

# NOTE TO THE READER

## FORGIVING PHILOSOPHY

This book addresses forgiveness as a philosophical matter, understanding that whenever forgiveness happens (or even whenever it is talked about) unnoticed theories of selfhood and time are inadvertently at play. To bring these unobserved models of time and the self to the fore, this study explores a series of commonalities and divergences in some selected works by Augustine, Kierkegaard, and Arendt. In these texts, forgiveness is understood as the gathering of a self that is scattered in time (Augustine), as present participation in an earlier redemptive moment (Kierkegaard), or as an event that resists the otherwise rectilinear, death-oriented course of human life (Arendt).

Why has forgiveness been mostly ignored in Western philosophy? What does this omission reveal about Western thought? Should we, can we forgive philosophy for this oversight? Is philosophy meant to forgive and be forgiven? What does (a) forgiving philosophy look like? Contemporary authors have argued for the (more or less imperative) need to (re)think what forgiveness is, the conditions under which it (supposedly) occurs (if it ever does), and its relation to justice (if any), since the inexpiable events of the past and present centuries maintain forgiveness an unresolved question.

This study rests on a counterintuitive idea: that for forgiveness to *pass in history* nothing must be *passed* from the one who forgives to the one who is forgiven. To support this claim, I undertake close readings (and re-readings) of Augustine's *Confessions*, Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, and Arendt's *The Human Condition*. In these works, forgiveness is understood as a paradox—it must be contained to be given (Augustine), granted-yet-not-granted (Kierkegaard), and forgotten the moment it is given, as if never given at all (Arendt). Can forgiveness be then thought of as a *hidden existential capacity*, and not as a magnanimous display of mercy? Can we imagine forgiveness as undoing the transgression we see, and secretly engaging with the invisible—the imperceptible impossibility of undoing what has indeed been done?

