

# Real Forgiveness: A Path of Personal Transformation

Yehuda Tagar

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Forgiveness is a healing, redeeming, life giving process, but only if it is real. Forgiveness as intention, duty, ideology, religious instruction or lip service - is a misleading illusion, or a lie. It is certainly not an intellectual process, and the intention to forgive, while being a necessary component of it – is in itself powerless to affect a real change.

In order to be effective forgiveness has to become a reality in one's actual experience, not just in one's intention. And in order to become a reality—the process of forgiveness has to transform the previous, pre-forgiveness experience: anger, revenge, bad wishing, negativity, cut-off. These realities live not only in the mind but in the deep emotional experience and in the depth the human embodied memory. There, where the deep established, inherent forces opposing forgiveness live—there the transformation towards forgiveness must take place.



What is the opposite of forgiveness: there is not one simple word for it, at least not in English. An injury, a damage, and offence must have been committed, at least in the eyes of the suffering side, for forgiveness to be an issue at all. Someone is perceived as the cause of someone else's suffering and loss.

The opposite of forgiveness are the normal human reactions of hurt, loss, a sense of damage, anger, a will for punishment, retribution and revenge, bitterness, a will to correct the wrong done and to claim retribution and punishment, the will to make the offender regretting what they have done, 'to teach them a lesson'. All these are real and powerful emotions. They must change for real forgiveness to remain just an intention. Real forgiveness requires a real change.

I identified four standards that are required the required pre-requisites for real forgiveness. I choose to call them now 'The Four Standards of Soul':

**Standard 1: Healing has started.** If forgiveness is to happen – it is necessary that the process of taking care and of healing one's own hurt, injury, wound caused by the offending deed --- has at least started by the sufferer.

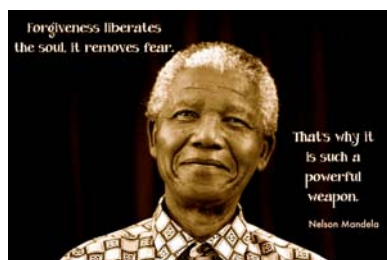
**Standard 2: Creation of new Meaning.** It is imperative that the sufferer at least started to create new meaning which they attribute to their suffering, that he/she learned something new and significant from it, made real steps in one's own personal development as a result of it, made a free choice as to how to live with it and how to personally grow from it. There must be an inner gain to balance the outer loss. **Standard 3: Transforming one's own obstacles to forgiveness.** That requires that the

sufferer has made a direct experiential connection to what lives in the depth of his/her own soul where the injury resulting from the offence is living. Sober self perspective and exploration into the wound and the reactions to it must prepare the way for real transformation of these reactions.

**Standard 4: Seeing the offender as a complete human being.** It is imperative for the cultivation of real forgiveness that the sufferer remembers the complete human being of the offender, in spite of all the natural impulses to the contrary. It is necessary to place the injurious deed of the offended in the context of the rest of their humanity. Their perceived darkness has to be seen in the broader context of their whole being.

On the basis of these preparations, real forgiveness is possible, available and quite effortless. It becomes a natural force of life on all levels, as a reality.

An obvious choice for a universal archetype of forgiveness is Jesus Christ – when he forgave those who executed him. I am a secular international humanistic scholar from a Jewish-Slavonic ancestry without any religious affiliation, Christian education, upbringing or tradition, but I am inspired by the outstanding individuals in human history and Jesus Christ's deed of forgiveness is inspiring. If in Europe today it is acceptable to be inspired by special teachers from the East, West, North and South – surely the European mythology of the Christ could also be used as an archetype.



Let us observe closely the crucial moment of his forgiveness: Jesus Christ dying on the Cross, speaking the immortal words: “Forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). He forgave his executioners. Following his example, became an article of faith for all Christians since then. But with basic knowledge of European

history, it becomes obvious that in spite of 2000 years of that faith, the ideology of forgiveness has not become a cultural reality for the warring tribes of Europe. Domination, struggles, retributions, and revengeful impulses dominated Christian European history much more than the standard of forgiveness. Imposed forgiveness and belief in it do not work. Real forgives is a very personal matter, taking place only in freedom, resulting from a real personal process and initiative.

Looking closely at the conditions under which the archetype of forgiveness made the above statement and really forgave his executioners, from the point of view of the above four standards of soul required for real forgiveness, reveal the following:

**Standard 1: Healing has started.** From His own point of view the Christ was identified with the creation of the world and of humanity. It is his world, his humanity, which in his view was in a severe need of healing. His suffering and execution, in his view, was a necessary act of healing; a sacrifice for the healing of his world.

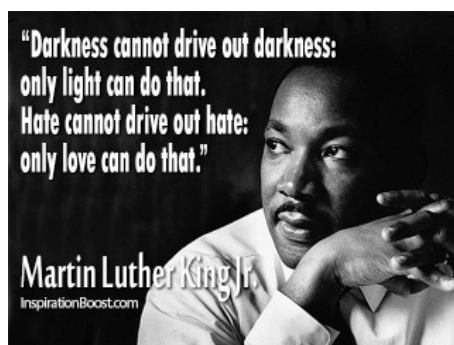
**Standard 2: Creation of new meaning.** His suffering on the cross was the fulfilment of a known prophecy in which he believed. It had to happen. Although he was not looking forward to it, he accepted it fully. He found new meaning in his suffering and was in full agreement with it. He gave it his own meaning.

**Standard 3: Transforming one's own obstacles to forgiveness.** The Christ being as a human being has already reached a level of initiation in which personal emotions do not contradict one's core values. He was already the leading initiate (Zadik, Swami, Yogi, Shaman, enlightened man) of his culture who transformed himself to a very high degree. His own inner darkness, the 'anti-human' that lives in every soul, had no power over his soul. On that basis he was free to forgive his executioners.

**Standard 4: Seeing the offender as a complete human being.** He could do this from the start. He achieved the capacity for seeing human weakness and wickedness in the context of their complete humanity, past, present and future. He has achieved that standard of soul long before his execution.

All the four standards of soul required for real forgiveness were in place before forgiveness could become a reality in this story. His act of forgiveness was real and credible. Let us try to apply them now to normal human life.

The first standard of soul means, at the very least, taking personal responsibility for one's own well being. It is in itself a significant step in personal development. This is the First Condition for Spiritual Development. It requires stepping out of the victim consciousness and taking a pro-active role in the process of one's own healing on all levels. It requires the development of self perspective, self-compassion and of self-empathy.



The second standard of soul - creation of new meaning – means having to start a process of self transformation. It requires the capacity of observing one's own suffering objectively; allowing oneself to give new meaning to their suffering out of their inner resources. It requires liberating oneself from given, cultural and instinctive reactions forming their personal meaning, into giving the injury a meaning that one chooses in freedom. It requires the capacity to transform any experience, good and bad, into a step in one's personal development. That is a path of personal initiation.

The third standard of soul, of transforming one's inner obstacles to forgiveness, requires, at the very least, getting in conscious touch with these inner realities. It requires to actually explore, observe, confront and transform these internal realities: the natural anger, the deep wounds and pain caused by the injury; the bitterness, the loss, the hate, the awareness of the damage --- all the natural reactions to being injured or hurt; the deep seated urge to revenge, avenge, claim justice, punishment and retribution for the affliction of the injury, correcting the wrong that was caused. All these must be encountered and transformed. One's own internal darkness, the anti---human in oneself, has to be acknowledged and neutralised in oneself, at least to an initial degree, for real forgiveness to become possible. As to the fourth standard of soul required for an act of real forgiveness - Seeing the offender as a complete human being – a deep act of empathy is required. But real empathy, like real forgiveness, is not just attitude, feeling or intention. True empathy is the act of perceiving the reality of another human being from their own point of view. It is a real capacity and skill that must evolve

consciously. And there are degrees of empathy. For the above standard of soul 'Perceptive Empathy' is not enough. It requires a perception not only of the manifest human reality, which obviously failed to act humanly. It requires the kind of empathy that can perceive the future developmental potential of the offender, what we call in Psychophonetics: 'Conceptive Empathy'. That is what it takes to put the failing and the weaknesses and the darkness of another human being in the context of their full human potential, *before* that full potential actually takes place.

These standards mark a personal initiation path. What I mean by initiation here is nothing traditional or sectarian. The time for these is well and truly over for those who regard themselves and independent, self-authorised individuals. What I mean here by the term initiation is the conscious effort to manifest one's own higher and deeper humanity – through the reality of one's actual, existential lived human reality, guided by one's own 'Moral Intuition', following no one else.

This is what I have to say now about real forgiveness – a path of personal initiation. Psychophonetics is one process that enables people to create perspective regarding their own experience and meaning, so that they can freely make the changes they choose to make. There are other methods for doing so. What matters is that creating perspective about oneself and affecting real changes is required for a grounded transformative, life giving act of real forgiveness.

**Yehuda K. Tagar**

*Psychophonetics Institute Int; Psychosophy Academy of Central Europe; Skola Empatica; British College of Methodical Empathy. Email: [yehuda.tagar@psychophonetics.com](mailto:yehuda.tagar@psychophonetics.com)*