate for just punishment, and see resentment's virtue as being the fuel for justice as such. The problem is they all go too far in advocating a complete negation of the very societal structures developed in the West for enacting such punishment. It is one matter to integrate the claims of the oppressed into the legal, philosophical, and political system we in the west call liberalism; it is another matter to negate the political system entirely and attempt to replace it with those claims alone, because having *claims* for justice is not yet a model of a political system that would *enact* justice. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that in making such claims, these interpreters do not escape Hegel's point that any and all punishment involves forgiveness. To some extent, they all acknowledge this, but there is a problem which they overlook.

In speaking about Améry's resentments, we must acknowledge that much of the resentment Améry harbors is against the German people as a whole, not simply those who were legally guilty of specific crimes. Repairing and *forgiving* those seemingly petty offenses — the offenses made by the shopkeeper who may have refused him service prior to his internment at Auschwitz, the school children who sneered at him on the street — are in some sense just as important as *punishing* his torturer, Wajsb. Forgiving those people, and thus being able to *reintegrate* and re-identify as a German — as just as German as anyone else — is a main goal for Améry which is overlooked by Žižek, Hunt, and Bernstein. Forgiving the individuals which effectively make up the masses, for

Améry, is a process; it is a process which in some sense transcends the criminal justice system as such, but that does not mean it lies in direct opposition to that system.

“Forgiveness,” as Arendt sees it, can play a supplementary role rather than a role of negation with respect to “resentment” as such, and vice versa. Punishing warlords and criminals of genocide, as well as winning over public opinion, as we will see in chapter 7, work hand in hand in contemporary cases of ethnic cleansing and mass crimes. Through punishment, the nature of the crime and the grasp it has on the given society as a whole can be forgiven. Where Hunt, Žizek, and Bernstein go astray is assuming that it is not the crime itself and the people involved in that crime — even if only tangentially — which Améry sees as what must be “forgiven,” but the historical superstructures which have guided Western societies for centuries. The question we must ask is whether this amounts to throwing the baby out with the bathwater and, furthermore, whether there is even textual evidence that Améry himself would support this claim. The distinction we make in our own approach to Améry is that whereas Žizek, Hunt, and Bernstein see the Holocaust as the natural culmination of liberalism and Western tradition, we (including, as we will argue, Améry) see the Holocaust as an aberration which must be corrected, setting the West back on its proper course.

Žizek, Hunt, and Bernstein offer a profoundly anti-Kantian reading of Améry. Human rights, mainstream liberal legal theory, ethics, and morality are all targets of critique.³²⁵ When understood in the proper Left-Hegelian context, their approach to Kant

325 Echoing Hunt’s critique of what she calls neo-liberalism, Žizek states, “The philosophical underpinning of this ideology of the universal liberal subject is the Cartesian subject, especially in its

is hardly surprising.³²⁶ This critique of Kant is not something we can prove or disprove within the scope of this dissertation. It is important to realize the significance of the possibility of reading Améry as they propose we do, if it is indeed a possibility. First and foremost, an anti-Kantian reading would drive Améry and Arendt apart. Is such a critique *in the context of Améry* necessary? Is it possible? Is it textually supported? Does it leave us with a more theoretically consistent and, perhaps most importantly for Arendt, a more practical understanding of the import of resentment in politics and transitional justice today? As this dissertation hopes to prove, Améry is not a thinker on the fringes of politics, but quite the opposite. What he writes is accessible to the average citizen in the West, and applicable to mainstream goals that people have in Western societies. Arendt herself stresses the importance of persuasion in her political philosophy. It is my contention that Žižek, Hunt, and Bernstein take their reading a few steps too far in suggesting that Améry is calling for what would amount to a totalizing revolutionary negation of values. In effect, theirs is a less-than-persuasive practical reading of Améry. For Améry, the truths he comes across — although perhaps only directly experienced by a person overcome by mass crimes like the Holocaust — are universal truths pertinent to

Kantian version. This subject is conceived of as capable of stepping outside his particular cultural/social roots and asserting his full autonomy and universality” He goes on to say that this universality is a counterfeit one which manifests in ideas like human rights. As he states, “Human rights emerge as a false ideological universality which masks and legitimizes the concrete politics of Western imperialism and domination, military interventions, and neocolonialism” (Žižek 148). Hunt also critiques the conception of human rights (Hunt 10). Bernstein’s article “Rights” further explicates the critique of human rights in Hegelian terms and is firmly anti-Kantian (Bernstein 2018). This seems to guide his reading of Améry, where he extends this critique of rights to concepts like self-respect and human dignity (Zolkos 40).

326 Their overall critique, as we echoed in the very beginning of our study (i.e.: Hegel’s take on Kant in his discussion of Noah and the Flood), is that Kant loses any practical ground for his conception of ethics and moral commandments,

the future of an interrelated, global humanity.

A practical reading of Améry would have to provide a practical means of punishment for it to have any effective value. As we will further discuss in chapter 8, this would require a means of dealing with both moral *and* criminal guilt: parties who are criminally guilty, as well as people who might have only been morally guilty, a guilt that Améry contends applies to the majority of Germans. As we will see when we delve into current issues of transitional justice, our liberal system of criminal justice is reasonably effective at dealing with the former and less effective at addressing the latter. Žizek, Bernstein, and Hunt attribute the moral failures of the masses in Germany to the structural insufficiency of the ethics, morality, legal systems, and ultimately, the religious foundations of Western society. They place all of this in question, but doing so presents its own problem. If our ability to punish rests on the entirety of the Western tradition as its foundation, then if we strip ourselves of this foundation, we face a profound void. Ultimately, how are we to punish if we have no basis to do so? The question of the basis for punishment and ethics as a whole is an issue which Bernstein, Hunt, and Žizek all acknowledge in some way or another.³²⁷ In fact, the methodology they create in generating their readings of Améry is an attempt to address to this problem. They all employ a methodology which arises out of something like Cartesian doubt about the body politic. By calling into question all we in the liberal West have come to take for certain, they attempt to reconstruct from the ground up the foundations for truth and certainty

327 Žizek, 190; Zolkos, 58; Hunt, 63.

anew. Like Descartes, their starting point is the body.

CHAPTER 6 – TRESPASS AS BODILY TRANSGRESSION

We previously spoke about the prevalence of the phrase “embodied ethics” in Hunt’s analysis of Améry’s Resentments. Bernstein and Zizek also suggest, in step with Nietzsche and Hegel, that if ethics is to be really real, it must be embodied in the real world rather than being an empty theoretical concept which is completely immaterial. We can take this quite literally, as Fichte does through his concept of “the need to act,” as we touched on earlier. It is only through action, namely, through positing the “not-I,” that the concept of being a human person is actualized. For Fichte this happens in the context of the subject-to-subject relation, more specifically, when one’s personal physical boundaries are crossed — when one is violated, injured, or in any way misrecognized. This provides greater clarity for understanding what they mean when they say that resentment must be embodied. As Zizek shows us, the most immediate way that resentment can be embodied is in the act of “just revenge,” or punishment. The value they see in the victim’s resentment amounts to the effectiveness it has in fomenting the enactment of punishment of the criminal. The vices of *ressentiment* are avoided, accordingly to their readings, when the associated feelings can be properly transmuted into action, such as the controlled violence of the state, the imposition of imprisonment by our criminal justice system, or capital punishment itself (of which Hegel is a firm advocate). When Améry states that his resentments must be externalized rather than internalized, this is what they take him to mean. The issue they all come to acknowledge and confront is that by questioning the very basis of our criminal justice system in the West (which is very much the product of Kantian ethics, Judeo-Christian morality,

Roman legal structures, etc.), they also recognize the apparent necessity of grounding resentment in something far more immediate: the body itself.

Bernstein's commentary on Améry can serve to highlight why the body is so important for anyone wishing to take a Left-Hegelian or Nietzschean approach towards Améry. Bernstein has a very specific understanding of Améry's work. Rather than seeing Améry's Resentments as the central chapter of the work, Bernstein sees Améry's chapter on "Torture" to be of utmost importance. Améry gives a profound phenomenology of torture in this chapter, often pushing the boundaries which usually distinguish prose from poetry. Bernstein's analysis of this section on "Torture" seems to perfectly frame Améry's Resentments, or at least the way they are understood by a portion of the secondary literature (Žižek, Hunt, Brison, Zolkos). He frames his understanding of Améry on "the body" and an ethic of embodiment. Yet he does not begin his chapter with an analysis of "the body," but rather with a critique of "human dignity," which he sees as being of utmost importance to Améry. Bernstein refers elsewhere to "human dignity as the secular version of the sacred."³²⁸ What might this mean? Améry introduces the topic of human dignity himself as follows:

I must confess that I don't know exactly what that is: human dignity In one instance human dignity is bound to a certain physical convenience, in the other to the right of free speech, in still another perhaps to the availability of erotic partners of the same sex. I don't know if the person who is beaten by the police loses human dignity. Yet I am certain that with the very first blow that descends on him he loses something we will perhaps temporarily call "trust in the world."³²⁹

³²⁸ See "Torture: J.M. Bernstein," *PoliticalConcepts.org*, 2012. Last accessed March 4, 2021.

³²⁹ Améry, 27-28.

As we will discuss in more detail later, Améry's writing style makes it difficult to determine whether his statement here is literary (using hyperbole, irony, satire), purely phenomenological and psychological (revealing a truth limited to his own particular experience), or philosophical (making a metaphysical claim about the nature of "dignity" and, by extension, "morality," as it is conceived by the world at large). Bernstein, and a few others in the secondary literature, presents a reading grounded in the opinion that the latter interpretation is self-evident and most appropriate. Accordingly, for them, Améry is a philosopher making a metaphysical claim about "The loss of trust in the world." This loss, according to Bernstein's interpretation, becomes "the primary locus of ethical experience, the place where our sense of self-worth is existentially posed in our relation to relevant others."³³⁰ The experience of torture for Améry, according to Bernstein, shows that "In comparison with the loss of the trust in the world, the question of human dignity appears almost abstract."³³¹ As Zolkos states, with respect to Améry's conception here, in light of Bernstein's chapter, "dignity coincides with the theme of responsibility ... irreducible to demands for principled or dutiful behavior. Rather it is predicated on the receptivity and openness of the self to the other."³³² Bernstein uses Améry's experience to show that one's "human dignity" is in fact not his own possession, nor is it a "metaphysical and natural possession of human beings but a social accomplishment bound to structures of recognition ... as a result it is corporeal and can be taken away."³³³

³³⁰ Zolkos, 39.

³³¹ Ibid., 40.

³³² Zolkos, xiv; 56.

³³³ Zolkos, 40.

This claim seems noncontroversial on the surface. The analysis Bernstein provides on Améry's "loss of trust in the world" also seems quite similar to Arendt's description of what the Nazi regime did to the world at large, most clearly exemplified by Eichmann. Taking a brief detour to understand some important differences is vital at this juncture.

The inability to "feel at home in the world" is a theme present throughout Améry's book. For Bernstein, the torturer's actions threaten the individual victim above all else; they prevent the individual victim from being "at home in the world" and engaging in "everyday living."³³⁴ For Arendt, we can say that Eichmann's actions threaten *human being* as such; they prevent the world from being inhabitable since they create a systemic problem which transcends the sum of the individuals involved. His actions in turn prevent all human beings from feeling "at home in the world," that is, if his actions remain unanswered. But the very nature of the transgression for Bernstein, on the one hand, and Arendt, on the other, is quite different. For Arendt, Eichmann's crime is that he transgresses the moral law (which includes human dignity, duty, etc.), and does so to such an extreme that he threatens the whole world bound by it. The nature of the crime does not erase the moral law nor prove it to be an empty Platonic ideal lacking substance or value. While the crime presents a most severe challenge to the moral law, in doing so the crime actually reaffirms the moral law's existence. This actually relates to how "the Aristotelians" conceived the function of resentment in relation to the nature of the transgression which prompts it. As Brudholm states:

334 J.M. Bernstein, "Torture," *PoliticalConcepts.org*, 2012. Last accessed March 4, 2021..

Adam Smith, Joseph Butler, and others all emphasize the ways in which the expression of resentment *may also stem from perceived violations of normative expectations of the moral order*; thus, resentment is an emotion that performs a valuable socio-ethical function. Like resentment thus conceived, Améry's ressentiments are not only about his struggle to regain his personal dignity but also about what he returns to repeatedly as 'our' problem: the conflict related to the Nazi past.³³⁵

As covered briefly already, both Butler and Smith see resentment's virtue in the role it plays towards the "administration of justice." As Butler puts it, it is "implanted in our nature by God" is "a weapon put into our hands by nature, against injury, injustice and cruelty."³³⁶ As we see from Arendt's own description, the administration of justice in the case of Eichmann is quite different from how it might otherwise be understood in normal circumstances. This is precisely the case *because* the nature of his transgression threatens more than the sum of the individuals involved; it truly is a systemic problem which threatens not one or several human victims, but human being itself. Accordingly, for Arendt, the reason why Eichmann must be put to death is mainly because of the threat he represents to the larger existing moral order without which humanity, as we know it, could not go on.

Although he agrees with Arendt's assessment of the trial and her ultimate approval for the sentence Eichmann was dealt, for Bernstein the experience of torture necessarily makes the victim question this larger existing moral order itself, or at least question it as anything that is not completely contingent. Human dignity and "the moral law" which it rests upon, as Bernstein describes it in another article, is "the secularized

³³⁵ Brudholm, 173, my emphasis.

³³⁶ Butler, 7; 127.

version of the sacred.”³³⁷ It is theological — invested and enveloped in “Platonism.”³³⁸ Although “the loss of trust in the world” leads to the victim’s discovery of “the social” and its importance in our daily lives, it is important to distinguish this understanding from Strawson’s understanding, which we briefly discussed above. For Strawson, resentment is revealed as a *human* emotion because it is something only possible through being involved in interpersonal human relationships. Its virtue comes in revealing the value of “the social”: those relationships and our ability to have them *as* human beings. Yet the social here is ultimately contingent on “Reason” (which I will capitalize here to mark the critiques mounted by Bernstein and others of Kant and Hegel’s conception of Reason as the organizing principle of the ethical universe). We can only have such relationships and be let down when someone transgresses against us by virtue of Reason, which itself gives us those expectations. For Smith and Butler, the same can be said of “justice” or “benevolence.” For Murphy the same can be said for “self-respect.” Being a victim of injustice triggers a response in us which stimulates our pursuit to repair what was lost. These readers take injustice as an aberration from the moral law and our normative expectations or opinions which Reason gives us about justice, dignity, and our self-worth as human beings.³³⁹ For Bernstein, the experience of torture brings Améry to a different truth, a metaphysical one and also an epistemological one: “even if the victim can regain some sense of his intrinsic self-worth, he can no longer have the confidence that this will matter to others, that his mere standing as a human is sufficient to support the existential

337 See “Torture: J.M. Bernstein,” *PoliticalConcepts.org*, 2012.

338 Ibid.

339 Arendt’s distinction between *episteme* and *doxa* also comes to bear here.

proprieties of *everyday living*".³⁴⁰ For Bernstein, *human* reality (the interpersonal or inter-subjective reality which makes one human; what amounts to "the social" for Strawson), is not revealed by the light of "Reason" (or by "human dignity," the moral law, etc.). Rather, for Bernstein, "Reason" *conceals* human being and its being understood.³⁴¹ Furthermore, "the social" in Bernstein's account is not contingent on "Reason," but rather reveals "Reason" to be a disembodied concept. Bernstein, in turn, makes the case that for Améry "human dignity" itself is a hollow concept with insufficient substance. All the things which Améry believed in prior to his being tortured (human dignity, the moral law, self-worth, universal human rights, etc.) are revealed as thoroughly hollow, all the way down, according to Bernstein. The victim's "trust in the world" is revealed as a *groundless* one. As Bernstein puts it, "human dignity" is (a)

340 Zolkos, 39. It is also important to note that Bernstein means something specific when he uses the phrase "everyday living" and relates it to the capacity for "trust." As he states, "I defend this Améryan conception of trust in 'Trust: On the Real but Almost Always Unnoticed, Ever-Changing Foundation of Ethical Life [2011].'" Although we will go into more detail about this shortly, suffice it to say that "Trust" relies on Hegel's conception of "Life" as presented in the essay with which we opened this dissertation: "The Spirit of Christianity." In this essay, Hegel states that "transgression" breaks the bonds between "Life" and "Love." The "metaphysics of 'Love' and 'Life'" represent Hegel's ethical vision in its primordial form, according to Bernstein ("Love and Law: Hegel's Critique of Morality," 2003). "Love" represents the invisible bonds connecting us; "Life" represents the practical and biological aspects, represented by *the body*. As Bernstein states, "in working out the substance of ethical living, above all in opposition to Kant's morality of universal law, Hegel is simultaneously elaborating the structural contours of human experience" (Ibid, 393).

341 As Bernstein states in his reading of the Améryan conception of "Trust," in the essay just mentioned: "A robust account of trust assumes: first, trust relations are primary and practical, and while monitored by reason, they are not rationally constituted; second, trust can sustain its practical primacy over moral reason because it is developmentally prior to reason; and third, trust relations can be the bearers of our worth and vulnerability because they are the developmental products of first *love*" (2011, 395). Bernstein is claiming here that "trust" functions not through the primacy of reason but through embodiment. "First *love*"—namely, the invisible bonds connecting us—is not constituted through "Reason," an empty theological concept on its own, but through the practical primacy of the body. "Life" and "Love" become inextricably linked, once this is understood. Bernstein's approach towards Améry is indisputably Hegelian.

corporeal, and is (b) something which can be taken away.³⁴² Bernstein's reading of Améry becomes geared towards providing substance for a conception of "trust in the world" grounded in "the body," and completely contingent on it. As Bernstein states, he sees "the body ... as constitutive of moral modernity; without it [sic] nothing of the moral and political world we inhabit is intelligible."³⁴³ As Bernstein states elsewhere, "human dignity has an ineliminable corporeal aspect"; it provides the ground for modern morality, or as he puts it, "moral modernity."³⁴⁴ We cannot understand it without understanding the body. The implication here is that "the body" is not only crucial for a sufficient conception of morality today, but also reveals something essentially modern.

From the beginning of this section and of this dissertation as a whole, which we framed around Hegel's depiction of the Flood in "The Spirit of Christianity," we have explored many different themes in dialectic: the Covenant versus the Flood; command vs. freedom, God vs. man, subject vs. object, man vs. nature, the state vs. the individual, Reason vs. passions, the communal vs. the individual, the universal vs. the particular. These themes have also taken different dialectical forms with respect to resentment: "deliberate resentment" vs. "instinctive resentment;" "reasoned resentment" vs. "unreasoned resentment;" "moral resentment" vs "defensive resentment," "deliberate revenge" vs. "instinctive revenge." In keeping with this structure, Bernstein's conception of the structure of human dignity (which he sees revealed in Améry's description of torture) rests on another dialectic: "the voluntary body" vs. "the involuntary body."

342 Bernstein, 40.

343 See "Torture: J.M. Bernstein," *PoliticalConcepts.org*, 2012.

344 Zolkos, 40.

Before we explore this further, it is important to first acknowledge what “the body” represents in this early essay of the young Hegel. I think this is merited since Bernstein himself states: “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate (hereafter Spirit) ... provides the most direct and eloquent presentation of the logical structure and moral content of Hegel’s ethical vision.”³⁴⁵ Bernstein goes on: “In working out the substance of ethical living, above all in opposition to Kant’s morality of universal law, Hegel is simultaneously elaborating the structural contours of human experience.”³⁴⁶ Bernstein sees Améry’s work outlining these very structures. However, is the picture he presents complete, at least with respect to Améry?

What Bernstein explicitly shows in his article on the *Spirit of Christianity* is that what “the body” represents is Jesus himself.³⁴⁷ Bernstein makes a compelling case that this is not a spiritual or religious argument, but a philosophical one. Jesus, bringing together “Love” and “Law,” represents many dialectical tropes. He is God, but also man. He is Spirit, but also flesh. In fact, within the Christian tradition, it is common to refer to Jesus himself as “the body [of Christ].” Through the sacrament of the Eucharist in the Catholic tradition, “the body” is consumed as “the body” of Christ — “the flesh and blood” of Jesus — in the form of bread and wine. As Ignatius of Antioch puts it, “I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became afterwards of the seed of David and Abraham; and I desire

345 “Love and Law: Hegel’s Critique of Morality” in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 70:2 (Summer 2003) 393.

346 Ibid.

347 Ibid.

the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible *love* and eternal *life*.”³⁴⁸

However, in the Christian tradition, the congregation itself is also “the body” of Christ, who himself is also God. This might seem odd for Bernstein who is a Left-Hegelian, not Christian, and not at all religious. Of course, for Bernstein, and arguably for Hegel, this is not a religious claim. Bernstein understands much of the “God-talk” to be secondary to the larger “metaphysical claim” he sees Hegel making, which is ultimately a claim against Kantian ethics. Jesus is not the *actual* fulfillment of the divine covenant, but rather the symbolic fulfillment of the covenant and all the problems embedded in it. The God of Noah is an infinitely removed one, according to Hegel: disembodied and absolutely removed from man and his nature. Jesus ushers in another idea of God. God is no longer external, but embodied. For Bernstein, “The Spirit of Christianity” is ultimately “anti-theological” for this reason. Jesus himself resolves all of these apparent dualisms which Noah, the Enlightenment, Kant — all one in the same, for Hegel — failed to resolve. Jesus is both “God” and “man,” God (“the law”) incarnate. He is what binds “Love” and “Law.” He gives substance to the law.

We can see that there is a larger framework at play in Bernstein’s approach towards “human embodiment” in his essay on Améry, which other philosophers like Zolkos only attribute to his borrowing of the phrase from Helmuth Plessner.³⁴⁹ Even though Bernstein references Helmuth in his chapter, in his description of this concept

348 Peter Kirby. "Historical Jesus Theories," Earlychristianwritings.com April 13, 2021. Available at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-hoole.html> Last accessed March 25, 2021. My emphasis.

349 Zolkos, xiii.

Bernstein remains true to his Hegelian roots. In “Améry’s Body,” he launches a critique of human dignity, self-respect, and morality based on duty or principled behavior.³⁵⁰ If such concepts can be understood, for Bernstein, they must be understood via “the body” itself. Human dignity is embodied. As we have just seen, “Law” is embodied. Jesus, symbolically, represents “God” (“Law”) becoming “flesh.” He is the sublimation of the dichotomy of (1) Noah’s [supposedly] “abstract” covenant and (2) “freedom” represented by nature (both external and internal to man). Inherent in Hegel’s critique of the Covenant is the juxtaposition between “The Spirit of Christianity” and “The Spirit of Judaism,” which it opposes and replaces. And embedded in this is a critique of kosher laws and other seemingly arbitrary or abstract laws of the covenant which put religious commands above human need. Jesus sets human need against the law, reveals how that need trumps the law and, by doing so, reveals that no command is absolute and there is no ultimate “ought.” Instead of an “ought,” Jesus’ ethical *logos* arises out of human need and the satisfaction of that need. “Love thy neighbor” becomes something learned not by principles, norms, and laws but by learning the meaning of human concepts of need (hunger, hurt, etc.). According to Hegel, “Jesus came along and wanted to lift nature so that it became holier than the temple.”³⁵¹ As Bernstein explains, if someone is hungry, feed them. If they need warmth, give them clothes. Effectively, Hegel thinks that we can have morality without any “ought.” Jesus replaces Kantian vertical ethics, founded on an

350 “Améry’s Body: My Calamity, my physical and metaphysical dignity” in *On Jean Améry: Philosophy of Catastrophe*. Edited by Magdalena Zolkos (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011).

351 See J.M. Bernstein, “Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, Lecture 2,” *Thebernsteintapes.com* September 20, 2006. Available at <https://www.bernsteintapes.com/hegellist.html> Last Accessed March 25, 2021.

“ought” with horizontal ethics founded on “[everyday] life” (as Bernstein puts in his essay on torture) and “love.”³⁵² What is revealed in *The Spirit of Christianity* is a metaphysics of life and love, according to Bernstein. “Love” is revealed as the invisible bonds connecting us with others. “Life” is the interconnected practical and biological aspects. It is in this context we can best understand Bernstein’s chapter on Améry, where launches a critique of Kantian ethics and concepts commonly associated with it like “human dignity,” “self-respect,” “universal human rights,” etc. As long as they are in the form of an “ought,” they are insufficient. Jesus, in his life *and* death, reveals this insufficiency.³⁵³ Bernstein takes Améry’s experience to provide just that understanding. Any conception of “human rights” as somehow independently existing of an inherent necessity was shattered by this “loss of trust in the world” which commenced, according to Bernstein, in the embodied act of Améry’s torture. And so, all of this considered, it is not surprising that Bernstein’s interpretation of Améry’s account of human dignity starts with nothing other than “the flesh” itself. The flesh is the law, embodied. As Bernstein states elsewhere, “broken laws stand for broken bodies.”³⁵⁴ Transgression against the law is transgression against the flesh. The flesh itself — more specifically “the skin” — serves as the gateway to the outside world and our socio-recognitive relations to it.

As Améry states, “The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of my self. My *skin* surface shields me against the external world. If I am to have trust, I must feel on

352 Ibid.

353 The fact that Jesus is both God and man, and dies a human death, unveils a divine vulnerability. (Not news to anyone who actually is a Christian, of course... it’s kind of the point of *et homo factus est*.)

354 See “Torture: J.M. Bernstein,” *PoliticalConcepts.org*, 2012.

it only what I want to feel.”³⁵⁵ As Bernstein describes it, Améry understands torture as a “border violation ... in which the experience of the self having boundaries and borders disappears”.³⁵⁶ *Having* borders is equivalent to having “bodily autonomy,” which is what it is for one to “have standing in the world, to matter at all to others.”³⁵⁷ It is “the condition of trust in the world,” the presupposition being that those boundaries will not be transgressed upon.³⁵⁸ As Bernstein sums up this point, “so the very being of the self in the modern world is the sense that one counts, that one’s self counts, that one’s skin counts, and that one’s self counts is shown by one’s skin counting ... my senses and skin [...] are modes of access to the world.”³⁵⁹ As he goes on: “I can have a sense of self only if I can, thoughtlessly, trust those around me to acknowledge my skin and sense as mine so that I will only feel on them what I want to feel.”³⁶⁰ It is “because of the relative character of our control over our bodies, [that] we are naturally tempted by the Cartesian locution that humans have bodies, but are not identical with their bodies.”³⁶¹ The experience of pain (or laughter, pleasure, crying, etc.) forces one to make the identification with one’s “involuntary body.” As Bernstein continues: “the *action* of my suffering self, and hence that the notion of the self cannot be reduced to the rational will or whatever mental or bodily states whose current orderliness is presumed to be a direct

355 Améry, 28, my emphasis.

356 See “Torture: J.M. Bernstein,” *PoliticalConcepts.org*, 2012.

357 Ibid.

358 Ibid.

359 Ibid.

360 Ibid.

361 Ibid.

consequence of my agency.”³⁶² It reveals that “we not only *have* bodies but *are* our bodies.”³⁶³ The “dual axes whereby we both have, and are, our bodies is constitutive of the specificity of human embodiment,” which is critical for human dignity.³⁶⁴ Torture however takes pain to an extreme and, as Bernstein states, is “fulfilled or most completely realized when it can reduce the victim to his body.”³⁶⁵ As Améry poetically puts it, “Only in torture does the transformation of the person into flesh become complete. Frail in the face of violence, yelling out in pain, awaiting no help, capable of no resistance the tortured person is only a body, and nothing else beside that.”³⁶⁶ As Bernstein interprets Améry here, through torture the *having* and the *being* of a body gets divvied up in an unnatural way. The victim becomes the body he already is — that is, he is reduced to a mere body — but ceases to *have* one. The torturer, through his act of torture, has the victim’s body. “All activity and voluntariness are in the hands of the torturer, while only passivity and suffering are left to the victim.”³⁶⁷ The dual axes of human embodiment, the voluntary and involuntary body, become divided between the torturer and the tortured. The torturer aspires to independence “without the stigma of dependence,” while the victim is revealed as a “wholly dependent being.”³⁶⁸

What we see is that, for Bernstein, “human dignity” requires one to *be* a body and *have* a body. *Being* a body relates to the “involuntary body”; *having* a body relates to “the

362 Ibid.

363 Ibid.

364 Ibid.

365 Ibid.

366 Améry, 33.

367 See “Torture: J.M. Bernstein,” *PoliticalConcepts.org*, 2012.

368 Ibid.

voluntary body.” As he goes on to state in “Améry’s Body,” a person’s “self-worth” *as a human being* is bound exclusively in this relation between the two. One’s self-worth is tied to one’s ability to “present” oneself as a human being. Self-respect allows one to do so. However, as Bernstein puts it, “the value accorded to the self in self-respect is manifest in protective activity.”³⁶⁹ Self-respect “appears negatively, in reaction to what might threaten it. Metaphorically, self-respect is akin to a boundary or skin enclosing the self which, if breached, would mortally wound it.”³⁷⁰ For Bernstein, the human *form* to be protected is best described by Fichte. According to Fichte, what distinguishes the human body from the animal body is that “the form” of the animal body is completely determinate, “having evolved in order that it can carry out a closed set of *law-governed* action routines.”³⁷¹ Human form is defined precisising in opposition to this. “Human are not limited to following a law-governed set of action routines.”³⁷² As Bernstein explains, we are capable of inventing “new modes of actions, new ways for parts of the body to be arranged with respect to one another as elements of an integral whole: fingering a violin (guitar, bass, saxophone, clarinet), tying a shoelace, shooting a jump shot, doing a triple salchow, typing, texting ...”³⁷³ Bernstein states, “[As] Fichte summarizes this thought eloquently: ‘[...] all animals are complete and finished; the human being is only intimated and projected.’”³⁷⁴

369 Zolkos, 55.

370 Zolkos, 55-56.

371 Zolkos, 45, my emphasis.

372 Ibid.

373 Ibid.

374 Ibid.

This appears to come quite close to Arendt in her distinction between labor and work, which she also uses to highlight the distinction between man and beast. However, it quickly becomes clear that Bernstein diverges from Arendt. For Bernstein, “Fichte’s central claim is thus that the *shape* of the human body — upright posture, arms and hands freed from direct functional tasks, ‘the spiritual eye and mouth that reflects the heart’s innermost stirrings’ — *is* the form of rational freedom, how it materially appears.”³⁷⁵ He goes on to state that it is “the fantasy of mind/body dualism: the mind so separate in kind from body, that any kind of body will do.”³⁷⁶ Bernstein states, “the human body is the necessary appearance form of freedom.”³⁷⁷ He quotes Fichte, “[the] human shape is necessarily *sacred* to the human being.”³⁷⁸ Bernstein’s entire chapter can be seen to be a “defense of this claim,” as he himself alludes to.³⁷⁹

Although Fichte is only indirectly referenced by Bernstein himself (and discussed briefly, at that, in only one of his two pieces on Améry), we can treat Fichte as playing an important role for Bernstein, Žižek, Hunt, and Brison. Bernstein does a stellar job in describing Fichte’s understanding of human *form* (i.e.: self-standing). However, there is evidence that Fichte plays an even more important role than appears to be the case on the surface. In fact, Fichte plays an important role for all of these thinkers and their interpretations of Améry. Hunt directly cites Bernstein’s “Améry’s Body,” and in many ways seems to follow from it. Žižek does not cite Bernstein; however, being a Left-

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 46.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

Hegelian like Bernstein, Žižek is also presumably greatly influenced by Fichte. Brison is perhaps not familiar with Fichte's work, nor the work of Bernstein, Žižek, and Hunt.

However, as we will soon see, she follows the same Fichtean thread.

As we have seen, Améry states that his experience in Auschwitz, above all, prevented him from "being at home in the world"³⁸⁰ Although Arendt does not discuss Améry in any of her works, she also describes the effect of the Nazi regime as resulting in a sort of "homelessness."³⁸¹ We also discussed how Bernstein (in his reading of Améry, on torture) and Arendt (in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*) differ in how they saw this homelessness unfold and what it revealed. For Arendt, the Nazi regime (epitomized by Eichmann) prevented "the whole world community" from being at home. It threatened the *polis* as such. Bernstein, seeing Améry's work as a phenomenology of the victim, sees this "homelessness" primarily situated in Améry himself — in the dichotomy between the having and the being ("the voluntary" and "involuntary body") which torture created in him, within his physical body. For Bernstein, Hunt, and Žižek, Améry's "protest" is one of the particular against the universal, the individual against the world around him. Bernstein makes clear that maintaining Améry's status as a particular requires Améry to, nonetheless, relate to this world outside of himself. How does Améry do so? As Bernstein stated, doing so involves self-respect, which is "performative" and performed as expressed "negativity." So it is an action which comes out of a *need*, requires *action*, and *negation*. Self-respect, self-worth, and human dignity requires "protection" of the

380 Améry, 40.

381 Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, vii.

[individual] body. The importance — or necessity — of human dignity being presented, is only made evident when it is violated: when the skin is breached, when blood is shed. As Bernstein sums up his effort, “Standard accounts in this area focus on respect — for the moral law or for another person — as primary; I take self-respect as central and respect as derivative because I take action (practical reason) to be prior to perception (theoretical reason).”³⁸² Bernstein’s explanation of self-respect and human dignity coincides perfectly with Fichte, and this resonates on every register. Fichte’s recognizes “the need to act,” and therefore the priority of action to perception. That need to act is purely negative: I act by “positing the not-I.” I arrive at “the practical proof” for solipsism, for Fichte, when I treat another as a “not-I.” I hit her. She proves her standing as a “really real” human being when she strikes me back in turn.

Bernstein sees Améry being put into the same state into which Fichte is thrown. As we discussed earlier, Arendt sees moral order, duty, ethics as something the Nazis categorically threatened or forgot — in concealing it, further revealing its existence. For Bernstein, Améry’s experience of torture reveals “human dignity” (as an extension of moral order, duty, ethics) as something which never really existed in the first place, or at least never really existed as anything other than an *abstract* concept. In this context, Bernstein sees the experience of torture as casting Améry into something similar to a Cartesian state of doubt about the world around him. Améry’s mission becomes a philosophical/metaphysical one. After these concepts of human dignity and rights have

382 Ibid, 56.

been shattered, how am I to understand the world and my own self-worth? How am I to understand and ground my identity? How am I to understand what is really real? It is in “the need to act,” as Fichte would have it. That need to act does not arise out of perception or consciousness, rather it precedes it. It arises not out of some abstract concept but an embodied necessary reaction to “life” in front of me.³⁸³ My human dignity is expressed by my human form; that form is expressed by *intentionality*, which *presents* my “self” as not just a passive or instinctive animal who works out of predetermined laws. However, my humanity does not reject the body, but rather claims ownership over it. My “human shape” is revealed through action; it expresses itself as a condition of freedom. As Isaiah Berlin summarizes Fichte’s thought, “the conquest of nature and the attainment of freedom for nations and cultures is the self-realization of the will: ‘Sublime and living will! Named by no man, compassed by no thought.’”³⁸⁴ Such freedom requires a sort of law breaking. Kantian morality, according to Bernstein, which rests on the idea that a human being has dignity by virtue of a larger universal — in the idea that ‘Reason’ imparts to humankind a rational will, human dignity, or self-worth just as a matter of fact — is completely thrown into question by Améry’s experience of torture. The torturer does not believe the tortured to be in possession of such a thing as human dignity *qua* Reason, nor does it even seem to matter to him if he did. Améry’s former “trust in the world,” grounded in such an assumption, is revealed (according to

383 Of course, this need to act resonates with Bernstein’s description of “The Spirit of Christianity,” in which Jesus acts out of need, not out of blind adherence to the laws. He embodies law, and shatters the thought that humans are simply determinate, law-abiding creatures.

384 Isaiah Berlin. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (2013) p. 241.

Bernstein) as groundless. Human dignity is revealed as an empty universal, and Améry's body is reduced to a pure object: "the involuntary object" which he simply *is* but does not *have*.

So how does Améry recognize himself as a human *form*? How does he provide substance to this empty abstraction known as "human dignity" or "self-worth"? Effectively, how does he realize himself as a body in possession of the condition of human "freedom"? By demonstrating what essentially amounts to "the need to act" for Fichte. As Fichte explains in *The System of Ethics*, people desire certain freedoms and will demand them of each other. Desiring freedom means having to assert a right to other beings. By this assertion, one acts according to this desire of freedom and demands a space where the other cannot interfere. As we can see in Bernstein's reading of Améry, one asserts one's own self-identity by asserting one's bodily boundaries. By doing so one lays claim to one's self. By making this claim, one no longer *is* a body, but *has* a body. As Bernstein puts it in relation to Améry: "an act of demonstrating his self-respect, his particular relation to self, in a manner that he expects to enjoin or demand or claim respect from another."³⁸⁵ The "body" is not only a physical boundary, but also a metaphysical one. It demarcates the self, which rises above the mere involuntary body to which animals are restricted. Once its boundary — "the skin" — is crossed, it demands reaction by way of "self-respect," which requires negation. The "claim" or "demand" of respect from the other, although it has metaphysical import, is fully embodied. Améry

385 Zolkos, 55.

finds a glimpse of his former human dignity — and, in fact necessarily for Bernstein, the source of “human dignity” for *mankind* as such — in its embodiment. It is in an act of violence that “human dignity” is revealed. And, as Bernstein makes clear, this act is not simply about self-defense. Bernstein here is alluding to the fact, as we can imagine from our discussion of Fichte, that animals too have the ability to act out of pure instinct to defend themselves. No, this act makes a claim and demand on the other human being *as such*. Bernstein elaborates on his reading of Améry in light of a passage which describes his interaction with Juszek, a Polish prison foreman who hits Améry on the face for some trifling infraction:

In open revolt I struck Juszek in the face in turn. My human dignity lay in this punch to his jaw-and that it was in the end I, the physically much weaker man, who succumbed and was woefully thrashed, meant nothing to me. Painfully beaten, I was satisfied with myself. But not, as one might think, for reasons of courage and honor, but only because I had grasped well that there are situations in life in which our body is our entire self and our entire fate. I was my body and nothing else: in hunger, in the blow that I suffered, in the blow that I dealt. My body, debilitated and crusted with filth, was my calamity. My body, when it tensed to strike, was my physical and metaphysical dignity. In situations like mine, physical violence is the sole means for restoring a disjointed personality.³⁸⁶

As Bernstein puts it, “For Améry hitting back represented a mechanism for asserting his fundamental worth in a manner consonant with the general notion of dignity”.³⁸⁷ As he goes on to state:

[H]uman dignity is non-detachable from self-respect, and self-respect lies in sustaining oneself as one who lives through self-valuing in opposition to any contestation of that claim ... in hitting back, Améry is saying ‘No!’ to the depredation of his self, hence denying the denial of his dignity that Juszek’s

³⁸⁶ Améry, 90-91

³⁸⁷ Zolkos, 55.

casual strike implied. In doing so he issues a claim that his body is morally and rightfully *his*.³⁸⁸

Bernstein concludes: “Bodily integrity is not a physical fact but a moral unity in material form”.³⁸⁹

Although it is not clear if Brison is familiar with Bernstein or Fichte, her analysis of Améry seems to come out of the same source and follow the same stream of thought. A philosopher, she is also a victim of attempted rape. She describes the experience of assault in phenomenal terms, just like Bernstein, emanating from something approximating a Cartesian state of doubt, expressing itself in the form of mind/body dualism. She notes how many survivors “report the kind of splitting from their bodies during the assault, as well as a separation from their former self in the aftermath of the rape.”³⁹⁰ She reveals “how the body and one’s perception of it are essential components of the self and also reveals the ways in which one’s ability to feel at home in the world is as much a physical as an epistemological accomplishment.”³⁹¹ Citing Améry, she states that in the experience of rape, one:

... loses ‘trust in the world,’ which includes the rational and logically unjustifiable belief in absolute causality perhaps’... more importantly, according to Améry, is the loss of the certainty that other persons will respect my physical, and with it also my metaphysical, being. The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of myself. My skin surface shields me against the external world. If I am to have trust, I must feel on it only what I want to feel. At the first blow, however, this trust in the world breaks down.”³⁹²

388 Ibid.

389 Zolkos, 58.

390 Brison, 19.

391 Brison, 18.

392 Brison, 18.

This connects quite well with the Fichtean idea of freedom being an assertion of a right which demands a space where the other cannot interfere. Rape infringes on that space, just as torture does. In the context of Brison's experience of "rape" rather than "torture," it is perhaps better to use Fichte's alternative expression of this idea: "there must be a physical space between and around them, within which the two can causally interact in a mediated way, *or* refrain from doing so".³⁹³ As Bernstein points out, Améry himself makes the analogy to rape: "[the other] forces his own corporeality on me with the first blow. He is on me and thereby destroys me. It is like a rape, a sexual act without the consent of one of the two partners."³⁹⁴ Bernstein points that this is significant since:

...it is the lack of consent and not necessarily the physical harm itself that makes the crossing of the boundary of the victim's skin a violation. Rape is traumatic not because of the physical injury done—although in some rapes that is extensive, even horrific; but because the victim's skin is no longer counted as a boundary of any sort, and hence her body no longer counts as hers, not just her bodily vulnerability, but her capacity for rapture, joy and intimacy are used against her. She no longer has standing before the other. Améry supposes that the victim of rape experiences her rapist as sovereign; and in so experiencing the other she loses, briefly or permanently, a sense of herself as having a world.³⁹⁵

As Bernstein claims, "the other person, opposite whom I exist physically in the world and with whom I can exist only as long as he does not touch my skin surface as border, forces his own corporeality on me with the first blow."³⁹⁶

Bernstein sees this analogy as significant because it highlights the fact that "it is the lack of consent and not necessarily the physical harm itself that makes the crossing of

³⁹³ Fichte, 68.

³⁹⁴ Améry, 28.

³⁹⁵ Bernstein, 2012.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

the boundary of the victim's skin a violation ... [it is] because the victim's skin is no longer counted as a boundary of any sort.”³⁹⁷ Bernstein directly references Brison here and states that she herself “reconstructs the meaning of her rape” in *Aftermath* through her explicit references to Améry's account of his torture. He goes on to make a direct analogy between their experiences:

Rape is a form of losing the world in which it can be the case that one who is raped stays raped, just as one who is tortured stays tortured. Analytically, it would be fair to hazard that these convergences are categorical: rape is form of torture. And in the manner in which rape is a form of torture there is revealed the sexual subtext to torture: involuntariness is essential to sexuality, it is the glory and terror of sexuality. Torture, as the exploitation of the involuntary body, turning bodily involuntariness against the being whose body is being tortured, makes all torture violation. Torture and rape are two aspects of a single phenomenon: torture reveals our systematic dependence on others, our existential helplessness, while rape reveals that dependence is physical and metaphysical at once, a matter of cognitive social practices that are constitutive of the person as such, as a being with dignity.³⁹⁸

Thus far, Brison's reading of Améry appears to perfectly coincide with Bernstein's. The lines from Améry which resonate loudest for Bernstein seem to resonate equally for Brison. Hunt's presentation of Brison's story — and what she sees as ultimately at stake in it — further grounds this impression.

Hunt, following Bernstein's line of thought, gives the impression that the ultimate revelation Brison has can be displayed in her account of the very act of rape itself. Just as Bernstein sees Améry's torture as phenomenologically revealing a metaphysical truth about the appeal to human dignity in terms of duty, morality, social norms, etc., Hunt sees Briton's rape revealing the same metaphysical truth. Hunt sees this occurring in three

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, Bernstein 2012

stages over the course of Brison's interaction with her rapist. This amounts to three forms of resistance Hunt sees Brison employing successively over the course of this event: *rational*, *practical*, and *ethical*. Hunt sees the last of these as closely resembling her idea of "bodily resentment."³⁹⁹ She does this, as she states, "in order to bring into view and problematize the gap between natural and deliberate resentments, or between animal instinct and rational decision-making."⁴⁰⁰ This is a continuation of what we discussed earlier with respect to Hunt, namely her insistence that resentment be understood against the distinction "the Aristotelians" laid out between "reasoned" and "nonreasoned resentments." Just as we saw with Bernstein, this is Hunt's attempt to bridge the gap between being a body and having a body — to sublimate Cartesian mind/body dualism. It is also an implicit critique of Kant's as well as of the Aristotelians' understanding of morality. We will pay close attention to the language used in the description of these three stages of resistance. We will begin by laying out what Hunt says about these stages, after each of which we will briefly analyze what is left unsaid, although implied by Hunt.

Walking along a dirt road in the French countryside, Brison is approached by an unknown assailant, grabbed from behind, and dragged into the bushes. As Hunt explains, Brison initially believed that she would be able to escape unharmed so long as she could find something to say. She addressed him directly as "sir" in "an attempt to 'appeal to his humanity' ... [and] articulate the right to life."⁴⁰¹ Hunt describes this first address as a language-based response, expressing "her rational self-interest ... supported by ideals of

³⁹⁹ Hunt, 163.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Brison, 88; Hunt, 163.

justice, equality, intrinsic worth of persons, etc.”⁴⁰² Hunt continues: “she attempted through reasoning and language to re-engage a recognitive contract; she needed him to see her as a person deserving of mercy.”⁴⁰³ This first stage is what Hunt calls “rational resistance.” Although Hunt does not say so explicitly, this is a critique of Kantian ethics and Reason. Reason, in the form of Brison’s appeal to rationality in her interaction with her assailant, fails. Notable is the lack of any hatred or resentment, on Brison’s part, during this first stage. For Kant, hatred along with all the other “passions” are a great threat to what should matter most to man, namely Reason. Above any natural passions which we might normally expect, all passions are noticeably absent here in favor of Reason. This first form or “stage” of resistance is distinctly Kantian. Through the appeal to Reason, Brison resists her attacker. But as Hunt sees, this utterly fails. What must we take from this? Reason fails as an appropriate response to moral harm. Brison’s implicit appeals to reasoned ideals fall on deaf ears. They are useless; they barely, if at all, exist as anything but an abstract form. Practically, they do not exist. They do not exist for Brison’s perpetrator, and so do not exist for Brison. Once this form of resistance *fails*, Brison attempts another strategy.

As Hunt states, upon Brison’s realizing that her first appeal to her attacker’s humanity has failed (which we are to understand as an appeal to Reason, duty, human dignity), she “addressed herself to his self-interest.”⁴⁰⁴ As Hunt states:

402 Hunt, 164.

403 Ibid.

404 Hunt, 164.

this shift in resistance marks a realization about survival; her social standing would not be spared, and her life was now under threat. If she were going to survive, she would have to suppress her will and submit to his. This “practical” self-interest was an attempt to deny her own rational self-interest (not to be attacked) in order to protect her physical self from death.⁴⁰⁵

Brison goes on to describe her ordeal, recollecting her internal monologue, “just follow his orders. Give him what he wants and he’ll leave me alone.”⁴⁰⁶ Hunt interprets this as follows. In the suppression of her “rational self-preservation,” Brison gives up control over herself in order to preserve a more fundamental level of life.⁴⁰⁷ Hunt’s entire depiction here comes strikingly close to the first stage of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic.⁴⁰⁸ Nonetheless, this is the stage Hunt calls “practical resistance.” This stage too fails, as we might expect from this reference to Hegel. But what might “practical” connote here? Hunt termed the previous stage “rational resistance.” This could be seen to reference Kant, as stated above. This “practical” stage can be seen to correlate to the second group of thinkers she criticized with respect to their notion of resentment: the Aristotelians. Rather than being completely bound to “Reason” or *Logos* (as are Kant and Plato), which excludes hatred and resentment, the next group of thinkers she criticized are those philosophers who arise in history as the first pragmatists with respect to Resentment, beginning with Aristotle. From Butler to Brudholm, and from Smith to Strawson, from J.S. Mill to Murphy, we have seen that this group was profoundly open to the virtue of resentment. However, as Hunt argues, they too failed. And their failure

405 Hunt, 164.

406 Brison, 2.

407 Hunt, 164.

408 This is a bit odd, since Brison herself is a philosophy professor who has taught Hegel, and yet does not herself make this reference.

rested in how they justified — inadequately, according to Hunt — resentment's virtue. That is, they saw the possibility of resentment becoming virtuous only insofar as it became practical or pragmatic: namely, serving a larger end. This larger end was "benevolence," "justice," "the social," "political reconciliation," etc.

Hunt's allusion to Hegel's master-slave dialectic is important here. The subject can be seen to subordinate her particularity — her will, her passions — to the larger social ideal which her particularity mistakenly sees its own worth being bound up in, just as the slave views the master. This also relates to Bernstein's allusion to the thought that in torture, the tortured person is tortured foremost by the idea that his body is the possession of the torturer, rather than his own. The slave makes this same mistake, with regard to the master. He succumbs to the illusion that he himself is not the possessor and proprietor of his own labor, his own blood, sweat, and tears. He backs down from a confrontation with the master in the effort to defend "mere life." Hunt's allusion to Brison's defense of "mere life," in this second stage of resistance, arises out of this understanding. And yet, at the same time, it is an implicit critique of the Aristotelian understanding of "resentment." According to Hunt, by submitting "resentment" to ends outside of itself, effectively seeing its value in "the social," "benevolence," etc., the Aristotelians fail to fully recognize resentment's value and virtue. With "practical" ambitions towards a larger end, they aim to temper and moderate resentment, at once creating and arising out of the division between "reasoned resentment" and "nonreasoned resentment." Effectively, Hunt enframes Brison's experience of rape within the Hegelian dialectic. She sees the third and final stage being the sublimation of the two former

stages: “rational resistance” and “practical resistance.” Hunt calls this stage “ethical resistance.”⁴⁰⁹

Brison recounts, “although I’d said I’d do whatever he wanted, as the sexual assault began, I instinctively fought back.”⁴¹⁰ For Hunt: “she articulates her physical resistance as a strategy that was her ‘body’s idea’ ... this third type of resistance inspired her to ‘fight like prey pursued by a stronger predator ... using animal instincts, not reason.’”⁴¹¹ She fought back, not only in protection of “mere life,” Hunt explains, but for “a fundamental sense of security.” Brison, in Hunt’s words, “mobilized a new kind of defense whereby her *‘body had categorized and responded’* to [her] attacker when there was no hope for communication.”⁴¹² This self-defensive revolt “marks a decidedly *ethical* bodily refusal that seeks to protect a fundamentally embodied freedom.”⁴¹³ Our previous point about Hunt attempting to sublimate “the Aristotelians” and Kantian view of ethics, in relation to the notion of resentment, is well founded. As Hunt states, “in self-defense, moral and bodily resentments act in concert.”⁴¹⁴ Hunt’s analysis is strikingly Fichtean. As she states, “bodily resentment” is the “attempt to express self-worth at the level of the body after its having been denied.”⁴¹⁵ Defending the bodily boundaries creates a *space*, one particular to the individual. As she goes on to state, “morality is embodied through self-defensive action, and second, that in cases of massive moral

409 Hunt, 175.

410 Brison, 2.

411 Hunt, 165.

412 Hunt, 89.

413 Ibid., 165.

414 Ibid., 163.

415 Ibid., 160.

injury, a feeling of freedom can be reactivated if not restored via a performative self-respect made available through bodily resentments.”⁴¹⁶ As she rephrases it elsewhere: “Morality is located in the body.”⁴¹⁷ “Justice” itself, for Hunt, is located in the body; in “embodied resentments.” Human dignity is no longer human, but embodied dignity. Self-respect is embodied respect. Human rights are embodied rights.

Citing Améry, Hunt states “The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of myself.”⁴¹⁸ In order to maintain “self-worth,” these boundaries cannot be trespassed upon.⁴¹⁹ Bodily resentment, as Hunt calls it, becomes “the mode of self-defense particularly suited to fend off such transgressions.”⁴²⁰ As Hunt presents, it is in “self-defense” — both during the attack and in the self-defense training she engaged in afterwards — that Brison herself reclaims her self-worth and dignity as a human being. Quoting Brison in her description of such training, “we had to learn to feel entitled to occupy space, to defend ourselves.”⁴²¹ As Hunt states, “Brison’s account of her re-emergence through self-defense is an instantiation of the capacity to re-learn oneself *via* the performance of one’s body boundaries.”⁴²² She goes on to say that “one’s self-respect can be both remembered and re-enacted via bodily resentments. But this act of remembrance is a performance.”⁴²³ Hunt concludes that this amounts to “the active

416 Ibid., 158.

417 Ibid., 126.

418 Ibid., 162.

419 Ibid.

420 Ibid.

421 Brison, 14; Hunt, 171.

422 Hunt, 172.

423 Hunt, 173.

construction of a narrative of liberation.”⁴²⁴

Hunt quotes Ann Cahill to show how self-defense is crucial in challenging assumptions about the female form and its relation to empowerment, seemingly driving home a point central to Brison’s experience. One cannot help but hear the overtones from Fichte’s description of human *form* being the condition of human freedom. This *form* is not only involuntary (like that of an animal or object) but voluntary as well. One displays one’s self-worth by displaying oneself as such. As Cahill notes, “Training women’s bodies in various types of self-defense resists in a variety of ways the discourses that make sexual violence not only possible but likely. First, it locates the means of resistance squarely within the women themselves, thereby undermining the construction of women as victims ... the new body that emerges from self-defense training perceives dangers as worthy of retaliation and anger.”⁴²⁵

Hunt concludes her work with a brief description of Judith Herman and psychoanalysis in *Trauma and Recovery*. As Herman affirms, it is often the case that people who have experienced significant trauma, and who develop PTSD afterwards, relive their experiences over and over without end. Herman claims: “rather than passively accepting these reliving experiences, survivors may choose actively to engage their fears.”⁴²⁶ Unlike the reenactment that occurs in those suffering from PTSD, such a process, “is undertaken consciously.”⁴²⁷ Hunt uses her own conception of “bodily

424 Ibid.

425 Ann Cahill. *Rethinking Rape*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, 203; Hunt, 169.

426 Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books, 1997, 197.

427 Ibid.

resentment” to play a great role here. Societal norms — what, for Hunt, amounts to Kantian ethics, human dignity, duty, “Christian morality” — have prevented people like Brison from immediately reactivating self-respect through anger and bodily resentment, which, as she defines earlier, amounts to “embodied revenge.”⁴²⁸ By physically asserting oneself as the kind of being capable of bodily resentment (which is both material and intentional), one makes a claim on one’s oppressor and his ability to oppress. This occurs both in the act of rape and well after in the recovery process, where she can continually affirm her self-worth up against the negation of the bodily trespass the rapist makes upon her. In doing so, she defines her form as human. She also makes a claim on the nature of freedom and justice. Hunt concludes, “This is the practical and political meaning of the performance of resentment, and it amounts to a self-authorized expropriation of freedom. Justice is embodied in bodily resentments.”⁴²⁹ It is certainly the case that this is a different conclusion from the one Plato reaches at the end of the *Republic* about this very important question of justice. It also differs greatly from the Aristotelian conception. Nonetheless it is important to analyze a few things here regarding Hunt’s reading of Brison and its relevance to Améry.

The impression we get from Hunt of Brison’s *Aftermath* is that “self-defense” training itself was what primarily allowed Brison to regain a sense of human dignity and self-worth — essentially, what allowed her to recover a sense of “trust in the world,” as Bernstein would put it. However, when we examine the text, we quickly come to discover

⁴²⁸ Hunt, 176-177.

⁴²⁹ Hunt, 177.

that Hunt's reading of Brison is an extremely specific one. We might get the impression from Hunt that Brison's *Aftermath* is a work whose primary focus is illustrating how "self-defense" allows a victim of moral harm (such as torture or rape) to regain his or her former "self." What we discover, though, is that self-defense plays only a partial role in Brison's own understanding of her personal recovery. Her recovery was actually nonlinear and involves multiple pathways. One pathway was the philosophical one (as an academic, teaching and writing philosophy); the next was through historical research of other trauma survivors in order to get better grasp of narratives which might differ from her own. Another important aspect of her recovery was getting psychiatric help: therapy as well as pharmaceutical drugs which aided her in fighting depression. Perhaps the most important aspect was the emotional one, through the support of family and a loving husband who helped her feel again at home in the world. She states that her initial experience of rape stripped her of her sense of self.

This ties in nicely with Bernstein's [Fichtean] description of Améry and the model of "self" as discussed earlier, which arises out of a need, is "performative," and is performed as expressed "negativity." For Fichte, to construct the "self," and realize human *form* or shape, one must recognize "the need to act" in relation to the outside world and create a certain private space into which the other cannot intrude. For Bernstein, Améry can only recover this sense of "self-worth" by what he called "performative self-respect," which amounted to defending the skin as the bodily boundary by "striking back." For Hunt, "Women can recover an affirmative sense of self

by constructing new, exaggerated body boundaries.”⁴³⁰ Men are generally far more comfortable taking up space and therefore display far more assertive body language than women. A good example of this is quite apparent on any New York City subway. Men can be seen to generally take up far more room on a subway bench by opening their legs. In contrast, most women are habituated to cross their legs or keep them together, presenting themselves as far more submissive. The case with self-defense is similar for Hunt. Women are perceived as not being able to defend themselves physically. This public perception not only puts them at greater risk of being unable to stop an attack once it begins, but also at increased risk of being attacked in the first place, since they are more likely be perceived as an easy target. When they train and manage to do so effectively, they come to assert themselves as beings capable of defending themselves, and thereby reinvent themselves as such. Similarly, it is through the act of self-defense (what Brison calls the enactment of “bodily resentments”), both during and after the event, that this can be done.

Brison states that, metaphysically, the self gains meaning in relation to others. This is true. However, with the possible exception of self-defense, none of the multiple pathways towards recovery Brison mentions is expressed, or “performed,” as a “negativity.” Self-defense is only a small part of the story she offers us. And that brings us to another major aspect of Brison’s recovery which we have largely neglected thus far. Crucial to Brison’s recovery is *narrative*. In fact, Brison’s methodology for conveying

430 Hunt, 169.

these metaphysical truths is narrative. We might phrase this as follows: narrative not only has a practical function for Brison, but also a metaphysical one. Whether it was the screams she bellowed when she was attacked, geared towards calling for the assistance of nearby townspeople, or the testimony she gave to the police and courts, which ultimately assisted in apprehending the rapist, it is quite clear to see that narrative has an important practical function. However, it also has a metaphysical one. Her identity is revealed through the process of telling herself a story about the experience.⁴³¹

This is also the case for Améry. His narrative reveals both practical and metaphysical truths. It is also important to note that Améry's work, just as Brison's, does not take form as a philosophical treatise but as a narrative. In Améry's case, and to a lesser extent Brison's, this narrative even takes the form of a dialogue. Though it is an inner dialogue, it is not too distant in *form* from Plato's dialogues, which themselves employ dialectic. One crucial aspect of both accounts being narratives is that they are embedded in time and temporality. Like Améry's understanding of "resentment" over the course of his narration, Brison seems to change with respect to her own understanding of trauma. As Brison states, "My earlier discussions of the primary effects of trauma emphasized the loss of control and the disintegration of the formerly coherent self. My current view of trauma is that it introduces a 'surd' — a nonsensical entry — into the

431 As we will note in the concluding chapter, storytelling is a crucial process for Arendt. It a process whereby we come to know our heroes, establish a shared history and culture around them, and emulate them. Storytelling is an essentially *political* act, according to Arendt. Its purpose is not to individuate, but to connect us to the greater collective, the *polis*. (So, telling the story of a trauma brings it from an individual experience of the silence of violence to the healing narrative that reconnects the individual to the trustworthy world – except, Améry refused to permit that. If I'm following this...)

series of events in one's life, making it impossible to carry on with the series."⁴³² This is quite different from Bernstein's interpretation of Améry's own experience. Bernstein saw Améry's experience as not only having metaphysical meaning, but making a metaphysical claim. Torture revealed that all of the metaphysical concepts such as "human dignity," Kantian morality, duty, justice, etc. were abstract and empty. In turn, a belief in them resulted in losing trust in the world. One's experience of torture and rape, for Bernstein and Hunt, forces one to adapt a *new* physio-metaphysical form which breaks from the former. Striking back allows Améry to reclaim his human dignity; it does so not by returning himself to his former self but by transforming into something new.

Similarly with Hunt, self-defense allows women to make this claim and recover from their experiences of sexual assault. However, it does so by changing the *form* of what a woman may have been prior to and during the event, presumably a damsel in distress. Through self-defense a woman can create an "exaggerated bodily boundary," take up space just as a man can, and act on her natural and virtuous feelings of anger and resentment. In doing so, she can regain control over her body, make a claim to her voluntary and involuntary body, and transform into a more formidable human form. In contrast, Brison's description here implies that her experience of rape was a "surd" in the larger series of life events. It was a glitch, an aberration from something which could have otherwise proceeded normally. This 'surd' did not free her from this larger series of life events, nor does it invalidate them. The main concern was how it prevented her from

⁴³² Brison, 103.

re-entering life. Although her rapist did not respect her metaphysical dignity, she learned that this had no bearing on her past, in which her loved ones and intimate others respected this dignity and cared for her. Part of the recovery process for Brison was arriving at this realization. Her rapist was male and infringed on her in the most flagrant manner, causing her to lose trust in the world and in men as a group. But that had no bearing on the trust that she could slowly start to develop or re-develop through the compassionate support of her husband and other friends and family. Without this, it is likely she never would have recovered. Her husband's behavior towards her did not correspond to her rapist's behavior. The conjunction of the two produced the greatest possible dissonance. Another part of recovery was being content with this non-coherence. However, this did not constitute a complete re-evaluation of who she was in the past and the principles she had faith in, namely her trust in men in general, family, society, community, etc. We might see how Brison views her trauma as analogous to how a train engineer views a derailment. The event does not cause the engineer to doubt the tracks themselves, but to check the track for what may have caused the derailment, and ultimately focus on the momentous task of figuring out how he can get the train back on track and recommence the journey. It is important to consider how this might relate to Arendt.

For Arendt, "the loss of trust in the world" finds its equivalent in the loss of a world itself. But it is a different type of loss than the one Bernstein speaks of in his reading of Améry. For Arendt, the Nazi regime (epitomized by Eichmann) prevented "the whole world community" from being at home. It threatened the *polis* as such. Eichmann's

crime is a transgression against the moral law (which includes human dignity, duty, etc.), and a totalizing one at that. It threatens that moral law in an extreme manner; however it does not erase the moral law or prove it to be an empty Platonic ideal lacking substance or value. Rather, it reaffirms the moral law while presenting it with a severe challenge. Eichmann is banal in the sense that he is not significant enough to take the world off course. He was an aberration from man's better origins and the judgment against him would historically mark him as such. The more we explore Brison's own narrative, and the marked change in it over time, the more Arendtian she becomes. As Brison states, "Narrative, as I now think, facilitates the ability to go on *opening up possibilities for the future through retelling the stories of the past*. It does this not by reestablishing the illusions of coherence of the *past*, control over the *present*, and predictability of the *future*, but by making it possible to carry on without these illusions."⁴³³ Zizek, Bernstein, and Hunt all rightly conclude that resentment must become manifest in *action*. What they all fail to adequately consider is Arendt's insight: that speech itself is action.

This of course brings us to another point of contention between Brison and Hunt. In her reading of Brison, Hunt expounds upon three stages of the physical act of rape and Brison's responses to it. The first is the rational stage. She uses language to make an appeal to her attacker. This approach fails. According to Hunt, the failure of this stage has a larger meaning. It suggests the non-viability of rational speech as a tool in making a "claim" about morality. At the very least, it suggests the great limits of "speech acts" in

433 Brison, 103-104.

making moral/ethical claims or demands on another. As we discussed earlier, this argument likely arises out of Fichte's critique of Kant, in which Fichte comes to the necessity of "the need to act," positing practical action prior to theoretical reason. As Bernstein notes, this requires a performative presentation of *human form* whereby one embodies the claim, one's bodily boundaries and the space around it, through physical action, which according to Bernstein is best embodied by Améry's striking back. Hunt makes this even more clear in her description of self-defense. According to Bernstein and Hunt, it is this physical act (an expression of human *form* and *shape*) which is performative. Nevertheless, Brison may be suggesting something far different here: it is not "embodied resentment" in the form of an act of violence that plays the most important role, but rather *speech itself*. One might say the apparent dichotomy Hunt and Bernstein see between speech and action is one Arendt herself — a true Kantian at heart — manages to dissolve. For Arendt, speech — appropriately situated — *is* action. This is certainly the impression we get from Brison herself. Narrative is not only the style Brison employs to reveal a phenomenology of victimhood. It also seems that *narrative* is the revelation itself, in the form of a speech act. As Brison states, "In this book I explore the *performative* aspect of speech in testimonies of trauma: How saying something about the memory does something to it."⁴³⁴ This stands in contrast to Hunt who states that memory is performative, but ultimately only by way of "embodied resentments" which she herself equates to revenge, "just punishment," corporeally understood.

434 Brison, x.

Hunt, Bernstein, and Fichte's approach seem to privilege the ability of the subject to rediscover a sense of self, in realizing that self in human *form* — that is, a body which is both voluntary and involuntary. As we saw before, Hunt, Bernstein and Žižek frame their reading of Améry's resentment as a protest of 'the particular' and 'subjective' up against 'the universal' and 'the communal' ("mass culture," moral norms, etc.) that attempt to subordinate it. In their perspective, the communal is a threat to Améry's subjective experience, itself represented by his resentments. "Forgiveness," "Christian morality," etc. represent the universal, which is at odds with the particular. Through seeing "narrative" as the central force of action, rather than the embodied act of self-defense, Brison seems able to give less weight to the self and more to the communal. In true Arendtian fashion, Brison goes on:

The communicative act of bearing witness to traumatic events [through narrative] not only transforms traumatic memories into narratives that can then be integrated into the survivor's sense of self and view of the world, *but it also reintegrates the survivor into a community, reestablishing bonds of trust and faith in others.*⁴³⁵

This marks a vital distinction between Améry and Brison which is largely overlooked in the literature that compares the two. United by the "performance of narrative," through a multifaceted approach — including story-telling, research into trauma, therapy, medication, self-defense, intimacy with her husband, support from her family and friends — Brison is able to reintegrate into her community. After a decade (which, interestingly enough, coincided with the end of her assailant's prison term) she describes having overcome, and is again home in the world. She reestablishes trust in the

435 Susan Brison *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, x

world, namely trust and faith in others who encompass it. What she discovers along the way is how different her context is from that of others, including Améry. As she states:

... many trauma survivors who endured much worse than I did, and for much longer, found, often years later, that it was impossible to go on.... Améry wrote, “Whoever was tortured, stays tortured” and this may explain why he, Levi, and Celan and other Holocaust survivors took their own lives decades after their (physical) torture ended.⁴³⁶

Brison recovers from her trauma, Améry does not. On that basis alone the comparison Hunt and others in the literature make between Brison and Améry can be seen as in part problematic.

It is important to note that Brison’s recovery is complete after ten years, just as her assailant’s prison term reaches its completion. The assailant served his time, underwent proper punishment, and his victim — Brison — gets married to a supportive husband, has a child, and is able to resume life in a manner which, as Hegel might put it, seemingly “leaves no wounds behind.”⁴³⁷ This emphasizes Hegel’s point about “punishment” in *The Spirit of Christianity*, the essay through which we entered into this study. There, Hegel notes that transgression breaks the bonds between “Life” and “Love,” and punishment provides for the condition of possibility for the re-forming of these bonds. Brison’s assailant committed a crime, transgressed against her, and was brought to justice. He had to pay for his crime; through serving his time, both he and Brison were able to free themselves from the darker aspects of their shared past. Améry’s own reflection on the prospect of punishing his torturer equally illuminates the structural gap

⁴³⁶ Brison, 65-66.

⁴³⁷ Hegel, *Theological Writings*, 230.

between Brison and Améry's experiences of trauma. For Brison, her trauma was localized, namely in a direct subject-to-subject relationship with her assailant. For Améry, his trauma was totalizing. As Améry states in reflection on the prospect of punishment for his torturer:

... when SS-man Wajs stood before the firing squad, he experienced the moral truth of his crimes ... I would like to believe that at the instant of his execution he wanted exactly as much as I to turn back time, to undo what had been done ... when they led him to the place of execution, the antiman had once again become a fellow man ... if everything had taken place between that SS man and me, then we both could have died in peace.⁴³⁸

But the simple truth of the matter was that everything did not simply take place between Améry and SS man Wajs. Améry states that it was the whole “inverted pyramid” of SS men, helpers, officials, Kapos, and generals which weighed on him... and beyond that, the people who were “guilty of omission, utterance, and silence.”⁴³⁹ It is in this context that Améry claims that the tortured stays tortured.⁴⁴⁰ As Hegel states, “if there is no way to make an action undone, if its reality is eternal, then no reconciliation is possible, not even through suffering punishment.”⁴⁴¹ Let us be clear. This is not to say that Améry or Hegel is conscientiously against punishment. It is not to say that they see punishment as unnecessary. It is just to highlight the circumstances in which punishment reaches its limits: when it cannot “make an action undone,” when “reality is [revealed as] eternal” even after punishment is enacted — when, as Améry states, “the tortured stays tortured” despite having the opportunity to strike back and see his torturer endure

438 Améry, 70; 73.

439 Ibid., 73.

440 Améry, 34.

441 Hegel, 227.

maximal punishment. Just as Eichmann, this torturer deserves his fate. Yet the physical enactment of justice here does not alone eliminate the injustice created. It is only a small part of the solution. This is one major way in which Améry and Arendt agree.

Through Hunt and others, we understand the virtue of resentment being in its bodily enactment. Brison's own story provides some credence to this view. The ruckus created in her attempt to defend herself against her attacker likely played a role in his fleeing the scene. Although she was left much the worse for wear, it was likely that this reaction contributed greatly to her survival. We might say that she enacted "bodily resentment" against her attacker. She inflicted a certain degree of punishment by striking him, even though it was far from sufficient to prevent the attack entirely. After he fled, she recalls lying in a field, broken and beaten, and flagging a local farmer for help. This farmer and his family carried her out of the field and saw to it that she got to a hospital. He also provided important information to the police and testified in court. After the event, we might say that it was her resentment against the injustice she experienced that allowed her to identify her assailant in a police lineup. This resulted in him being tried, sentenced, and punished in the French court system, to the full extent of the law. At the end of the book, we experience a sort of catharsis. Just as the assailant finishes his sentence, Brison is released from her trauma. Although we get the impression from Hunt and others that Améry rediscovered a large part of his sense of "human dignity" in a morality of "returning the blow," as Primo Levi disparagingly put it, Améry's own narrative proves otherwise. Améry's assailant, as Améry himself states, is not simply his

torturer but the entire world.⁴⁴² This is indeed *the* problem for Améry and he consciously acknowledges it as such. It is tempting to celebrate Améry's justification of resentment against the German masses and the status quo of Germany at the time. However, to do so would manifest the failure to understand it and the problem it reveals. In this realization we find an analogue in Nietzsche when he states "God is dead." The towns-people completely miss the point and hastily interpret this pronouncement as a cause for celebration. Rather, as Nietzsche understands all too well, what is revealed by this pronouncement is a serious problem — perhaps the central one which defines the modern age. Just like Améry's, the madman's own protest is in vain. Just as the town-people carelessly overlook what is at stake in his protest, a healthy portion of the literature makes a similarly dangerous mistake regarding Améry's own "protest against the world." In reality, this protest unveils a problem that needs to be solved, for which the world at the time lacked an adequate answer. The protest, albeit necessary and valid, is not itself the solution.

Zizek and Hunt's ultimate failure to understand Améry lies in this very oversight. They reduce Améry's protest against the world to a protest against "Christian morality," mass culture, "the ethic of forgiveness," Kantian ethics, etc. As a result, they subordinate Améry's narrative to a larger, supposedly Nietzschean, one. And yet because Zizek and Hunt are also heavily influenced by Hegel, we can also see their reading of Améry in

442 As Améry states, "There was much talk about the collective guilt of the Germans. It would be an outright distortion of the truth if I did not confess here without any concealment that this was fine with me. It seemed to me as if I had experienced their atrocities as collective ones (Améry, 65).

Hegelian terms, as representing the protest of subjectivity/individuality against universality/commonality. As we mentioned, one of the major critiques Hegel makes of Kant — and “the covenant” — is the loss of subjectivity in favor of abstract universality. By applying a Nietzschean spin to this discourse, the ultimate goal is not to reconcile the individual to the larger society, but to celebrate individuality and particularity as such. The universal has a tendency to swallow up the individual, in his particularity. The universal itself is therefore the enemy — that which oppresses Améry. For Hunt and Žizek, it is the universal itself against which Améry rebels and *must* rebel to out of necessity. As Hunt states, “where reconciliation amounts to mere re-inscription of *commonality*, the first move, reconciliation is nothing less than domination. That is Améry’s point ...”⁴⁴³ And so, Hunt says, “Embodied practices of resistance generate novel understandings of empowerment that challenge the *universalist* model of human dignity.”⁴⁴⁴ It is against this Hegelian backdrop that Žizek sees Améry’s protest amounting to “a Nietzschean heroic resentment, a refusal to compromise, an insistence ‘against all odds.’”⁴⁴⁵ However no sublimation occurs here. The result, for Žizek, is profoundly Nietzschean. This “resistance” manifests in the *refusal* “to integrate it into a consistent and meaningful life-narrative.”⁴⁴⁶ The individual is not to integrate himself or his own narrative into the larger communal narrative. His narrative has one function: to resist the larger narrative. As Žizek states, here, *resentment* has nothing to do with “the

⁴⁴³ Hunt, 135.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁴⁴⁵ Žizek, 190.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

slave morality.”⁴⁴⁷ Quite the opposite: it becomes manifest in direct opposition to slave morality. Žizek comes to transvaluate resentment and Nietzsche, in his reading of Améry. Resentment is “Nietzschean” and “heroic.” Hunt makes similar points about Améry, which we discussed above. However, she seems to extend this reading even to Brison’s narrative as well, and to Brison’s own take on Améry. As Hunt states: “Brison’s self-defense training highlights what I understand as a Nietzschean trans-valuation of resentment and amounts to what Brison calls the “active construction of a narrative of liberation.”⁴⁴⁸ If we take Hunt’s definition of revenge, properly understood, as “enacted resentments,” then this liberation must have something to do with revenge. Žizek also states that the enactment of revenge is liberating for both parties. How do Žizek and Hunt conceive of this liberation, and from whom or from what are Brison and Améry liberating themselves? Who is involved in creating this narrative? Whom does it concern?

The “liberation” to be found through resentment, in both Hunt and Žizek’s readings of Améry, can only be found if resentment is embodied. Resentment is only fully embodied through an enactment of revenge. As Žizek states:

How, then, does this authentic resentment relate to the triad of punishment (revenge), forgiveness, and forgetting, as the three standard ways of dealing with a crime? The first thing to do here is to assert the priority of the Jewish principle of just revenge/punishment—an “eye for an eye,” the *ius talionis*—over the standard formula of “we will forgive your crime, but we will not forget it.” The only way truly to forgive and forget is to enact a revenge (or a just punishment): after the criminal is properly punished, I can move forward and leave the whole affair behind. There is thus something liberating in being properly punished for one’s crime: I paid my debt to society and I am free again, no past burdens attached. The “merciful” logic of “forgive, but not forget” is, on the contrary, much more

447 Ibid.

448 Hunt, 99.

oppressive: I (the criminal who is forgiven) remain forever haunted by the crime I committed, since the crime was not “undone (*ungeschehengemacht*),” retroactively cancelled, erased, in what Hegel sees as the meaning of punishment.⁴⁴⁹

Zizek creates a dichotomy between what he calls “Jewish justice” and “Christian mercy.” He promotes the former against the later and sees the wisdom of the former as revealed in its understanding of the value of punishment and revenge. Hunt makes a similar argument against “Christian morality,” tacitly implying the same view of the God of the Old Testament. Firstly, it is important to note Zizek’s reference to punishment here and its function. Interestingly, he cites Hegel’s conception of punishment and uses the same language Hegel uses in his presentation of it in “The Spirit of Christianity.” Zizek’s description reveals something quite important. Although Hunt, as well as Zizek, claims to be advocating on Améry’s behalf for the virtue of resentment as such (or as Sebald puts it, resentment *quand meme*), Zizek here reveals this is not, in fact, the case.⁴⁵⁰ There is a prescribed end or goal to resentment, revealed in its enactment through punishment (or “proper revenge,” as Zizek calls it). It is not an end in and of itself. To put it differently, even though they see resentment’s virtue revealed when it is embodied in the act of punishment, its goal is revealed as something quite different. The goal of punishment for Hegel is the retroactive “undoing” (*ungeschehengemacht*) of the crime. Although it is surely not intended, this description comes strikingly close to Arendt’s understanding of “forgiveness.” The means they employ towards that end are different, but the end is the

449 Zizek, 190.

450 See Sebald, Winfried G. 2003. *Against the Irreversible. In On the Natural History of Destruction*. New York: Random House. As Sebald states, “Resistance *quand meme* ... is the essence of Améry’s philosophy” p. 155.

same. Améry himself speaks of this same end as the ultimate goal of his own resentments: “the eradication of the ignominy.”⁴⁵¹ The main problem here is that this Hegelian understanding of punishment has its limits, as Hegel himself acknowledged. Zizek (and Hunt) seem to overlook the significance of this. As Hegel states, “if there is no way to make an action undone, if its reality is eternal, then no reconciliation is possible, not even through suffering punishment.”⁴⁵² Under normal circumstances of crime — for example, the circumstances surrounding Brison’s trauma — the Hegelian conception of punishment can work. Hunt and Zizek fail to make the all-important important distinction between an individual criminal act, even if terribly traumatic, and the totalizing nature of the crimes committed against Améry.

In the case of Brison, her ability to defend herself as well as to stand up to her assailant after the attack (which led to his being punished), provided both her and her attacker the ability to “undo” the past and move on in life. This was because it was her assailant who was fully responsible for this crime, in isolation from the community that later came to support her and allow her to regain trust in the world. For Améry, this was not the case. Améry alludes to this fact when he poetically says that it was not simply SS-man Wajs, but the guards, the clerks, the shopkeepers, including those not criminally guilty who “*weigh*” on him.⁴⁵³ This gets us to the significance of Améry’s mention of rape in relation to his experience of torture. Bernstein and Hunt have taken this to imply

⁴⁵¹ Améry, 78.

⁴⁵² Hegel, 227.

⁴⁵³ We will discuss Brudholm’s sociological take on the relationship between criminal and moral guilt in the coming chapter. There are those who are both legally and morally guilty, but there are also those who are only morally guilty for a given transgression in the context of mass crime.

that for Améry “torture” and “rape” are largely equivalent phenomena. However, there is an alternative way of interpreting Améry’s reference. Rather than providing grounds for comparison to Brison’s trauma, it may be doing the opposite: laying out an important difference. Rape results from one body forcing its corporeality onto another body, the victim’s. Torture, or at least Améry’s experience of it, results in a whole mass of bodies *weighing* on the victim, because behind the torturer stands the whole apparatus of the National Socialist state and society, from Hitler at the pinnacle of power, down through the lowly functionaries, and over to the average Germans who were all to some degree complicit. Another problem emerges. They — that is, all these bodies — are all, in various ways, guilty. However, as we will explore in the next chapter, they are not all *criminally* guilty. And yet Améry seems to be suggesting that they are still to be held accountable in some way.

The prospect of *punishment* — at least in the Hegelian context — of course loses its meaning here. It also loses its efficacy. If guilt is defined by transgression of a law (Hegel), and “broken laws are broken bodies” (Bernstein), then “crime” is here defined as transgression of the body. Žižek and Hunt effectively show that the limits of “the body model” of resentment — just as the limits of punishment for Hegel — are the conditions of its possibility. Namely, if the crime is defined at the level of the bodily boundaries and their transgression, then it is only those who themselves physically cross those boundaries whom we can legitimately punish. This model also implies something Žižek and Hunt overlook: under this model we can *only* justifiably resent those who we *can* punish. Is it not the case that certain circumstances call for us to resent those who we

cannot punish legally? This approach seems to pigeon-hole the virtue of resentment in a very restrictive context. It seems that, for Améry, this would not be a sufficient version of resentment. Many more people were involved in his torture than what the situation at the level of “the bodily boundaries” would make it seem. It is fair to say that Améry harbors resentments against all of these people, to different degrees. But if resentment is tethered to embodied resentment/punishment, and has no other outlet, then, surely, we cannot resent anyone who is not directly criminally guilty of transgression, which is transgression of the bodily boundary. Nevertheless, Améry’s resentments, as the original title of his book suggests, go beyond guilt — that is, beyond those who are criminally guilty. This goes beyond the Hegelian conception of guilt and atonement, with respect to his discussion of punishment. But what might Améry mean by going beyond atonement? Atonement suggests something “theological.” In fact, Améry makes this clear. It would suggest something abstract, disembodied, and irrelevant to his own experience.

Another pertinent issue with Hunt and Žižek’s reading of Améry’s resentment is that, as noted, they both attempt to read Améry’s understanding of resentment through Nietzsche. This should strike us as odd for two reasons. Firstly, *ressentiment* is something profoundly negative for Nietzsche. It is a character trait of “slave morality.” Secondly, as we have already touched on, Améry directly defines his resentments as being fundamentally opposed to Nietzsche’s conception *and* to that of modern psychology. In the effort to save Nietzsche from Améry’s critique, Žižek and Hunt trans-evaluate Nietzsche’s conception of *ressentiment* and make a case for Nietzschean “heroic resentment” that is in line with how they understand Améry’s Resentments. Others in the

literature also do this, to greater or lesser degrees, in the effort to make sense of Améry. Even though Nietzsche can be read in this manner, his discussion of resentment is still limited by his own suspicion of politics and the collective. Hunt acknowledges this herself, claiming that Nietzsche's conception has "limited reach" in this regard.⁴⁵⁴ Améry, on the other hand, seems to suggest that his own resentments, although particular to his own context, have *political* import. Hunt states that this is one of the main reasons she brings Nietzsche into conversation with Améry and Brison: to politicize Nietzsche and thereby allow the insight of his conception of resentment full recognition in the public sphere.⁴⁵⁵ Žižek's reading of Améry can be seen as similar. In their trans-valuation of Nietzsche's notion of *ressentiment*, they effectively politicize resentment through putting Nietzsche in conversation with what amounts to the Fichtean conception of "the need to act" and the Hegelian conception of punishment. What they fail to realize is that both of these conceptions are politically limited — indeed, they are limited by the subject-to-subject relation. In turn, the entire framework around which their readings of Améry is limited. Like the Christian understanding of "Turn the other cheek," Fichte's demand is misappropriated by Bernstein and Hunt since it only applies in the context of two individual persons interacting with one another and precisely cannot be applied in circumstances where large groups of people are concerned. Améry is not speaking about his experience as an individual victim who happened to be tortured in Germany in a given time in history, by a specific individual. He is speaking about what it means to be a

454 Hunt, 178.

455 Ibid.

Jew, and what it means to be a German. Bernstein and Hunt's use of Fichte fails in this context accordingly since this is a political conversation, not one concerning Améry as an individual sovereign subject confronting his torturer, another individual sovereign subject. Améry demands a political dimension to resentment. Bernstein and Hunt fail because they believe Fichte can provide one. He cannot. The subject-to-subject relation in the need to act is limited to two individual persons. It is not political, or at the very least, *not yet* political. Both their readings of Améry arise from the attempt to square Nietzsche with Hegel and Fichte on this issue. However, not only is it unclear that this is possible, even if it were, it is also unclear that it would be sufficient for establishing resentment as a politically viable concept. In their subsequent advocacy of a notion of "embodied resentment," they flee the subject-to-subject relation which provides them a moral ground to advocate for it in the first place. As a result, they both interpret resentment "theologically" in the worst sense of the term, whether they realize it or not. This is because in doing so they lose the practical ground for the ethicality of punishment for Hegel, retribution for Fichte, and some form of healthy resentment for Nietzsche, all of which operate non-politically, within the confined space of the subject-to-subject relation.⁴⁵⁶ In order to put this in context we should first briefly note how the body model, proposed by Bernstein and taken up by Hunt (and inadvertently by Žižek),

456 This is, of course, assuming that Nietzsche can be understood as himself providing grounds for distinction between *ressentiment* and resentment, which Žižek, Hunt, and others like Jeffrey Murphy suggest. See Jeffrey Murphy "Moral epistemology, the retributive emotions, and the 'clumsy moral philosophy' of Jesus Christ" in *The Passions of Law* (New York: New York University Press 1999) 152.

accounts for resentment and its actualization as enacted revenge or punishment. Before we go into Bernstein, however, we should take note of how Hunt arrived at Bernstein in the first place.

The problem in Žizek and Hunt's approach is not that they advocate for "embodied resentment" or revenge, but that they are vague about its aim — that is, its target. Who or what is to be resented? They equate Améry's resentments to a Nietzschean trans-evaluation of morals. In their description of this trans-evaluation, they are also vague about which moral framework is their target. Žizek and Hunt both suggest that this amounts to the negation of "Christian morality," effectively reverting back to "rigorous Jewish justice," in the form of the "just revenge/punishment — 'an eye for an eye,' the *ius talionis*."⁴⁵⁷ Hunt makes a similar claim in her critique of Bishop Butler, who sees forgiveness as a natural requirement of our fallen nature. Hunt states that she sees forgiveness not as a natural requirement of our fallen nature, but rather "a Christian ideal introduced to us by Jesus against a history that had hitherto understood retaliation as the natural and just response to injury."⁴⁵⁸ In reference to the Old Testament, she speaks of this as "just retribution."⁴⁵⁹ However, both Žizek and Hunt are quite vague and inconsistent on this point. It becomes unclear whether the moral system to which they wish to revert is that of Judaism or something different altogether. Just a few pages prior to this assertion of the primacy of Jewish law, Žizek suggest that it is not only Christianity which is at fault, but the entire Judeo-Christian tradition. As he claims,

⁴⁵⁷ Žizek, 190.

⁴⁵⁸ Hunt, 49.

⁴⁵⁹ Hunt, 57.

“What is crucial, however, in this position is the later monotheistic, Judeo-Christian mutation of rage. While in Ancient Greece rage is allowed to explode directly, what follows is its sublimation, temporal deferral, postponement, transference: not we, but God, should keep the books of wrongs and settle accounts in the Last Judgment.”⁴⁶⁰ Hunt makes a similar point about “the Aristotelians,” those who approach resentment’s virtue from the perspective of moderation.⁴⁶¹ As she states, they “can only redeem resentment on the condition that the emotion is sterilized of its natural — and I would add politically potent — tendencies.”⁴⁶² What is at issue for Hunt and Žižek is not resentment but the act of moderation itself. This gets us to our next point: namely, how Hunt arrived at Bernstein’s “body model” in the first place.

As we discussed earlier, the major issue Hunt has with ‘the Aristotelians’ is not that they fail to see resentment’s virtue, but that they somehow constrict it. We have discussed how all of these thinkers understood resentment to be virtuous and in fact necessary to a virtuous life. But resentment’s virtue did not lie in relation to itself. That is, it was not an end to itself for these thinkers. Its virtue was limited to different contexts outside of it: benevolence, justice, “the social,” etc. By working out of and revealing these contexts — bringing them to life — resentment was seen to be in step with virtue. It participated in virtue. The gap that philosophers from Plato to Kant could be accused of creating between “Reason” and “the passions” was bridged by Aristotle and those who

⁴⁶⁰ Žižek, 186.

⁴⁶¹ As stated above, this group includes thinkers such as Murphy, Walker, Wallace, Strawson as well as others who approach resentment from the perspective of analytic moral philosophy. Hunt also lumps Brudholm into this group.

⁴⁶² Hunt, 49.

followed in his footsteps. Resentment was not simply a passion, but a reasoned passion. It was seen as a proper virtue in the Aristotelian sense. But as such, its virtue-ness was constricted. For Aristotle, something is not virtuous because it is good in and of itself, but only because (and insofar as) it achieves the mean between extremes. And so, we might consider every virtue, accordingly to Aristotle, to be similarly constricted. Once a virtue is driven towards an extreme, it necessarily becomes a vice. Another consequence of this Aristotelian understanding of virtue is that an *extreme* is possible in relation to virtue. Herein lies the revelation that every virtue can transgress the *bounds* of its virtue-ness. The Aristotelian structure which can allow for resentment to be seen as a virtue, must also necessarily impose bounds on its being so. Effectively, there must *necessarily* be a border — a distinction — between resentment and revenge. ‘The Aristotelians’ brought together Reason and “the passions.” By showing that it is possible for resentment to be virtuous, they also showed how it can be. As a result, reasonable resentments can be virtuous. Hunt criticizes anyone who seemingly takes an Aristotelian approach towards Améry as being a “moralist,” subtlety hinting at a catchphrase Améry uses to refer to all thinkers who morally condemn resentment and effectively fail to understand resentment’s virtue. Améry himself does not mention Aristotle in his work. In addition, there is little evidence that an Aristotelian approach towards resentment prohibits one from understanding resentment’s virtue, or even from Améry’s own specific understanding of it. Although Hunt’s description of the Aristotelians might not be completely fair or accurate, she proposes that the main problem with their reading of resentment is as follows: by positing such a thing as “reasonable resentments,” and implicitly suggesting

that instinctive resentments are morally neutral, they restrict the full virtue of resentment and prevent it being realized. As a result, the emotion is “sterilized”: made impotent, and freed from its more potent “natural” state. *However*, the distinction the Aristotelians make between reasonable resentment and unreasonable resentment is also the distinction that allows them to avoid the problem of *revenge*. Hunt and Zizek, through Nietzsche, aim to deal with the problematic nature of revenge not by creating distinctions which could safeguard against it, but rather by revealing the *nature* of revenge to be unproblematic if properly expressed. Hunt has a certain amount of success in doing this, by incorporating Bernstein’s understanding of “the body” as the basis for morality. For Bernstein, the body is more than the basis for morality: it is the ground for for modern morality, or “moral modernity,” which creates a major break with or, we might say, forgets the past.

As we discussed before, Bernstein’s argument can be read as Fichtean with a Hegelian twist. Rather than conceiving morality in Kantian terms of abstract concepts of universality (universal human rights, human dignity, moral laws), Bernstein sees it as infinitely more productive to conceive morality/ethics as embedded in the particularity of subjective experience: “Standard accounts in this area focus on respect — for the moral law or for another person — as primary; I take self-respect as central, and respect as derivative because I take action (practical reason) to be prior to perception (theoretical reason).”⁴⁶³ When Fichte posits “the need to act” as prior to consciousness, he sets up precisely this priority. Action, for Fichte, is absolutely necessary to combat a crisis of

463 Ibid., 56.

identity. How do I know that I exist? Unlike Descartes who answers this question theoretically through speculation, Fichte believes it is only through acting upon the world that I can prove my existence and become self-aware. How do I establish my own identity as a human being rather than just some mere object? As Berlin puts it, commenting on Fichte:

A man is made conscious of being what he is — of himself as against others or the external world — not by thought or contemplation, since the purer it is, the more a man's thought is in its object; self-awareness springs from encountering resistance. It is the impact on me of what is external to me, and the effort to resist it, that makes me know that I am what I am ... It is the need to act that generates consciousness of the actual world.⁴⁶⁴

By positing the not-I towards the natural world, I make a claim on it, and, out of that claim, transform raw materials to satisfy my own needs and purposes. I kill a deer in order to have food; I chop down a tree in order to build my house; I chop down additional trees to heat my home in the winter; I kill the bear encroaching on my home in order to protect myself and my family. Doing all of this requires my seeing these things as mere objects. Once that is possible, I can “make a claim” and exert ownership over them. By acting on them in such a way, I present them as objects and reveal my self-identity as a human subject. But what about other subjects? What stops me from “positing the not-I” and making a claim on them? For Fichte, there is no theoretical solution to solipsism; no conceptual framework which would *necessarily* prevent me from doing so. There is only a practical solution: if I treat another human being as an object, he will prove to me that I am mistaken. He will strike me in order to reclaim what is in fact his.

464 Berlin, 239.

Bernstein takes Fichte's understanding of self-realization and teases out its socio-recognitive potential along Hegelian lines. When someone violates my "bodily boundaries," they make a claim on me. For all practical purposes, any "human dignity," "rights," "self-respect" I thought I had, vanishes into the ether. The only way I can reclaim any semblance of such things is by *re-acting* to their claim. By striking back, I make a claim which negates their claim on me. Their claim on me is a claim on my being as a human being: a subject. My being a subject is defined by my ability to have *both* a voluntary and involuntary body. Animals have involuntary bodies; but being a human means being the type of creature that can reveal the human shape or form as a condition of *freedom*. For Fichte, I can contort my own body in order to express that freedom. By doing so, I actualize my potential for freedom. "Self-respect," in turn, for Bernstein, is transformed from an abstract concept to an action; it is enacted and embodied as a corollary of Fichtean "self-realization." Bernstein sees Améry striking back against the Polish foreman in this context. The Polish foreman hits him, treating him as an object; Améry hits back in order to make it clear that he is a human subject. Hitting back is not simply for the purposes of his own survival; nor is it directly to prevent further harm. In fact, hitting the guard leads to Améry being beaten further. But it does not matter. The purpose behind hitting back is to make a statement. It is a means towards an end: making the guard recognize him as a human being. In hitting the guard, causing him pain, Améry also reveals to the guard that he too is vulnerable; he too has an involuntary body and is not completely sovereign. What is formerly assumed as a subject-to-object relation by this Polish foreman is now revealed to be a subject-to-subject relation. While it is true

that the foreman beats him down, Améry notes that this in fact is not a problem since the Pole was still forced to recognize Améry's humanity through receiving the blow. In some limited fashion, in this scene we see both subjects coming to acknowledge the other as human and yet at the same time as being fully vulnerable to each other.

One of the advantages of Bernstein's model of ethics is that it seems to give us a firm basis for making moral judgments. Under this model, no longer is it necessary to appeal to abstract ideals of rights, dignity, respect, etc. to decipher what is morally right or wrong. The moral law is no longer a matter of speculation on theoretical forms or ideals. Its ground is imminent and embodied. Right and wrong no longer relate to keeping or breaking some external law or command. Morality directly relates to the body itself. Transgression of the law *is* transgression of a body, and nothing else. One need not appeal to duty or moral norms in order to judge that something is criminal and therefore law-breaking. The body is made the basis for whether a crime has been committed. If it has been transgressed upon, then a crime has occurred. The victim is the one whose body suffers transgression; the criminal is the one who transgresses the victim's body. There is no speculation or abstract concept that can get in the way of this determination. Harm is harm against a person, not some abstract offense against a duty, moral law, etc., as Bernstein argues.

But what about the issue of revenge? If we have no other basis upon which to understand morality than the human body, how are we to avoid the very prominent threat of an excessive reaction to a crime, unrequited revenge, or excessive punishment? For Bishop Butler, resentment was virtuous, but it was virtuous inasmuch as it served as a

counterbalance to excessive compassion. Compassion itself was a counter-balance to resentment, preventing it from becoming excessive and turning into revenge. The body model avoids the issue of revenge by virtue of the context it sets up for understanding transgression in the first place. Its limits, in this regard, are the conditions of its possibility. Since right and wrong are not determined by breaking an external law but rather by transgressing against a body, all action and reaction is limited to the two subjects involved in such a transgression — what we have been referring to as the “subject-to-subject relation,” according to Fichte. The criminal acts by transgressing against the victim; the victim naturally feels resentment and can embody it as revenge. But the victim can do so primarily because it is clear who is responsible for the transgression. Revenge is not something internalized or frowned upon as a result of moral norms or other abstract conceptions of morality. It is focused, directed towards the perpetrator, and enacted. The body model needs no external concepts to restrict or moderate resentment or revenge. The limitations of the body model itself serve to provide its own bounds in this regard. One enacts resentment on the person who wronged one *physically*, through just revenge or punishment; the context of that punishment is perfectly understood by the assailant. His act of transgressing the boundaries of his own “self,” crossing the other’s boundaries, is swiftly met with a reaction. There is no confusion on the part of the criminal as to why he receives this reaction. After suffering it, he is released from his crime. Both the criminal and the victim can free themselves from this shared past and leave no festering wounds behind. There is no occasion for any lingering resentments or thoughts of revenge to persist. By virtue of

“punishment/vengeance,” as Žižek puts it, as a necessary performative act by one subject against another subject, revenge is freed from its toxic qualities. Whereas other models of justice preserve resentment’s virtue through the external moderation of Reason, the body model contains its own self-regulatory mechanism. Because it is limited to the subject-to-subject relation, revenge does not appear as so great a threat as it might outside this paradigm. The problem is that Žižek and Hunt adapt this model while at the same time causing it to come loose from its mooring.

Both Žižek and Hunt imply that the enactment of resentments as just revenge/punishment results in freedom or “liberation.” This is the case for Fichte. The condition of human freedom is realized in the presentation of the self as having human form, and therefore in its negation of objects outside of it. This is also the case for Hegel. When one person transgresses against another, punishment is imposed in order to bring the transgression into recognition for the criminal as well as to free him and the victim from the past deed. It is helpful to see how this functions in Bernstein. For Bernstein, Améry’s act of striking back against the Polish foreman provided a certain sense of liberation. To a certain degree, that liberation was liberation from the Polish foreman. However, that would oversimplify what Bernstein is saying. The freedom achieved by Améry in this action, according to Bernstein, is defined by its socio-recognitive and claim-making function. It is not simply that freedom results from tearing the bonds between the assailant and victim. The crime itself tears those bonds. Freedom results rather from Améry’s ability to *present* himself as a human being and to have his assailant recognize him as such. Likewise, the strike allows the assailant to realize his own bodily

vulnerability, thereby stripping him of the delusion of complete sovereignty over the victim. For Fichte, the condition of human freedom is in the human bodily *form* which is defined by it being both involuntary and voluntary. The transgression *and* the striking back function together, in relation to Améry and the Polish foreman, to *present* this form and reveal this condition of freedom in both parties. Both parties are necessary, and the fact that both parties have bodies that could allow for such recognition is also crucial. In other words, this type of claim-making would not work if one of the parties were a human and the other a dog. It requires two *human* subjects and an inter-subjective or interpersonal relationship to be recognized between them.

For Améry, striking back liberates him from the claim his assailant makes on him. It is not simply a negative form of freedom he is after, however. The goal is not simply freedom *from* the guard. His striking back causes the guard to again strike Améry. The freedom realized by Améry here is more related to the claim striking back makes than to the physical implications of the act of striking back itself. The liberation Brison experiences is similar. Brison speaks of the story of her rape and its aftermath as “a narrative of liberation.” The liberation she discovers, which can be understood as liberation from her assailant, is not *simply* that. If the nature of this liberation were simply physical, then the moment the attacker fled — or perhaps, the moment he was apprehended by the police — she would be liberated. This is not the case. If her attacker were an animal, however, then in all likelihood this would be what defines liberation: namely, liberation from further physical harm. However, the harm inflicted on her is more than simply bodily harm. This is the case because her attacker is a human being whose

attack makes a serious claim on her; he objectifies her and makes her into an object for his own purposes. Liberation for Brison only *starts* with striking him back and defending herself. The enactment of a decade in prison — his punishment — completes the claim she makes on him. He recognizes the consequence of his deed through suffering just punishment. She is liberated from him, but more importantly she is liberated from his claim on her. Her experience is socio-recognitive and claim-making, and therefore is completely dependent on and bound by the subject-to-subject relation. Freedom or liberation is only achieved with respect to another subject and that subject's claim on oneself. Zizek and Hunt completely lose touch with this in their advocacy of embodied resentment and revenge.

Bernstein is careful to note that Améry's claim is directed towards another subject, namely the Polish guard. A reading of this episode sympathetic to Brison's interpretation could argue that her notion of resentment points to a similarly defined subject, namely the man who raped her. Liberation is defined in relation to the subject against whom their resentments are directed and the claim they make on them. This necessarily requires two subjects: one to make the claim, and one to recognize the claim. Without a human subject against whom to direct one's resentments, "liberation" ceases to make sense in either Brison or Améry's case. As we can gather from Zizek and Hunt's reading of Améry's resentments, there is no defined subject against whom resentment is targeted. For Hunt and Zizek, the targets of Améry's resentments are no longer another subject but an abstract ideal or concept: "Christian morality," the Judeo-Christian tradition, slave morality, "mass culture," etc. It is not clear that any subject or subjects

occupy this space. No longer is this space defined by any specific borders or boundaries. Without a body, there are no more bodily borders. Without bodily borders, there is no more transgression. The space freed up by the victim's claim is abstract, hollow, and barren. It leaves the victim completely alone, stranded by his claim which cannot be answered. It ceases to be socio-recognitive and claim-making because it is misdirected. As a result, whatever "liberation" or "freedom" that Žižek or Hunt discover in Améry is necessarily a groundless one. They free the "body model" from its mooring. By drifting away from this subject-to-subject relation that Bernstein maintains, their arguments become stranded in a sea of uncertainty. They lose the world.

Another problem which surfaces here is the inherent lack of translatability between Bernstein's body model and issues which constantly arise in the practice of transitional justice. Bernstein shows how resentment can be embodied in such a manner that it not only challenges current mainstream conceptions of human rights, morality, and humanity dignity, but replaces them and their foundation. A body can harbor and act on resentments after being transgressed upon. Although Bernstein and Hunt display how this can be effective under the constraints of individual subject-to-subject relations, namely between one individual and another, their appeal to Brison finds its limits when they attempt to translate their models to a larger scale. For instance, if I harm another individual, it is quite clear that my body — clearly demarcated by the skin — is being transgressed upon by somebody else, namely another human body. However, it becomes problematic when we attempt to conceive 'the body' on the political level. How are we even to attempt to do so? On the level of tribe, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, creed,

hair color, height, eye color? And if someone from another political body, however conceived, were to attack me, is it the case that I should take vengeance on his countrymen or even those who share his skin tone, his religion, and so on? As soon as we push this model onto the political, it seems to collapse. We effectively start down a very slippery slope towards problems of collective guilt. We will address this in the following chapter, along with Arendt. As Arendt shows, there is an important distinction to make between collective responsibility and collective guilt. Because a purely embodied approach fails to make this very important distinction — a distinction with particular importance in cases of mass crimes, genocide, and ethnic cleansing — we must explore a more practical understanding of resentment, one for which Arendt provides a crucial groundwork, if only indirectly, through her conception of “forgiveness”.

CHAPTER 7 – ARENDT AND THE PATH TOWARDS FORGIVING THE UNFORGIVABLE

At this point we have assessed the many ways Améry's Resentments can provide the ground not only for a new way of understanding political philosophy, but also ethics, metaphysics, and the history of philosophy. In analyzing the many powerful advantages of embodied "resentment" — the model offered by Žižek, Bernstein, and Hunt in their interpretations of Améry's chapter Resentments in *At the Mind's Limits* — we have also approached certain limits of our own. Whereas this model has allowed us to make immanent the grounds for ethics, justice, and moral action when confronted with "the loss of the world," as Améry might put it, its advantages in this regard bring it to its own limits. Whereas this model works quite well in the context of Brison, whose rape remains within the bounds of an interaction between two individuals (a subject-to-subject relation, as Fichte would put it), Améry's torture and internment goes far beyond the boundaries of such an experience, however horrifying the assault must have been for Brison. In this final chapter we will explore how Arendt might begin to fill in the gaps this model creates. We will do so in a manner which does not negate the validity of this model, but rather incorporates it, acknowledging its insights and strengths while going beyond it to better understand the broader political value of Améry's Resentments. In this way, by bringing Améry's work to its limits through Arendt, we discover how well some of those insights hold up to new political concerns and areas of contemporary study in the field of transitional justice. This chapter will therefore illustrate what an Arendtian reading of Améry might look like. To do so, we will discuss three aspects of Arendt's thought in an

Améryean context: (1) Arendt's discussion of collective guilt versus collective innocence, (2) her discussion of speech as *action*, and ultimately (3) her discussion of forgiveness and its limited, yet profound, relevance to genuine politics and a healthy civil society.

Bernstein, Zizek, and Hunt's explication of "embodied resentment" seems to coincide perfectly with Brison's account of being attacked and her heroic response to it, namely in actualizing her capacity to fight back. Through Bernstein we can understand how this attack triggers an effectively Fichtean response in Brison. The necessary conditions of Brison's attacker deciding to rape her are many, but first and foremost is his inability to see her as a subject. As Fichte would put it, the rapist's action is possible precisely because of his inability to see her as *really* real, that is, as a subject. We must note that this discussion in Fichte, which Bernstein, Hunt, and Zizek (indirectly through Hegel) reference, occurs in the context of Fichte's practical solution to solipsism. This is Fichte's own response to a shortcoming in his own philosophy, namely the prioritization of action over consciousness. For Fichte, just as for Arendt, it is action that reveals to us our status as human beings: beings in distinction from all that is not human, namely, the natural world. For Fichte, it is through man's dominance over the natural world that nature comes to have any value whatsoever.⁴⁶⁵ By positing the "not-I" to things in the natural world, we identify them as distinct from us and reveal them as objects for consumption, building material, entertainment, and so on.

One inherent danger in Fichte's framework here, as Fichte himself points out, is

⁴⁶⁵ Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, 79.

that of mistakenly positing everything and everyone as a “not-I.” This is the danger of practical solipsism — seeing everything around one as an object to be exploited and reserving the status of subject to oneself and oneself alone. For Fichte, this is a problem for which there is no theoretical solution. There is only a practical one. Inherent in human nature is a mechanism that resists being posited as a “not-I” (that is, an object). By positing another human being as a “not-I,” the subject opens himself up to being posited as such by another subject. I am free to treat another human being as if he were not really real; but if I do so, I open up the possibility of the other proving her existence to me by giving me a rude awakening that she is in fact a subject, namely, by striking me back. We see this with both Brison and Améry.

Brison’s response to her assailant can be divided into three stages, as we discussed above. As Hunt states, during the first stage Brison expresses “her rational self-interest ... supported by ideals of justice, equality, intrinsic worth of persons, etc.”⁴⁶⁶ Here “she attempted through reasoning and language to re-engage a recognitive contract; she needed him to see her as a person deserving of mercy.”⁴⁶⁷ The use of language falls short, however. Addressing her assailant as “sir” and treating him with respect does not work. Communication fails. He continues the attack. In the second stage, she appeals to his own self-interest, namely in submitting to his will. By stoically enduring the attack and submitting, she believes she can escape with her life. She tells herself “just follow his

⁴⁶⁶ Hunt, 164.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

orders. Give him what he wants and he'll leave me alone.”⁴⁶⁸ After these first two stages of response fail, in the final stage Brison recognizes her ability to fight back. Brison recounts, “although I’d said I’d do whatever he wanted, as the sexual assault began, I instinctively fought back.”⁴⁶⁹ As Hunt states, “she articulates her physical resistance as a strategy that was her ‘body’s idea’ ... this third type of resistance inspired her to ‘fight like prey pursued by a stronger predator ... using animal instincts, not reason.’”⁴⁷⁰ Brison, in Hunt’s words, “mobilized a new kind of defense whereby her ‘*body had categorized and responded*’ to [her] attacker when there was no hope for communication.”⁴⁷¹ Let’s now briefly reiterate this in Fichtean terms. Brison’s attacker’s inability to see her as really real necessitates a further action on Brison’s part for her to have any hope of demonstrating her status as a subject. Let us note, in the context of Brison *and* Fichte, the audience for this demonstration is both the attacker and the one being attacked. By striking back, Brison reveals an inert capacity to be human both to her assailant *and* to herself. An act of embodied resentment (that is, controlled violence) establishes this. We can certainly see some parallels with Améry here; however, the question we must seriously consider is how far embodied resentment can take Améry, given the particular context of his suffering in juxtaposition with the context of Brison’s experience. Although, on the surface, there are some similarities between Brison and Améry, there are some serious differences between the two, the significance of which should not be

468 Ibid

469 Brison, 2.

470 Hunt, 164.

471 Hunt, 89.

overlooked.

One passage Bernstein and Hunt place great emphasis upon is the one which describes Améry's interaction with Wajs. Let us go back to this passage in full:

In open revolt I struck Juszek in the face in turn. My human dignity lay in this punch to his jaw-and that it was in the end I, the physically much weaker man, who succumbed and was woefully thrashed, meant nothing to me. Painfully beaten, I was satisfied with myself. But not, as one might think, for reasons of courage and honor, but only because I had grasped well that there are situations in life in which our body is our entire self and our entire fate. I was my body and nothing else: in hunger, in the blow that I suffered, in the blow that I dealt. My body, debilitated and crusted with filth, was my calamity. My body, when it tensed to strike, was my physical and metaphysical dignity. In situations like mine, physical violence is the sole means for restoring a disjointed personality.⁴⁷²

Améry makes a moral claim on his perpetrator, Juszek, by striking back. For this reason, the physical effectiveness of the claim — that is, how strong Améry is able to strike him, the extend of the injuries inflicted, whether or not he is able to stop the assailant by knocking him unconscious — is inconsequential. As Bernstein states, “The hitting back is not an act of self-defense ... Juszek’s crushing — at least here — implicitly recognizes Améry’s dignity (as what becomes manifest in his self-respecting action) as what is to be denied and destroyed. The stakes of hitting back are solely moral.”⁴⁷³ As Bernstein notes: “The hitting back takes the physical fact of his body and attempts to give to it a metaphysical worth by claiming it.”⁴⁷⁴ As Carol Quinn expands upon this claim, “By hitting back, Améry demonstrated his value; he demonstrated that he possessed

472 Améry, 90-91.

473 Magdalena Zolkos. *On Jean Améry: Philosophy of Catastrophe*. Lanham Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011, 58.

474 Ibid., 58.

dignity and was not a mere *Muselmann*.”⁴⁷⁵ We find an extremely strong corollary in Brison’s experience. When she decides to fight back her assailant, she realizes a new form. She realizes, as Hunt states: “The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of myself.”⁴⁷⁶ In order to maintain “self-worth,” these boundaries cannot be trespassed upon.⁴⁷⁷ Bodily resentment, as Hunt calls it, becomes “the mode of self-defense particularly suited to fend off such transgressions.”⁴⁷⁸ The claim is two-fold: “morality is embodied through self-defensive action, and second, that in cases of massive moral injury, a feeling of freedom can be reactivated if not restored via a performative self-respect made available through bodily resentments.”⁴⁷⁹ As Cahill and Hunt note, this has particular significance for a group that is considered unable to perform such an action, namely, women. They both suggest self-defense courses for women not only to provide women with much-needed skills to prevent sexual assault, but to allow women to actualize this potential performatively — taking on a new *form* publicly which presents them as *bodies* capable of defending themselves. In just such a manner, “self-defensive action locates the means of resistance squarely within the women themselves, thereby undermining the construction of women as victims ... the new body that emerges from self-defense training perceives dangers as worthy of retaliation and anger.”⁴⁸⁰ It is important to note the striking similarities to Améry here in his altercation with his

⁴⁷⁵ Quinn, 50.

⁴⁷⁶ Hunt, 162.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Hunt, 158.

⁴⁸⁰ Hunt, 169.

foreman, Juszek.

By retaliating against Juszek, returning blow for blow, Améry not only defends himself but makes a metaphysical claim. In trying to make this comparison, however, we also come to a crucial difference between what Améry suggests and what Hunt and Cahill suggest in their discussion of self-defense. On the surface, it seems that Améry strikes Juszek back in self-defense, just as Brison is inevitably forced to fight for her life against her assailant. However, Améry himself reveals that his action has very little to do with self-defense or self-preservation. He even comes close to suggesting that it runs counter to self-preservation. Whereas Brison is forced to fight back, after she quickly calculates that it might be the only way for her to escape further suffering at the hands of her assailant, Améry reveals that he is in fact conscious of the fact that striking his guard will almost certainly guarantee greater suffering and abuse. Améry states: “that it was in the end I, the physically much weaker man, who succumbed and was woefully thrashed, meant nothing to me.”⁴⁸¹ Reality unfolds just as he predicted it would. He is even more harshly treated after striking back. If self-defense or self-preservation alone was the primary goal, Améry would perhaps abstain from retaliation all together. He chooses to strike back against his own bodily interest in order to make a metaphysical claim. For Hunt and Cahill, the act of striking back is just as much about self-defense as it is about making a metaphysical claim. Brison’s experience serves as a great example of this claim. While striking back her assailant might allow her to present herself as a

481 Améry, 90.

metaphysical threat to him, it is quite clear from her own description that escaping further abuse is the primary goal in doing so.

Brison's decision to fight back may have very well saved her from further suffering or even death. Without a doubt, like Améry, it allowed her to recognize herself as a human being — that is, a being capable of defining her own boundaries and punishing transgressions against them through an act of violence. In *physical* terms, the level of effectiveness of striking back in Brison's case proves to be not as futile as it is in Améry's. Although her actions may have very well delayed the attacker long enough to prevent what might have otherwise led to her murder, she was still a victim of rape since her attacker, similar to Juszek in stature, overpowered her. Brison's intent was both practical and metaphysical. She hoped that striking back would free her from further harm and also made a claim on her own body through doing so, despite the outcome. Améry's claim was solely metaphysical: claim-making was the one and only motive. Améry chose to strike back knowing full well that doing so would bring him more physical harm. In both cases, the act of striking back freed neither from their experiences of being physically raped or tortured. Hunt suggests that the metaphysical claim that self-defense makes allows for "a feeling of freedom" for the victim.⁴⁸² It allows one to free oneself from victim status and transform into something other. It would also make sense that such a freedom would manifest in freedom from that experience of being raped or tortured. We will not deny that striking back does in fact make this metaphysical claim in

⁴⁸² Hunt, 158.

just such a fashion. Rather, the question that must be asked is how this claim can be actualized? A good place to start our attempt in answering this question for Améry is to examine how it is indeed actualized for Brison, as evident in her own narrative.

Hunt is correct to claim that Brison's ability to courageously fight back against her attacker contributed to her own recovery in the aftermath of her rape. As Brison herself notes, this realization coupled with self-defense courses were quite helpful to her.⁴⁸³ Realizing her own capacity for physical violence in the context of self-defense contributes to her ability to create an image of herself that rises above what formerly could be described as victim status: a powerless, defenseless woman who is not in control of her own body or being. As Hunt states: "Brison's account of her re-emergence through self-defense is an instantiation of the capacity to re-learn oneself *via* the performance of one's body boundaries."⁴⁸⁴ Hunt continues: "one's self-respect can be both remembered and re-enacted via bodily resentments. But this act of remembrance is a performance."⁴⁸⁵

As we will come to see in the final section of this chapter, remembrance is a crucial component in Arendt's understanding of forgiveness. The impact an event has upon us, particularly when we are dealing with trauma, is just as much dependent on what occurs as how we come to remember that event and see our own role in that event. Enacting self-defense during the attack and taking self-defense courses after the attack contribute much to Brison's ability to affect this impact the act of rape has had on her, allowing her to reconstruct the shattered remains of what was once her self. Recovery is

483 Brison, 14; Hunt, 171.

484 Hunt, 172.

485 Ibid., 173.

complete if and only if this reconstruction is actualized. Yet it is important to note that the act of self-defense during the attack — and through the training she receives afterwards — is only one component in a much larger whole with respect to her recovery process. It might be necessary, but it is surely not sufficient. We see this in her recovery process, which indeed provides a blueprint for understanding Améry, even though it does so in a way which goes beyond the limits set by Bernstein and Hunt.

So far in this chapter we have shown how self-defense in the case of Améry and Brison contributes towards making a metaphysical claim on their assailants. We also have also argued, in agreement with Hunt and Bernstein, that the actualization of this metaphysical claim brings a form of liberation from the chains of trauma, particularly the trauma of rape and torture which Brison and Améry respectively experienced. For Brison, the act of self-defense and self-defense training are completely necessary for actualizing this claim, but also insufficient. We gather this from Brison's text itself. Although self-defense provides the groundwork for her to realize the possibility of this metaphysical claim, and even start the process towards its actualization, it is only when the perpetrator is brought to justice that this claim she makes can be said to be properly actualized. It is only when her perpetrator is brought to justice, and Brison is able to witness such justice enacted, that the metaphysical claim is actualized for Brison. It is only at this point that she is released from the shackles which haunt her. To use the language of the young Hegel, the ghost of the past lingers until the metaphysical claim she wishes to make is actualized through just punishment. After her assailant serves ten years in prison, is made to atone for what he has done, the ghost of the past no longer lingers. She is able to return

to normal life. Brison notes that it just so happens that just as her assailant was released from prison, around a decade after the event, she is able to return to a normal life: to be a partner again to her husband, a productive academic, an effective co-worker, and no longer held captive by her trauma nor defined by it.⁴⁸⁶ As Žižek puts it, citing Hegel: “after the criminal is properly punished, I can move forward and leave the whole affair behind. There is thus something liberating in being properly punished for one’s crime: I paid my debt to society and I am free again, no past burdens attached.”⁴⁸⁷ It is only when she witnesses that her assailant is brought to justice and has served his time for his offense that Brison can let the past go. In her case, she was lucky. Brison says as much: “[M]any trauma survivors who endured much worse than I did, and for much longer, found, often years later, that it was impossible to go on.”⁴⁸⁸ Interestingly, she cites Améry as a prime example of a survivor. As she states: “Améry wrote, ‘Whoever was tortured, stays tortured’ and this may explain why he, Levi, and Celan and other Holocaust survivors took their own lives decades after their (physical) torture ended.”⁴⁸⁹ What we can gather here is that whereas a physical act of retribution (both on her part during the event, and on the part of the criminal justice system after the event) is sufficient for actualizing the metaphysical claim of embodied resentment, thereby freeing her from the event, for Améry the situation is far more complex. Though the goal of Brison and Améry is the same — namely, to free themselves from the clutches of their

486 Brison, 123.

487 Žižek, 190.

488 Brison, 65.

489 Ibid., 66.

trauma — actualization of the metaphysical claim of resentment goes far beyond the physical act of “just revenge” or punishment, as Žižek would suggest. Whereas the physical claim seems to be one and the same with the metaphysical claim Brison wishes to make through embodying resentment, the prospect of physical punishment seems to reach its limit when it comes to Améry. We see this in Améry’s discussion of his relationship with SS-man Wajs.

Before delving into Améry’s captivating discussion about his relationship with SS-man Wajs, it is important to not overlook the special nature of both Améry’s and Brison’s experiences. Even though we will ultimately see a distinction between Améry and Brison in both degree and kind, it is transparent that both of their experiences are exceptional in nature compared to other types of trauma. This is why Bernstein sets cases of torture and rape apart from other types of abuse. He sees torture and rape as earth-shattering and world-changing, and for good reason. Améry and Brison come out of their experiences, at least initially, unable to function in every way that counts as representing a normal human life. In Brison’s case, not only does the experience affect her academically in her ability to teach her students and interact with her colleagues at the university, the memory of the horrible experience serving as a distraction from her normal duties, its effects go far beyond these. The trust that she lost that day extends into every aspect of her life, even the most menial ones: going grocery shopping, having drinks with friends, communicating on a day-to-day basis with her neighbors — all of these things became greatly burdensome. She even came to mistrust her husband, through no fault of his own, because of the way her rape affected her image of what a man was.

Something synonymous can be said for Améry. He notes that his experiences force him to lose trust in the world, in his neighbors, his former friends, his country, his native tongue and culture. Brison, through telling her own story about her rape and its aftermath, charts her own model of recovery. This is transparent in her book, *Aftermath*. Although it is certainly less transparent in this regard than Brison's work, Améry's *At the Mind's Limits* also charts a possible model of recovery. The fact that he is not able to carry through and actualize this model in his own life is indeed tragic. Brison is able to actualize her model and in fact does recover. The fact that Améry does not recover has less to do with his own personal courage, strength, and individual commitment to the cause of recovery than with the actions and inactions of those around him at the time. It is here that we can uncover something crucial about Améry's case which sets it apart from "normal" cases of abuse and trauma.

Judith Herman is a world-renowned clinical psychologist who, in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, puts forth a model for recovery with immense clinical value.⁴⁹⁰ Brison tells the reader how effective private therapy was for her. This took the form of psychotherapy, psychiatric medications, and even sessions with a hypnotherapist, all of which helped her return to a normal, productive life. Améry's relationship with modern psychology is more adversarial. As Améry states, just as his discussion of resentment is a critique of Nietzsche, it is also a critique of modern psychology which views his condition as "a kind of sickness," "concentration camp syndrome," rather than a

490 Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.

condition of truth.⁴⁹¹ There are some striking similarities between Améry's chapter Resentments and Herman's model of recovery. Améryan "resentments" manifest themselves in something which fundamentally alters the "natural time-sense" of the person who harbors them while demanding a "painful" process of "regression into the past," through an "annulment of time" itself.⁴⁹² As Herman similarly puts it, the recovery process itself requires an "immersion in a past experience of frozen time," an immersion characterized by "a timeless quality that is frightening," quite "painful," but absolutely essential — "the most necessary" element — to the second stage of recovery: "the descent into mourning."⁴⁹³ The descent into a broken past also proves to be central to Arendt's understanding of the mechanism of forgiveness, which we will shortly come to see. However, there are a few major points of contention between Herman and Améry which must be noted. Whereas Herman's model — the gold standard for clinical treatment of trauma — provides a blueprint for Brison's own experience of recovery, Améry's model seems to take Herman's model to its limit. In analyzing why this is, we will reveal why it is necessary to understand Améry in Arendtian terms to understand him at all.

Herman sees the descent into mourning as crucial to the recovery process. What Herman also argues is that the reformation of relationships is essential for the victim's recovery. In fact, she sees the former and latter as interconnected: "What sustains the patient through this descent into despair [this immersion in "frozen time"] is the smallest

491 Améry, 64; 68 .

492 Ibid., 68; 72.

493 Herman, 188; 195.

evidence of an ability to form loving connections.”⁴⁹⁴ For Herman, “the smallest evidence” of this ability is manifested through the patient’s ability to tell his or her story to a therapist — to trust another person enough, after what the patient has experienced, to tell one’s story in front of him or her. For Herman, it is in the telling of one’s story that evidence of the potential for this process of reconnection in the individual patient is revealed, though not yet actualized. “Stage three” in her model of recovery (called “Reconnection”) can only occur if the patient has already properly mourned (“stage two”). In order to better understand what Herman means by mourning, it is best to examine the case-study of the child-abuse victim Herman uses, and quotes at length, to open up her section on “Mourning Traumatic Loss.”

In this study Herman describes a young woman who, as a coping mechanism for surviving abuse (by her mother, and eventually, her husband), had resorted to closing herself up emotionally and adopting a form of extreme stoicism, both during the abuse and long after it. In the girl’s own words: “No one could get me to cry ... Even when that woman beat me, no way was she going to make me cry. I never cried when my husband beat me ... I never trusted anyone enough to let them see me cry. Not even you [Dr. Herman], till the last couple months. There, I’ve said it!”⁴⁹⁵ Here Herman presents us with the image of a [typical] pre-mourning stage trauma victim and her stoicism — a stoicism whose mechanism itself is a process of self-delusion, one sparked by a “fear,” as Herman states, of the patient delving into and, in effect, “mourning” her own painful past.

494 Herman, 194.

495 Ibid., 188.

It is this fear — as Herman states, most often manifested in three main obstacles (the fantasies of [1] revenge, [2] forgiveness, [3] compensation — which prevents the mourning process (stage two) from being “accomplished,” and entry into stage three of recovery from being actualized. In this case study we see precisely such a feat begin to be accomplished when such fear, and the stoicism resulting from it, breaks before our eyes: when the girl is finally brave enough to cry in front of her therapist.⁴⁹⁶ In the end, it is this woman’s eventual opening up to her being abused — recognizing and accepting (by narrating it to herself, through her therapist) the darkness and pain behind her experience — that allows her to mourn it; ultimately, to put her past behind her and allow ‘Time’ itself to start “to move again” and open up a “future” for her.⁴⁹⁷ Right here, we get the essence of Herman’s thesis in her section on “Mourning” (stage two) and its function as the main catalyst for the transition into the final stage of recovery: “Reconnection” (stage three) — the stage, as Herman notes, when one, “having come to terms with the traumatic past” through mourning, sees the past as indeed past (i.e.: namely not as the present, or future) and the point at which one can (A) again look towards a bright ‘future,’ and (B) start to build connections to the world and others in it, in the present.⁴⁹⁸ Herman suggests that one must mourn one’s trauma and the perpetrator of that trauma — that is, in Nietzschean language, *forget* it and them — before one reconnects to the world. Améry, by contrast, seems to suggest the opposite: until he is properly reconnected with the world around him, he cannot forget the experience of torture and release himself from

496 Ibid., 188.

497 Ibid., 195.

498 Herman, 195-196.

his resentments. Putting Améry aside, it is useful to consider how Brison's model of recovery coincides with Herman's and therefore comes to differ from Améry's.

Brison's narrative breaks from Herman's to the extent that Brison does not seem to be entirely free from her rapist's fate. A crucial step of Herman's model of recovery from trauma is that the patient breaks free from the perpetrator's fate and becomes indifferent to him.⁴⁹⁹ This makes sense because the obstacles that get in the way of recovery according to Herman — the fantasies of revenge, forgiveness, and compensation — all anchor the victim to the perpetrator in ways that are unproductive and in fact damaging to the victim. Let us not forget the context of Herman's work, namely the clinical setting. It might be the case that the patient is a middle-aged person who suffers from the physical abuse of a parent who is long since passed. In this case, it makes sense that the sooner the patient can forget the perpetrator and break from caring about his fate, the sooner the patient herself can get beyond the trauma and properly see the past as *past*. Brison's situation is a bit more complex, even though Herman's model can still account for it. The complexity arises from the fact that she cannot so quickly break herself from her assailant's fate. This is mainly because after the event, the perpetrator is still on the run. Not only does this present a threat to other women who may be forced to meet the same fate as Brison — certainly a concern for her — it presents an ever-looming threat to Brison herself. The latter should not be overlooked. In the mind of Brison, the event can reoccur. Even though this rape occurs in France, Brison still lives on in fear, despite

499 Herman, 190.

living thousands of miles away, that the past will eternally return in the present. It is for this reason that the assailant's being brought to justice and punished is the crucial event marking the completion of her recovery. In this sense, Brison's experience approximates Hegel's model of punishment better than it does Herman's model of recovery. When she witnesses her assailant properly punished for his crime, she is able to leave the ordeal with no scars behind.

By contrast, though, one could argue that Brison fits Herman's model of recovery as well as Hegel's. In fact, if we remain true to Brison's narrative, her assailant being brought to justice is just a small part of a much larger process of recovery. We might say that his being punished, however impactful, serves a role which is complimentary rather than sufficient in and of itself for Brison's recovery. This is reflected in her relationship with her husband immediately after the rape and in the years following. It was at this point when she — as she started to forget the event or at the very least experienced release from the grip it had upon her — starts to reform those relationships with her friends, husband, students, and co-workers in a manner which reflects a normal human existence. We might suggest that Brison does in fact *forget* her assailant and break herself free from his fate, at least partially and temporarily, well before he is brought to justice. If she instead were to completely bind herself to the experience and not open up to at least the possibility that others around her could support her, heal her, and comfort her, then she would inevitable be held by the past's grip upon her. Like Améry's experience with being tortured, she loses trust in the world through the experience of rape. Through the support of her husband, neighbors, friends, an effective criminal justice system in France,

and legal support, she is slowly able to forget the experience and overcome it. Rather than being completely emotionally tied to the perpetrator, Brison experiences his serving time as a compliment to the process — a part in a much larger whole rather than the whole itself. She is able to appreciate it, while at the same time not being completely emotionally caught up in it. As Brison states, her assailant finishing serving his time, making amends for what he has done, coincides with the end of her own recovery process.⁵⁰⁰ The two parties are each separately free to pursue a more productive future, not entirely forgetting the past, but remembering it in a way that allows for a future to be possible. Through her assailant's process of atonement inside the prison, and Brison's process of recovery on the outside, both parties are able to pursue life again free of the ghosts of the pasts which would otherwise linger. To use Hegel's language, through just punishment, the break in the bonds between "Love" and "Life" are repaired.

Améry describes a similar relationship between himself and his assailant when faced with the prospect of just punishment. For Améry, in contrast to Brison, this takes the form of a thought experiment rather than a present reality he faces. Améry is not able to identify his assailant after the war: whether he is alive or dead, whether he has suffered for his crimes or not, whether he is imprisoned somewhere or is still at large in the aftermath. All of this aside, Améry's description of his torture and of his torturer, SS-man Wajs, comes quite close to Brison's description of her rape. The act separates him from his body as well as forces him to lose trust in the world. Almost mirroring Brison's

⁵⁰⁰ Brison, 123.

experience, Améry imagines the prospect of being given the opportunity to see SS-man Wajs brought to justice, namely the swift justice of the hangman's knot:

When SS-man Wajs stood before the firing squad, he experienced the moral truth of his crimes. At that moment, he was with me ... I would like to believe that at the instant of his execution he wanted exactly as much as I to turn back time, to undo what had been done. When they led him to the place of execution, the anti-man had once again become a fellow man.⁵⁰¹

We discussed this passage above, but now, in this context, let us look at it anew.

Améry confirms what Brison's narrative suggests, and what Žizek, Hunt and Bernstein all imply in their readings of Améry, by acknowledging the function of just punishment. At the same time Améry notes the limits of punishment, which his own experiences reveal:

If everything had taken place only between SS-man Wajs and me, and if an entire inverted pyramid of SS men, SS helpers, officials, Kapos, and medal-bedecked generals had not weighed on me, I would have died calmly and appeased along with my fellow man ...⁵⁰²

It is useful to continue our comparison with Brison on this point. As much as the experiences of Brison and Améry are similar, they are distinct. The main point of distinction between the two experiences is evident in this very sentence. In Brison's case, her rapist is the primary and sole aggressor. As Brison states, her rape creates a "surd" in her life — a breakpoint which not only changes the way she lives life in the aftermath, but prevents her from living a normal life. Breaking the bonds of trust she has in the world, her rape causes an aberration "into the series of events in one's life, making it impossible to carry on with the series."⁵⁰³ In effect we can deduce that recovery is

501 Améry, 70.

502 Ibid., 70-71.

503 Brison, 103.

dependent on entering back into that very series of events, effectively undoing, reversing, or at the very least, in some sense, repairing that aberration's effect on her life. To put it more simply, if trauma is an event which derails one's life, recovery concerns the process of putting it back on track. For Brison, the aberration had one root cause: the actions of her rapist. Bringing him to justice, and enacting a form of violence upon him — namely, forcing him, through the power of the state to be confined in a prison cell for ten years — allowed her to regain trust in the world in which she had lost faith. This event differs from Améry to the extent that it only directly involves two individuals — Brison and her assailant. Once her assailant was properly punished by the criminal justice system, she was able to re-enter a normal life again.

Brison characterizes her experience of rape as a lonely one, occurring on an abandoned French dirt road in the countryside where there was great doubt anyone would be able to hear her scream. Although Améry describes his torture as a lonely and intimate experience, occurring in a quiet isolated prison cell in which only two parties were physically involved, the context is obviously much more complicated for Améry. The reason for this complexity is less obvious. There is reason to believe this has less to do with the grand scale of torturers, SS-officers, generals, and other active Nazi forces, the massive sum total of those *criminally* guilty for these type of crimes during the Holocaust, and more to do with those who were not *criminally* guilty but guilty nonetheless. This is, in fact, Améry's central paradox.⁵⁰⁴ As Améry states, "Wajs from

⁵⁰⁴ This is the main claim of this dissertation.

Antwerp was only one of a multitude”; what weighed on Améry *was* in fact “the entire inverted pyramid of SS men, helpers, officials, Kapos, and generals.”⁵⁰⁵ Beyond that, it was the people who were “guilty of omission, utterance, and silence,” (informants, bystanders, and spectators) and even those whose only offense might have been, in their pride, self-righteously refusing to speak to him “in any other but a crude domineering tone,” or refusing him so much as a “compassionate smile” upon passing him on the street just prior to and during the war.⁵⁰⁶ Ultimately, and perhaps most importantly, it was all those who just as crudely refused to hear his story afterwards, which made it so that two decades after Germany was “liberated,” as he put it, “the inverted pyramid is still driving [him] with its point into the ground.”⁵⁰⁷ As Améry states: “The far too many of them were not SS men, but rather laborers, file clerks, technicians, typists — and only a minority among them wore the party badge. All in all, for me they were the German people...they perceived the burnt smell from the nearby extermination camp as we did...[and]...found that everything was just right.”⁵⁰⁸

Here we come to two further distinctions between Améry’s and Brison’s experiences. The first is that for Brison the guilty party is guilty specifically of a clear and criminal *action*. It is action which makes him guilty. Furthermore, it is the action of her assailant, and her assailant alone, which makes him guilty. This being so, it is a situation

505 Améry, 71.

506 Ibid.

507 Ibid., 71; 73. Améry’s narrative, originally presented on German national radio prior to its release in his book, was an object of great resentment itself on the part of the majority of the German public at the time (Améry, 110).

508 Ibid., 73.

in which *guilt* can be more simply and directly addressed and dealt with, namely by capital punishment via the law. For Améry, the guilt extends not only to Wajs but also to many other individuals who were also criminally guilty, including everyone from Wajs up the chain of command to generals and other officials in the Party leadership. The paradox that we face with Améry is that he also wishes to include the multitude of Germans who were not criminally guilty but seemed to him guilty nonetheless. Here we see that his resentments do not only encapsulate those who are guilty of action, but also those guilty of inaction. In fact, it seems that the main target of his resentments — the group of individuals who concern him most — are this group. The problem is that this group of people cannot — legally or ethically — be punished in the same manner. Améry himself makes this realization clear.⁵⁰⁹ The main question we face in coming to a proper understanding of his Resentments is as follows: if resentments are the main route for recovery for Améry, and they are actualized exclusively by controlled violence, then they seem to entirely lack effectiveness. Žižek, Hunt, and Bernstein define the actualization of “resentment” as a physical act of controlled violence. By limiting ourselves to this model of *action*, with respect to Améry, we also limit its ability to affect this very large group of Germans who remain partially guilty and partially innocent. These people’s guilt lies not in specific criminal action, but in far less tangible offenses. These transgressions matter, nonetheless, to Améry. These people clearly have transgressed against him. Yet they, unlike Wajs and the entire chain of command above him, have not committed

⁵⁰⁹ Améry, 77.

transgression in the same manner. They are not criminals, but they are far from morally innocent. We might say that the majority of Améry's focus in his Resentments rests on a group which exists in the *twilight* — the gray area — between innocence and guilt. How are we to deal with this pressing issue which seems to haunt Améry? In addressing this paradox in Améry, we address another elephant in the room in Améry's work: the issue of collective guilt. Few in the literature on Améry have placed emphasis on this issue.⁵¹⁰ Doing so, however, is essential for establishing a complete understanding of Améry's Resentments.

As stated previously, one of the main challenges in coming to a proper reading Améry is the style he employs. He presents the audience not with a philosophical treatise but a poetic account of his personal experiences. Irony is one of Améry's main literary tools, which is very much in evidence in his discussion of collective guilt. On the surface, there are many lines in this chapter that, in isolation, suggest a very controversial take on the matter. This only appears so, however, when the reader overlooks the dialectic Améry is attempting to put forth in the *act* of resenting. What is the nature of his Resentments? Does he resent the whole of Germany? Perhaps, but when we understand his Resentments in the proper context of this dialectic, we discover that he resents in a manner both familiar to and foreign from how *we* might ordinarily experience the phenomenon. It stands to reason that, if the reader were put in Améry's position — in and after Auschwitz — it would be quite natural to develop resentment towards any and all people who

510 The one very notable exception to this is Thomas Brudholm.

contributed to his degradation. Given that the original title of Resentments was “The Germans,” it is quite clear that the subject of Améry’s Resentments was the German people. It is here that we come to a major hurdle in our analysis, if not a complete standstill. *If* Améryean “resentments” are only to be made manifest in the act of just punishment, *and* if the subjects to whom those resentments apply is the German people as a whole, then the unimaginable seems to surface. Améry himself alludes to what this would entail, while at the same time reflecting the mental state every survivor was forced into as a result of their experiences at Auschwitz. As Améry describes this state, “whether the victim wanted to or not, he had to believe that Hitler really was the German people.”⁵¹¹ After his release from the camps, Améry confronted an environment in which the term “collective guilt” was taboo.⁵¹² At the same time, “there was much talk about the collective guilt of the Germans.”⁵¹³ As Améry states:

It would be an outright distortion of the truth if I did not confess here without any concealment that this was fine with me. It seemed to me as if I had experienced their atrocities as collective ones. I had been just as afraid of the simple private in his field-gray uniform as of the brown-clad Nazi official with his swastika armband. I also could not rid myself of the sight of the Germans on a small passenger platform where, from the cattle cars of our deportation train, the corpses had been unloaded and piled up; not on a single one of their stony faces was I able to detect an expression of abhorrence. Let collective crime and collective guilt balance each other and produce the equilibrium of world morality. *Vae victis castigatisque*.⁵¹⁴

This would suggest that the ultimate aim of Améry’s “resentments” is the same type of swift justice Zizek and others speaks about, but on a much grander scale that

511 Ibid., 74.

512 Ibid., 72.

513 Ibid., 65.

514 Ibid.

Zizek would surely refuse on principle. While making this claim, Améry also simultaneously claims that “nowhere else could the *jus talionis* make less historic and moral sense than in this instance.”⁵¹⁵ A vital component of Améry’s Resentments is the fact that he always discusses “resentment” as *resentments*, in the plural. Brudholm is one of the few in the literature to acknowledge this fact and its peculiarity. According to Brudholm, Améry’s usage of the plural here indicates the multi-faceted nature of his resentments — what they are, what they mean, how he came to experience them over time. How are we to make sense of what Améry is attempting to convey here about own particular understanding of this phenomenon he calls “resentments,” and what they ultimately reveal to him? What does this have to do with the paradox of collective guilt, which Améry’s approach here seems to suggest? Through Arendt, we can see why this is the case.

Arendt speaks about the issue of collective guilt in “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility.”⁵¹⁶ Her description is strikingly similar to Améry’s discussion in Resentments. She expands upon Améry’s main focus in the chapter. As Arendt states, “The totalitarian policy, which has completely destroyed the neutral zone in which the daily life of human beings is ordinarily lived, has achieved the result of making the existence of each individual in Germany depend either upon committing crimes or on complicity in crimes.”⁵¹⁷ It is in this context that we can understand that “the true

515 Ibid., 77.

516 Hannah Arendt. “Organized Guilt and Responsibility” in *Essays in Understanding* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 2003).

517 Hannah Arendt. *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954*. Edited by Jerome Kohn, New York: Harcourt

problem to consider [is] how to conduct ourselves and how to bear the trial of confronting a people among whom the boundaries dividing criminals from normal persons, the guilty from the innocent, have been so completely effaced that nobody will be able to tell in Germany whether in any case he is dealing with a secret hero or with a former mass murderer.”⁵¹⁸ Under totalitarianism, the neutral space in which the average human (or German, in this case) — the one who is neither a “silent hero” nor a “mass murderer” — ordinarily occupies is destroyed, with effects so extensive and catastrophic that even the space which divides the “secret hero” and the “mass murderer” seems to dissolve. The absence of this space shows that “even the best-intended discussions between the defenders of the ‘good’ Germans and the accusers of the ‘bad’ not only miss the essence of the question, but also plainly fail to apprehend the magnitude of the catastrophe.”⁵¹⁹ Indeed, Arendt and Améry agree that “silent heroes” and “mass murderers” did exist, but they also agree in their realistic belief that both were few and far between. It is the effect of totalitarianism on the “in-between,” that is to say, the grounds in between the former and the latter which defines the normal human being — the rule, rather than the exception — which is the focus of Améry and Arendt. Arendt expands on this point:

In this situation we will not be aided either by a definition of those responsible, or by the punishment of ‘war criminals.’ Such definitions by their very nature can apply only to those who not only took responsibility upon themselves, but also produced this whole inferno — and yet strangely enough are still not to be found on the lists of war criminals. The number of those who are responsible and guilty

Brace & Company, 1994, 124.

518 Ibid., 125.

519 Ibid., 124.

will be relatively small. There are many who share responsibility without any visible proof of guilt. There are many more who have become guilty without being in the least responsible. Among the responsible in a broader sense must be included all those who continued to be sympathetic to Hitler as long as it was possible, who aided his rise to power, and who applauded him in Germany and in other European countries.⁵²⁰

Through Améry we find new meaning in Arendt's phrase that "When all are guilty, no one can be judged."⁵²¹ This does not of course imply that in order for someone to be judged, all must be declared "collectively innocent." The paradox of "collective guilt" for both Améry and Arendt lies in the fact that those "irresponsible co-responsibles," as Arendt puts it, those "who were co-responsible for Hitler's crimes in a broader sense, did not incur any guilt in a stricter sense."⁵²² That is, the paradox is that "they, who were the Nazis' first accomplices and their best aides" were not guilty, and in turn, could not be "judged" accordingly.⁵²³ The paradox is that in the context of a mass crime there are many who may be morally guilty, but not legally or criminally so. The problem this creates, if we do not have some alternative mechanism to deal with individuals who fit in this category, is that these people become overlooked. This is of course an issue for Améry, and he is referring to it when he says, "it is a social unrest, not a metaphysical one. It is not Being that oppresses me, or Nothingness, or God, or the Absence of God, only society."⁵²⁴ Améry's own neighbors turned against him — people he attended school with, worked with, identified with, and felt at home with. In the

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 126.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 100.

aftermath of his experience at Auschwitz, he was forced to enter a society in which these very same people seemed to roam free. Although this is a point easily overlooked in Améry's Resentments, it is, in fact, the chapter's foundation. In this regard it is important to remember the original title, "The Germans." His focus is on a group whose guilt goes beyond the *law* in the strict sense — that is, as the original title would suggest, beyond guilt and atonement. Yet, they are still *morally* guilty nonetheless. Effectively they must make amends for such guilt if, as Améry puts it, history is to remain moral.

Although this distinction between moral and legal guilt might seem peculiar and rather inconsequential, its practical importance is revealed the further we explore the conundrum which lies at the center of Améry's Resentments. Furthermore, in recent decades this distinction between moral and legal guilt has been acknowledged in the literature of transitional justice and has also been revealed as a vital distinction with great consequences in the practice of the field. After genocide, as the sociologist Thomas Brudholm explains, although there are many who are legally and morally guilty (i.e.: those who actively committed heinous crimes), there are many more who, although not legally guilty of positively enacting certain crimes, were nonetheless morally guilty.⁵²⁵ Furthermore, there are cases in which moral guilt remains exclusively "moral" (as in the "guilt of omission, utterance and silence" Améry describes), and cases in which "'moral guilt' overlaps with 'legal guilt,'" rendering "criminal guilt," guilt which is criminally prosecutable.⁵²⁶ Améry believes the former and latter to be wholly separable — for him

⁵²⁵ Brudholm, 141.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

there is a major distinction between SS man Wajs and the shopkeeper. The former is a war criminal and the latter, to use the language of Catholic social justice teaching, might only have been guilty of a “sin of omission.” Nevertheless, Arendt, Primo Levi, and Gunther Grass are all in agreement with Améry here in his attribution of widespread “moral guilt” for “passivity” and “omission” as incurred by a great majority of the German public at the time.⁵²⁷ As Gunther Grass puts it, confirming Améry’s claim, “The Germans, those who did it and those who let it be done, killed six million human beings.”⁵²⁸

We must be exceedingly careful to notice that Grass, Levi, Arendt and Améry are not suggesting the adoption of a form of moral relativism that equates the average German to Hitler here, suggesting all Germans are equally culpable and must be punished (or pardoned) accordingly. As we can see from other accounts, Améry had no delusions about the distinctions between the criminal culpability of the SS man who tortured him and the owner of a restaurant who self-righteously stood by while his Jewish neighbors were taken to the camps.⁵²⁹ Améry made it very clear that he had no qualms about capital punishment for those legally responsible, and, on the other hand, the “moral impossibility” of enacting such punishment on any who were legally innocent, even if

527 Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 121-132; Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*. Translated by R. Rosenthal. New York: Summit Books, 1988, 167

528 Zvi Bar-on, *Measuring Responsibility*. In *Collective Responsibility: Five Decades of Debate in Theoretical and Applied Ethics*, Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1985/1991, 255–71.

529 Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. New York: Schocken Books, 1998, 108.

they were in some way not completely morally innocent.⁵³⁰ And yet their strictly moral guilt, for Améry, is still highly problematic, particularly because of the legal system's inability to sufficiently deal with the disconnect that such a trespass has created between him and his former neighbors — what ultimately amounts to his “world,” the subject of his Resentments: the German people. As Mark Osiel notes, in the case of genocide it is often true that “the criminal law fails to reach many people who bear significant moral responsibility for what transpired.”⁵³¹ We see this reflected in Améry's own frustration with the justice system after the war. Rather than presupposing, however, that this system represents for Améry a neo-liberal hegemony that must be overturned, it is perhaps more reasonable to assume that Améry's frustration is not directly with the system itself. Rather, his frustration is better understood as arising out of a recognition of an unavoidable consequence of criminal justice itself: the majority of the “multitude” has incurred some form of moral guilt (that of “omission, silence, and utterance”), while at the same time being criminally innocent.

Nevertheless, their strictly moral guilt is still highly problematic, perhaps the most problematic, particularly because of the legal system's inability to sufficiently deal with it and repair the disconnect such guilt has created between him and his former neighbors, most of whom are guilty in this limited manner. As Brudholm notes, resolving issues in the wake of mass crime and genocide requires going beyond the normal means by which we deal with crime, namely by punishing those who are criminally culpable. As he states:

⁵³⁰ Améry, 77.

⁵³¹ Mark Osiel, “Why Prosecute? Critics of Punishment for Mass Atrocity” in *Human Rights Quarterly*, 22 (2000) 118–147.

[D]ealing with the legacy of genocide and other forms of mass crime perhaps necessitates a focus on the responsibility of states and organizations, and even on such ‘vague’ concepts as the ways in which societies or nations relate to their history and ethical-political identity.⁵³²

This kind of process cannot be brought about simply through just punishment because just punishment can only be enacted on those who are criminally guilty. In order to enact a change which Brudholm describes here, one that Améry himself is working towards in Resentments, requires a new way of understanding punishment and forgiveness. Let us not forget that the system of just punishment Zizek, Bernstein, and Hunt depend upon is the one put forth by the young Hegel. A crime is forgiven if and only if it is punished. The wound it creates in society is healed once the criminal is brought to justice. However, this system lacks a way of dealing with moral guilt in instances where moral guilt may exist but legal guilt does not.

As we discover, Améry’s Resentments are not what they seem to be at first glance. Rather than being an attack on the notion of forgiveness in favor of just punishment, Améry’s work is more accurately interpreted as an attempt to reconcile (repair, forgive) the fissures which his experience has caused for him, the rest of Germany society, and the world itself, in a context where punishment reaches its own limit. Although just punishment may assist the process, the changes Améry hopes for must come from grassroots changes enacted by the German people themselves if any recovery is to be possible for both Améry and Germany. Punishing his fellow neighbors who are morally guilty but not criminally guilty is not only morally impossible but a

532 Brudholm, 139.

completely fruitless, self-defeating enterprise. This is because his recovery is completely dependent on the very same people he would be punishing. Again, “nowhere else could the *jus talionis* make less historic and moral sense than in this instance” for this reason.⁵³³ Let us not forget that Brison’s recovery would not have been possible without one crucial element: a feeling of community — the bonds she had with her friends and family. As she stated, it was through the love and support of her husband, colleagues, friends, students, and neighbors that she was able to re-establish trust in the world and re-enter normal life, as Améry describes it, a life directed towards the future. Just as Brison’s experience highlights the necessity of civic associations and community in the recovery process, Améry recognizes it as a necessary condition for his own recovery, yearns for it, but is denied it. As Herf, Frei, Adorno, Habermas, and others note, the post-war years in Germany were characterized above all by the German public’s outright repression and denial of their complicity in the atrocities they witnessed, and in some cases even directly took part in — what the writer [and fellow survivor] Ralph Giordano calls “The Germans’ second great fault.”⁵³⁴ As Améry states, it was a time in which a majority of Germans saw National Socialism as “nothing other than an operational mishap of history and [nonetheless, one] in which the broad masses of the German people had no part.”⁵³⁵ As Hannah Arendt states, emblematic of the time was the Germans’ very “lack of a response” to what had occurred, and the tendency, in the years immediately following the

⁵³³ Améry, 77.

⁵³⁴ Ralph Giordano, *Die zweite schuld — oder Von der Last Deutscher zu sein*. 2000. Köln: KiWi pp. 246-66.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

War, to move on “as if nothing has happened”; this was the second moral collapse in Germany, as she put it.⁵³⁶ Here we come to the second major distinction between Améry’s and Brison’s experience, and another paradox. The community is what saves Brison and allows her to recover. For Améry, the community — German society at large — is what binds him, preventing him from being saved. The paradox is that there is nothing else but this community itself which can save him. Without it, he is alone.

For Améry, the experience of being overcome “was, at the very bottom, that of an extreme loneliness.”⁵³⁷ It is because of the nature of this loneliness that “resentment” — the process which can allow for the overcoming of his “being one who has been overcome” — is not, and cannot simply be a “matter of revenge nor one of atonement.”⁵³⁸ However, if this is the case, it is obvious that this type of resentment Améry eventually comes to develop towards his fellow Germans is different in kind to the one he has towards SS-man Wajis, whom at the end of Améry’s discussion seems to fade into the distance. This type of resentment cannot be dispelled by the act of just punishment, as the young Hegel might suggest, but must be externalized in some other fashion. The loneliness which comes to characterize his existence results from the breaking of the bonds between himself and his world, and becomes the main problem his resentments aim to address. In effect, his goal cannot be anything but reintegration into that world, and re-establishing ‘the order’ that was stripped from him through his trauma — an ‘order’ everyone around him once belonged to, and in effect needed to reconnect to

⁵³⁶ Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 259.

⁵³⁷ Améry, 70.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., Brudholm, 141.

if there was any hope for him (and them) to justifiably re-enter this order once again and genuinely look forward to a common future together *with* them: the ultimate goal, as he states, towards which his work is aimed.⁵³⁹ It is for this reason, as he shows us through his Resentments, that his past “must not be internalized” through a process of individualized “mourning” but “externalized” in the hope of a process of communal mourning which recognizes his past — his story — as an important part of their own communal past that cannot be neglected. Until that point, the past is still very much alive for Améry, and for the world around him. What Améry acknowledges is that relationships must be reestablished in order for a ‘common future’ to be possible; if this is not the case, then it is still truly the case that, as Améry states, “catastrophe [HaShoah] cannot be ruled out for tomorrow.”⁵⁴⁰ He cannot, as Nietzsche might suggest, forget the past in order to usher in a new, better future. This is not due to him being sick, but rather a sign of his complete health and cognizance of reality.⁵⁴¹ The present cannot give way to the future unless his shattered past — or, at the very least, the harmful effects it has had — can be healed. To neglect this would be to neglect the nature of the tarantula bite, unwittingly willing a return of the repressed, which further entombs one and seals one’s miserable fate. In healing the root cause of these ailments, a proper recovery would amount to a process of forgiving the past while at the same time not forgetting it.

539 Ibid., xvi.

540 Améry, 94.

541 Améry, 68.

CONCLUSION

Setting this dissertation apart from a large portion of the literature on Améry's Resentments, I have argued that the main problem Améry confronts is not one between the individual and collective — Améry and his native Germany. Rather, this study has shown that the problem for Améry is in a definition of terms. It is the negative connotation of *ressentiment*, embedded historically in German society, that most prevents Améry from communicating a deeper message behind his Resentments to the German people, differentiating it from this more common understanding of the term which he sees Nietzsche monopolizing. In this study we have explored the historical and philosophical context of the term *resentment* and Nietzsche's understanding of it. Although comparing Nietzsche's and Améry's separate understandings of the concept of resentment reveals some common ground, it is fair to say that the two thinkers are engaged in largely separate projects in their explication of this age-old concept. Even Hunt, who advocates the most persuasive Nietzschean reading of Améry in the secondary literature to date, still recognizes a certain limitation to this analogy between the two thinkers.⁵⁴² Nietzsche, in exposing the dangers of *ressentiment*, highlights the standing of the individual over and above the masses, who most often will always fail to understand him. Although Hunt, for example, takes the comparison between Améry and Nietzsche one step too far, her comparison reveals one major problem:

Despite his attack, Améry shares with Nietzsche a deep commitment to individualism and nonconformity that on the one hand protects their thinking

⁵⁴² Hunt, 139.

from being appropriated by popular (Christian or liberal) politics, while on the other hand, puts them at risk of alienating their thought from the possibility of politics through the refusal of community.⁵⁴³

Although it is true that both Nietzsche and Améry advocate for the individual, they do so in different ways and with almost directly opposing goals. Whereas Nietzsche argues for individualism for the sake of the individual's freedom to express his identity *as* an individual, Améry advocates for the individual through his own personal story of survival, but does so for the sake of the collective, of which he himself comes to realize he is only a small inconsequential part. In effect, Améry reveals a truth which is far more Hegelian than it is Nietzschean. Améry's primary purpose in exhibiting his resentments is not simply to express his individualism — how his experience made him an individual with a particular understanding of resentment which no one else could hope to understand, choosing to endure the social shame of affirming them as a protest against the collective as such. On the contrary, his individual story reveals to him how interconnected he is to the larger whole he formerly came to hate. He resents, not because he hates Germany, but because of his love for it and his concern for its future. His Resentments, after all, are directed towards a particular audience, "the Germans," as the original title of the chapter would suggest. His discussion is aimed at raising the larger question of the Germans' own understanding of the term itself and their relationship to it, not simply resenting the collective they represent.

Both Nietzsche and Améry give phenomenological accounts, but where Nietzsche's discussion focuses on the individual, Améry's account of his individual

543 Ibid.

experience is *essentially* political.

The chapter which would become known as Resentments was originally presented as an address on German national radio, addressed to the Germans, in German. As we have discussed, the original title of this address was “The Germans.” At the same time, Améry’s primary challenge is to give a description of the “subjective state of the victim.”⁵⁴⁴ Taking the latter claim in isolation leaves us with a reading of Améry which is quite Nietzschean, as if his primary goal were to present his story and his resentments as a protest against the collective which surrounds him. This is a prevalent view in the secondary literature, as we have discussed, and for good reason. Although this is true, it is also an incomplete reading of Améry. It is through his protest as a survivor — a being trapped in a state of “loneliness” and despair — and his personal reflection on what being a survivor revealed, that Améry comes to recognize the collective in a new light. Without them, he is nothing. Without their support, his Resentments fail to achieve their intended target: “the eradication of the ignominy,” not only in the harmful effects the Holocaust had on survivors like himself, but in the world as a whole.⁵⁴⁵

An important point, neglected by some in the literature, is that Améry himself, many years after his experience of torture, is still unsure about the very nature of his resentments. As Améry states, “The people of whom I am speaking and whom I am addressing here show muted understanding for my retrospective grudge. But I myself do not entirely understand this grudge, not yet; and that is why I would like to become clear

⁵⁴⁴ Améry, 64.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 72.

about it in this essay...I speak as a victim and examine my resentments.”⁵⁴⁶ Here, we return to the original claim of this dissertation: Améry is effectively engaged in a phenomenological enterprise. Much of the literature places far too much emphasis on Améry’s “protest” as one of individualization and far too little emphasis on the intersubjective nature of his narrative, which itself connects it to the larger collective surrounding him. The goals he sets out to achieve through his Resentments cannot be *achieved* outside of a larger collective; he suggests that they cannot even be *understood*. This is the paradox unanswerably underlying Améry’s work. Although the Germans might be tempted to think otherwise, they cannot understand themselves without understanding his story, just as Améry cannot understand himself without them. Furthermore, any attempt by the Germans to tell a story about themselves is incomplete without having heard his own. Any story Améry attempts to tell himself, likewise, requires that he speak of those he wishes to forget.

For Bernstein, Žižek, and Hunt, resentment is embodied and actualized through just punishment. One realizes the need to act, in Fichtean terms, when one’s humanity is denied by another. Améry being struck by the foreman exemplifies such a denial. Améry acts on the need to act, forcing the foreman to recognize his humanity by returning the blow. “Action” is made manifest through the negation of a negation — a proportionate act of controlled violence against his assailant. Through acting, he proves to his assailant that he is not a mere object to be manipulated and controlled at will, but a subject capable

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, 63.

of demonstrating his subjectivity. He does so through force. Through externalizing his resentments, which naturally result from his personal boundaries being crossed, he acts on them without letting them fester through internalization. He embodies his resentments in carrying out the act of violence or, as we might put it, just punishment. We saw how well this model of “resentment” works to explain Brison’s rape and its aftermath. It was only through resisting her rapist physically that she was ultimately able to survive. After taking self-defense courses, she was able to approach the world with a new sense of confidence which might change the way other assailants would approach her in the future. Her capacity for self-defense improved as a consequence of realizing and actualizing her form as a human being, striking back at her assailant, and then engaging in self-defense training in the years following her rape. Ultimately, Brison was able to recover from her experience. Although this was analogous to Améry’s, we ultimately discovered that her experience of trauma and recovery operated under conditions greatly different from Améry’s. At long last, we saw that the ability to make connections again to family, neighbors, and loved ones — her community — was important for her own recovery. In fact, her community was with her all along her journey — from the French bystander who called an ambulance upon finding her broken and bruised, alone on a French dirt road after being raped, to her husband and coworkers in America years later who supported her along all the steps of her recovery process.

As we have argued, this model of embodied resentment reaches its limit when it comes to making a substantive comparison between Brison and Améry, since the very community Améry depends on is the same community which has turned against him,

effectively turning his world upside down and leaving him in a far more damaged state in the aftermath. There is no clear indication that embodied resentment can account for the type of recovery that Améry sketches out and for which he yearns most in Resentments. He desires a process which not only accounts for criminals, but can also encompass all of German society, the majority of which is criminally innocent. Here we came to another limitation of understanding Améry's Resentments as necessarily embodied and actualized in just punishment or violence. If Améry's main goal in resentment is punishment, then he cannot morally resent those he cannot punish. Since a majority of the German public is criminally innocent, and the criminally innocent cannot be punished, then they also cannot be resented. But surely, if they are morally guilty, it is quite natural for him to resent them. This would leave Améry in the awkward position of resenting them while at the same not being able to act on such resentment. If one cannot punish through violence, then one cannot act. Since action is bound to violence under this model, one's hands are tied. One must remain passive and can only submit to the lonely state Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment* resides in, namely that of fantasy, delusion, and inaction.

Inaction in the face of oppression is self-defeating. Bernstein, Zizek, and Hunt have all offered readings of Améry which allows us to see how resentment is in fact an active process rather than a passive one. Through their presentation of embodiment, they have shown how just revenge is often the only outlet for the poison that is contained within resentment to be externalized. If it is internalized and allowed to linger, there is no greater threat to the victim and his ability to have a productive future. However, under the circumstances in which just revenge is not permitted or possible, it seems as if the

possibility for action itself is threatened. This is indeed a problem. As Arendt says, a life “without action ... is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.”⁵⁴⁷ What much of the literature in question here overlooks is the possibility of speech *as* action, and action as speech. In fact, it is Arendt who provides us with just such a possibility. Améry cannot punish his German neighbors — all of those morally guilty but criminally innocent. In this manner, Améry realizes *through* his Resentments that he himself cannot act as the lone arbiter of divine justice. However, what he realizes in effect is that he *can* speak to them, compel them to listen and have them *act* on their own accord, on his behalf.

One of Arendt’s most important insights is her illustration of the vital connection between speech and action. As Arendt states in the opening line of her chapter “Action,” in *The Human Condition*, “Human plurality, the basic conditions of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction.”⁵⁴⁸ To act means to initiate, to begin, to set something into motion. It is in this manner we can understand what Arendt means when she states that “a life without speech and action ... is dead to the world.”⁵⁴⁹ Without the ability to begin something *anew*, we can no longer be said to be living human beings. Human beings are defined by their natality: the capacity to create all things anew. One way they do so is through language, and more specifically, speech. For Arendt, it is speech which lays out the character of human plurality, which itself has a dual character of quality and distinction. Because men can understand each other, they

⁵⁴⁷ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 176.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 177.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 176.

are equal. At the same time, if men were not distinct, the necessary conditions out of which language arose — namely, the possibility of being misunderstood and misrecognized — would not exist. We discussed how Améry's torture, as well as Brison's rape, represent some of the most violent forms of misrecognition possible. How can speech allow one to recover from such extreme experiences? How is speech one of our most powerful tools, the power of which is revealed in such experiences that approach the limits of our imagination?

One of the main functions of speech, for Arendt, is the disclosure of the identity of the agent, the one who acts. *Who* we really are, as opposed to *What* we are, is revealed through storytelling. We come to know ourselves and understand ourselves only retroactively when we are able to tell a story about ourselves. As Arendt states, these stories “tell us more about their subjects, the ‘hero’ in the center of each story, than any product of human hands ever tells us about the master who produced it.”⁵⁵⁰ Améry engages in just such a form of storytelling in order to better understand for himself what his “resentments” are, at first not being entirely sure. It can be said that Améry is in fact the quintessential storyteller in the manner Arendt lays out. What is ultimately a phenomenology of victimhood or what he elsewhere calls a “meditation” on his condition is in fact geared not only towards the self, but towards the other. His goal is to come to self-knowledge, but it is equally to come to knowledge of the other. His journey is an inward one, but also an outward one, simultaneously. In order for a story to be a story, it

550 Ibid., 184.

must have an audience. Otherwise, there would be no way to distinguish a story from the delusions of a truly sick individual, like the man of *ressentiment* for whom action is not possible, and reality amounts to fantasy and nothing more. In this sense, speech is crucial for both Améry and Brison in each of their own attempts at recovery. Just as we saw with Brison, and in line with Herman's model of recovery, recovery involves a descent. For Herman, the recovery process requires an "immersion in a past experience of frozen time," an immersion characterized by "a timeless quality that is frightening," quite "painful" ... but absolutely essential.⁵⁵¹ Likewise, Améryan "resentments" require a descent. They manifest themselves in a "regression into the past," through an "annulment of time," all of which is quite painful to the extent that it inverts one's natural time-sense.⁵⁵² Rather than avoiding pain and discomfort, as any conscious animal would, Améry embraces it. As Améry notes, it took great courage and patience to develop what would become his Resentments. It is fair to say that this is because his "resentments" were directed in a manner resentment typically is not, further distinguishing his stand from Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment*. What Améry says in this regard is quite telling and is worth citing in full:

Resentments as the existential dominant of people like myself are the result of a long personal and historical development. They were by no means evident on the day when I left the last of my concentration camps, Bergen-Belsen, and returned home to Brussels, which was really not my home. We, the resurrected, all looked approximately the way the photos from those days in April and May 1945, now stored in archives, show us: skeletons that had been revived with Anglo-American canned corned beef, toothless ghosts with shaven heads, just about useful enough to give testimony quickly and then to clear out to where they really belonged. But

⁵⁵¹ Herman, 188; 195.

⁵⁵² Améry, 64; 68.

we were ‘heroes,’ namely to the extent to which we could believe the banners that were stretched over our streets and which read: *Gloire aux Prisonniers Politiques!* Except that the banners quickly faded, and the pretty social workers and Red Cross nurses, who had turned up in the first days with American cigarettes, tired of their efforts. Still, for quite some time there lasted what was for me a totally unprecedented social and moral status, and it elated me to the extreme: being what I was — a surviving Resistance fighter, Jew, victim of persecution by a universally hated regime — there was mutual understanding between me and the rest of the world.⁵⁵³

As we see here, whatever Améry experienced in the initial stages of his liberation was not “resentment.” We are led to believe that his resentments formed as a result of the realization that there was no mutual understanding between himself and the world, and for that matter, himself and his fellow Germans. Their misrecognition of him is two-fold: the first one culminates in the Nazi regime and his torture, the second arises in the premature effort to forget the first. A consequence of such a hasty form of forgiving and forgetting the past is that the majority of the German populace never becomes aware of their collective trespass against him, dooming any effort to help overcome it. As Améry goes on to say:

Those who had tortured me and turned me into a bug, as dark powers had once done to the protagonist of Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, were themselves an abomination to the victorious camp. Not only National Socialism, Germany was the object of a general feeling that before our eyes crystallized from hate into contempt. Never again would this land ‘endanger world peace,’ as they said in those days. Let it live, but no more than that. As the potato field of Europe, let it serve this continent with its diligence, but with nothing other than that. There was much talk about the collective guilt of the Germans. It would be an outright distortion of the truth if I did not confess here without any concealment that this was fine with me. It seemed to me as if I had experienced their atrocities as collective ones. I had been just as afraid of the simple private in his field-gray uniform as of the brown-clad Nazi official with his swastika armband. I also could not rid myself of the sight of the Germans on a small passenger platform where,

553 Améry, 64.

from the cattle cars of our deportation train, the corpses had been unloaded and piled up; not on a single one of their stony faces was I able to detect an expression of abhorrence. Let collective crime and collective guilt balance each other and produce the equilibrium of world morality. *Vae victis castigatisque*. There was no reason, hardly a real possibility, for resentments to form. Certainly, I wanted no part of any compassion with a people that for me was laden with collective guilt, and it was rather indifferently that I helped some Quakerly inspired persons to load a truck that was bringing used children's clothes to impoverished Germany.⁵⁵⁴

Améry states something immensely curious here about a main aspect — a necessary condition of possibility — for his “resentments” to form: compassion for the Germans and Germany as a whole. Although Améry presents us with a justification of resentment, the form of “resentment” he ultimately arrives at is one foreign to resentment as it is normally understood. In fact, his form of “resentment” seems to be the very negation of resentment. What could “resentment” have to do with compassion? What role could compassion have with the process of “resentment”, or in his own recovery process, which seem to be one in the same for Améry? What role could it play in helping him *overcome* his trauma which would, as he seems to imply, simultaneously allow Germany to *overcome* it?

As we discussed in the last chapter, according to Herman the second stage of recovery involves remembrance and mourning, and this is enacted by retelling the story of the traumatic event. Through telling her own story, Brison was able to recovery from her trauma. However, without the third and final stage of Herman's model of recovery, any attempt towards recovery is always left unfulfilled. The third stage for any trauma survivor is, as Herman states, “Reconnection.” This stage involves reconnecting with

554 Améry, 65.

loved ones, friends, and neighbors, and integrating back into society. In being able to perform this stage of recovery, Brison was able to recover. Améry was not. But why not? On the surface, it seems as if Améry's failure to recover from the camps and enter a life orientated towards the future was a direct result of exercising his will *not* to do so. In light of what we have just discussed and explored, it is worth considering the possibility that his ultimate failure to reconnect with his society — Germany — was not intentional. This failure to reconnect does not necessarily imply he lacked the desire to do so. In fact, on the contrary, he shows this desire to a great degree and it is evident throughout the text. He fails because they fail. The Germans, who at the time of his writing were quite reluctant to accept the Holocaust and their moral culpability for it, saw Améry as a just another *Ressentimentsträger*.⁵⁵⁵ In doing so, they missed his point entirely. By understanding the ultimate fulfillment of Améry's "resentment" being in their embodiment (in the act of just punishment), we likewise run the risk of missing an important factor Améry's "resentment" point to: without reintegration, all is lost.

As Herman shows us, recovery from trauma requires one to reconnect to one's society. Although Améry describes himself as a Jew, he also describes such an identity as something in part forced upon him through his experience in the camps.⁵⁵⁶ Just as much as he identifies as a Jew, he also sees Germany as his homeland.⁵⁵⁷ It represents something he cannot simply forget. Just as he resents Germany in the immediate

⁵⁵⁵ Brudholm, 90-91.

⁵⁵⁶ Améry refers to this in another chapter of *At the Mind's Limits* as "the necessity and impossibility of being a Jew" (Améry, 90-91).

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

aftermath of the Holocaust, he shows compassion for it. In fact, “resentment” for Améry can be described as the dialectic between compassion and resentment. This compassion is shown in this passage above. He resents Germany and the Germans, but doing so does not prevent him from helping send used clothing to impoverished German children in a war-torn Germany. We might suggest that his “resentments” are bound and kept in check by compassion, and not without reason.

We noted earlier that Herman states, “What sustains the patient through this descent into despair [this immersion in “frozen time”] is the smallest evidence of an ability to form loving connections,”⁵⁵⁸ and that this ability is manifested through the patient’s ability to tell his or her story to a therapist — to trust another person enough, after what the patient has experienced, to tell one’s story in front of him or her. For Herman, it is in the telling of one’s story that evidence of the potential for this process of reconnection in the individual patient is revealed. Both Améry and Herman see this “descent” — this “immersion” — as *the* critical element to the process of recovery. It is this “descent” which Améry’s Resentments, and Herman’s process of “mourning,” both enact. However, a great difference between Améry and Herman can be traced to the following: what Herman’s model of “mourning” attempts to do on the level of the *individual*, Améry’s ‘Resentments’ attempt to do on the level of the *community*.⁵⁵⁹ In Herman’s model, this “descent” (this “immersion”) is something demanded of the victim (the *teller*) by his audience (his *analyst*); in Améry’s case, it is something the victim (the

⁵⁵⁸ Herman, 194.

⁵⁵⁹ Brison, 13.

teller) demands of his audience, the Germans, themselves.

This relationship between the storyteller and the audience is something Arendt develops in her own work, going back to the ancient Greeks to shed light upon it. As Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves describes in his article on Arendt, for the Greeks, the past was not simply past, foregone, and forgotten. Rather, according to Arendt, for them “the past became a repository of instruction, of actions to be emulated as well as deeds to be shunned. Through their narratives the fragility and perishability of human action was overcome and made to outlast the lives of their doers and the limited life-span of their contemporaries.”⁵⁶⁰ D'Entreves continues: “However, to be preserved, such narratives needed in turn an audience, that is, a community of hearers who became the transmitters of the deeds that had been immortalized. As Sheldon Wolin has aptly put it, ‘audience is a metaphor for the political community whose nature is to be a community of remembrance.’”⁵⁶¹ D'Entreves expands on this point:

In other words, behind the actor stands the storyteller, but behind the storyteller stands a *community of memory*. It was one of the primary functions of the *polis* to be precisely such a community, to preserve the words and deeds of its citizens from oblivion and the ravages of time, and thereby to leave a testament for future generations. The Greek *polis*, beyond making possible the sharing of words and deeds and multiplying the occasions to win immortal fame, was meant to remedy the frailty of human affairs. It did this by establishing a framework where action and speech could be recorded and transformed into stories, where every citizen could be a witness and thereby a potential narrator. What the *polis* established, then, was a space where *organized remembrance* could take place, and where, as a

560 Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, “Hannah Arendt”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/arendt/>>

561 “Hannah Arendt and the Ordinance of Time” in *Social Research*, 44(1), 91–105.

result, the mortality of actors and the fragility of human deeds could be partially overcome.⁵⁶²

Améry's interest, expressed through his own Resentments, is not in holding The Germans to the past only for the sake of doing so; rather, it is in order to invite them to explore their past — one they share in common with him — and out of that exploration find some “future possibility.”⁵⁶³ It is through this possibility that he hopes that he and the Germans can overcome the past together, even if only partially.

As Arendt shows in her conception of “forgiveness,” what forgiveness implies is not a forgetting of the past, but a re-entry into it — a re-presentation (that is, a making-against-present the past) — which is directed towards revealing new possibilities in an otherwise static present and future. Forgiveness does not aim to undo or erase the past action, but only the actor's relationship and seemingly inescapable bonds to it. In other words, it enacts an opening up of the past (just as Améry opens up his “wounds” to his audience, the German people, in his Resentments) which provides it with the possibility for making all things new with respect to the transgressor, the transgressed party, and their relationship in the future. It opens up a space for a future between them, without which neither can have a future of their own. It frees the transgressor not from his transgression, but from the seemingly irreversible creation of the bond which that transgression has on the transgressor's identity that, as it stands, prevents him from having any such relationship with the person against whom he has transgressed. “And if

562 Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, “Hannah Arendt”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/arendt/>>

563 Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 48.

he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”⁵⁶⁴ As Arendt states in a footnote, the word translated into “repent” here, derived from “*metanoein*,” which means “change of mind,” is itself ultimately derived from the Hebrew *shuv*, which implies a “return,” or a process of “trac[ing] back one’s steps.”⁵⁶⁵ Additionally, the Greek word translated as “forgive” is *apheinai*, which has the connotation of “release.” What this implies, according to Arendt’s understanding of this biblical verse and broader understanding of “forgiveness,” is that when one (namely, the transgressor) is ready to “trace back one’s steps” and express a “change of mind” about his former actions, it necessarily puts him in a position to be “released” from his act, on the faithful assumption that he (like the “irresponsible co-responsibles” of Hitler) could not have been fully aware of what he was doing at the time he committed it.⁵⁶⁶ The act is not forgotten or undone. On the contrary, it is re-presented in such a way that the relationship one has to the action becomes transformed as one is given the chance to recognize its ill effects. In turn, so does the relationship one has to the one transgressed against.

Améry’s Resentments, an exceptionally difficult chapter in a book that approaches the limits of our understanding, is perhaps best understood through neither Nietzsche nor Hegel, but through Arendt. Directed towards the enactment of a process of Arendtian forgiveness, expressed on a communal level, these Resentments aim not only to transform the one who harbors them, but also to transform those they are directed

⁵⁶⁴ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239-240.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 240.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 240. Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 126.

towards. Améry's Resentments manifest itself as a call for repentance, and also as the realization of the need for such a call to be answered. When the call is sufficiently answered, only then are "resentments" no longer necessary. Their ultimate goal can be seen as a process of Arendtian "forgiveness," writ large. Forgiveness is not simply a process for the sake of the victim, so that he can free his own mind of the burden of the past, but, as Arendt states, an "affair in which what was done is forgiven for the sake of who did it."⁵⁶⁷ It is done not out of spite for the offending party, but out of compassion for them and their shared future together. As Améry concludes:

If, in the midst of the world's silence, our resentment holds its finger raised, then Germany, as a whole and also in its future generations...would then, as I sometimes hope, learn to comprehend its past acquiescence in the Third Reich as the total negation not only of the world that it plagued with war and death but also of its own better origins; it would no longer repress or hush up the twelve years that for us others really were a thousand, but claim them as its realized negation of the world and its self, as its own negative possession. On the field of history there would occur what I hypothetically described earlier for the limited, individual circle: two groups of people, the overpowered and those who overpowered them, would be joined in the desire that time be turned back and, with it, that history become moral. If this demand were raised by the German people, who as a matter of fact have been victorious and already rehabilitated by time, it would have tremendous weight, enough so that by this alone it would already be fulfilled. The German revolution would be made good, Hitler disowned. And in the end Germans would really achieve what the people once did not have the might or the will to do, and what later, in the political power game, no longer appeared to be a vital necessity: the eradication of the ignominy.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁷ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.

⁵⁶⁸ Améry, 72.

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