

Remembering and Forgiving as Moral Duties: A Ricoeurian-Kantian Synthesis for the Victims of Tragedies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether remembering and forgiving can be elevated as categorical imperatives under Kantian ethics. Philosophical discourse usually describes remembering and forgiving as interpretative, therapeutic, or social actions; however, their status as universal moral obligations is not clearly explained. This research aims to provide a synthesis based on the philosophical views of Paul Ricoeur and Immanuel Kant, demonstrating how remembering and forgiving can serve as categorical imperatives grounded in human dignity. Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach perceives remembering and forgiving as ethical actions grounded in narrative identity, acknowledgment of suffering, and the opportunity for moral renewal. Still, his framework primarily maintains an interpretive and descriptive perspective. Kant's deontological ethics, on the other hand, proposes a normative framework through the categorical imperative, establishing moral duty in reason and moral law. This study employs a philosophical methodology, specifically conceptual analysis and a dialectic approach to examine the ethical tensions and convergences between these two philosophical traditions. The research demonstrates that human dignity represents the key ethical principle for the integration of Ricoeur's hermeneutic perspective with Kant's deontological framework. This synthesis contends that remembering provides a moral obligation that protects truth, justice, and dignity of victims, while forgiving is described as an imperfect duty that enables reconciliation and healing. By positioning these ethical actions in human dignity, the study contributes to philosophical discourse by giving a synthesized normative ethical framework for addressing the moral issues created by historical injustices and collective tragedies.

Keywords: Remembering, Forgiving, Moral Duties, Paul Ricoeur, Immanuel Kant

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of remembering and forgiving have been discussed as moral answers to suffering, yet philosophical investigation has not sufficiently clarified whether these acts are merely personal choices or binding moral duties. This lack of clarity became important in context of historical injustices and collective tragedy, where the ethical answer to suffering directly affected human dignity (Blustein, 2008; Ricoeur, 2004). Although remembering and forgiving have been studied as beneficial descriptions of social activities in the fields of psychology, history, and theology, their status as moral duties based on reason has not been clearly stated. The study highlighted the absence of philosophical framework that could explain how remembering historical injustices and forgiving wrongdoings may be founded on universal moral principles rather than contingent emotional, personal, or cultural reactions. Previous methods tended to focus on either moral obligation without sufficient consideration of lived moral experience or meaning and interpretation without normative basis (Kearney, 2010; Ghasemi et al., 2011). Consequently, remembering and forgiving were often treated as mere emotional or personal choices rather than as moral duties that arise from respect for human dignity (Blustein, 2008). The need to clarify the moral status of these actions formed the primary focus of the current study.

The unanswered tension emphasized the absence of a unified moral framework that might explain the interpretive complexity of remembering and forgiving as well as their potential position as moral obligations. While Ricoeur (2004) emphasized moral meaning and Kant (1785/2012) on moral law, neither framework alone sufficiently addressed how remembering and forgiving could operate as obligations grounded in respect for

human dignity. The lack of philosophical synthesis between Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach to remembering and forgiving and Kant's deontological framework thus constituted a significant research gap.

Human dignity appeared in this study as the key ethical element capable of addressing the gap. In order to preserve and restore dignity, both remembering and forgiving were examined as moral actions. Remembering preserved dignity by affirming victims' moral value and speaking out against injustice. By permitting the potential for moral renewal without denying wrongdoing, forgiveness preserved dignity. Framing these acts through the lens of human dignity allowed for a common ethical ground without collapsing their differences or tensions. The ethical importance of this investigation was further highlighted by the Philippine experience. The tenacity of selective recollection, historical injustice, and disputed narratives demonstrated how forgetting might serve as a moral evil. However, the risk of reducing forgiveness to a social expectation rather than a moral act based on respect for persons was revealed by demands to forgive quickly or without conditions. These facts showed that remembering and forgiving were moral issues that had an impact on actual communities and lives rather than being purely intellectual issues.

In light of these considerations, this study was conducted to fill the philosophical problem concerning the moral status of remembering and forgiving. By combining Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach with Kant's deontological ethics, it attempted to establish if these actions might be justified as universal moral duties. The study sought to shed light on how remembering and forgiving should be viewed as moral obligations that apply to all rational moral beings, rather than just cultural practices or mere personal choices, by emphasizing human dignity as their common ethical concern. This study aims to identify the key ethical tensions between Ricoeur's hermeneutics of remembering and forgiving and Kant's deontological ethics. It further seeks to investigate how Ricoeur's insights on remembering and forgiving can be reconciled within Kantian deontology. Moreover, the study aims to determine whether remembering and forgiving can be elevated and justified as categorical imperatives. Finally, it intends to create a Ricoeurian-Kantian moral synthesis grounded in human dignity.

This investigation does not claim that remembering and forgiving serve as categorical imperatives in the strict Kantian sense of universally applicable rules. Instead, forgiving is seen as an imperfect obligation that permits logical judgment, whereas remembering is seen as a perfect duty based on respect for people. In a constructive ethical framework, the term "categorical imperative" refers to moral obligation based on human dignity rather than absolute formal universality.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed philosophical methods to address the questions related to this study. The philosophical approaches will involve conceptual, dialectical, and hermeneutical analysis. The conceptual analysis serves as a foundational philosophical approach to break down complex ideas and concepts into their core parts for better understanding and clarity. All the important ideas are clearly defined for their usage to be consistent in different contexts. This study also applied the dialectic method of constructing arguments through an interaction of the two differing philosophical viewpoints and will bring together the two potentially contrasting yet complementary ideas: Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics, which focused on duty and universality of moral laws and Ricoeurian ethical concepts, which focused on the complexities of memory, forgetting, and forgiveness. This approach makes it possible for this research to trace tensions between the obligations to remember as a form of justice and the obligation to forgive as an exercise of reconciliation and healing, then reconcile them toward forming a moral framework which could be applied to everyone who suffered from tragedies and post-conflict societies. The study mainly anchored in Ricoeur's hermeneutics of remembering and forgiving, as expressed in historical and ethical context, while Kantian deontology to explore moral obligations underlying these concepts. These methodologies facilitate a thorough philosophical inquiry that connects two philosophical traditions.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This study proposes that the dialogue between Ricoeur (2004) and Kant (1785/2012) ethical ideas unveils not only complementary insights but also profound philosophical tensions regarding memory, forgiveness, justice, moral obligation, reconciliation, and healing. This analysis therefore examines how these tensions can illuminate

the ethical status of remembering and forgiving, particularly in relation to the preservation of human dignity. In applying this framework, Philippine memorials show that telling the truth through names and stories allows forgiveness without removing ethical responsibility. The “*Bantayog ng mga Bayani*” fulfill the duty of remembering by preserving and protecting facts and honoring victims’ while promoting education to prevent history from repeating. The “*People Power Monument*” illustrates how public ceremonies can express protest and reconciliation as long as they do not force forgiveness or lessen accountability. For disaster memory, the “*MV Eva Jocelyn/Yolanda Shrine*” turns loss into a lasting commitment to remember, presenting it as a moral duty rather than mere emotion or choice. In short, a memorial or commemoration supports forgiveness with memory if it clearly emphasizes the names of those who suffered and those responsible, centers the victims, avoid coercion, and commits to preventing recurrence. The philosophical discourse between Paul Ricoeur and Immanuel Kant begins not with agreement but with conflict. Their ethical frameworks originate from fundamentally distinct philosophical traditions. Ricoeur’s hermeneutic philosophy focuses on interpretation, narrative identity, and moral recognition. In contrast, Kant’s deontological ethics focuses on rational duty, universality, and moral law. Due to the differences, the accounts of remembrance and forgiveness initially seem challenging to harmonize. Recognizing these tensions is necessary in order to understand how their ideas might enter into philosophical dialogue.

A major point of contention is the basis of moral obligation. Kant’s philosophy is based on the categorical imperative, which says that moral actions must come from reason, duty, and principles that can be applied to all rational beings (Kant, 1785/2012). Moral worth, therefore, resides in acting from duty rather than from inclination or personal preferences. In this framework, ethical obligation is dictated by reason and must remain unchanging regardless of desires or circumstances. Ricoeur took a different approach to ethics. In *Oneself as Another* (1992), he claimed that the self is formed through interpersonal relationships and the narratives that give human experience with importance. Ethical responsibility emerges not merely from moral law but from the acknowledgment of the other within collective life narratives. Ricoeur (1992) characterized the ethical objective of human existence as “the good life, with and for others, in just institutions.” This relational orientation prioritizes ethical considerations of recognition, interpretation, and solicitude. The difference between Kant’s idea of rational autonomy and Ricoeur’s idea of relational identity shows a big philosophical problem about how moral responsibility is based.

To clarify the normative framework of this study, it is essential to differentiate fundamental Kantian notions. A categorical imperative denotes a universal moral principle that is applicable to all rational moral agents. Perfect duties are strict obligations that must consistently be adhered to, such as the need to refrain from dishonesty or to uphold justice. Conversely, imperfect obligations permit flexibility in their implementation, shown by the obligation to assist others or to foster moral conduct. In this context, remembering as a perfect duty is regarded as an absolute obligation, as it immediately supports truth and justice by acknowledging the dignity of victims. Forgiveness is regarded as an imperfect obligation, as it relies on reasonable assessment and cannot be equally mandated in every circumstance. In instances of profound injustice, forgiveness may be regarded as a moral ideal rather than a mandatory requirement. This differentiation reinforces the notion that remembrance and forgiveness are ethically obligatory, while aligning with Kantian ethics.

A second tension arises in their understanding of forgiveness. Kant’s ethical framework emphasizes justice, accountability, and respect for the moral law. Because doing something wrong constitutes violating a duty, Kantian ethics tend to emphasize moral obligations. If forgiveness happens, it must still be fair and show respect for people (Johnson, 2004). Ricoeur, on the other hand, looks at forgiveness through narrative identity and hermeneutics. He said that forgiveness does not invalidate wrongdoing or eliminate the existence of harm; rather, it reconsiders the past to facilitate the potential for moral restoration. Kant’s ethics often bases morality on pure reason, while Ricoeur focuses on how memory and relationships can change how we see things. This difference shows that there is a conflict between forgiveness seen as a moral duty based on justice and forgiveness seen as an ethical act that goes beyond rules.

A third tension emerges in their approach to memory and forgetting. Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of memory differentiates between what he terms bad forgetting and good forgetting (Ricoeur, 2004). Bad forgetting happens

when the past is hidden, changed, or denied in ways that erase suffering of victims and change the truth about history. This kind of forgetting is morally wrong because it stops people from seeing injustice and undermines the dignity of those who have suffered. On the contrary, Ricoeur recognizes the potential for good forgetting. Good forgetting does not erase the past; instead, it helps people and groups get over their angry feelings without losing the truth of their memories. In this context, forgetting may facilitate reconciliation by preventing memory from evolving into a lasting source of conflict.

This study claims that the tensions between Ricoeur's hermeneutic ethics and Kant's deontological framework represent not an incompatible contradiction but a constructive philosophical dialogue. By establishing remembrance and forgiveness in the preservation and restoration of humanity, it becomes possible to integrate Ricoeur's interpretative insights with Kant's argument of moral obligation. Both philosophical traditions converge on a shared ethical concern for human dignity. Ricoeur suggests that we honor someone's humanity by remembering their pain. This simple act of seeing their past suffering makes them matter to society again. In Ricoeur's framework, forgiveness maintains dignity by not entirely reducing individuals to their misconduct. Kant's moral philosophy likewise establishes ethics in the inherent dignity of rational beings. Kant's Formula of Humanity asserts that rational agents must consistently be regarded as ends in themselves, rather than merely as means to an end. This idea posits human dignity as an unquestionable moral foundation. In this context, remembrance is a moral imperative, as neglecting the suffering of others may diminish them to mere tools of historical oversight. Consequently, recollection is both interpretative and a rational duty rooted in respect for individuals. In both frameworks, moral duties ultimately serve to protect the supreme worth of the human person. Despite their differing approaches, human dignity serves as the foundational principle linking Ricoeur's emphasis on relational narrative and Kant's focus on universal moral laws. Both philosophers acknowledge that genuine ethics must protect the intrinsic worth of the individual, despite their disagreement on whether this arises from collective experience or a moral duty. This common foundation indicates that remembrance and forgiveness beyond mere personal choices; they constitute essential moral obligations grounded in profound respect for human dignity. Ricoeur (2004) clarifies the human interpretation of suffering and renewal through memory and forgiveness, whereas Kant establishes the moral framework that turns these interpretive choices into rational duties grounded in universal moral law. Both perspectives converge on the belief that ethical life requires meaning, understanding, and obligation. Through this dialogue, remembering and forgiving are elevated from personal choices into categorical imperatives that affirm justice, dignity, reconciliation, and healing.

Ricoeur (2004) considers remembering as an ethical act of justice. He explains that to remember is to struggle against forgetting, which threatens justice. Remembering is not just passively recalling the past; it is a moral duty to remember those who suffered. It keeps the truth alive, fights against denial, and gives victims their dignity back. Kant (1785/2012) reinforces this claim by establishing remembrance in the moral law. He insists that "A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, nor because of its adequacy to achieve some proposed end; it is good only because of its willing, that is, it is good in itself.", implying that moral worth lies in the rational will to act justly. Kant (1785/2012) contends that the moral value of an action is determined not by its consequences or success, but solely by the intention that motivates it. Even if the action fails or produces no outcome, the act itself remains good, as it is motivated by duty rather than inclination or consequence. So, remembering becomes a moral act, a perfect duty that follows the categorical imperative by recognizing other people as ends in themselves (Kant, 1785/2012).

Within the framework of this research, Ricoeur's perspective on memory as an ethical act can be further explained through the Kantian principle of humanity. Ricoeur underscores the narrative recognition of the suffering, whereas Kant offers the normative foundation illustrating the moral importance of such recognition. Remembering past wrongs is not just a way to understand them; it is also a moral duty to treat people as ends in themselves (Kant, 1785/2012). In this context, the moral imperative to remember is intrinsically connected to the obligation to uphold human dignity.

This study therefore proposes that human dignity functions as the philosophical bridge Ricoeur's hermeneutic ethics and Kant's deontological framework. In Ricoeur's philosophy, dignity is preserved through the recognition of the other's suffering within narrative memory. In Kantian ethics, dignity originates from the

inherent value of rational beings, who must always be regarded as ends in themselves. Even though their philosophical approaches are different, both schools of thought agree that people have moral worth. By grounding remembering and forgiving in human dignity, these actions can be perceived not only as personal responses but as moral obligations founded on respect for humanity.

In the Philippines, this moral act of remembering can be seen in the stories of people who suffered harm by Martial Law and still tell their stories to keep justice alive and fight against historical revisionism. The Amnesty International Report on the Philippines (1981) documents that “thousands were detained, tortured, or executed under martial law, and remembrance of these abuses remains essential for justice”. This means that during martial law, a lot of people had their rights violated in an extensive manner. It’s important to remember these things so that justice can be done and they do not happen again. The moral obligation to remember aligns with Ricoeur’s recommendation to remain faithful to the truth and Kant’s notion that recognizing humanity entails acknowledging the intrinsic worth of every rational being. After Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, survivors’ demands for accountability and proper remembrance show the same moral urgency. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2014) emphasized that “survivors’ healing is deeply tied to recognition and remembrance of those lost”. This means that healing after a tragedy is not just about moving on; it is also about being honest about the pain. Survivors give meaning to their suffering and honor the dignity of the victims when they talk about what happened and remember those who died. Remembrance serves as a means of emotional and moral healing, enabling survivors to attain peace while preserving the memory of the past as an indicator for justice and compassion. In both instances, remembrance functions as a moral obligation of justice rooted in respect for individuals. This example illustrates that the act of remembering is not solely a historical or cultural activity, but a moral duty rooted in the acknowledgment of human dignity.

If remembering keeps dignity alive by recognizing suffering, forgiveness brings back dignity by making moral renewal possible. On the other hand, Kant’s ethics sees forgiveness as an imperfect duty, a moral obligation that requires rational judgment and empathy without giving up on justice. Ricoeur (2004) views forgiveness as a difficult gift, one that allows reconciliation without erasing accountability. It is difficult because you cannot ask for or trade forgiveness. It comes about on its own as a kind act that goes beyond punishment and fairness. But it is hard because it faces the weight of human wickedness and pain, which are the things that seem impossible to forgive. For Ricoeur (2004), true forgiveness does not erase wrongdoing or let the guilty go free. Instead, it lets people make up without losing their responsibility. It recognizes the truth of the past, honors the pain of the victims, and frees both the offender and the victim from the chains of guilt and resentment. In this way, forgiveness does not imply denying justice; it means fulfilling it. It is a moral perspective where truth, responsibility, and compassion all come together. For him, forgiveness changes how he sees the past, giving suffering a new meaning through belief. Kant complements this by defining imperfect duties as actions that stem from reason but allow flexibility in application, such as showing compassion or developing moral virtue (Kant, 1785/2012). Forgiveness thus becomes a rational act of moral strength, not sentimental absolution. Satne (2018) explains that forgiveness in the Kantian sense is not indulgence but an exercise of rational self-governance that acknowledges both justice and the offender’s moral potential. Satne (2018) says that Kant (1785/2012) does not think that forgiveness is just letting someone off the hook or ignoring what they did wrong. It is not an accident; it is a conscious moral choice made with reason and self-control. Forgiveness comes from a sense of justice and the belief that the person who did wrong can still become a better person. It does not come from weakness or emotion. In this regard, forgiveness honors both moral accountability and human dignity. Ricoeur’s narrative of forgiveness and Kant’s autonomy of the will converge in the shared perspective that forgiveness should to facilitate healing without ignoring truth.

Jeffrey Blustein (2008) strengthens this synthesis by characterizing the remembrance of wrongs as an ethical obligation grounded in respect for persons. It means that remembering past wrongs is not just a choice, but a moral obligation. It comes from the belief that everyone deserves respect, especially those who have been wronged. We honor the victims’ pain and uphold their dignity by remembering wrongs. This makes sure that their experiences are never forgotten or repeated. In this manner, remembrance transforms into a manifestation of respect that upholds justice and human dignity. His argument is similar to Kant’s idea of humanity and Ricoeur’s focus on the moral act of recognition. Joy (2015) also says that “forgiveness becomes rational when

guided by respect for humanity and moral responsibility” Forgiveness turns into a moral and thoughtful duty when it is based on respect for human dignity. It is not an emotional response or a sign of weakness; it is a reasoned choice that respects both justice and kindness. Joy (2015) states that genuine forgiveness is rooted in respect for humanity, asserting that it entails moral responsibility through the recognition of wrongdoing while choosing for reconciliation as a rational and ethical decision. These philosophers indicate that Ricoeur’s interpretive ethics can coexist with Kant’s deontological framework, as both emphasize the significance of moral responsibility towards others.

Filipino moral philosophy can also help us understand how these frameworks fit together morally. Timbreza (2003) defines *kapwa* as the communal moral framework that prioritizes relational humanity and collective accountability. He said that *kapwa* is a strong bond between people. It is more than just being together. It is the understanding that one’s humanity is interconnected with others. During this shared experience, people are not alone; they are part of a community that is connected by empathy, respect, and caring for each other. *Kapwa* emphasizes collective responsibility, asserting that the welfare of an individual impacts all, and ethical conduct must consistently prioritize the community’s welfare. This idea is similar to Ricoeur’s “ethics of solicitude” and Kant’s idea that people should be treated as ends in themselves. When Filipinos remember the victims of Martial Law or Typhoon Yolanda, they are not just doing something pleasant for their culture; they are also doing something that is morally right and in line with universal moral principles. Zehr (2014) describes this relationship in restorative justice by stating, “true justice remembers the harm, takes responsibility, and seeks healing for all involved.” He said that real justice is more than just punishing the person who did something wrong. It starts with honestly remembering the damage that was done and how it affected everyone involved, including the victims, the offenders, and the communities. Taking responsibility means admitting you did something wrong and trying to fix the damage. In this sense, healing means fixing relationships, rebuilding trust, and encouraging people to get along again. Zehr’s concept illustrates that genuine justice entails restoring balance and dignity through remembrance, accountability, and compassion, rather than seeking vengeance. So, Ricoeur’s interpretive ethics makes Kant’s idea of moral duty stronger by adding narrative empathy, and Kant’s idea of moral obligation gives Ricoeur’s idea of compassion a solid foundation.

In this reconciliation, remembering is a perfect duty to uphold truth and justice, while forgiving is an imperfect duty to bring moral harmony back through reason and compassion. Ricoeur adds meaning and narrative understanding, while Kant gives these acts a rational framework and universality that makes them binding. They create a moral framework that can help people and communities recover in an ethical way after they have been harmed. Ricoeur (2004) asserted, “forgiveness gives time a new beginning”, while Kant (1785/2012) emphasized that moral worth resides not in feelings but in acting from duty alone. This synthesis shows that remembering and forgiving are two important things that work together to keep justice, reconciliation, and the dignity of humanity alive. This reconciliation sets the foundation for the following discussion, which investigates how the concepts of remembering and forgiving, when rooted in interpretation and reason, can be expressed as categorical imperatives that bind all rational moral beings within a community.

The potential to establish remembering and forgiving as categorical imperatives is fundamental to the synthesis of Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of remembering past injustices for justice and forgiving for reconciliation and healing within Immanuel Kant’s deontological ethics. Ricoeur interprets remembering and forgiving as moral expressions of meaning and recognition, whereas Kant offers the rational and universal framework that enables their comprehension as binding moral duties. This synthesis renders remembering a perfect duty of justice and forgiving an imperfect duty of reconciliation, both grounded in ethical reasoning and universally applicable to all rational beings.

In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (1785/2012) defines the categorical imperative as the command that only do something if you think everyone should be allowed to do the same in a similar situation. This means that, before doing something, a person should ask whether their reason for acting could be applicable to all without exception (Kant, 1785/2012). Furthermore he said that, if everyone did the same thing, it should be morally acceptable to all. Otherwise, if the action would cause harm, contradiction, or chaos when made a universal standard, then the action is morally wrong. For instance, if someone lies to get ahead and everyone

else does the same, trust would disappear and communication would stop working. So, lying cannot grow into a universal law for everyone. Kant (1785/2012) emphasizes that reason must guide our moral actions and that we must respect the moral law's universality for all rational beings. This commandment stipulates that moral actions must be universal and without conditions. The procedure of universality succeeds when we remember the pain of others since it upholds justice without exception. It shows that the moral law asserts that every rational being should be treated as an end in themselves. Ricoeur's (2004) insight complements this by interpreting memory as an ethical act that "does justice through remembrance". Thus, remembrance becomes a categorical imperative because to forget would violate reason's duty to preserve human dignity and moral truth. This means that remembering is a moral obligation that reason demands. If we forget about past wrongs, we will not value human life or the truth about how painful it was for the victim. Remembering is a way to honor those who have suffered and keep our moral duty to protect and promote human dignity.

The study argues that remembering and forgiving can be ethically justified within Kant's moral framework when viewed through the lens of human dignity. Remembering serves as a duty of justice by protecting the truth of human suffering and upholding the dignity of victims. Forgiveness, in contrast, functions as a duty of reconciliation aimed at the moral restoration of relationships while maintaining accountability. When these actions are interpreted in this manner, they fulfill the moral obligation of the categorical imperative by recognizing the inherent value of individuals as ends in themselves.

Jeffrey Blustein (2008) supports this moral grounding by stating that "remembering wrongs is a moral obligation". He grounded this idea that there is a need to express certain moral and compassionate attitude, including the respect for persons, specifically the victims, and a means of ensuring justice and preventing injustices in the future. Blustein (2008) further argued that remembering is a sign that honor the victims of injustice as persons with dignity and value. Forgetting on the other hand disrespects the victims and lets the wrongdoers delete their value. He also emphasized that remembering past injustices serves a cautionary function that would help societies remain alert for possible future injustices and provides reasons and actions for reparations and transitional justice. The essence of Blustein's argument states that failure to remember past wrongs poses a threat to both individual and society. His position translates Ricoeur's ethical memory into Kantian duty by showing that remembrance is not optional but morally binding. Remembering the horrors of Martial Law or suffering of survivors of Typhoon Yolanda is a way to show respect for others. The Amnesty International Report on the Philippines (1981) points out that keeping the truth about human rights abuses in the past is necessary for justice. Not remembering or changing such a memory would be a moral failure because it goes against the categorical imperative to uphold truth and humanity.

On the basis of this inquiry, remembering satisfies the requirements of a perfect duty because it directly protects the moral dignity of persons who have suffered injustice. A society that intentionally forgets past transgressions may regard victims merely as instruments whose experiences can be destroyed for the sake of convenience or political stability. This kind of forgetting goes against the Kantian idea that every rational being has intrinsic worth that must always be respected. Remembering thereby transforms into both a historical practice and a moral imperative rooted in respect for individuals. Forgiveness, on the other hand, can be anchored in the categorical imperative when perceived as a rational action that fosters moral restoration rather than mere emotional release. For Kant, imperfect duties allow flexibility in their expression while remaining morally obligatory. Imperfect duties, such as helping others or improving oneself (e.g., skills, character), encourage individuals to embrace universal moral goals rather than specific actions that are required at all times (Kant, 1785/2012). This means that imperfect duties tell you what to do without requiring you to do the same thing every time. The duty to help others, for instance, makes someone want to be kind and helpful, but it does not imply they have to help or support in every situation. The duty of self-improvement also requires people to work on their skills and character, but when and how to do this is up to each person. These duties depend on reason and reflection, which shows that goodness (like being kind, helpful, or generous) require the freedom to choose what is good, not just following strict rules (Kant, 1785/2012). This flexibility makes them different from perfect duties, which are moral rules (like lying, killing, or breaking promises) that must always be followed, no matter what someone wants.

Satne (2018) explains that “forgiveness in a Kantian sense is a rational act of moral self-governance that respects both the autonomy of the self and the moral potential of the wrongdoer”. The duty to forgive is an imperfect moral duty, meaning it depends on one’s thoughtful choice and reason. Choosing to forgive shows the person’s freedom and self-control. Kant further explains that a person has a moral duty to respect themselves, which includes not forgiving someone who shows no remorse. If you forgive someone who remains unchanged their conduct too easily, you are letting injustice happen and letting your dignity be disrespected. For Kant (1785/2012), self-respect is part of being a rational and moral being. So, forgiveness must come from reason and it should not ignore reconciliation and healing while also recognizing the wrongdoer’s potential for moral growth. Satne (2018) states that this view clears up misunderstandings about Kant’s idea of forgiveness by showing it as a thoughtful moral choice instead of a sign of weakness or emotion. He also makes a difference between legal pardon and moral forgiveness. While he rejects pardons in the legal sphere because it undermines justice, he allows forgiveness as a moral act within the ethical sphere. This idea helps clarify that moral punishment for Kant, is not derived from emotion or resentment but by a rational commitment to protest wrongdoing. Forgiveness is the rational decision to end moral protest once the wrongdoer shows moral growth (Kant, 1785/2012). It arises from the duty to forgive, similar to the duty of beneficence, emphasizing reason, virtue, and respect for human dignity (Moran and Timmermann, 2022). This perspective corresponds with modern Kantian study, which acknowledges forgiveness as a reasonable moral response based on respect for others rather than mere emotional reaction.

Nevertheless, an important ethical difficulty must be acknowledged: individuals who have experienced profound injustice may find forgiveness extremely difficult or even impossible. In this sense, this difficulty does not undermine the moral value of forgiveness but rather clarifies its ethical nature. Forgiveness is an imperfect duty, so victims cannot be forced or asked to do it. Instead, it stays a moral ideal that promotes healing and reconciliation while also respecting the freedom and emotional reality of those who have been hurt. This difference makes sure that forgiveness helps people heal without ignoring justice or the victims’ dignity.

Ricoeur (2004) characterizes forgiveness as challenging gift for it cannot be demanded or easily earned. Meaning a true gift, is freely given and cannot be a mere transaction or the result of a norm or social pressure. According to Ricoeur, if forgiveness were just a required duty, it would no longer be a genuine, freely given act of grace. This means that forgiveness has a unique moral value because it is freely chosen, not forced. If people were required to forgive in every situation, forgiveness become mechanical and loses the sincerity and compassion that make it meaningful. The beauty of forgiveness comes from the fact that a person chooses to let go of resentment out of understanding, empathy, virtue and not because society demands it. The person who has been wronged must make a free, personal decision to grant forgiveness. This means that forgiveness has more moral value when it comes from careful thought rather than just feelings. When someone forgives because they feel morally obligated to do so, not just because they feel sorry for the person, the act becomes more stable and in line with moral reasoning. So, forgiveness is not just something that happens on its own; it is a conscious choice based on moral duty. To forgive rationally, in the Kantian sense, involves acting from duty rather than inclination. Kant (1785, 2012) argues that the moral value of an action is not determined by its anticipated outcome but by the principle guiding the course of action. This means that the reason or rule you follow when you decide to act is what makes the action truly moral. Even if the result is good, the action is not morally good unless it was based on a good principle, like doing something out of duty and respect. Kant (1785, 2012) contends that morality corresponds to intention based on reason, rather than outcomes or consequences. The emphasis is not on success, outcomes, or personal benefit, but rather on whether the action was executed from pure reason.

Kant’s standard for forgiveness is that it is done out of respect for human dignity and moral principles. Ricoeur also says that forgiveness means honestly looking back on the past, not forgetting it but seeing it as a responsibility. These ideas show that forgiveness can be both a rational and a universal moral duty to seek healing while upholding justice. This means that forgiveness is morally valuable only when it is based on respect for people and guided by moral law. Kant (1785, 2012) asserts that the morality of an action is determined by its underlying principle, which must be rooted in dignity and reason. Ricoeur (2004) enhances this concept by illustrating that forgiveness involves reinterpreting past transgressions, rather than merely forgetting them; it requires comprehending them in a manner that facilitates healing and accountability. When these two points of

view are put together, forgiveness turns into more than just a feeling; it becomes a thoughtful commitment that helps people heal while still upholding the truth and justice that victims deserve.

In the Filipino context, these categorical imperatives are distinctly displayed in the moral response to national tragedy. Honoring the victims of Martial Law through memorials, education, and testimonies illustrates the imperative to uphold truth and human dignity. The United Nations Human Rights Council (2020) said that keeping the memory of the past alive in the Philippines is important to stop injustice and keep moral responsibility alive. In the same way, survivors' continued calls for recognition and recovery after Typhoon Yolanda show that remembering is a way to do justice for both the dead and the living. According to Zehr (2014), "true justice remembers the harm and seeks restoration for all involved." These practices embody universal moral obligations that surpass cultural and situational contexts, illustrating that moral actions of remembrance and forgiveness are not confined to cultural factors but are founded in reason. This example also further demonstrates that remembering and forgiving are not simply cultural responses but moral imperatives rooted in universal principles of human dignity.

According to Kant's principle of universality, which says that actions must apply to everyone, both remembering and forgiving are moral actions. This contended that remembering past injustices and extending forgiveness for the purposes of healing and reconciliation are not merely individual decisions. They can be defended as universal moral duties. If everyone remembered the truth, dignity and fairness would be safe. If everyone forgave in a responsible way, healing and moral growth would be possible without ignoring responsibility. Both actions can be willed as universal standards that uphold respect for persons; thus, they satisfy Kant's test of categorical imperative. Remembering as a moral duty protects justice and the moral truth of suffering, while forgiving as an imperfect duty helps people get along with each other while still being respectful and responsible. The combination of Ricoeur's interpretive ethics and Kants moral framework generate a synthesis where meaning and universality meet. When people see remembering and forgiving as duties based on human dignity, these actions can be used by everyone. A world where moral agents always recognize injustice, remember it honestly, and seek reconciliation through responsible forgiveness would support justice, healing, and human dignity. In his view, remembering and forgiving fulfill Kant's requirement that moral principles must be willed as universal laws. This synthesis shows that the categorical imperatives of remembering and forgiving are not only abstract moral laws, but also rules for human dignity and renewal, especially in societies that are healing from injustice and tragedy.

The theoretical synthesis derived from Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of remembering and forgiving and Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics is what this study derived as the Ricoeurian-Kantian Moral Framework. This framework unites the interpretive depth of Ricoeur's ethics with the moral system of Kantian ethics, showing that remembering and forgiving can function as categorical imperatives, which are universal moral duties binding to all rational beings without exception. Ricoeur (2004) provides the ethical meaning of how humanity remembers and forgives, while Kant (1785/2012) provides the logical structure that changes these moral acts into obligations grounded in pure reason. Together, they form an ethical structure that sustains justice, human dignity, respect for persons, reconciliation, and healing within both individual and collective moral life.

This study proposes the concept of "The Ricoeurian-Kantian Ethics of Remembering and Forgiving." This framework combines Ricoeur's hermeneutic view of remembering and forgiving with Kant's idea of universal moral duty, putting both actions in the context of protecting and restoring human dignity. In this synthesis, remembering serves as a duty of justice that protects truth and respects the dignity of victims, whereas forgiving acts as a duty of reconciliation that facilitates healing and moral renewal without avoiding accountability. This framework combines interpretive ethics with a universal ethical structure to give us a philosophical basis for seeing remembering and forgiving as moral duties that go hand in hand after a tragedy.

Ricoeur (2004) argued that to remember rightly is to give validation to those silenced by suffering and to resist the erasure of truth. Kant (1785/2012) complements this intention by asserting that moral acts are valid only when they can be willed as universal law. The synthesis between the two therefore situates remembering as grounded in pure reason and respect to human dignity. Forgetting or distorting memory becomes a violation of

moral law because it treats persons as mere means to others selfish interest. Remembering, then is an act of rational and resistance to injustice. Forgiving within this framework, is understood as a duty of reconciliation and healing. Ricoeur (2004) views forgiveness as an action that transforms suffering into hope, but he cautions that forgiveness deprived of justice is pointless. Kant (1785/2012) clarify this concept by classifying forgiveness as an imperfect duty, originating from reason yet permitting rational discretion in its application. Satne (2018) interprets Kantian forgiveness as a rational act of self-governance intended to convert suffering into ethical responsibility, guided not by emotion or inclination but by pure reason.

This Ricoeurian-Kantian synthesis establishes a field in which remembering protects justice and truth, while forgiving restores relationships and healing. Both are expressions of free acting under reason. Blustein (2008) argues that we ought to remember and do wrong not to remember, a statement that captures Kant's insistence that respect for persons is a non-negotiable moral law. Margalit (2004) characterizes remembrance as a moral connection that prevents the abandonment of humanity. These insights confirm that moral responsibility transcends individual choice and is considered a universal ethical principle.

In the Philippines, this framework is put into practice by the importance of remembering and forgiving. It is everyone's moral duty to uphold justice by remembering the victims of Martial Law through education and public memorials. The United Nations Human Rights Council (2020) says that remembering the past is important for keeping order and accountability in a society. Likewise, the post-Yolanda push for rehabilitation and solidarity shows that forgiveness is a logical way to make peace and heal. Communities do not rebuild only from emotion or inclination; they rebuild from a collective commitment to restore life and dignity. According to Zehr (2014), real justice remembers the damage and tries to make things right for everyone involved. Both examples show how meaning and moral law come together in the lives of people who have been hurt and lived.

This synthesis also connects the individual and universal aspects of moral being. Ricoeur's hermeneutic ethics introduces compassion, narrative, and recognition, whereas Kant's deontological framework provides normative structure. They all agree that justice, reconciliation, and healing are not values that are opposed to each other, but rather duties of moral reasoning that support each other. The synthesized framework implies that every act of ethical remembrance and forgiveness includes a moral obligation to others, promoting recovery without denying truth or accountability.

As has been demonstrated, the Ricoeurian-Kantian moral framework defines as a duty of justice and forgiving as a duty of reconciliation and healing. It translates Ricoeur's ethical significance into Kant's moral framework, forming a unified standpoint on moral existence relevant to both individual and communal circumstances. This synthesized moral framework provides a structure that can guide rational beings through crises, whether resulting from historical injustice or natural disaster, by anchoring ethical actions in both understanding and obligation. Thus, remembering and forgiving are not simply options but rather categorical imperatives for rational moral agents. Through this synthesis, remembering and forgiving arise not merely as emotional reactions to suffering but as ethical obligations rooted in the dignity of the human individual.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the concepts of remembering and forgiving can be ethically justified as categorical imperatives through a philosophical integration of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics and Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics. Ricoeur (2004) enhances our understanding of moral actions by demonstrating that remembering and forgiving are interpretive processes that construct moral identity, recognize suffering, and facilitate the potential for renewal. Kant (1785/2012), in turn, provides the universal rational groundwork that transforms these ethical acts into binding moral duties grounded in human dignity. By bringing these two perspectives into dialogue, the study demonstrates that meaning and duty are not opposing ideas but complementary dimensions of moral life.

In this integration, remembering becomes a moral obligation, a reasoned act to recognize past harm, uphold human dignity, and avoid the danger of complete forgetfulness. Not remembering how other people are suffering

goes against the moral law that says you should be honest and recognize others. Forgiveness, on the contrary, transforms into a duty of reconciliation and healing, an imperfect yet essential moral act informed by reason, compassion, and the potential for moral growth. It is not irrational forgiveness but a responsible use of moral autonomy that restores human dignity without getting rid of responsibility. Ricoeur (2004) asserts that forgiveness provides a fresh beginning, while Kant (1785/2012) emphasizes that rational beings should recognize that moral value is derived solely from a sense of duty. These insights demonstrate that remembrance and forgiveness uphold moral existence.

However, it is important to recognize that some victims may find forgiveness very hard or even impossible. People may not be able to forgive right away if they have been through a lot of trauma, injustice, or ongoing harm. This study emphasizes that this difficulty does not undermine the ethical significance of forgiveness; rather, it elucidates its character as an imperfect duty rather than a perfect one. Although remembrance may constitute a demanding moral imperative to uphold justice and truth, forgiveness cannot be ethically imposed upon victims. Instead, it has to stay a moral option that respects the autonomy, dignity, and emotional reality of those who have been hurt.

The Filipino experiences of Martial Law and Typhoon Yolanda demonstrate the real value of this integrated moral framework. Survivors' identities, public memorials, and efforts at communal reconciliation illustrate the deep human need to remember truthfully and to forgive carefully. These actions are not just ways of showing how you feel or how you feel strongly. They are statements that the worth of people must be recognized. This study thus confirms that remembrance and forgiveness direct victims and societies towards justice, reconciliation, and healing based on reason rather than mere emotion. This is a way for us to use our free will as rational beings.

Finally, it provides a normative system for individuals, communities, and institutions facing enduring effects of suffering, injustice, and loss. It calls rational beings to uphold the dignity of others through truthful remembrance and responsible forgiveness. In doing so, it affirms that to repair societies and in order to heal individuals from their painful suffering, reason and compassion must converge. This means that the study does not only provide a theory but a practical moral structure that can guide how individuals and societies should respond to painful histories or ongoing harm. It emphasizes that remembrance is necessary to honor victims and prevent the repetition of injustice, while forgiveness becomes a possible solution for reconciliation, and healing when it upholds human dignity. These elevated categorical imperatives are presented as significant tools for rebuilding moral order in communities that have experienced trauma, such as those affected by Martial Law or Super Typhoon Yolanda. The synthesized moral framework also insists that reconciliation and healing is not possible through reason alone or through emotions alone. Real restoration happens when people combine rational moral principles (like duty, truth, and justice) with human compassion (like empathy, care, and the desire) to make things right.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that remembering and forgiving transcend mere personal emotional responses; they constitute moral obligations resulting from our collective respect for human dignity. This study demonstrates that recovery from tragedy requires both genuine remembering and ethical forgiveness by integrating Ricoeur's emphasis on essential narratives with Kant's focus on moral principles. Justice is served when we remember the pain of a victim, and forgiveness heals broken relationships by letting us move on together without ignoring the need for accountability. When you put these two ideas together, remembrance and forgiveness become two moral duties that guide people and society toward fairness, healing, and coming together again. In essence, the integration of Ricoeur's and Kant's ideas illustrates that healing and reconciliation following the crisis are attainable if the respect for human dignity remains central to our remembrance of the past and our capacity for forgiveness. Remembering protects justice when it is based on human dignity, and forgiving opens up a way for people to move forward together.

Future researchers should further develop the Ricoeurian-Kantian synthesized moral framework through comparative studies with other moral traditions such as Confucian and Levinasian ethics, or African Ubuntu philosophy. This would broaden the dialogue and scope on moral universality and contextual ethics to enrich

global discussion and investigation on post-conflict justice and reconciliation. Such comparative work can reveal where different cultures align or differ in their views on remembrance, forgiveness, justice, reconciliation, and healing. It will also strengthen global conversations about how societies rebuild after violence disaster. By engaging multiple moral traditions, future studies can develop a more inclusive and culturally grounded approach to post-conflict justice and reconciliation.

This research is fundamentally conceptual and philosophical; subsequent studies should empirically apply the framework to communities impacted by trauma. Qualitative methods, including narrative or phenomenological inquiry, might clarify how victims perceive remembrance and forgiveness as moral imperatives, thereby validating and enhancing the theoretical synthesis. Listening to their narratives would not only validate the framework's alignment with actual experiences but also enhance and enrich the theory through the perspectives of those directly impacted.

Governments and schools should make remembering a part of everyday life by teaching it in schools, putting it in museums, and holding annual memorials to emphasize justice and responsibility. Teaching history correctly helps people understand what happened in the past and stops moral truths from being lost. In the realm of education, ethics curricula can utilize this framework to elucidate to students the significance of truth-telling, the acknowledgment of wrongdoing, and the practice of forgiveness for moral development. Through these efforts, society can help people become more aware of right and wrong and make sure they do not forget important lessons from their past pain.

People who have been through a tragedy may use this synthesized framework as a guide to help them heal. By remembering the truth and forgiving in a responsible way, they can take back their authority and dignity. After their suffering, these practices can help survivors feel more in control, clear, and independent. This framework might help community groups and religious groups create recovery programs that balance justice, healing, and forgiveness. It might help them come up with activities that do not make people forgive or forget, but instead encourage honest storytelling, recognizing harm, and making up. This balanced approach makes sure that healing does not ignore accountability and that reconciliation takes into account of moral duties and emotional needs.

This moral framework may assist transitional justice and peace-building programs in societies that have been through war or disaster. Organizations like the United Nations, ASEAN, and groups that work for human rights can use it to encourage people to remember and forgive as moral duties that are important for moral and social restoration. These institutions can help countries face up to past wrongs and rebuild trust by starting things like the truth-telling process, survivor-centered memorialization, community dialogues, and restorative practices. The framework helps societies move toward long-term moral and social restoration by treating remembrance and forgiveness as universal moral duties. This makes sure that past harms are not repeated or forgotten.

Ethical Considerations

This research did not involve human participants or animals; therefore, ethical approval was not required.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

No primary data were generated. All sources are publicly available and properly cited.

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