Lance Armstrong is a liar, but that's hardly the extent of his sins. He's also a thief, a fraud, a serial cheat, a gutless bully and about the worst possible guy you can ever imagine a guy being. While there seems to be a growing trend in the media at the moment to put Armstrong's transgressions on some sort of sliding scale giving him a relative pass for some and railing against him for others, there's no need for the exercise. He's a despicable being unworthy of anything more than completely fading from the national conscious and crawling back under the rock where he came from.

I'm not buying the current narrative that seems to excuse his cheating under the guise that everyone in bicycling did it. Yea, everyone did it and they did it because the guy that was winning and kicking their asses was doing it and they knew it. They were doing it to level a playing field that Armstrong deliberately tilted in his favor. That doesn't excuse their transgressions either but let's face it the "everyone does it" defense is used because it works. It also illustrates why even the now pedestrian charge of using performance enhancing drugs doesn't seem to hardly raise an eyebrow these days.

But I will concede that if Armstrong merely took the drugs and kept to himself, sort of like Barry Bonds or Roger Clemens, that would be bad enough but perhaps not world ending bad, especially these days. But Armstrong was about so much more, so much hideously more.

In pursuit of perpetuating his continuing fraud on the world Armstrong deliberately went about trying to destroy everyone who got in his path, men, women and children, without a second thought to the damage he was doing. Lives have been ruined by and because of Armstrong. And all for what? So he can go on Oprah Winfrey's fledging, failing network, boost her profile and ratings, in what, some sort of redemption tour in a pathetic attempt to reclaim a competitive sports career? Lance Armstrong perjured himself when he testified under oath to that which he now says isn't true. A statute of limitations on that crime may keep him from prosecution but the

simple fact is that Lance Armstrong should be in jail.

The reaction thus far has been fairly interesting if not predictable to Armstrong's confessional, particularly given how calculated it all was, though eventually I expect it will probably take the familiar arc that Armstrong is banking on: shock, disgust, forgiveness, celebration. Here's hoping that this is one cycle that breaks.

Armstrong had the first opportunity not to go down the path of performance enhancing drugs. No one held a gun to his empty head and forced him to dope. In fact it was more the other way around. Armstrong held the careers and fates of others in his hands and pushed them to follow his illegal lead time and time again.

Having chosen to cheat, Armstrong then went at his craft fully vested in lying, cheating and stealing a thousand times over to his fans, his sponsors and anyone else with even a fleeting interest in bicycling. When someone broke ranks, Armstrong got insular and combative in the most destructive way possible. You could Google Armstrong's reactions to the various claims made against him over the years by journalists, doping agencies and fellow riders and you'd end up with pages of denials. And they weren't denials by deflection, the sort of "everyone just wants to see someone who is successful, who beat the odds, fail" denials that really act as hedges in case the truth is ever discovered. They were denials of absolute certainty built on taking the supposedly higher moral ground against those who would bear false witness to his greatness. Lance Armstrong is a true sociopath, a sociopath of such historic proportions that he should be immortalized in the same way that Charles Ponzi is immortalized. Now when athletes and their enablers cheat through drugs, deception, fraud, you name it, we should say they are pulling an Armstrong Scheme.

Ponzi may not even be the best comparator to the kind of long-term fraud that Armstrong engaged in. A better one is probably Bernie Madoff. The comparisons are eerily similar. Both built empires off of modest talent originally that could never sustain the outsized and unattainable dreams they had for themselves. So they both cut corners, small ones at first and then bigger ones along the way to keep the lie going and to keep the money flowing. It wasn't enough for either to simply build a small fortune for themselves by defrauding others while remaining off the radar screen. They both had to live large, build bigger until eventually the energy and level of deception it took to maintain the fundamental lie collapsed by its own weight on their thick skulls and amoral souls.

But the American people are a gullible and forgiving sort. There will be columns like this one trying their best to remind people of the seriousness of Armstrong's crimes. They won't do much good. Armstrong will face a mountain of legal trouble as those he's wronged line up against him to reclaim all they lost by daring to confront one of the biggest liars, cheats and frauds in American history. Yet as sure as I'm writing this is as sure as I am that eventually the pendulum will swing back in Armstrong's direction. His calculating, devious mind is counting on it and there's no reason to bet against him on that.

The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency did everyone a huge favor by spelling out in abject, crystal clear detail the extent of Armstrong's cheating and yet it's instructive to note how many people still came to Armstrong's defense. The most flagrant has been Sally Jenkins, a Washington Post columnist and a rider on the Armstrong gravy train as the co-author of two Armstrong books of lies, particularly when she wrote a mystifying defense of Armstrong just about a month ago.

Styled as a thought piece meant to justify her own role in furthering Armstrong's fraudulent narrative, Jenkins gave Armstrong a pass despite the mountains of evidence against him by hinting first of a hatchet job by the USADA in their pursuit of Armstrong (a high class way of parroting Armstrong's charge that it was a witch hunt, proving as always that she and Iran's Minister of Information had more in common than even she thought) as well as a more pointed indictment of the unfairness of drug testing in general (another favorite Armstrong target). It was clear from the column, just as it's been clear for years, that Jenkins was too seduced by Armstrong and all his hollow, grandiose statements about competing to see the fraud for what he was. She was not a journalist in any sense of the word but a fan girl whose credibility and position was used by Armstrong to provide him the cover he needed to further his grand myth. To paraphrase Ms. Jenkins and her column, maybe I'm not mad at Sally Jenkins because I understand how even with all the professional advances a woman like Jenkins can make as a sports journalist a good looking man can usually get what he wants from her just by charming her with the words she wants to hear.

Jenkins and her school girl crush have forever ruined her credibility and for that she should be summarily fired by the Post. If she had a shred of dignity, she'd resign before they have to make that choice but I suspect she too is so steeped in denial that she doesn't realize how shameless she became in order to protect a criminal. Jenkins won't lose her job and she won't resign but more to the point does anyone think that Armstrong cares about the fate of someone like Jenkins either way? Armstrong has already proven he doesn't care about anyone but Lance Armstrong because he's as fully entrenched now in controlling the uncontrollable damage his crimes have caused as he was in perpetrating those crimes in the first place.

Another acolyte was Buzz Bissinger, the opinionated loudmouth writer of Friday Night Lights who wrote a fawning piece about Armstrong this past August for Newsweek. Bissinger bought into the lies, something he now strongly regrets. Writing for the Daily Beast on Monday, Bissinger now says he was conned by Armstrong and that virtually nothing Armstrong says to Oprah or anyone else should be believed. Good for Bissinger for seeing the light.

There will be some handwringing certainly by Armstrong defenders as they try to contextualize him in much the same way that Joe Paterno defenders still fight tirelessly to contextualize him. Armstrong and his Lance Armstrong Foundation (recently renamed the LiveStrong Foundation in order to distance itself from such a world class creep) certainly did some good in the world for cancer victims. But let's not forget that this good was furthered mostly by true believers in the Armstrong myth and not Armstrong himself. Every step he took, every breath he uttered was built on lies and even though those lies pushed others to do good in his name they can never be seen as justifying his underlying deceptions. Every action he took supposedly in the service of others was merely part of the scam, meant to deflect attention away from the shady, immoral and unethical way he built his narrative in the first place.

Armstrong gets a pass on nothing. He can and probably should ask God for forgiveness. He just shouldn't ask or expect it from anyone else.