

"Forgiveness in the absence of guilt. Reflections on the ethical implications of Harald Welzer's book Täter (Perpetrators)"

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Social psychologist Harald Welzer's recent book "Täter. Wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden" has been welcomed as a seminal contribution to our understanding of the mentality of ordinary Germans who took part in the killings of Jews on the Eastern Front. Forgiveness is not a topic addressed in his study. My paper explores the implications for forgiveness I see following from Welzer's reconstruction of the peculiar viewpoint from which these perpetrators considered mass murder morally legitimate. My thesis is that Welzer has given scholars of forgiveness much food for thought.