

# ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF FORGIVENESS FROM HANNAH ARENDT AND LEONARDO POLO

## Perspectiva antropológica del perdón desde Hannah Arendt y Leonardo Polo

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### Abstract

Forgiveness has been studied in recent years from different perspectives. The interest in this topic is explained by the need to address personal and interpersonal development strategies. The various approaches that have been made so far do not allow a full understanding of forgiveness. Therefore, the objective of this article is to show the anthropological foundation of forgiveness from Hannah Arendt and Leonardo Polo, as well as the educational consequences this virtue has on personal growth. Forgiveness, understood as a virtue, takes special relevance and it is highlighted not only as a repairing action, but also as regenerator of the person. A literature review is made of the main contemporary authors that understand it so, assuming both interpretations -repairing and regenerating- among whom are Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. The work delves into Hannah Arendt's proposal and Leonardo Polo's transcendental anthropology due to the interest of his contributions in this regard and the educational repercussions that they suggest around personal development with the acquisition of virtue: the thought of both authors suggests the conception of forgiveness as a virtue that contributes to personal growth and favors interpersonal relationships.

### Keywords

Forgiveness, virtue, Hannah Arendt, Leonardo Polo, anthropology, education.

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### Resumen

El perdón ha sido estudiado en los últimos años desde diferentes perspectivas. El interés en este tema se explica por la necesidad de abordar estrategias de desarrollo personal e interpersonal. Las aproximaciones de diversa índole que se han realizado hasta el momento no permiten una comprensión total del perdón. Por ello, el objetivo de este artículo es mostrar el fundamento antropológico del perdón desde Hannah Arendt y Leonardo Polo, así como las repercusiones educativas que tiene esta virtud en el crecimiento personal. El perdón, entendido como virtud, cobra especial relevancia y se destaca que no es únicamente un acto *reparador*, sino también *regenerador* de la persona. Se realiza una búsqueda bibliográfica de los principales autores contemporáneos que lo comprenden así, asumiendo ambas dimensiones del perdón -reparador y regenerador- entre los que se encuentran: Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida y Emmanuel Levinas. El trabajo profundiza en la propuesta de Hannah Arendt y en la antropología trascendental de Leonardo Polo por el interés de sus aportaciones al respecto, y las repercusiones de carácter educativo que sugieren en torno al desarrollo personal con la adquisición de la virtud: el pensamiento de ambos autores sugiere la concepción del perdón como una virtud que contribuye al crecimiento personal y favorece las relaciones interpersonales.

### Palabras clave

Perdón, virtud, Hannah Arendt, Leonardo Polo, antropología, educación

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## Introduction

The term forgiveness has been studied from different perspectives, including religious, psychological, legal, educational, philosophical and anthropological. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychological studies of forgiveness have increased significantly, explaining a specific way of developing positive responses, among which is the one carried out by Gismoro-González et al. (2020), Rosales-Sarabia et al. (2017), or Wade & Worthington (2003). Other authors, such as Mullet (2011), have approached it as an essential element in marital therapies. Also, following Serrano (2017), forgiveness has often been treated as a personal process aimed at psychological recovery after some pain suffered. In this case, forgiveness would consist of replacing negative emotions with positive ones, which would translate into wishing the good of the offender to address him/her in a better way in the future.

In its religious meaning, it has often been pointed out that the ability to forgive is one of the personal experiences that should be educated in the classroom in the subject of religion, as Freedman (2018) and Mullet et al. point out. (2004), among others. However, today there has been a secularization of the concept of forgiveness, detaching it from the religious sense of guilt and sin, although, generally, it has been approached as a moral concept. In this regard, from a civic point of view, it should be emphasized that tolerance and forgiveness manifest the freedom of the person, but they are distinct acts. According to Villar Ezcurra (2006),

tolerance enables civic virtue. Etxeberria (1997) points out that tolerance finds its limit in injustice, i.e., any unjust act carries with it a vengeance that demands justice, as Echano (2002) indicates.

From the legal perspective, following Nieves (2015), forgiveness is irreducible to a simple legal or political term, since it makes it possible to overcome hatred and resentment for the offense suffered. Therefore, the desire for justice in the face of such offense is replaced by the ability to forgive when it comes from love. In the social sphere, according to Dordron and De Oliveira (2015), forgiveness is accepted as a guarantee of interpersonal relationships because it restores the well-being between the victim and the offender.

From a psychological analysis of this concept, we emphasize the lack of seen it as a mere cognitive strategy, but it is the result of an emotional reaction for the feeling of compassion towards someone who is hurt by an injustice. The act of asking for forgiveness is a consequence of the compassion felt by the offender. Also, Wade et al. (2014), point out that compassion also helps the offended person accept forgiveness from the offender - an attitude that is caused by certain thoughts and feelings - and there is an increase in positive thoughts and feelings with that acceptance. Therefore, the act of asking for forgiveness also comes by an empathetic feeling as a response to the pain of the offended. In this sense, we can say that the ability to forgive makes it possible to repair personal relationships. However, asking for forgiveness does not necessarily mean forgetting what you have suffered, because the memory of that act can always trigger feelings of revenge. Villegas (2017) points out that pain is not solved by simply apologizing, although the offender serves to free himself/herself from a past that blocks him/her.

Today, from a psychological perspective, it is also unusual to hear the word forgiveness; people say “I am sorry” as a compliment of courtesy, although it is not always a consequence of a true empathy shown towards the offended person and wants to express the understanding of how the offended person feels. However, it is necessary to avoid confusion between the feeling and the sincere verbal expression of asking for forgiveness, which requires a voluntary act, previously mediated by an act of reason. In relation to this, it is not convenient to reduce the ability to forgive a spontaneous reaction, but rather to affirm that the expression of forgiveness is a free act exercised by the person, “a virtuous act” that develops certain attitudes and skills in the face of pain. Indeed, forgiving an offense goes beyond: it is an act of magnanimity that involves accepting that apology, it is a virtue. Understanding the ability to forgive as mere compassion is a

reductionism of current culture, because, although it may be preceded by an empathetic emotion, it is more than that emotional reaction. In this research we want to emphasize that forgiveness not only repairs the offense, but is capable of regenerating the interpersonal relationships between the offender who asks for forgiveness and the offended who accepts it. From the philosophical point of view, forgiveness and regret have been approached in recent years by some authors such as Cázares-Blanco (2020) and González Montero (2018), among others.

As for the problem to be solved, we consider that forgiveness has been approached in the educational field from a psychological point of view in relation to emotional well-being as a way of feeling better when asking for and accepting forgiveness. However, there are no educational proposals in which forgiveness is approached in its anthropological content, perspective that wants to be proposed in this work, since from other perspective (the aforementioned), the vision of forgiveness does not understand human growth in all its depth. To this end, from an anthropological perspective, the analysis distinguishes the restorative sense of the regenerator of forgiveness.

Regarding the methodology used in this research, a theoretical review is made and texts are analyzed, in which the selected authors address the notion of forgiveness with the double meaning: repairing the offense and regenerating the person; this second sense is the one that deepens the anthropological scope of this article.

As for the structure of the article, first, some of the most significant contemporary authors who have studied forgiveness from an anthropological view -human growth- and whose proposals suggest this restorative-regenerative distinction will be re-examined. Jankélévitch, Derrida, Ricoeur and Levinas are the most relevant. A brief immersion will be made from their contributions to understand the true scope of the regenerative meaning of forgiveness. In order to give an answer to this, in the second place, the thought of Hannah Arendt and Leonardo Polo will be studied more deeply, since their anthropology suggests interesting notes on the regenerative sense of forgiveness and its scope in personal growth.

Arendt (2005) affirms that this reality helps to improve human action, restoring it, since it represents a new beginning. The author explains that forgiveness is a virtue that contributes to personal growth and that contains both the restorative and the regenerative dimension. For his part, Leonardo Polo, based on his anthropology centered on personal growth - in which virtue is an essential axis - suggests an interesting perspective that can complement Hannah Arendt's proposal. His thought invites us to



have a deeper vision by considering forgiveness as a virtuous act that has its origin in the ability to love on a personal level. To do this, we will analyze the self-gift structure developed by the author (Polo, 2016) in which he points out that what it is specific to the person is his ability to give and accept the others. Forgiveness will be a key element in making this possible.

Therefore, the main contribution of this work is to highlight that the ability to forgive contributes to personal improvement and makes it possible to repair the offense and regenerate the person and -as a consequence- to improve interpersonal relationships. In addition, it is pointed out that -due to its relationship with personal acceptance- it is a virtue that favors the acquisition of other virtues, such as magnanimity, hope, strength and truthfulness.

The feeling of repentance that usually prompts us to ask for forgiveness, along with the virtuous willingness to ask for it, does not come from religion, but from the anthropological configuration of the person. This means that one cannot understand the person without forgiveness, because when he is authentic and sincere, he brings us closer to the intimacy of the other. For this reason, interpersonal relationships are the basis for human growth in virtue, too.



## Some theories that glimpse a regenerative sense of forgiveness

The Nazi Holocaust has allowed us to reflect on whether an act of forgiveness can repair any action, even one in which the damage has completely corrupted the human being. In this sense, Jankélévitch (1986), when asked whether any offense is forgivable, states that these massacres have changed his perception of the term forgiveness. For this author, the reality of the Nazi Holocaust is an irreparable event, even unforgivable, since the criminals have not asked for forgiveness and even if they asked for it the damage caused is so big that it can hardly be forgiven. The question is therefore so serious that Jankélévitch raises whether this phenomenon can be restorative of the human being when the offender cannot return to the offender what he has lost. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to stop at the Jewish Holocaust and how it has influenced the conception of forgiveness as a human value, a topic that has already been addressed by other authors such as Echeburúa (2013).

Among contemporary philosophers, Derrida Ricoeur, Levinas, who broaden the perspective of forgiveness as a mere feeling, could stand out,

proposing it as a necessary element for human growth with a restorative and -to a certain extent- regenerative sense of the human being. However, these visions are not purely anthropological because they are approached from a more philosophical perspective. The analysis allows to glimpse contributions of interest on forgiveness that help to understand how to educate in forgiveness, thus overcoming the psychologically reasonable vision.

### *Derrida's conditional and unconditional forgiveness*

The first author is Jacques Derrida, who points out (2015) that it is necessary to differentiate two areas of forgiveness: the one that affects the private sphere of the person and, the other, the legislative dimension. According to him, there are several meanings of this term related to legal issues, such as apology, repentance, regret; but also distinguishes other types of political character, such as pardon and amnesty.

This author defines forgiveness in a double sense. The first is a pure and unconditional concept, exempt from any external purpose such as, for example, redemption. Derrida (2002) stresses the need for forgiveness to be unconditional because it is granted even to those who have not regretted. In this regard, this author (2001) also points out that the act of forgiveness is granted, even though the offender has not shown a clear change of attitude because he has not regretted. Therefore, this modality of forgiveness is not conditioned on whether or not it has been previously forgiven in an interpersonal relationship. This sense of forgiveness, according to Derrida (2001), is exceptional and extraordinary because it seems as if forgiving interrupted the ordinary passage of historical temporality. In this case, the forgiveness is granted to the other person without consideration, even if he has not asked for it.

Secondly, it speaks of "conditional forgiveness, which is proportional to the recognition of the lack suffered, to the regret shown and to the transformation of the sinner" (Derrida, 2015, p. 34). This second sense of forgiveness is subject to three elements: the first is that there is awareness of having committed a fault. The second refers to the very transformation that occurs in those who ask for forgiveness. Finally, the offender must show a strong believe not to commit a similar offense again (Derrida, 2002). Therefore, the unconditional forgiveness granted, even if the offender does not ask for it or is regretted, could be identified with an act that can contribute to personal growth because it involves accepting the other, without looking exclusively at the reparative role of forgiveness, since the offender is forgiven as such.



### *Overcoming Ricoeur's Golden Rule*

For his part, for Paul Ricoeur (1999), “forgiveness is a value not only supra legal, but supra ethical” (p. 95), because he understands the ability to forgive as a generous gift that implies the radical demand to love the enemy, something superior to the Golden Rule. Ricoeur argues that forgiveness is an act of love of the person, and not so much of justice because it is not something that is requested or deserved, but it is given and accepted freely, as Aranzueque (2017) points out. This is an exceptional and extraordinary thing that makes repair possible (Ricoeur, 2006).

In this line, Rebok (2015) indicates that in Ricoerian thought forgiveness does not eliminate the memory of the offense, but assumes it and transforms it. Therefore, as Ricoeur (2006) states, when a person asks for forgiveness, it does not mean that he discards or represses the offense; it implies the ability to forget the damage suffered, since only then can it really be forgiven. For this reason, for this author (Ricoeur, 2011), the action of forgiving means giving a future to memory because it allows making new promises and continuing to act in the future. In short, the concept of forgiveness developed by Ricoeur, in addition to including the restorative dimension of action, would also be in tune with a certain regeneration of the person, in terms of the renewal of the ability to make promises on a personal level. Therefore, this proposal does not reduce the ability to forgive a specific act -reparative- but deepens on what it means to forgive those who offend.

### *Levinas' Unconditional Forgiveness: Forgiving the Other*

Emmanuel Levinas (1977) affirms that forgiveness preserves the forgiven past in a purified present and, consequently, it does not imply forgetting the damage suffered, because it repairs the action. Whoever asks for forgiveness has the past in the present moment, since he has the ability to repair the offense, without giving it back. In this sense, for this author, the ability to forgive is reparative of the offense, since the offender discovers in the present some element of the past capable of being restored. Therefore, thanks to restorative forgiveness, the human being can reverse the irreversible character of the human action occurred in the past.

As explained by Levinas (1977), since forgiveness does not mean concealing the offense, it is necessary to differentiate the offense from the subject who performs it. Only in this way can a free forgiveness be granted by forgiving the other, even if he has not asked for it, nor has he repaired the offense. This act of forgiveness, which is unconditional,

is characterized by the fact that it is not subject to a formal request for forgiveness by the offender and therefore requires the acknowledgement of the offender as an equal offender. Moreover, this action involves forgiving the other, as another and not only remaining in whether or not the offense has been repaired; even what may be humanly unforgivable can be forgiven in the name of God, as Levinas (1991) points out.

Likewise, Montero (2019) affirms that, in Levinasian thought, the other is always more than his acts, that is why the forgiveness that comes from compassion helps to repair humanity. Therefore, this act of forgiveness is more than a reparative action of the past, by implying the recognition of the offender as another self. It is precisely this recognition the one that elevates unconditional forgiveness to a certain regenerative action, allowing the forgiver or the person who asks for it to improve as a person.

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## Forgiveness as Birth in Hannah Arendt

Following the nightmare suffered by the Jewish people in World War II, Arendt (2017) delves into violence (2012) and also addresses the possibility of forgiveness and its meaning (2005). It highlights this phenomenon as the inexplicable action that restores the rupture produced by an injury between the offender and the offended. Any act of offense to others has consequences -because a damage has been committed in the person- Arendt (2005), points out that “the possible redemption of the predicament of irreversibility (...) is the ability to forgive” (p. 256). Arendt discovers in this act the ability to restore an offense and to annihilate the consequences attached to it, as explained by Lasaga (2003). While forgiveness “serves to undo the acts of the past” (Arendt, 2005, p. 256), the promise suggests a window of hope that opens to an uncertain future. Contrary to the Nietzschean idea (Nietzsche, 1999) that “man always depends on the past” (p. 41) and repudiates the will, the author emphasizes that when a person forgives, it somehow eliminates the possible revenge of all unjust actions. Arendt (2005) points out that “forgiveness serves to undo the acts of the past” (p. 256), giving the offender a promise, a new opportunity: a new birth. He adds:

Only by this mutual exoneration of what they have done, men remain free agents, only by the constant determination of changing their minds and starting again are they entrusted with a power as great as that of starting something new (p. 259).



As pointed by Mihăilă et al. (2016), the concept of birth is a transversal axis in Arendt's thought that contains great educational possibilities from a personal growth perspective. Bárcena (2006) adds that "every human being is a being-in-time, pure beginning and, therefore, foundation of something new: a moment of pure freedom" (p. 181). In this regard, Arendt (2005) conceives man as a natural being, as a being able to grow and be open to new possibilities: "something uniquely new enters the world with every birth... action that as a beginning corresponds to the fact of being born" (p. 207).

### *Renaissance and citizenship*

Beyond the context of Judaism, Arendt (2017), provide two dimensions of forgiveness (2005) applied to the public and private spheres of the person, facilitators of interpersonal relations. In his thought (Arendt, 2005), forgiveness and promise "depend on plurality, on the presence and performance of others, since no one can forgive himself or feel bound by a promise made only to himself" (p. 257).

The author places forgiveness in the social sphere as that which enables coexistence and political relations. In this case, the foundation of forgiveness is "a kind of friendship without intimacy" (p. 261) that allows life in society. Respect is possible by discovering the dignity of the human being and does not depend on the qualities of a person.

When we are aware of the value of the person, we forgive even forgetting an offense. Arendt (2005) states that "forgiveness is the only reaction that does not simply react, but acts again and in an unexpected way, not conditioned by the act that caused it and therefore free from its consequences" (p. 259). This applies to both the offender and the offended. For this reason, this act overcomes justice by restoring the person's dignity.

The author explains that forgiveness is necessary for life to take its course. And for that new life opportunity to be possible, it must come about not only as a repair to the offense, but also as a regeneration that eliminates revenge. It is the only way that a new birth can occur in Arendtian terms. Following González and Fuentes (2012), forgiveness does not relativize mistake, but assumes it and overplays it, showing that the person -for that dignity- is more than his acts. From Arendt's perspective (2005), forgiveness appears as the regenerative act of civic relations and, therefore, regenerative also of the person because it eliminates the revenge of every offense.



*Love as Regenerator of Personal Relationships*

Similarly to the social dimension, Arendt (2005) points out the sense of forgiveness in the personal sphere as a requirement of love. Because of the fact of being a person, every human being requires to be loved in an unconditional and unlimited way. In this regard, the author raises forgiveness from the personal to the religious realm, founded on love and not so much on divine anger, as Nussbaum (2018) has emphasized, giving it a deeper and more coherent sense with the idea of a free human being and always growing instead of the Nietzschean deterministic superman, as indicated by Polivanoff (2011) and Lemm (2010). Forgiveness in Arendt (2005), from the perspective of love, has a regenerating role of interpersonal relationships, since it “destroys the environment in which it relates us and separates us from others” (p. 260), enabling a new birth, as a promise, as Bárcena (2006) points out. Thus, as Arendt states (2006), the ability to forgive eliminates revenge as a natural reaction to the offense that causes “the individual to remain subject to the process” (p. 259).

Arendt (2009) stresses that the Christian vision of love impels us to love any human being, even the one who has offended us: only perfect love is capable of forgiving. Like his vision in the political sphere of the person, forgiveness is possible because we can recognize that the person who offends is more than the damage done and deserves to be loved; and due to that dignity, we forgive and love. He also points out that love “possesses an unparalleled power of self-revelation and an unparalleled clarity of vision to discover the who” (Arendt, 2006, p. 260), which allows accepting the person not by what he is, but by who he is. As pointed out by González and Fuentes (2012), forgiveness dignifies the person and regenerates him, so that the fact of being wrong does not detract from his dignity but makes hope possible. This perspective of forgiveness is deeper than that based on respect, since it affects the person as a whole, embracing him in a radical way, allowing his regeneration and that of the personal relationships he establishes.

*Educational repercussions of Hannah Arendt's thought in personal growth: the cultivation of virtue*

Arendt's anthropological optimism provides a view of human nature with consequences on personal growth. The discovery of who referred by Arendt (2005), allows to understand that the human being is more than the actions he performs. This perspective gives new horizons -without ignoring the limits that accompany the human nature- in which it is



assumed that the person should always be cared for and educated. The option of a new beginning, a new birth entails a commitment to human perfectibility and its regeneration. In this personal growth, education can offer tools for strengthening the character - development of virtues - of both the offender and the offended.

Although Arendt does not specify any pedagogical proposal, his thought offers an interesting idea that can be used by education in freedom, as proposed by Nieves (2017), or ethics education, as recently developed by Korsgaard (2020) or Dennis et al. (2019), among others.

Specifically, his approach to forgiveness suggests a first axis of action to promote the person, through the acquisition of the virtues of hope and magnanimity. In short, forgiveness is presented as an opportunity for regeneration both for the one who forgives - the act of forgiving carries with it the virtue of magnanimity - and for the one who is forgiven, because it fosters the virtue of hope, as said by González and Fuentes (2012). Putting the pedagogical focus on the development of virtues predisposes the person to good actions -it entails the cultivation of intelligence- and strengthens it, making it better (regenerating it), growth of the will, as Aristotle points out (1985). For that reason, it is so interesting to talk about virtues, because they empower the person to act well, since they foster the development of intelligence and will. For this reason, acts of forgiving and accepting to be forgiven favor the acquisition of virtues; therefore, the formation of character.

On the other hand, under Arendt perspective, another possible way of educative formation of students oriented to personal growth is opened: the education of freedom, since -against all deterministic approach- and as Arendt points out (2005), the person can start again and regenerate. Under the idea of educational intervention in situations of injustice, an important axis to address is the acquisition of the virtues of strength and truthfulness aimed at the person assuming that he has committed an injustice or that he is capable of integrating a damage suffered. It is important to learn that injustice does wrong, both to those who suffer it and to those who have done it, as Polo points out (2018), “which is much worse than to oppress it, because it is to become unjust” (p. 65). At that moment, as González and Fuentes point out (2012), it is necessary to help face the pain: “facing the wrong committed and its consequences is an moment for personal growth” (p. 486). Undoubtedly, as Millán-Ghisleri and Caro (2022) point out, these habits strengthen the personality, predispose deep interpersonal relationships and contribute greatly to personal growth.

## Cyber regeneration and growth of the person: Leonardo Polo

Forgiveness as a regenerative act of the person and interpersonal relations is highly suggestive and the proposal of personal growth collected in the anthropology of Leonardo Polo (2016), makes it possible to have an interesting dialogue with Hannah Arendt.

### *The Virtuous Sense of Forgiveness*

In this sense, following Aristotle approach (1985), Polo (2002) affirms that virtues contribute to the perfectionism of nature and result in the own growth of the person. Polo (2003) points out that “to perfect oneself unrestrainedly involves tending to more” (p. 117) because man can always grow. He further adds that all the acts performed by the person revert on him; thanks to the acquisition of virtues, the person generates a “growth of willingness” (p. 124) to act well, producing a regeneration of the person, hence Pole (2011) uses the word cybernetic when referring to that growth that consists in acquiring virtues. In addition, as Pérez Guerrero (2016) points out, “it is in that cultivation that the manifestation of the person occurs” (p. 237), since it is the one who performs such acts, because it is part of his nature and perfects it freely (Polo, 2011). In this regard, it could be noted that in this way the person “is more than species” (Polo, 2011, p. 139), since it does not exhaust it (Polo, 2018). This leads to the conclusion that “man with his acts can become more or less man” (Polo, 2018, p. 206).

This cybernetic growth referred by Polo (2002), consists to perfect that nature, because these virtues not only elevate nature, but they directly revert to the promoter of these - the person - it is a kind of feedback” (2011, p. 298). That being more means that cyber growth allows a person to over-provide, Polo would say, to give it to others. This having more means that the acquired virtues are perfections that the person has to improve in their interpersonal relationships and help others by giving more to them. This implies that, as Polo says (1993), the person is optimized, when he gives to others what he has. To be more virtuous enables one to give more to others. The human being “is a dynamic system endowed with intrinsic feedback; a cybernetic being..., the first beneficiary or the main victim of his action is himself” (Polo, 2018, p. 64). For this reason, Polo (2003) says that virtue “is the guarantee of the unrestricted character of human perfection” (p. 125).

### *The Value of Forgiveness in Personal Growth*

When Pole (2016) refers to forgiveness, he relates it to the virtue of friendship. The person only understands from his being with the other. He further states that “human person means co-existence” (Polo, 2016, p. 217). The person cannot achieve an authentic life fulfillment without giving and receiving others. This openness to others does not develop only in a sense of need, but as gratuity. Polo (2003) adds that “friendship is bland without gratitude and without vindication, because it is not virtue, i.e., because it is not free” (p. 140). In the polyanic approach of forgiveness, it is useful to distinguish between offense and offender. Sellés (2020) notes that while the offense may be judged objectively, the offender cannot, “because this is really different from his acts, irreducible to them” (p. 365). The person in the polyanic sense is not reduced to his acts, since these are manifestations of the personal being, they tell us something about the person, but it is not his.

Within the development of friendship, Polo (2003) speaks of vindictio (revenge), virtue through which an unjust offense suffered is corrected - since “it is right to be indignant in the face of unworthiness..., it is proper for freedom to resist the offense and claim justice” (pp. 139-140). And this is where he points out forgiveness as a specific act of revenge “which does not merely erase offense, but restores friendship” (p. 139). This correction of the offender - which does not ignore the offense, but presupposes it - comes to be like a regenerative act of everything that has damaged friendship, which makes it possible to start again, that beyond the offense based on the dignity of the person.

Moreover, for this author, authentic forgiveness is free and founded on piety. Pole (2003) explains the virtue of piety as “the veneration of one’s own origin, the author of oneself” (p. 132), which ultimately refers to God. And he adds that “a man who does not forgive in function of divine forgiveness leaves the question unresolved” (p. 139). Divine forgiveness is always mischievous, not vengeful, that is why the person demands to be treated with mercy, because as we said, he is more than the mistakes he may have made. Divine mercy teaches that one must learn to forgive the other because there is no revenge for those who want to improve as a person. Revenge must come with mercy, which not only erases an offense, but radically restores the one who has offended. As Selles (2020) points out, “with mercy we raise others to the personal level” (p. 373), since offense is overcome connecting with the personal being.

By speaking of forgiveness as an act of the virtue of friendship, following his cyber theory, one can conclude that the person perfects his nature through those acts of giving or accepting forgiveness. Indeed, Polo

(2011) states that “through his actions man acquires a perfection of his own” (p. 293); and not only that, but the person gets better, since the person is the origin of that growth. But for there to be personal growth, forgiveness cannot be reduced to an act of courtesy - a reparation - but requires a free - regenerative - exercise in which the person truly overcomes the offense and opens up to the other. The act of forgiveness not only repairs the offense, but radically regenerates the relationship with the offended person. In this sense, being a friend of the other helps to ask for forgiveness, since the friend wants the best for his friend. For that reason, Polo (2003) says that “if friendship is left aside, revenge cannot be virtuous” (p. 139), but that would be a deviation, because he would seek its own satisfaction and not so much the good of the other. Indeed, as the author points out (Polo, 2011), “man relates to others through virtues” (p. 146).

In Leonardo Polo’s anthropology (2003), the perspective of the growth of nature, virtues are ordered to personal growth, and this can only be given in fullness, if it is oriented to others. In fact, “the meaning of human life is precisely in manifesting itself better and better to the person; because the human being can manifest through its essence” (p. 303). It cannot be manifested without a who, and that is where virtue finds its true foundation.

### *The person’s self-gift structure as a foundation of personal fullness*

As Aguilar (2008) pointed out, “the purpose of education is to achieve a true humanization of the subject involved in the educational process” (p. 47). In this moral realm, such humanization in its fullest sense is understood as flourishing, recovering the Aristotelian notion of personal fulfillment, eudaimonia. Kristjánsson (2020), White (2011) or De Ruyter (2004), among others, have analyzed it. Personal fullness, as Wolbert et al (2019), point out is directly related to virtues in their deepest sense and specifically to friendship, as Kristjánsson (2019) proposes. Likewise, Polo (2016) personal fulfillment is rooted in self-gift’s structure. The person cannot achieve personal fulfillment without others, i.e., the person develops his nature to make himself better for others.

This structure developed by the author contains three fundamental elements: giving, accepting and gift. Polo (2016) explains that in every interpersonal relationship there is someone who gives, someone who accepts and what is given-accepted (the gift). The person gives to others, and by giving himself finds the way for human fullness, since the person is configured to give to the other. On the other hand, for Polo (2016), “the giving has to be accepted (...) There cannot be giving without acceptance:



it would be a solitary, unfinished, tragic give” (p. 218). The gift would be the perfected nature that the person gives and that requires to be accepted by the recipient. Indeed, the person has a received nature and that nature is perfected-improved through virtue, empowering the person more, turning him into what Pole calls added life. That refinement of nature is what the person has to give to others. This is where forgiveness would be placed, as a concrete act of donation to the other, subject addressed by Lemm (2010) -although from the philosophical perspective- therefore, education in forgiveness would be a way to help personal growth oriented to improve interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, this is the key to forgiveness in its deepest and most regenerating sense: the ability to forgive is an act of absolute freedom in which the person surrenders to another - receiving or giving - for love of the other. Only from this approach of forgiveness can a genuine regeneration of the person be achieved, and only in this way is the person freed from the consequences of the offense committed or suffered.

## Conclusions

The problem presented in this research is that there is an increase from a psychological view of forgiveness as a contribution to emotional well-being. However, this perspective is insufficient because it ignores that forgiveness cannot be reduced to a positive feeling that generates asking for it and being forgiven. The true anthropological scope of forgiveness pointed out in this paper leads to overcoming this psychological vision.

As for the objective of the article, which was to carry out an anthropological study of forgiveness, it is concluded that the true meaning of forgiveness goes beyond the scope of compassion, surpassing the simple reparation of offense by asking for forgiveness, since if it is a virtuous act, it can regenerate the human being by improving him as a person. Beyond the formality of verbalizing an apology as an emotional reaction of compassion towards the offended, this phenomenon must be understood as an act that repairs certain actions and, in addition, can contribute to radically regenerate the person. Although compassion plays a very important role in interpersonal relationships in helping to identify how the other feels, forgiveness cannot be reduced to that feeling. As has been pointed out, the act of forgiveness is an act of will - a virtue - capable of repairing an offense. Often, the act of forgiveness follows a first compassionate act. This means that, if forgiveness is sincere, it turns back on the revenge-justice- of the offense.

Forgiveness is a virtue that, in its restorative sense, allows healing wounds and restoring the bonds of interpersonal relationships weakened by unforgiven offenses. However, in addition to this restorative sense, education of the regenerative sense of forgiveness is relevant. The one who asks for forgiveness manifests a desire to change the offense and that act can also help him improve as a person, regenerating him, learning not to offend again.

On the restorative meaning, it has been concluded that Derrida's conditional conception of forgiveness restores the offense, while the unconditional perspective is free and in tune with a certain regenerative transformation of the person. For his part, Ricoeur proposes forgiveness as an act of love that facilitates the reparation of the offense, but a connection with the personal being is not observed. Instead, Levinas warns that this action may play a regenerating role in recognizing the person to whom forgiveness is asked as another self.

Hannah Arendt's approach seems interesting to us, as it highlights that the ability to forgive, in addition to erasing the offense, triggers a new birth, a new beginning for the person who offends. The effect of this action - not only restorative but regenerative - is explained by the author as a promise that eliminates revenge from the offense suffered. In addition, his anthropological proposal offers a solid base for the conception of forgiveness as a virtuous act that perfects the person beyond his affective dimension.

In this sense, the restorative aspect of the action -present in Arendt's novelty- has been distinguished against the regenerative role of the new birth also addressed and that is related to the cybernetic character of Leonardo Polo's virtue. In fact, the person's self-gift structure, developed by this author, helps to understand the double meaning of the act of forgiveness - asking for forgiveness and accepting forgiveness. In this regards, asking for forgiveness is an act of personal giving, and accepting it is an act other than personal acceptance. This double face of forgiveness seems very useful to us, since it assumes that it does not benefit only one of those affected, but can help generate personal growth in both the offender and the offended. Consequently, it also restores interpersonal relationships.

Undoubtedly, both Arendt's and Polo's approaches contribute to a greater anthropological foundation of forgiveness. It is therefore appropriate to treat it as a virtue, with a clear restorative character of the action and, at the same time, regenerative of the person who asks forgiveness, enabling interpersonal relationships that help personal growth itself.

The aim of this article is to set a way to educate in forgiveness as a way for moral education, justified by the underlined connection between forgiveness as a virtue and the person. In this sense, learning to ask for





forgiveness implies realizing the offense committed, recognizing the damage caused, taking care of the suffering of the other to accept his pain, assuming that the action done has damaged the nature of the offender and that it has meant a setback in personal optimization, since it worsens the personal being.

Regarding the educational implications emphasized in this article, it is concluded that realizing the damage of the offense in one's nature and the damage generated in the person entails not only educating in forgiveness as a simple reparative act, but also educating the regenerative vision of the person. It suggests education in the virtues of magnanimity, hope, strength and truthfulness as the main axes of educational action, oriented to the education of forgiveness. Therefore, we propose, as main lines in the future, the pertinence of an inclusion in the curriculum of an educational proposal of forgiveness in its restorative and regenerative anthropological perspective.



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