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Remorse and self-love: Kostelnička's change of heart

Abstract: Does remorse imply self-hatred? In this paper, I argue that self-hatred is a false response to one's wrongdoing because it is corrupted by the vice of pride, which affects the perception of its object. To identify the detrimental operation of pride, I propose to study the process of change of heart and its impediments. I use the example of Kostelnička, from Janáček's opera *Jenůfa*, to show that the impediment to remorse is active already as a source of wrongdoing and self-deception. I identify three different aspects of Kostelnička's pride: social ambition, defensive anger and moral ambition. I show that it is pride as moral ambition that prevents the wrongdoer's acknowledgment of her blameworthiness by causing her obsession with her blameless self-image and corrupting her self-love. In the last part of the paper, I reject Kostelnička's initial self-hatred before her change of heart, because it is not based on an accurate judgement of her agency. Kostelnička's true remorse is thereupon connected with her inner transformation towards humility and with a reorientation of her attention towards the victim of her wrongdoing, as testified in her plea for forgiveness. The implied moral improvement and reconstitution of her relationship to herself and others opens the way for her coming to terms with her guilt.

Keywords: guilt feelings and remorse, change of heart, self-deceptive wrongdoing, corrupted self-love, pride and humility, moral ambition

Aristotle pictures the connection between love and goodness in a way that is tempting in its simplicity: since we can only love what is lovable, and people are lovable for their own sake only in so far as they are good, we can only love people for their own sake in so far as they are good (or, more precisely, virtuous). Since, for Aristotle, self-love is a kind of love, the same logic applies to one's love of oneself: virtuous people, because they approve of themselves, enjoy living, care for themselves and pursue their own well-being. Bad people, "having nothing lovable in them", are full of regret. According to Aristotle, they thus "have no feeling of love to themselves", and those who have committed many crimes hate themselves for their wickedness and end up destroying themselves (EN IX, 1166b17, 1166b10). In Aristotle's picture, it is not conceptually possible to love the bad and wicked for their own sake, and villains who repent their actions and recognise their villainy cannot but hate themselves, that is, loathe their very being and wish to harm and eventually to annihilate themselves.¹

I have argued elsewhere against the conceptions of love – that is, love for another – that are conditioned by the appreciation of the beloved's character similar to the Aristotelian picture (Pacovská 2018). The value of a human being (and her "lovability"), I claimed, does not depend on her qualities, and the tendency to judge people according to their qualities and merits can be connected with the vice of pride. A humble person, on the contrary, has the capacity for unconditional love. I showed that in recognising the inalienable value of all human beings, she can respond lovingly to the other's wrongdoing, namely, with compassion and pity, as opposed to condemnatory responses such as indignation, contempt or repulsion. This is how I interpreted Augustine's famous dictum that one must hate the sin, but love the sinner (Pacovská 2014, Part 3). But the topic of this paper is not love of another, but rather love of oneself. Is it possible to take this concept of unconditional love for another, extend it to the attitude of wrongdoers to themselves and avoid the fate Aristotle envisaged for them? As will soon become apparent, the full answer to this question must wait until we have a better understanding of the various

¹ Self-hatred thus involves both self-loathing (based on "global" negative evaluation of the person as such) and the corresponding behaviour that damages one's well-being, such as self-torment, destructive behaviour and even suicide. I am following here Aristotle's remarks on hatred (Aristotle 1382a15) as developed by Ben-Ze'ev (2000: 382).

emotional responses to one's wrongdoing and their moral implications. In this paper, I will pursue a more modest claim that the morally most appropriate response, which I identify as remorse, does not imply self-hatred and that, indeed, self-hatred is a corrupt moral response to one's wrongdoing.

Part of the reason why self-love does not copy the structure of love when it comes to a culpable wrongdoer is that the retrospective responses to one's own immoral action, such as repentance, remorse, guilt feelings and shame, are significantly different from the responses to an immoral action by another person. The most important difference, which will be key for this paper, concerns the wrongdoer's actual or missing acknowledgement of her blameworthiness. When we consider a loving response to another person who has done something wrong, the question of whether she does or does not repent is important but is not essential. In both cases I can ask myself whether I can go on loving my villain.² My knowledge and judgement of what she did, my "hating the sin", is different from hers since I am not the author of what I have come to hate. For the wrongdoer herself, however, "hating the sin" means "hating *her* sin"; it means that she is fully aware of what she has done, she repudiates the act and she condemns herself for having been the author of it. In short, she repents. The wrongdoer's question of whether she can go on living with herself arises only in the case that she (at least partly, indistinctly) recognises her blameworthiness, that is, as *part of* repentance. If she does not acknowledge that she has done something wrong, her relation to herself (her self-love) is not called into question and self-hatred is not an issue.

Even though acknowledgement of blameworthiness has such an important role in coming to terms with one's wrongdoing, it is rarely discussed in the literature on retrospective moral emotions, which mostly focuses on the static study of emotions that are already experienced, and therefore on the static study of wrongdoers who already admit their blameworthiness. What I propose to do in this paper is to concentrate on the dynamics of coming to repent, and therefore of coming to acknowledge one's blameworthiness, that is, on the process that is sometimes called "change of heart". In part 1, which plays the role of an extended introduction, I will briefly outline the contemporary discussion of retrospective moral emotions and show why the dynamic approach is so important in responses to wrongdoings that are blameworthy: it is in such wrongdoings that the wrongdoer typically does not believe she is doing something wrong. The self-deception underlying such wrongdoings and the subsequent change of heart will be illustrated in part 2 through the example of *Kostelnička*, from Leoš Janáček's opera *Jenůfa*.

Kostelnička's example shows that the process of change of heart is difficult and painful for the wrongdoer because there is an inner resistance to overcoming self-deception regarding the moral nature of one's action. This observation leads to the second main question of this paper, returning the inquiry to the initial topic of self-love: what is the obstacle that prevents the wrongdoer's acknowledgement of blameworthiness? This obstacle can be tracked to the initial motive of self-deception and to the question of what is it, in the agent, that biases her thinking about her action and prevents her from seeing that she is doing something terrible? I will argue that self-deception here is a product of the wrongdoer's corrupted relation to herself, of her improper self-love. *Kostelnička*, like many other wrongdoers, resists

² Yet, as the ample discussion of conditional and unconditional forgiveness shows, the answer is far from clear. See, for example, Griswold (2007: 47–51), for a classic formulation of six conditions that an offender must meet in order to deserve forgiveness. These conditions attempt to capture all aspects of what it means to repudiate one's own past action, including regret and contrition and the commitment to becoming a better person, one who is averse to committing the deed again. For a defence of unconditional forgiveness, see, for example, Garrard and McNaughton (2002).

seeing that she is doing something terrible exactly because seeing that she is a terrible person would jeopardise her self-conception and her relationship to herself, which is based on her faith in her superior moral qualities.

In this second line of inquiry, the dynamic study of the change of heart is again useful, because seeing what happens when the obstacle of remorse is overcome helps to identify the underlying vice. Following the observation that Kostelnička humiliates herself through her change of heart, I will identify, in part 3, the vice of pride as the source of her corrupted self-relation. As in the above-mentioned case of love for another, in this case pride corrupts the person's relationships both to herself and to others, and the transformation towards humility brings not only remorse but also love and compassion for her victims. On the basis of these considerations, in part 4 I will reject self-hatred as a false moral emotion, one that is influenced by pride, and claim that remorse is the morally appropriate emotion that helps the wrongdoer come to terms with her wrongdoing.

1. Moral emotions and change of heart

When a person does something morally wrong and comes to regret it, how do we determine which of her emotional responses is better than others and which is the most appropriate? Should she feel guilty, ashamed or remorseful? The answer is usually taken from the main object of these emotions, which derives from the two main aspects of (blameworthy) wrongdoing: the inner aspect of the wrongdoer's voluntary agency and the outer aspect of the deed realised in the world. There may be wrongdoings that lack one of these aspects, such as the unintended wrong or the unsuccessful attempt, but in a full-blown blameworthy wrongdoing, both aspects combine in a complex way that reflects in the complexity of the problem of retrospective moral emotions (Pacovská 2019). Authors who think that it is more important to focus on the deed favour guilt feelings and remorse as the morally appropriate retrospective emotions.³ Others point out that the repentant person condemns herself as the author of the wrongdoing and that this aspect is better captured by shame.⁴ I will sketch here the basic arguments of Bernard Williams, as the proponent of the latter, broadly virtue-ethical view, and Raimond Gaita, as a critical reaction on which I will base my own dynamic study. Leaving aside other aspects, I will limit myself here to the part of the debate that relates to the object or focus of emotions, the reorientation of which will be crucial in analysing the change of heart later in part 4.

Both Williams and Gaita are critical of guilt feelings, the emotion that has traditionally prevailed as *the* moral response to wrongdoing and that still holds primacy both in the literature and in common language.⁵ They both claim that it derives from an outdated, legalistic conception of moral philosophy that works with an inadequate picture of moral life and moral responsibility. Indeed, when a person feels guilty for what she has done, she blames herself for having done something forbidden, either by (moral) law or by some other norm (Taylor 1985: 85; Ben-Ze'ev 2000: 498). Since violating a norm or a law need not necessarily harm other people, the focus of guilty suffering is on the agent's transgression and not primarily on the victims, as would be the case with remorse. Contrary to shame, however, in which the whole self is judged and responded to with contempt, guilt feelings only focus on the deed and

³ See, for example, Taylor (1985), Ben-Ze'ev (2006), Gaita (2002), Cordner (2007) and Buber (1958).

⁴ See, for example, Williams (1993), Calhoun (2004), Sánchez (2014) and, for a combined position, Murphy (1999).

⁵ Slightly diverging from contemporary practice, I retain the distinction between guilt (the state of being guilty or of being blameworthy, see footnote 2) and guilt feelings (the state of feeling guilty).

connect to deed-related responses such as punishment or repayment (Taylor 1985: 89). Also contrary to shame (but similar to remorse), a person can feel guilty only for something that she thinks herself responsible for, typically a blameworthy action. But there is vast grey area of guilt feelings for unintentional or involuntary harm caused by the agent (Taylor 1985: 91) and also of guilt feelings lacking any actual responsibility, such as survivor guilt, that are sometimes called “irrational sentiment” rather than emotion (Ben-Ze’ev 2000: 499–501). In part 4, the consideration of neurotic guilt feelings that are not based on a clear condemnation of one’s action will show their proximity to self-hatred.

Williams has a lot to say about involuntary cases (Williams 1981), but we will leave that discussion aside and concentrate on his discussion of responses to voluntary wrongdoing. He begins by criticising the conception of guilt feelings for failing to give a satisfactory explanation of what it means to repent one’s voluntary (or “blameworthy”) wrongdoing (Williams 1993: 93). He claims that since the legalistic conception of morality lacks an account of the agent’s moral self, moral identity and, above all, character, guilt feelings fail to do justice to the inner aspect of wrongdoing: they fail to lead the wrongdoer to rehabilitate her character and rebuild her life, including her relationships with those who have been harmed by her wrongdoing (Williams 1993: 94; note 1, 222). This function is, according to Williams, better performed by shame, which focuses on the wrongdoer’s failings and character flaws that stand behind the wrongdoing. A person who is ashamed of (rather than remorseful for) what she has done perceives herself as “diminished” or less worthy, and is motivated to improve her character in order to regain her self-respect (Williams 1993: 90).

Gaita strongly disagrees with Williams on the role of the agent’s character in her moral response to her wrongdoing. Gaita claims that this virtue-ethical emphasis on the acting person, and on what she “has been revealed to be” in doing what she has done, misdirects the response to wrongdoing and connects it with a “destructive sense of self-hatred and worthlessness” that, far from enhancing it, prevents the healing of one’s guilt (Gaita 2002: 34).⁶ Gaita claims that it is only corrupt moral responses to wrongdoing that take the self as their object; a pure, that is, morally uncompromised, response has to avoid self-absorption and self-indulgence (Gaita 2006: 49, 51, 56). For Gaita, the only proper object of moral emotion that responds to one’s wrongdoing is the act and its victim, and the only moral emotion that satisfies this condition is remorse.⁷

Remorse is, according to Gaita, a “pained, bewildered (...) realisation of the full meaning of what one has done” (Gaita 2006: xxi; Gaita 2002: 31). Recognising with horror the seriousness of her act, the wrongdoer comes to see the wrong she has done to another person. The victim has to be the main object of attention since, according to Gaita, remorse is possible even in situations in which the wrongdoer is not to blame (situations of the “involuntary” in Williams’ language) and thus has nothing to reproach herself for in view of her character. This is the case in the two main examples Gaita uses to illustrate his account: the Dutchwoman who refuses to give shelter to two Jewish fugitives so as not to jeopardise the activities of the anti-Nazi resistance; and the man who hits an aggressive beggar, who is thereupon killed by an oncoming car.⁸ Both cause the death of another person, but this is an unwanted consequence of

⁶ Compare Gaita (1996: 5, 10–11). See also Gaita (2011: 68). For a more detailed discussion, see Cordner (2007).

⁷ See also Murphy (1999) and Fetterolf (2014). For an illuminating discussion of remorse vs. guilt feelings, see Taylor (1985: 97–103).

⁸ The first example is from Gaita (2006: 43f.), the second from Gaita (2002: 30–32).

their action that they deeply regret. Their painful realisation of what they have done to another person, and of what they have become by doing it, represent intelligible and full-blown cases of remorse, according to Gaita.⁹

I would now like to take up Williams' objection to accounts that do not address the "inner" aspect of voluntary (or blameworthy) wrongdoing, but from a different angle. One could object that there is an important difference between blameworthy and non-blameworthy wrongs that concerns the agent's acknowledgement of what she has done. In Gaita's examples, there is no question that the agents *didn't want* to cause death. They are good people with no evil intent and no apparent hesitation at, or resistance to, acknowledging their responsibility. The case of blameworthy, wilful wrongdoing is quite different, though, since in acting as she does, the wrongdoer typically does not believe she is doing something wrong; otherwise, she would not be doing it.¹⁰ In order to repent, the wrongdoer has to undergo a change of heart during which she realises that what she has done was wrong. Understanding the process of a change of heart and its impediments is thus essential to understanding remorse for blameworthy wrongdoings and for doing justice to its "inner aspect". Among other things, the dynamic of gradually coming to repent hints at why the characteristic expression of remorse involves a bewilderment, a shocked discovery: "What have I done? How could I have done it?" (Gaita 2002: 31). It is only in part 4, after a comprehensive study of the process of change of heart, that we will be able to answer fully the question of what is the morally appropriate emotional response to blameworthy wrongdoing, and to grasp the full dynamics of the different objects of these responses.

The call for a change of heart is best seen in a certain type of wrongdoing, one that is not seen *as* wrongdoing by its agent because her judgement of her action is somehow impaired. There is a motive at work that makes the wrongdoer shrink from seeing that she is doing something wrong, or at least from grasping the full meaning of what she is doing. In this type of wrongdoing, the wrongdoer comes to believe (falsely) that her action is justified. Her judgement is usually already blurred, both before the action (during deliberation, when she, for instance, fabricates a false excuse) and during the action, and often remains so afterwards.¹¹ To illustrate this type of wrongdoing and the challenge it presents to the conception of remorse, I will present, in part 2, an account of Kostelnička's crime. I will show that Kostelnička acts under the influence of self-deception, and, in order to repent, she has to come to understand her act for what it was and repudiate it as such. The ensuing analysis of pride as a source of self-deceptive wrongdoing (part 3) and as an impediment to a change of heart and true remorse (part 4) will build on this presentation of Kostelnička's example.

2. Kostelnička's story

Kostelnička and her stepdaughter, Jenůfa, are the two main characters of Leoš Janáček's opera *Jenůfa* (*Her Stepdaughter*). Kostelnička is a strong and intelligent woman. In her village, she is highly respected for her wisdom but slightly feared for her severity. She is called "Kostelnička" because she takes care

⁹ In Pacovská (2019), I examine the tension in remorse between what one is revealed to be and what one has become in acting as one did.

¹⁰ The cases of *akrasia*, or weak will, are an important exception here, because the person who succumbs to temptation inherently knows that she is succumbing and condemns it. But even these cases have been questioned in the past, most famously by Plato's Socrates. Compare the insightful discussion in Gaita (2006: 231).

¹¹ For a more detailed analysis of motivated justification and self-deception in wrongdoing, see Pacovská (2016, 2020). Compare also Strandberg (2015: ch. 4).

of the *kostel* (church); her name is a fabricated female variant of *kostelník*, meaning sexton or sacristan. She is very proud of Jenůfa, whom she has brought up alone under difficult circumstances, and she cares for her greatly. Jenůfa is a pretty, intelligent, pious and very kind young woman. During Act I we learn that she is in love with the light-hearted Števa and is expecting his baby. Števa, however, loses interest in Jenůfa and refuses to marry her. In a traditional village society of the 19th century this is, of course, a very problematic and shameful situation, and Kostelnička is extremely upset about it. In order to prevent a scandal, she hides Jenůfa in a room of their cottage until the baby is born and tells everyone that Jenůfa has gone to work in Vienna (the imperial capital for Czechs in those days).

A week after the baby boy is born, Kostelnička invites Števa over. Jenůfa is asleep, having consumed a sleeping potion. But Števa again refuses to marry Jenůfa. Kostelnička is furious and desperately thinks about how to save Jenůfa. Just at that moment, Števa's good-hearted half-brother, Laca, who has long been in love with Jenůfa, comes to see Kostelnička. She tells him about Jenůfa's pregnancy, but when she guesses from his reaction that he would not marry Jenůfa with Števa's baby, she tells him that the baby has died. When Laca leaves, she has to make a decision. The opera's famous aria "In one moment" expresses her deliberation, which is at first calm and heavy when Kostelnička thinks about the life of Jenůfa and her baby, and becomes very dramatic when Kostelnička pictures the humiliation and mockery that would befall them. This image agonises Kostelnička and she decides to "redeem" Jenůfa's life by removing the "obstacle" to her happiness: she takes the baby, carries it out of the village and throws it into a hole in the ice covering the river (Act II, Scene 5, my translation). Even though the act is difficult for her, she persuades herself it is for the best, both for Jenůfa and for the child. When she returns, she tells Jenůfa that the baby has died; Jenůfa accepts Laca's offer of marriage and Kostelnička collapses. As we come to know later, she remains ill and broken ever after, tormented by feelings of guilt, nightmares and paranoid visions, the cause of which she successfully conceals.

On the day of Jenůfa and Laca's wedding, two months later, a dead baby is found in the melting ice. Jenůfa cries that it is her little boy and people start accusing her of murder. When Kostelnička sees the villagers threatening Jenůfa, she stops them and confesses that it was "her deed". She describes what she did and repeats her justification from the day of the murder. She adds, however, that it felt as if the baby "had burned my hands" and that she felt from that moment that she was a murderess (Act III, Scene 10, translation by T. Cheek). Following her confession, a terrified Kostelnička runs to her room to take poison. She stops herself, however, realising that Jenůfa will be judged for her crime. It seems that, even at this moment, she would prefer suicide to the humiliation of a public trial and punishment. In spite of two months of torment, she still can't see the true root of it. Even though her deed has been exposed, she is still unable to condemn it and accept the consequences, including the fact that she deserves (and needs) punishment. At that moment she is not even moved by Jenůfa's suffering.

But then Jenůfa does something that seems mad to those around her. She raises Kostelnička up and tells the people not to curse her or damn her. She, the mother of the murdered child, urges that Kostelnička should be given time to make atonement so that "the Lord looks down on her". This noble and solemn act has a profound effect on Kostelnička. She calms down and turns to Jenůfa in a meek and gentle tone, begging Jenůfa's forgiveness and finally admitting her failure:

It is only your forgiveness I ask, (2x)

Now I see I loved myself more than you (2x)

you can say no longer:
“Mother mine, oh Mother mine.”
You could not inherit my character or my blood,
Yet now, I come to you for strength ...
I want to suffer, (2x)
so that the Saviour will look down on me!
(...)
Come, Mayor, lead me forth!¹²

We can see from Kostelnička's lines that she has had a change of heart. Kostelnička is now humble. She can see that what she did was wrong and that she was moved by a wicked motive. Once she acknowledges her sin, she asks for forgiveness and proclaims her readiness to suffer and submit to punishment. Kostelnička accepts all this calmly. She is reconciled, and thus the story between her and Jenůfa closes.

3. Self-love and pride

Kostelnička acknowledges her blameworthiness in the passage quoted above by way of a contrast between love on the one hand and self-love on the other.¹³ The love at stake is that of a mother, the paradigm of selfless, unconditional love that is ready for any sacrifice and self-denial. Kostelnička now comes to see that she has failed in that love, and therefore that she has failed as a mother, something she strongly wished to achieve. She persuaded herself she was helping Jenůfa, even sacrificing herself, but she comes to understand that in reality she was acting out of selfish motives. The concepts of love and self-love as used here follow a simple, old-fashioned model in which acting out of self-love means acting for one's own interests based on care for one's well-being, whereas acting out of love means acting for the sake of the loved one based on one's care for the loved one's well-being, which can involve sacrificing some of one's own interests.¹⁴ In cases such as that of Kostelnička, in which the motives of love and self-love are in conflict, and the motive of love should prevail, acting out of self-love can be criticised as selfishness or improper self-love. We will see later, however, that to explain fully the role of self-love in Kostelnička's wrongdoing, a more complex model of self-love is needed, one that conceives of self-love as a relationship to oneself in which one's self-conception plays an important role. Only with this more complex model can we show how self-love (that is, one's relation to oneself) can become corrupted by the vice of pride.

Starting with the simple model, let us ask: what is the wicked, selfish motive that Kostelnička associates with her wicked self-love, the source of her failure? What interest of hers is served by her action? An interesting clue can be found in the original text of the play by Gabriela Preissová, on which Janáček's libretto is based almost literally. In this text, there are two more lines in Kostelnička's plea for forgiveness: “For now I see I've always loved myself more than you. I denied myself everything for

¹² Act III, Scene 11, my translation, based on translations by E. Downes (1969) and T. Cheek (2016).

¹³ Janáček emphasises the phrase “Now I can see I have loved myself more than you” by giving it rhyme, melody and meditative repetition.

¹⁴ Compare Frankfurt (2004: 72–79), criticised by, for example, Lippitt (2015), Bransen (2006) and Maurer (2019).

you, everything except my pride. A real mother would have suffered shame and humiliation for your sake.”¹⁵

Now this is an unusual formulation: we don't usually speak of pride as something positive we can “deny ourselves” in the way we might deny ourselves meat or hot baths. Even in philosophical literature, pride is associated either with an emotion (feeling proud of something) or with a character trait (being proud).¹⁶ Neither of these has the form of an interest that one can simply forgo. Moreover, there is a problem with Kostelnička's rejection of her pride. Pride in the sense of emotion is considered harmless or even positive (Taylor 1985: 20–35). Pride in the sense of a character trait is ambivalent (at least in English), and a distinction is sometimes drawn between praiseworthy “proper” pride (connected with self-respect) and blameworthy “improper” pride (a vice opposed to the virtue of humility).¹⁷ Thankfully, Kostelnička's use of the negative Czech word *pýcha* in the play makes it clear that she refers to pride in the sense of something undesirable.

In Kostelnička's formulation, the sacrifice of pride is directly connected with shame and humiliation. In particular, it is connected with Kostelnička's *public* shame and the humiliation that would follow if the fact of Jenůfa's pregnancy became known. This would mean losing her standing and worth in the eyes of her community, standing that is jointly granted by her reputation and the admiration and respect of her neighbours. Naturally, such a loss of standing would affect both Kostelnička and Jenůfa. But Jenůfa never hesitated to accept public dishonour for her misbehaviour. Unlike Kostelnička, she never cared very much about her position in her community, and she never desired to rise in status. For Kostelnička, however, public dishonour is what she fears most in life, because reaching a respected position in her community is her main ambition in life. Indeed, she has worked hard to gain the respect and admiration of her neighbours: she managed to sustain herself and her stepdaughter after the death of her dissolute husband and she gained a reputation as a wise advisor and healer. She is proud of her achievements, but most of all she is proud of her stepdaughter, whom she has brought up and educated on her own. The public humiliation of Jenůfa would mean losing everything she has struggled for: to be a respected woman and a good mother.¹⁸ She is ready to lie and pretend, and eventually to commit murder, to protect Jenůfa's reputation and her own.

The selfish interest that Kostelnička says she was, out of self-love, unable to sacrifice was thus her public pride in the sense of social ambition, derived (at least partly) from the social success of her stepdaughter. But, in spite of what her formulation suggests, Kostelnička's pride is not limited to one interest of hers, and I will show in the following paragraphs that, indeed, pride is to be considered the key vice that caused her wrongdoing. First, I would like to consider briefly the connection between pride and anger. Analysing pride as a character trait, Fischer points out that it involves a specific emotional setup, namely, that the proud person tends to feel shame, humiliation, anger and contempt (Fischer 2012: 211f.).¹⁹ We

¹⁵ Preissová (1999: 55), translation by Barbara Day. There are several hints in the original text that Kostelnička, not having any children of her own, actually doesn't understand what a mother's love – unconditional love – amounts to, even though she is at the same time reported to have done a great deal to win God's favour to have a baby.

¹⁶ For a classic distinction, see Taylor (1985), ch. “Pride and Humiliation”, and more recently Fischer (2012).

¹⁷ Roberts (2007, 2009) defines the vice of pride as the opposite of virtue humility. In the opposite direction, Fischer (2016) tries to rehabilitate pride as a virtue.

¹⁸ It is worth mentioning that the status of a woman in a traditional society greatly derives from her children, and their character and achievements, which is why a mother's ambition so often includes the success of her children.

¹⁹ Compare Roberts (2007: 88), who implies that a proud person is disposed to feel “emotions associated with caring a lot about one's status”.

have already seen that Kostelnička feels shame and humiliation intensely; let us now consider her disposition to feel anger, the emotion of self-protection that Taylor also associates with pride (Taylor 2006: 82–91).

Both the libretto and the music of Act II convey the message that Kostelnička's response to Jenůfa's situation is one of intense anger: she is angry at Števa, at Jenůfa, even at the newborn baby. Her anger is, however, not simply righteous anger towards the two "sinners". Kostelnička feels a personal, almost childish anger, as if she has been robbed of something. Indeed, her most precious ambition is threatened and her whole view of the world becomes tainted by what Taylor calls "defensive aggression" (Taylor 2006: 86): the excessive fear of dishonour triggers in combative Kostelnička the desire to defend their reputation at any cost, a desire that blinds her and biases her. She is so blinded by her emotions that she completely fails to understand Jenůfa's perspective, the perspective of a woman not only full of guilt feelings but also full of love for her baby boy. Consequently, Kostelnička behaves heartlessly, even cruelly, for example when she urges Jenůfa, who is caressing her baby, that she should rather pray that "it" dies. In her deliberations she thinks of the baby only as an "obstacle" to be "removed", and never realises that she is thinking of killing her daughter's child, her grandson. She is therefore also completely blind to the pain his death will cause to Jenůfa. It is only after her anger and defensive attitude are broken by Jenůfa's noble response that she is able to see the true nature of her action.

I would like to pursue the connection between pride and loss of truthfulness further. In part 1, I suggested that there is a connection between the impediment to acknowledging blameworthiness and the source of wrongdoing. We have been speaking about Kostelnička's fear of public humiliation, which impeded her public acknowledgment of Jenůfa's sin and led to her deceptive strategy of concealment. But Kostelnička's concern with her public standing – her social ambition, in other words – has an important inner counterpart in her perception of her moral standing and worth. Her social ambition, that is, her desire to be highly respected and praised *by others*, is a reflection of her inner moral ambition, of her desire to *be* a highly respectable and praiseworthy person (Taylor 2006: 73). I will claim that just as she deceives others to save her social ambition, so also does she deceive herself about the moral character of her action, the infanticide, to save her moral ambition. It is therefore her pride as moral ambition that moves her to fabricate the false justification for her action and impedes her acknowledgment of blameworthiness.

We observed above that Kostelnička mobilises forces to defend her and Jenůfa's position in society. But she is also fighting for her illusion, the illusion that her action was justifiable and that she herself is blameless and flawless. It is only when Jenůfa steps forward in her support, with no sign of anger, vengefulness or hostility, and forgives her lovingly, that Kostelnička's obduracy yields. Kostelnička admits her fault, her heart softens, she starts to understand her stepdaughter and asks for her forgiveness. She also comes to understand that her self-love and pride have blinded her. We spoke above about Kostelnička's fear of public humiliation, in which she would be and feel degraded in the eyes of others. What we witness here is a different, inner kind of humiliation that corresponds to a deep inner transformation towards becoming humble.²⁰ Kostelnička, this strong and severe woman who used to reproach Jenůfa bitterly for her sin with Števa, is now moved by Jenůfa's example and humbly acknowledges her own sinfulness.

²⁰ Thanks to Hugo Strandberg for alerting me to the various meanings humiliation can have in English.

Kostelnička's inner humiliation has multiple and deep ramifications. Her more accurate self-assessment is a result both of her changed relationship to herself and of the way she understands her worth as a human being. There are several hints in Act I that Kostelnička has the tendency, so common in gifted people, to see herself as morally and otherwise superior to her neighbours, and to ground her sense of worth in her superior qualities. In Pacovská (2018) I connected this sense of superiority to the vice of pride, understood as the tendency to derive people's worth (including the worth of one's self) from their qualities and merits. Should the proud person lose her moral credit, her relationship to herself will be severely damaged: in losing the foothold for her human value, she will feel worthless, hateful and not deserving of love.²¹

It is important to notice that, on this account, Kostelnička is not proud simply because she falsely believes that she is better than others. After all, Kostelnička has already sensed that this has not been the case for some time. Her pride consists in attributing inadequate, vital *importance* to her moral credit, to the amount of her moral qualities and achievements. Since she bets her own human worth on moral credit, she tends to be blind to the signs that threaten it. Similar to uncritical lovers who focus too much on the other's qualities, Kostelnička grounds her relationship to herself on her (partly illusory) qualities and on the admiration they elicit from others. Yet, similar to the love for another, it is not enough to break the illusion, because that only turns love into hatred. What is needed is a deep inner transformation that reconsiders the role of these qualities in valuing a person. What Jenůfa's noble gesture shows Kostelnička is that a completely different attitude is possible, namely, an attitude in which moral credit is not what grounds human value. No one is beyond forgiveness and love, because even the worst sinner will be looked upon by God.²² It is important, however, that this new sense of worth is conveyed to Kostelnička from others: from Jenůfa and indirectly from God (it is no coincidence that both Jenůfa and Kostelnička call him "Saviour" at this point). Kostelnička's recognition that she is not beyond love is thus not self-referential; it is connected with gratitude and hope. I will return to this thought at the end of part 4 where I consider the question of whether this sense of worth is to be called (proper) self-love.

Kostelnička's uncritical self-conception gives us the last piece of the puzzle in analysing the source of her wrongdoing. Her vital need to preserve her moral image corrupts Kostelnička's (in itself intense) relation to morality, and she ends up deceiving herself about her actions. In Pacovská (2016) I showed that self-deception with regard to one's moral actions, and a biased assessment of them, is an outcome of a conflict between an intense moral ambition, on the one hand, and a strong wicked desire, on the other. The urge both to gratify the desire and to stay blameless in one's eyes leads to an inner conflict that results in a biased capacity to perceive and judge the circumstances of one's actions. Deliberation about what to do turns into a search for excuses and justifications for a previously desired outcome.²³

This is the case with Kostelnička, whose deliberation about what to do with the baby is biased by her desire to avoid public shame and humiliation at all cost, the later motive for her action. She knows that getting rid of the baby is the only way to save their reputation and she is drawn to this solution. In her

²¹ Pacovská (2018: part 3). In Pacovská (2020), I consider in more detail the connection of pride with moral ambition, moral perfectionism and the desire for admiration (175–177), and with moral ideals, self-conception and self-deception (178–180). Compare also Lippitt (2020), ch. 7.

²² In a similar vein, Furtak connects Raskolnikov's development of remorse with his renewed capacity for love and his reaffirmation of the world, rekindled by Sonya's unconditional love; see Furtak (2019).

²³ Pacovská (2016: 182); see also Pacovská (2020: Part 11.5).

deliberation, she only fabricates justifications for this solution, such as that she is saving Jenůfa's life, that it is better both for Jenůfa and the baby that "He will reach the Lord God before he knows anything" (Act II, Scene 5, translation by T. Cheek). Yet, she would have no need to fabricate inaccurate justifications if she didn't care intensely about the moral character of her actions or, more accurately, about her impeccable moral image. It is her need to stay justified and blameless in her own eyes that is the proper motive for her self-deception and the most genuine expression of her pride.²⁴

It would be a mistake, however, to limit the operation of the biasing motives to the time of Kostelnička's deliberation. They infiltrate her vision from the moment she learns of Jenůfa's pregnancy, and actually make her take steps to prepare the scene, for example by hiding Jenůfa in their cottage so that, in the event of a stillbirth, they could keep the whole affair secret. Once the healthy boy is born, her whole way of seeing him – as an "obstacle" rather than a human being – is distorted. During Kostelnička's change of heart, she comes not only to clear-sightedly condemn her action but also to correct her perception of the world and the human beings that occupy it.

4. Self-hatred and remorse

In part 1, we tentatively identified the morally appropriate emotional response to one's wrongdoing with remorse. Let us now return to the explanation of why it is this particular response, and to the question whether such response implies self-hatred. In part 3, we considered the wrongdoer's inner obstacles to remorse: studying Kostelnička's story shows that there are important cases in which remorse is conditioned by a reduction of the pride that corrupted the wrongdoer's relationship to herself; such pride acts as a source of wrongdoing that persists after the act as a kind of blindness towards one's blameworthiness. It is only when Kostelnička humbles herself that she is able to acknowledge her fault and start to repent. Having shown how Kostelnička's pride prevented her remorse, let us look now at what Kostelnička's change of heart tells us about the conception of remorse itself. As already indicated in my account of Kostelnička's story, I suggest that there are two phases of Kostelnička's response to her wrongdoing, and that only the second is the morally appropriate one. The first phase covers the time between the act and Jenůfa's noble interposition; the second phase comes afterwards and consists of Kostelnička's final speech, in which she acknowledges her guilt and asks for Jenůfa's forgiveness, which is thereupon granted.

Kostelnička's state of mind in the first phase could be characterised as self-hatred. She is both physically and mentally ill and doesn't want to get better: "I don't want that ... Long life for me would only be horror, only horror ... And what then?" (Act III, Scene 2, adjusted translation of E. Downes). This self-inflicted suffering comes with episodes of self-loathing and self-destructive behaviour, thus complementing the picture of self-hatred outlined at the beginning of this paper: Kostelnička feels that she is a despicable murderess and that she is damned both in the eyes of fellow humans and in the eyes of God. She cannot see any possible life for herself and is ready to kill herself the moment her crime is exposed. I believe that it is natural to say that Kostelnička suffers from guilt feelings on account of her murdering the baby. Indeed, she believes herself to have done something forbidden, which is a proper object of guilt feelings. Guilt feelings also often involve a neurotic aspect of physical or mental illness,

²⁴ It is worth noting that pride in this sense – as a vice that by clinging to one's superior moral image prevents the acknowledgment of one's fault and blameworthiness – is independent of the actual motive of wrongdoing and thus has application in various different types of wrongdoing.

especially if they are not based on clear judgement of one's wrongdoing (Buber 1958). Yet, as suggested in part 1, guilt feelings focus on the deed and its repayment, which does not correspond to Kostelnička's self-hatred, which focuses on her whole self (and its annihilation). That self appears to her as despicable and hateful, not worthy of any kind of love, its value having vanished. In that respect, her feelings in this phase contain an element of shame.

But Kostelnička's feelings do not fit Williams' (or a generally virtue-ethical) picture of shame as a moral response, because they do not derive from a recognition of any kind of moral failing. Even though Kostelnička bravely confesses to her crime to protect Jenůfa, she does not unequivocally condemn it, and therefore does not condemn her character as the source of her crime. She still clings to her misguided justification of the murder, suggesting – perhaps with less conviction and less defensiveness – that she still considers her act a kind of sacrifice in which she doomed herself to save Jenůfa from a life of shame. Now that her deed and Jenůfa's "sin" have been discovered, her attempt has failed and she is entirely broken, but she regrets it only on account of her sacrifice having been in vain. Her self-hatred is thus not based on a truthful recognition of what she has done. Kostelnička still resists what Martin Buber calls "self-illumination", that is, clarifying the true meaning of one's actions.²⁵

It would seem that when a person does something wrong, painful feelings (be they of guilt or shame) by themselves are always a good and moral reaction. Such feelings are supposed to be a sign that the wrongdoer condemns the wrong done and regrets it, and thus that she improves. Yet, Sigmund Freud famously pointed out the danger of false or corrupted guilt feelings. Following up, Iris Murdoch warns against too quickly attributing a redemptive power to guilty suffering, because it almost always issues in self-absorption or a kind of self-directed masochism. According to Murdoch, dwelling on one's guilt as well as on one's unworthiness are the most dangerous and most sophisticated cases of self-centredness because they are almost perfect "imitations of what is good".²⁶ If that is the case, guilt feelings only *seem* to have the wrong deed as their sole object. We could add, with Gaita, that the only sure sign of true remorse is actions that turn to the victim – apology, plea for forgiveness, attempts at reparation and recompense, acceptance of punishment, atonement.²⁷ Only by this direction of attention, and by these actions, can the wrongdoer eventually come to terms with what she has done and reconstruct her relationships, including her relationship to herself.

We should notice, however, that Murdoch's and Gaita's points apply to both kinds of wrongdoing, voluntary (or blameworthy) and involuntary. Even if there is no fault on the part of the agent for which she could be blamed, such as in Gaita's examples mentioned in part 1, her remorse is liable to self-centred corruption if the object of her attention is the self rather than the wrong done to the victim. Her remorse can even turn into self-hatred that obstructs the healing of her guilt. I believe that this description fits Kostelnička's feelings in the first phase, in which she believes that she *had to* do the terrible thing for which she now suffers. Even if what she believes were true (if we imagine, for example, that severe

²⁵ Buber (1958: 209). Kostelnička's confession could be compared to Stavrogin's "fictitious" act of confession, which, according to Buber, "lacks the small light of humility that alone can illuminate the abyss of the guilty self" (1958: 207), compare also (1958: 204).

²⁶ Murdoch (1970: 68). Murdoch also examines guilt feelings in her novel *The Good Apprentice*. In a similar vein, Gaita (2006) warns against forms of corrupted guilt feelings that are self-indulgent, self-absorbed, sentimental, morbid, self-dramatising or mixed with self-pity; see (2006: 45, 49–53, 59, 63). Compare also Kierkegaard (1941), part "The Sin of Despairing over One's Sin". For Murdoch's account of "unselfing", see Hämäläinen (2015) and Fredriksson and Panizza (2020).

²⁷ Compare Gaita (2006: 53f.), who takes over Williams's investigation of the conditions under which recompense expresses a sense of responsibility, in Williams (1981: 28f.).

punishment awaited Jenůfa), Kostelnička's response would still be corrupt since it is not directed towards her victim.

But the problem with Kostelnička's guilt feelings goes much deeper, and it would be a mistake to reduce its explanation only to this sense of self-absorption. Her wrongdoing was voluntary, which means that it is not enough to condemn and regret its outer aspect. In a voluntary wrongdoing, the agent has to condemn the inner aspect too. Remorse in these cases requires the wrongdoer to repudiate her original decision as wrong and thus acknowledge her fault; without this, remorse is incomplete, because it does not involve moral improvement, which – unlike involuntary cases – is a necessary condition for coming to terms with voluntary wrongdoing. Yet, this point seems to be in tension with Murdoch's and Gaita's claims, since condemning one's fault seems to direct the attention towards the self. It is exactly this observation that led Williams to claim that by condemning her fault, the wrongdoer condemns her character and herself, and that by feeling ashamed and diminished, she sets out to improve her character and regain her worth.

Yet, Kostelnička's case shows that this is not the right picture for at least one significant type of wrongdoing. First, we have shown in part 3 that the very idea of worth is part of the problem here, a problem that persists during the first phase and corrupts Kostelnička's response: Kostelnička's improper pride manifests as a prevailing concern, even an obsession, with her social and moral worth. Even in this phase of acute self-hatred, she still cares about her social status, now perceived as a loss, as a frustrated social ambition. Moreover, it is her misconceived sense of worth that makes her shrink from acknowledging her fault. The sense of worthlessness thus cannot be part of a general account of morally appropriate retrospective emotion.

Second, Williams' picture misrepresents the form of moral improvement that is a necessary condition for morally appropriate retrospective emotion in this type of wrongdoing. It is not the case that only after acknowledging her fault does the agent set out to improve her character in order to prevent the repetition of the fault. Instead, moral improvement (that is, transformation towards humility) is a necessary *constituent* of the very acknowledgement of her fault. The agent's character defect, pride, defies Williams' idea of character reform since it – by means of self-deception – affects the very agent's judgement and presents resistance to her true acknowledgement of her blameworthiness. Once this judgement is humbly corrected, once the wrongdoer sees her past action as wrong, then there is no question that she would do it again.

Let us return now to the original question: how can the wrongdoer condemn the inner aspect of her voluntary wrongdoing and yet avoid slipping into the self-centredness described by Murdoch? It follows from the previous paragraph that in order to satisfy the condition concerning the inner aspect, it is not necessary for the wrongdoer to condemn her character. On the contrary, the deep meaning of Murdoch's and Gaita's point is that dwelling on one's inner fault, even though the temptation here is enormous, is counterproductive. Even in voluntary wrongdoings, the attention has to be on the victim. But, as opposed to blameless cases in which the agent harms the victim through no fault of her own, in blameworthy cases the condemnation of the wrongdoer's action enters into the perception of her victim: the

wrongdoer turns to her victim with the humble knowledge that she has unjustifiably wronged her.²⁸ Understanding the full meaning of what she has done by her own fault involves acknowledging the reality of the wrong done to the victim. What is perpetually obscured by the wrongdoer's pride is both the reality of the victim and the true nature of the wrong.

This redirection of attention is clearly visible in the second phase of Kostelnička's response. After she witnesses the noble and loving reaction of the person she has wronged, Kostelnička truly starts to repent. She concentrates on what she has done and to whom, and she finally sees fully how terrible, serious and unjustifiable is the thing she has done. Even though she now sees her fault, she ceases to be preoccupied with her own worthlessness, sinfulness and shame, and she turns first to Jenůfa (the victim) to ask her forgiveness, and second to the magistrate (the representative of the law), proclaiming that she is ready to submit herself to punishment and atonement (to fix her relationship with God). These two sincere proclamations are no longer centred on herself; they derive directly from the nature of her deed. Both forgiveness and punishment take the action as their object, as opposed to shame and self-hatred, which focus on the agent's self. Both proclamations also attest to her change of heart, since they only make sense if blameworthiness is sincerely acknowledged by the perpetrator; this is most apparent in the case of punishment, which is essentially a painful thing that cannot be sincerely accepted and required by the wrongdoer unless she takes it as a deserved consequence of her wrongdoing (Winch 1972b). With this proper direction, Kostelnička's paralysing and self-destructive self-flagellation turns into remorse that shows the way in which she can come to terms with her guilt.

As we observed in part 3, Kostelnička only comes to see the true meaning of what she has done thanks to her inner transformation, during which she abandons her former pride and corrupted self-love and becomes humble. This transformation towards humility involves two aspects, epistemic and emotional, that are intimately intertwined: when Kostelnička stops clinging to and fighting for her social and moral status, she overcomes her blindness and self-deception, but she also finds in herself new love and compassion that reveal the true nature of her victim: Jenůfa's child was not just an "obstacle"; it was a human being that she killed, thereby causing Jenůfa unspeakable suffering. Her pride blinded her to the reality of other people and to the harm she caused them. This is why Gaita insists that the most important aspect of true remorse is that the wrongdoer comes to see the reality of her victim and of the wrong she has done to her.

I suggested in part 3 that Kostelnička's inner transformation towards humility involved a change in her sense of her own worth, which previously derived from her moral credit. I claim here that her new humility is connected with her new capacity for love. Does this not imply that her new humility also brings a new, proper self-love? Is not the right kind of remorse connected with the right (humble) kind of self-love? I believe the answer is no, but to give a proper argument for that answer would involve a thorough discussion of contemporary accounts of humility, self-love and self-respect that far exceeds the scope of this paper.

Let me only point out that Kostelnička's remorse, even in the second stage, is still an excruciatingly painful emotion that is based on a recognition that she has done something terrible, that she has murdered

²⁸ There is an interesting question about what is the object of one's remorse in cases that lack the "outer" aspect, such as unsuccessful attempts. For an informed discussion of this topic, see, for example, Winch (1972a).

someone out of selfish motives. Kostelnička rightfully condemns herself as a murderess and she condemns her character as that of a murderer. Even though she is on her way to redemption, it does not ring true to say positively that she loves herself at this moment. I stressed in part 3 that the new sense of worth is conveyed to her from “outside”, from the apprehension that she can still be loved. It is important that her attention here is not on herself but on others. Saying to herself “I am a murderess but I still have a value as a human being” would be a false, self-indulgent consolation. Saying instead “I am a murderess, but in spite of that, my stepdaughter and the Saviour love me and will perhaps forgive me” expresses gratitude and hope that are directed outside herself. There is an orientation towards the future that indicates that the story of remorse does not end with the conclusion of the opera. Repentance and atonement are long processes during which the wrongdoer rebuilds her relationship with the world and with herself. Perhaps, at some point in the process, we can start speaking about proper self-love again.²⁹

Conclusion

I opened this paper with the question of whether self-hatred is an inescapable fate of repentant wrongdoers. I have argued that, on the contrary, it is a sign that the wrongdoer’s moral response is not genuine, because it is based on her misconception of what it means to wrong someone. I suggested that consideration of the process of a change of heart casts invaluable light on what it means to acknowledge one’s blameworthiness and to truly repent. I showed that the main obstacle to this acknowledgment is the wrongdoer’s improper self-love, which is corrupted by the vice of pride. Not only does it bias the wrongdoer’s perception of her wrongdoing before and after the action, but it also prevents the wrongdoer from coming to terms with her guilt.

To study (at least partly) unrepentant wrongdoers, it is important to see that their bias or self-deception is usually not limited to their retrospective assessment of their actions, but is active already before the action takes place: when they engage in their deliberation, assess the alternatives and make their decision. The source of their failure to repent thus partly corresponds to the source of their wrongdoing. This is why I devoted parts 2 and 3 of the paper to the investigation of this biased wrongdoing and its sources, based on a case study of the crime of Kostelnička. Following the hint from her confession, I identified three aspects of her wicked self-love as the source of her wrongdoing and tracked each of them to the operation of the vice of pride. First was her social ambition, which manifested as a fear of public humiliation. The second was her overwhelming anger at those who threatened her position in society, manifesting in her defensive aggression. But Kostelnička’s self-love did not only involve desire for things for herself, fear that she might lose them and anger towards those who would deprive her of them. Her self-love could not be understood as simple selfishness because we saw in the further instance that her whole relationship to herself was corrupted by what I called “moral ambition”. Moral ambition is a tendency to derive one’s worth and lovability from one’s qualities and achievements (one’s moral credit), a tendency that blinds one to one’s flaws and failures should they threaten one’s exalted self-image. It is this aspect of pride that was behind Kostelnička’s flawed decision and her subsequent resistance to acknowledging that her action was wrong.

That Kostelnička’s main vice is pride is most clearly visible in the fact that her final change of heart is connected with a deep inner transformation that can be characterised as becoming humble. Her new humility not only enables her to see and condemn her action clearly but also manifests in a changed

²⁹ Analogous questions can be asked about the possibility of self-forgiveness; see John Lippitt’s analysis of Ian McEwan’s novel *Atonement* in Lippitt (2020: ch. 9); for a more general account of how our identity is shaped by what we do, see Tieljen (2020).

relationship both to herself and to others. It is only after her change of heart that she starts to recognise the victims of her wrongdoing. Her plea for forgiveness and acceptance of punishment are the first steps in coming to terms with what she has done. I argued in part 4 that without such reorientation, guilt feelings are morally compromised. The initial phase of Kostelnička's self-hatred is thus exposed as simply the other side of the coin of her unreformed self-love.³⁰

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