Prof. Dr. Bengül Güngörmez Akosman
Institute of Sociology
Bursa Uludağ University

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Review of Isidore Agbanero's Doctoral Dissertation 'Moral Questions Regarding Amnesty Program For Terrorists'

In a formal-substantive sense, the work consists of six properly structured chapters, in accordance with the plan and presentation outlined in the introduction and summarized in the concluding section:

Chapter one contains the review of the current literature on the thesis's subject matter, with a special attention to concepts such as terrorism, counter-terrorism, amnesty, justice for the victims, integration of terrorists within their societies, the role of the government in preventing the spread of violent conflicts etc. It also investigates the moral dilemmas faced by post-conflict societies, especially in Africa.

In chapter, two ethical theories, especially utilitarianism and Linda Radzik's concept of making amends are examined to explore complex nature of ethical decision-making in relation to concepts of justice and fairness. This chapter delves into the nature of moral choices and their implication in the context of the study presented in the thesis.

Chapter three is a methodological chapter that outlines the research approaches used in the thesis to gather data that help to address the thesis's main research questions. The chapter contains also a discussion and analysis of ethical dimensions and problems revealed during the data collection, studying, and reporting of the results.

Chapter four provides a comprehensive overview of the research findings with application of research strategies and methodologies presented in the previous chapters. It shows, in a complete and fully structured manner, to what extent the moral, normative ethical theories used in the research shape the questions and help to interpret outcomes of the interviews employed as the primary research data. Thematic analysis provided in the chapter concerns four themes related to victims' experiences, perceptions and moral/normative judgments: the responses of victims to the question of fairness in the amnesty procedure; victims' insistence on Diya payment (a restitution form in Islamic law); victims' insistence on punishment for reintegrated Boko Haram members; and the victims' desire for revenge.

Chapter five offers a detailed and structured interpretation both of moral/normative themes that emerged during the field interviews and of existing literature review (of works that validate the qualitative interview and the more theoretical scholarship in contemporary normative – especially in its analytic tradition – social and political philosophy).

Chapter six serves as a conclusion of the dissertation presenting and briefly discussing its most important outcomes, including research findings and moral interpretations.

The entire project is well thought out and structured, with clearly defined theses and arguments, systematically developed through its consecutive parts. The undoubtedly philosophical nature of the research must be highlighted. It offers an inter- and multi-disciplinary approach and can be regarded as a valuable extensive, monographic study in applied philosophy. It reflects an openness and readiness to intellectual "exploration" and to a "scientific risk". This feature of the research is evident in the way it determines the balance (epistemological, ontological, moral, and political) between the experience of victims of terrorism on the one hand and "repentance" of former terrorists on the other. This determination refers to the fundamental question of whether such a balance is possible to achieve and, above all, whether it is desirable from the perspective of the numerous reasons considered here. The thesis takes the form of a consideration both within the theory and practice/application of justice and the idea of a fair (based on equality, freedom, access to fundamental freedoms, transparency, the rule of law, as well as participation and representation)

political and social "ordering" (governing), and within the area of moral philosophy, metaethics and practical ethics (theories of action, choice, responsibility, moral subjectivity, etc.).

The thesis, from its beginning and as suggested by its title, appears to serve as a challenge to the notion that philosophy is a kind of strictly professional endeavor dealing exclusively with technical problems that only its practitioners can understand, and that operates with abstractions and speculations far removed from political-social reality. In fact, like a jurist or a sociologist, a philosopher must act following experience, to describe social-political reality and the world in general, with conceptual clarity, to find new concepts to make new situations comprehensible or to create and offer a new perception of reality. Thus, sociology without philosophy means that the link between thought and reality, between the universal and the singular, is broken at the expense of getting lost in the empirical details and in a fixation on narrow, specific phenomena. But a philosophy unaccompanied by sociology means, as Arendt points out, that thought ceases to be tied to the singular event and becomes meaningless, and as a result one is increasingly "reduced to singing old truths that have lost all their concrete significance". If Reason/Theory or Philosophy fails to fulfill its promise of understanding and explaining the reality of the present and providing principles to guide action, it is inevitable that the masses or the public – in search of a moral orientation – will fall into "emotional outbursts of rage against reason, thought and rational discourse", "flight from thought to action" such as chauvinist tendencies, irrational religious movements, fanatical anti-progress etc. Arendt sheds light on her own time as well as ours when she says that modern man "became hopeless when he realized that he had to live in a world in which he did not even have the ability to ask proper and meaningful questions, let alone find an answer to the complexities of his reason and his tradition of thought".

Accordingly, the thesis under review starts from a phenomenon, namely concrete experience. It realizes that concrete experience is formed by Boko Haram terrorists attacks, victims of Boko Haram attacks, Nigeria amnesty and reintegration program etc. But it is not simply true. Because the observations and conceptualizations of an intellectual, a philosopher who is the author of this study, living there in the society they are analyzing, is also included in the concrete experience of that society. However, we should know that it is impossible to detect the phenomenon without the mediation of concepts, and that we are oriented towards the phenomenon with "concept models" existing in our minds. In this context, the research presented in the dissertation is motivated by basic, vital and crucial moral questions such as "Is it morally justifiable to reintegrate individuals who have committed violent crimes into the same community where victims of such

crimes still grapple with unresolved trauma?" and "How feasible is it to reconcile victims, whose call for justice have been neglected, with perpetrators whose actions have been pardoned without any form of punishment?". In the same direction, the research is guided and motivated by the three leading research questions and hypotheses:

1. Ignoring victims 'experiences in the amnesty proceedings influences their perceived unfairness of the Nigerian amnesty program. The aim of this research task was to examine reports organizations committed to counseling victims of Boko Haram terrorism in order to identify in the clearest, the most relevant, and full way the actual victims 'situations.

2. Victims' unfair perception of the amnesty leads to revenge against reintegrated Boko Haram terrorists. The aim of this research task was to study the answers (obtained thanks to qualitative research interview utilized in the study) to the main moral questions regarding the Nigerian amnesty implementation addressed to the victims of Boko Haram terrorists.

3. Restorative justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation are necessary to prevent cycles of retaliation on offenders. The aim of this research task is to broaden knowledge on the experiences of Boko Haram victims regarding the Nigerian amnesty program and to provide analysis as well as the questions asked by victims and their concerns themselves in order to help the authorities and their advisors to formulate measures that will resolve victims needs during the amnesty process.

The research aims to "incorporate qualitative research approach to examine existing philosophical discussions on issues of justice and fairness and inquire how the outcome of the Nigeria amnesty/reintegration program for ex-Boko Haram fighters shape victims 'judgement of justice and fairness". It means that this study will employ political-philosophical and moral-philosophical points of view, along with theoretical frameworks or conceptions of justice and fairness at the service of solving vital problems. Therefore, this study is organized mainly to more practical part (the amnesty program of global, as well as Nigerian context) and theoretical framework. In the section on amnesty in a global context, the writer says that although terrorism is not a recent phenomenon, there is limited academic research on its history. From this point of view, the author of the thesis starts with a theoretical discussion ranging from the definition of terrorism to its relationship with the state. According to Weber's famous definition, the state is the monopoly of legitimate violence in a certain territory. Therefore, state actors who are dealing with particularly dangerous terrorist organizations should use "proactive measures" to target and dismantle terrorists' resources. These "proactive measures" require to refer political and moral theories such as just or justified war with their roots in the writings of medieval philosophers such as Saint Augustine and

Thomas Aquinas. The most important aspect of this “proactive measures” or the utilization of military force against terrorists are loss of life of innocent people and property destruction. Because clashes between soldiers and terrorists underscores the importance of exploring dialogue-based methods, the amnesty program as a non-military approach is in the focus of this research.

It is really important to remind that the term "amnesty" is derived from the Greek word "amnestia. Because the roots of the term of amnesty which translates as "forgetfulness" in English points out that it is “a procedure for fostering peace and reconciliation rather than a means of punishing perpetrators or securing justice for their victims”. This, once again, invites us to think about the moral context and implications of the amnesty program.

In the part of “Amnesty in Global Context”, writer offers the social-political context in which will allow us to see things from a broader perspective. For this purpose, the research briefly examines amnesty programs in some African countries, including South Africa, Rwanda, and Mozambique. Thanks to this broad perspective provided by the author, we can see the differences in the amnesty program between African countries, as well as the differences between those proclaimed throughout Nigeria's history. The difference of the amnesty program for Boko Haram terrorists from others also explains why the main topic of this study is the Boko Haram amnesty program. The fact that “Boko Haram terrorism has not ended" highlights this distinction. “Victims were also excluded from the procedures” and “the idea of offering amnesty to Boko Haram members was not a consensual agreement between the state and members Boko Haram terrorism”, it makes the issue even more sensitive than it already is and confronts it with much sharper ethical dilemmas.

Writer emphases that the Nigerian amnesty program suffers from the absence of justice. They are very successful in demonstrating the need to return to philosophical discussions of justice in order to understand the ethical dilemmas posed by the Nigerian amnesty program. If “justice is indispensable for fostering happiness and fostering peaceful coexistence within society” and “there exists a connection between justice and the common good”, then “the government must ensure that actions which jeopardize justice are not tolerated within society”. Advocates of retributive justice argue that fairness dictates that perpetrators of crimes should experience the same degree of harm they deliberately inflicted on their victims. Those on the side of the retributive justice advocate the view that the perpetrator should be harmed to the same extent as the victim. From the perspective of the theory, amnesty for Boko Haram terrorism has no moral justification. Because if individuals or

offenders who engage in serious crimes are not punished by the authorities, the victims they harmed may seek revenge or feel betrayed by society. Writer is also successful to address and to discuss the question of "whether perpetrators of crime deliberately cause harm to their victims" as well as the question of "whether the amnesty program is in alignment with the state's responsibility to ensure the safety of its citizens from harm" referring Aristotle's virtue ethics, Kant's moral philosophy and social contract theories. Accordingly, Aristotle goes beyond suggesting that "individuals may intentionally denigrate others when they fail to recognize their value" and posits that "individuals who are insulted by others have a legitimate right to feel upset". In this sense, writer points out some similarities or commonalities between Aristotle and Kant who "argues against using individuals as mere means to achieve their selfish aims".

The methodological aspects of the research need to be mentioned and acclaimed in the current review. Some critical comments about this component of the research should also be presented. The study is based on non-numerical data. Because of that, it applies a qualitative approach, i.e. 'unstructured' forms of data collection, both interviewing and observation, and employing verbal descriptions and explanations rather than quantitative measurement and statistical analysis" (as suggested by Hammersley, quoted in the thesis). The study adopts also phenomenological approach. Perhaps it would be interesting and rewarding to expand further this dimension of the study and apply also a variant of phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, as developed by Max van Manen and defined by D. Smith: "research methodology aimed at producing rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the life world of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively". When it comes to methods, techniques and research tools, the study uses most prominently, semi-structured interviews that helps to inquire about the specific problems and questions the entire research is devoted to and designed and organized around. The thesis should offer a little bit more philosophical-political analysis that would be applied to understand how questions of human morality such as justice, fairness, punishment etc. are used, negotiated and developed within societies and in various cultural contexts. From this point of view, also pluralistic methodological stance and perspective would be advisable and expected in the thesis more than they have been employed in its current version. Such an approach would be combined with methods in analytical political philosophy (such as reflective equilibrium) and comparative political theory, in order to learn more extensively and clearly about victims' experiences and their perception of the amnesty program and their understanding of moral concepts such as justice and fairness. More attention given to analytic normative political philosophy and its broader application with the focus on clarity and precision of thesis and

argument would be particularly rewarding in this sense. For instance, “abstract examples and simplified models” typical for this tradition based of methodological and moral individualism (as defined for example by J. Wolff, and used to some extent by L. Radzik, one of the authors who inspired the entire research evaluated in the current review), could bring additional benefits as important outcomes of the research. The analytic approach could be then combined in the thesis with comparative studies in social and political philosophy. Hence the entire thesis would explore works of scholars and other experts on ethical issues relating to justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and subject them to philosophical scrutiny in even more theoretically rich and successful way. The comparative method is of course used in the thesis, where the Nigeria amnesty proceedings are compared with amnesty programs in other countries with the aim of discovering resemblances and differences. Still the comparative potential of the research and its expected benefits that such a perspective could bring seem to be not fully achieved.

In light of the above evaluation, it can be concluded, that the work meets, to a greater than basic and sufficient extent, the requirements for doctoral dissertations. This is evident in both its structure (clearly formulated thesis/research problem, transparent plan of the argument, correct selection of the considered and proposed lines of argumentation, guaranteeing completeness and achieving the expected results) and its content and substantive aspects. It took up an important and certainly innovative topic within the framework of applied philosophy and comparative social-political philosophical studies, which are still rare not only in the context of scientific research and academic projects presented in Poland. The argument is rich and detailed, making important contributions to many sub-disciplines, areas of research and discussion in contemporary philosophy. Despite its minor shortcomings (as indicated in the current report above), it demonstrates the work of an experienced and mature researcher.