

Forgiveness, As Through A Glass Darkly

by

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## ABSTRACT

Forgiveness is a response to moral wrongdoing motivated by moral reasons. Long thought to be the overcoming of resentment, I will present T.M. Scanlon's view that it is best understood as the decision to blame no longer, i.e. to give up the judgment that one's relationship with another is impaired. Forgiveness has been traditionally thought of as having its locus in the forgiver. However, this has led to a number of accounts in which forgiveness has been presented as a one-sided undertaking, compromising the interpersonal character of the act. I propose a different way of viewing forgiveness, namely as the combination of two actions: the decision of the victim to forgive and of the acceptance of forgiveness by the offender. In this way, forgiveness maintains its character as an interpersonal action aimed at repairing the moral bonds damaged in the wake of wrongdoing. Forgiveness is not dependent solely on a victim's willingness to forgive, but also upon an offender's willingness to be forgiven. While a victim may choose to forgive an offender before he has repented, this alone cannot bring about this act of moral repair. An offender must accept to be forgiven, which I will argue is only possible once he has recognized his wrongdoing, its harmful effects, and regrets his offense. Unconditional forgiveness is not possible, therefore, though a victim might wish it. It is always dependent upon the reciprocated actions of the forgiver and the offender in an undertaking that is dyadic from beginning to end.

## DEDICATION

To my husband, Adam, whose stimulating conversation and independent  
mind make my work so much more interesting

and

To my young philosophers, Isabella, Rocco, John-Paul, and Amadeo, who give  
me so many reasons to smile

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reparative justice is a topic that has recently been gaining recognition in what has come to be known as an age of apology. In political spheres, it constitutes an essential tool in diplomacy and peacekeeping and the concepts involved in reparative justice have raised, among other questions, the issue of what it means to forgive. Once a topic reserved uniquely for religious discussions, forgiveness has since the middle of the 20th century become a subject that one also speaks of in secular tones and in contexts involving nations or large groups of people, not just interpersonal relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Making and keeping peace have been furthered by public acknowledgement of wrongdoing, apologies, and reparations in countries around the world.

Interesting to note is the fact that many of the apologies that politicians have extended are tied to transgressions in which they played no direct role and which often took place in the distant past. We can think of Prime Minister Tony Blair's apology for the part his country played in the Irish Potato Famine of the mid-1800s. Or President Ronald Reagan's apology offered more than forty years after the offense to the Japanese-Americans interned during the Second World War.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that political leaders perceive a need to address wrongdoing that has gone unanswered seems to indicate that time alone is not sufficient in putting to rest past crimes and that the latter can continue to negatively affect the narrative of a nation and its relations with other nations unless fully addressed. While time

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<sup>1</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 29

<sup>2</sup> Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 113

by its very nature seeks to engulf events into the past, many victims oppose its force through an ongoing resentment, which may never entirely dissipate, but can and must be answered.<sup>3</sup>

To address the need for forgiveness in secular contexts both at the interpersonal and political levels, philosophers have recently developed more full-bodied secular discussions about what counts as an act of forgiveness. The particular model that I will examine is Charles Griswold's account in his book *Forgiveness*. His writings on forgiveness will provide the framework for understanding the steps in the process of forgiveness, what is expected of the forgiver and the forgiven, as well as a sound secular account of the different facets of forgiveness. Griswold's account distinguishes between "paradigmatic" and "non-paradigmatic" scenarios of forgiveness, the first of which he describes as involving "a moral relation between two individuals, one of whom has wronged the other, and who ... are capable of communicating with each other. In this ideal context, forgiveness requires reciprocity between injurer and injured."<sup>4</sup> Central to my discussion is this view in which forgiveness is considered as a dyadic undertaking that is initiated by the original injury between offender and victim and is only completed when forgiveness has been offered by the latter and accepted by the former.

However, before we move forward, I will begin by examining a psychological account of forgiveness by Fred Luskin from his book *Forgive for*

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<sup>3</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 142-143

<sup>4</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, xvi

*Good.* This will serve the two-fold purpose of outlining a position which has many adherents among psychologists and thus must be carefully considered; and second, it will be the platform from which I can expand upon my own view of forgiveness by showing in which ways my account contrasts with that of Luskin's. His position which equates forgiveness with giving up feelings of anger and resentment is a tempting one, but I think that upon closer examination of his work, one will still be left with many unanswered questions that go to the very heart of the nature of forgiveness. I will argue that one cannot limit oneself to a purely psychological interpretation of forgiveness, but must go further in developing the essential moral ingredients that make forgiveness such a central notion in areas of morality and history and law, to name a few. I believe that forgiveness is first and foremost a moral notion that acknowledges that a wrong of a moral nature has been done and that this wrong must be addressed by the two parties; that in "forgiving something is 'set right' in a way that neither compromises, dulls nor buries the sense that a wrong was done."<sup>5</sup>

Also essential to my understanding of forgiveness is that a victim cannot forgive for reasons that are not moral. Many can put aside pain, make peace with the past, and move on for various reasons. However, only moral reasons can motivate an act of forgiveness and at least some of a person's motives must be moral in nature in order to bring about an act of forgiveness.<sup>6</sup> Next, I believe that the importance of the relationship between the offender and the offended cannot be overlooked in

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<sup>5</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 161

<sup>6</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 46



this process. Forgiveness is an act of moral repair between the two parties,<sup>7</sup> which is why I maintain that forgiveness cannot take place without an encounter of the two. And lastly, forgiveness is the result of two actions: the willingness to forgive on the part of the forgiver and the acceptance of forgiveness on the part of the offender. I will argue that though forgiveness has traditionally found its locus in the forgiver, an act of forgiveness is not something that a victim can bring about alone. It is also contingent on an offender's recognition of wrongdoing and acceptance of forgiveness, which bring about the moral repair between the two parties so essential to any understanding of forgiveness.

In order to explain what forgiveness can achieve, it is important to understand the value and role of resentment. Bishop Butler provides a seminal account in his "Sermons on Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries" in which he develops a robust defense of resentment and its positive role in human interactions. I will also touch on other accounts such as Hampton's and Murphy's argument that resentment is vital in maintaining one's self-respect and Jean Améry's proffering of resentment as a uniquely moral position. These are key to any account of forgiveness lest we lose much of what we value in providing an account that cannot safeguard these goods.

I then would like to offer my own account of forgiveness based on much of what has come before but with a special focus on the process of forgiveness. In analyzing the various steps in the process, I will separate what it means to be willing to forgive from what it means for forgiveness to take place. By unpacking

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<sup>7</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 153

forgiveness in this way, many questions can be answered more incisively, two of which I shall address: “Can one forgive too soon?” and “Should forgiveness be conditional upon repentance?” I will argue that one can never be at risk in being willing to forgive an offender, because an act of forgiveness cannot take place until the offender accepts the forgiveness that has been extended. And as I will make the case that an offender cannot accept forgiveness without a recognition of having done wrong, feelings of contrition, a change of heart, and a hope of making amends, what results is that only a deserving offender can ever be forgiven. This means that a willingness to forgive need not hinge on whether or not an offender is repentant. A victim can be prepared to offer forgiveness without condition. However, an act of forgiveness is by its very structure conditional on repentance and will never take place if an offender has not repented.

Another interesting result of my account of forgiveness is that it provides a view of why one ought to develop a forgiving disposition.<sup>8</sup> Some have explained it as a virtuous state.<sup>9</sup> Others have shown it to be pragmatic: if one hopes to be forgiven, one must forgive as well.<sup>10</sup> However, if my account of forgiveness is correct, it follows from the very structure of forgiveness that one cannot forgive an unrepentant wrongdoer and yet, it may not be enough to compel a victim to be willing to forgive. If we view resentment as an emotion with not only a cognitive,

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<sup>8</sup> Murphy, “Response to Neu, Zipursky, and Steiker,” in “The work of Jeffrie G. Murphy: Symposium,” 56

<sup>9</sup> See Griswold’s view for one such account in his *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 67-72

<sup>10</sup> Butler, Sermon IX “Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries,” 7

but also an affective component, then we are faced with the limits of the persuasive power of reasons. The cognitive component of resentment, i.e. the beliefs underlying the emotion, will be responsive to reasons that favor or oppose maintaining a resentful stance. However, there is another element of resentment, its affective component that will not necessarily be swayed by reasons for or against feeling resentful. Just because one has enough reason to give up resentment, and even when one recognizes that the conditions that would warrant forgiveness are at hand, this does not always mean that one will or even can forgive. The affective component of resentment must be addressed and recognized as being differently motivated. If we hope to benefit from the advantages of forgiving and if it is the case that a willingness to forgive will not necessarily be within our control especially immediately after we have suffered an offense, we must arm ourselves ahead of time with a forgiving disposition. Only when we have cultivated a forgiving outlook and a slowness to resentment will we be equipped to forgive when we are injured and to forgive when we ought.

While I have only the space to address these limited questions on forgiveness, they are essential in shaping our understanding of how to relate to others. The struggle to forgive is one we face at many levels, from the interpersonal to the corporate to the political. Is there a way to defend justice, promote peace, release anger, uphold morality, respect the other's dignity, understand our humanity as tied to the humanity of others? Here are many more topics that might be explored. While they may have to be reserved for another occasion, perhaps this discussion might serve to illuminate even some of these..

## 2. UNDERSTANDING FORGIVENESS

### 2.1. Blameworthiness and Moral Wrongdoing

Fred Luskin's *Forgive for Good* offers a view of forgiveness according to which to forgive is to let go of anger thus promoting your own peace of mind and well-being. It involves taking control of your life and emotions, no longer agreeing to be a victim, thereby improving your mental and even physical health.<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly there are many benefits for the forgiver when he releases the anger associated with having been wronged and he is no longer dominated by resentment or focused on the wrong or the wrongdoer. However, Luskin does not distinguish between different types of wrongs to determine those for which one could be appropriately deemed blameworthy and so he does not identify situations in which forgiveness would not be a viable response. On the contrary, he admits of the possibility of forgiving someone who could not rightly be an object of blame. Take for example the scenario in which Anna blames her brother who chose not to join her on a trip to go and visit their parents.

Anna's car broke down hours from home while attempting to visit her parents. She was two hundred miles from home with a broken car, even though she'd had her car checked out before she left. Anna made a difficult situation worse by blaming her brother for not joining her. She forgot that accidents and breakdowns can happen at any time and that getting a car checked does not guarantee it will remain working. Imagine if Anna forgave her brother, forgave her car, and simply enjoyed the experience as best she

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<sup>11</sup> Luskin, *Forgive for Good*, viii

could. What an ideal opportunity to practice forgiveness!<sup>12</sup>

I would argue that neither her brother nor her car could appropriately be viewed as objects of blame. In the first case, her brother played no part in Anna's vexing situation. He was not there to remedy it, but the harm done was not done at his hands or due to his negligence. He would therefore not be blameworthy. As to the car, forgiving inanimate objects is a contentious topic. Whereas one can arguably resent an inanimate object that one had come to view as representing an entity with malevolent intent,<sup>13</sup> it is decidedly more difficult to think of forgiving an object for any harm incurred. This is because in order to forgive, one would have to come to see the object as either not having had evil intentions after all or as having had some justification for the evil it inflicted. In the first case, an object's "excuse" would simply be that as an inanimate object it could not have exemplified evil intentions or any intentions at all. In the second, the only "justification" an inanimate object could have for inflicting harm would be that it could not make a choice about whether or not to inflict harm, being the inanimate object that it is. In both cases, forgiveness could not be deemed the appropriate response because the "blameworthiness of an action depends, in ways that wrongness generally does not, on the reasons for which a person acted".<sup>14</sup> We can appropriately forgive only someone whom it would be suitable to blame and for this we must look to a person's reasons for acting and judge them according to

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<sup>12</sup> Luskin, *Forgive for Good*, 188

<sup>13</sup> My thanks go to Peter de Marneffe for this insight.

<sup>14</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 124

“distinctively moral standards,” standards that Scanlon describes as having “at least in a large and central class of cases...to do with the kind of concern that we owe to each other.” Only these standards have “the right kind of significance to make blame appropriate.”<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2. Forgiveness for Moral Reasons

It is also important to clarify that we can properly forgive a morally wrong act only for moral reasons. Murphy<sup>16</sup> points out two different cases in which overcoming resentment alone could not be considered forgiveness. Take the example of forgetting. If one forgets that one has been wronged and as a result no longer experiences resentment, “it seems too removed from agency to count as a moral virtue.”<sup>17</sup> Likewise, if a victim were to attend sessions with a behavior-modification therapist and no longer suffered of any form of resentment toward his aggressor, this could not be termed forgiveness, for his “motivation here was not moral at all; it was purely selfish: the desire to promote [his] own mental health.”<sup>18</sup> Other methods such as hypnosis would be criticizable on the same grounds. Absent a choice on the victim’s part, forgiveness cannot occur. And if that choice is not made for moral reasons, it cannot be sufficient to count as an act of forgiving a moral wrong.

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<sup>15</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 124

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that Murphy has modified his views since the publication of *Forgiveness and Mercy* in 1988. See “The Case of Dostoevsky’s General: Some Ruminations on Forgiving the Unforgivable,” published in 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Murphy in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 23

<sup>18</sup> Murphy in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 23

Some might argue that Luskin's theory of forgiveness could simply be his way of defining a word that is used by many in this very way. However, it seems that what Luskin is referring to is making peace with the past and that there must be a richer account of forgiveness than that of letting go of anger to achieve psychological well-being. If the victim has no further contact with the wrongdoer even when it remains possible, no re-evaluation of his view of that wrongdoer's character, then really the change that has occurred can only be one-sided. Scanlon makes the point eloquently:

It may be thought that forgiveness is mainly a matter of putting an end to resentment and other hostile feelings - without these, there is nothing for forgiveness to do- and that, correspondingly, blame essentially involves having feelings of this kind. Both of these claims seem to me to be mistaken. If I "write someone off" as a person I am going to have nothing to do with, then I am blaming him, even if this is accompanied by no hostile feelings, perhaps because I regard him as not worth being angry at. And when someone has been "written off" in this way, even without anger or resentment, there is certainly something for forgiveness to do."<sup>19</sup>

One could carry the point even further. Assume that I could legitimately define forgiveness as solely the giving up of resentment and assume further that I had forgiven an offender in this way even though he was unrepentant. If the offender were to appear before me months later sincerely apologetic, deeply sorry for the harm he had caused, my view of him would necessarily change. My feelings

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<sup>19</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 160

toward him would change as well and if it could be said that forgiveness had already occurred, then what would my new change of heart represent? It is one thing for a person to fix an offense in the past and thereby render the future impervious to its effects,<sup>20</sup> but that act differs from the act of forgiveness. In his *Moral Dimensions*, Scanlon defines forgiveness as not only the giving up of anger, but more centrally as the giving up of blame. Blame, on his account, is the decision to act in accordance with the judgment that one's relationship to a person has been damaged and changed. So to forgive is to judge that the relationship has been repaired and to act accordingly. It does seem as though there is much to do beyond the work of giving up resentment before one can claim that one has forgiven. And the work seems to lie in the reweaving of the moral fabric damaged in the wake of moral wrongdoing, in reconsidering as Scanlon says "what we owe to each other."<sup>21</sup>

Luskin's theory does have a place in a theory of forgiveness in situations in which the offender is unrepentant, unknown, or dead. When a victim is left in less than ideal circumstances, she need not be at the mercy of her offender. "Paradigmatic forgiveness," as Griswold calls it, may not be possible, but the victim can still release her anger and resentment and move on with her life by applying the techniques that Luskin teaches. However, it should be with the understanding that true forgiveness is only achieved in the interaction between offender and victim and at best what might be achieved is "making peace" with

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<sup>20</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 154

<sup>21</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 124



the past, which differs substantially from an act of forgiveness. In and of itself, psychological therapy cannot bring about an act of forgiveness, but it is valuable in the sense that it enables victims who would otherwise have been incapable of reasoning clearly due to psychological trauma, of preparing themselves to forgive.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.3. The Encounter

The interaction between the offended and the offender is essential in order for forgiveness to occur because forgiveness is fundamentally dependent “on plurality, on the presence and acting of others; ... forgiving...in solitude or isolation remain without reality and can signify no more than a role played before one’s self.”<sup>23</sup> Forgiveness is one of the essential faculties that man possesses for interacting with others and moving forward in a purpose-driven way, as an agent and not a mere participant in a chain reaction of events initiated by a wrongful act.

The act of forgiving can never be predicted; it is the only reaction that acts in an unexpected way and thus retains, though being a reaction, something of the original character of action. Forgiving, in other words, is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven.<sup>24</sup>

Arendt means by this that a victim, through an act of forgiveness, is able to stop

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<sup>22</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 46

<sup>23</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 237

<sup>24</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 241

the chain of events that would normally have resulted from an offense. An offense will typically result in feelings of anger and even vengeance. However, when a victim chooses to forgive he chooses to put an end to the force of an offense rather than being swept up in the tidal wave of resentment and revenge brought on by wrongdoing. While he may not be able to undo the original harm, he can undo many of its harmful consequences and through reacting with forgiveness, he can change the course of future events. In this way, forgiveness, though a reaction, takes on the characteristics of action. This idea is what prompts Arendt to speak of redemption from the predicament of irreversibility. The offense initiates a particular encounter between an offender and a victim and, according to Arendt, only forgiveness or punishment will put an end to the resulting consequences of that offense so that a new series of events can be set in motion, so that action and not re-action can take place. Forgiveness and punishment therefore have this characteristic in common: “that they attempt to put an end to something that without interference could go on endlessly.”<sup>25</sup> It is an interesting question which of forgiveness or punishment is more conducive to that end.

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<sup>25</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 241

### 3. RESENTMENT, VENGEANCE, AND BLAME

#### 3.1. The Nature of Resentment

After any occurrence of wrongdoing we are confronted, whether we are explicitly aware of it or not, with a choice. When we choose to resent,<sup>26</sup> we choose not to forgive. And the inverse is also true. When we choose to forgive, we choose to give up our resentment or, as Griswold states, we commit to the moderation of resentment and to eventually letting it go altogether.<sup>27</sup> While it is not the only view, I believe that resentment is experienced in response to moral wrongdoing specifically<sup>28</sup> and that forgiveness is just one possible course of action open to all victims. Therefore, we should ask what this feeling of resentment really represents in order to determine if and when it should be given up; what reasons we could have to choose forgiveness over resentment. Some moralists will defend a resentful stance as sometimes being the only truly moral position.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, Christian accounts often argue for unconditional

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<sup>26</sup> To choose to resent must be differentiated from simply continuing to feel resentment. There are many theories about the nature of emotions, but if we think of emotions as being at least in part made up of a cognitive component, then the choice to resent is a reference to that cognitive component of resentment which is guided by our beliefs and over which we can theoretically exercise control.

<sup>27</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 54

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Walker makes the different case that resentment can be felt in any situation in which norms have been violated, even when those norms are not of a moral nature. See *Moral Repair*, 115

<sup>29</sup> See Jean Amery's position detailed in Brudholm's *Resentment's Virtue* for one such account. Also, Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 4 and Murphy in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 18

forgiveness and therefore for forgiving as soon as one is able.<sup>30</sup> Anthony Bash lends another perspective. He directs us to Levinas' idea that we should not get bogged down in the "contents of ethics," for the right moral response in a moral situation can only be arrived at as a result of the encounter between the offender and the victim such that no one answer can apply to all situations.<sup>31</sup> Let us take a closer look at the nature of resentment.

Resentment must be differentiated from other forms of anger in its nature and in its purpose. While one can experience anger in many different scenarios that would not require forgiveness, resentment, as mentioned before, is a sentiment that one experiences only in the face of moral wrongdoing. Bishop Butler in his "Sermons Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries" performs an interesting analysis of the nature and, in fact, the usefulness of the feeling of resentment. He believes that resentment in and of itself cannot be criticized "since no passion God hath endued us with can be in itself evil."<sup>32</sup> In fact he finds a use for it in its function as a deterrent to those who would commit vice and wicked actions. "It seems plainly connected with a sense of virtue and vice, of moral good and evil...The indignation raised by cruelty and injustice, and the desire of having it punished, which persons unconcerned would feel, is by no means malice. No; it is resentment against vice and wickedness."<sup>33</sup> Butler believes that if we did not

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<sup>30</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 79

<sup>31</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 4 footnote 10

<sup>32</sup> Butler, Sermon VIII "Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries," 2

<sup>33</sup> Butler, Sermon VIII "Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries," 3

experience resentment, we would not do what was necessary to punish wrongdoers and carry out justice in the world. However, in an Aristotelian fashion, he explains that our negative associations with resentment really are tied to the abuses of the feeling. The several abuses he lists are (1) we can imagine we have been wronged when it is not the case. (Think of Luskin’s example of Anna blaming her brother for the inconvenience associated with her car breaking down); (2) we can imagine a wrong done to us to be much greater than it actually is; (3) we can experience resentment inappropriately due to pain or inconvenience and not in a case of moral wrongdoing (Once again, Luskin’s example would illustrate this abuse); (4) we can experience resentment excessively and out of proportion to the wrong committed; (5) we can abuse when we retaliate and inflict harm out of a feeling of resentment.

Kept in check, however, resentment is a useful sentiment and Butler never speaks of giving up the feeling, but rather cautions his listeners against its abuse when he states, “if we consider mankind, according to that fine allusion of St. Paul, as ‘one body, and everyone members one of another,’ it must be allowed that resentment is ... a painful remedy... never to be made use of, but only in order to produce some greater good.”<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2. In Defense of Self-Respect

Jean Hampton provides a nuanced description of resentment in *Forgiveness and Mercy*. She presents the feeling of resentment as a subjective feeling a person

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<sup>34</sup> Butler, Sermon IX, “Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries,” 2-3

experiences in response to an event that he believes to be objectively possible of having been diminished by an offensive act either in a way that has revealed his lower value, or in a way that has effected a lowering of his value.<sup>35</sup> Hampton's own view on this point is Kantian in that she does not believe that people can either gain or lose value. Nevertheless, she describes how a wrongdoer who offends concurrently sends the message via his offensive action that he does not believe that his victim was worthy of better treatment and how a victim can feel diminished as a result. She describes the many strategies a resenter contemplates to prove that he is not of low rank and the emotions that he experiences after offensive behavior.

The feeling of resentment is directed at the offensive act and it differs from hatred or, more specifically, from the sentiment of malicious hatred. Malicious hatred is felt towards the offender himself and is reflected in the desire to elevate oneself *vis à vis* one's offender and see him defeated or diminished in turn. Hampton describes why this type of strategy could only be self-defeating. If a person hopes to elevate himself above an offender and seeks recognition of his superiority from the offender whom he has diminished, a strange result occurs: the offender's opinion cannot be trusted because he is inferior and could only be respected if he were superior to the resenter. Thus the resenter winds up in the unusual position of not being able to receive affirmation of his own superiority

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<sup>35</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 50

because of the very inferiority of his opponent.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, when someone experiences the form of hatred called spite, she attempts to bring her offender down to her level to fare better in a comparison of herself *vis à vis* others. Hampton argues that this strategy is equally futile because “our evaluation of her is not curve based but criteria based and thus objective.”<sup>37</sup> Whether or not someone is as equally debased as she, does not render her any less debased. Thus she cannot accomplish the elevation she seeks. These two types of hatred, malicious hatred and spite, represent Butler’s fourth case of the abuse of the feeling of resentment. Resenting an action can quickly induce a person to hate the agent of that action, but to hate maliciously and to experience spite are to feel “excessively and out of proportion to the wrong committed.” While Butler acknowledges that resentment may lessen one’s goodwill toward an offender, he believes that “when this resentment entirely destroys our natural benevolence towards [our enemy], it is excessive, and becomes malice or revenge.”<sup>38</sup>

What then is the appropriate form of resentment, the sentiment that Butler spoke of as “not only innocent, but a generous movement of mind?”<sup>39</sup> This would be the kind of resentment that serves to defend one’s own self-respect and the indignation that leads one to protect the ideals one holds dear: feelings that result

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<sup>36</sup> Some might argue that an offended person could gain the impression and satisfaction of being elevated *vis à vis* his offender without ever seeking the offender’s affirmation of his superiority.

<sup>37</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 77

<sup>38</sup> Butler, Sermon IX, “Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries,” 4

<sup>39</sup> Butler, Sermon VIII, “Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries,” 5

in what Hampton terms “moral hatred.”<sup>40</sup>

Murphy states:

Wrongdoing is in part a communicative act, an act that gives out a degrading or insulting message ... ”I count and you do not, and I may thus use you as a mere thing.” Resentment of the wrongdoer is one way that a victim may evince, emotionally, that he or she does not endorse this degrading message ... This does not mean that a self-respecting person will never forgive; but it does mean that such a person might make forgiveness contingent on some change in the wrongdoer - typically repentance - that shows that the wrongdoer no longer endorses the degrading message contained in the injury.<sup>41</sup>

This resentment is an even-handed response to offensive behavior that demands to be answered. In resenting, a person stands up for his beliefs, insists that he be treated fairly, and deters people from acting in dishonorable ways. He is the safeguard of justice, and the protector of societal norms by enforcing them when needed.

### 3.3. Resentment and Justice

If there are to be disagreements between defenders and detractors of resentment, they will usually surface as to what regards the duties on the part of the victim because on any account of forgiveness it is always unequivocally positive that an offender should repent. Many distinguished writers and thinkers

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<sup>40</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 61

<sup>41</sup> Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*, 79.



such as Elie Wiesel and Jean Améry have defended the position over the years that resentment can be a perfectly moral stance, despite pressures to the contrary. Brudholm is a proponent of such a position and Murphy states in the foreword to Brudholm's book that it is "indecent to portray those who do not wish to forgive and reconcile as lacking in either virtue or mental health."<sup>42</sup> Brudholm goes on to make the case that nonforgiveness is as legitimate a choice as the choice to forgive and that it should not be trivialized nor the victim reduced to merely a patient in need of therapy. Many think that an enduring resentment is a sign of psychological trauma and a disorder that one should attempt to remedy. However, by presenting a comprehensive view of Jean Améry's writings, Brudholm defends his belief that "forgiving is a temptation, a promise of relief that might be morally dubious."<sup>43</sup>

Brudholm also makes the point that we should not be too quick to assume that the only feeling experienced by a victim is the desire for revenge. There are other perfectly reasonable demands a victim might have. Margaret Walker expresses that "what resentment calls out for is assurance of protection, defense, or membership under norms brought into question by the exciting injury or affront."<sup>44</sup> These needs can be answered by the moral community even in the event of non-repentance on the part of the wrongdoer. As Walker explains, part of our sense of security is derived from being able to count on the members of the

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<sup>42</sup> Murphy in Brudholm's *Resentment's Virtue*, xi

<sup>43</sup> Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue*, 2

<sup>44</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 133

moral community to act in certain ways. We have normative expectations, one of which is that people will act justly, and those expectations are trampled on when we are injured. This in turn creates a need to have our understanding of the prevailing norms affirmed and to have our communities condemn the instances in which they are breached.<sup>45</sup>

The ability to experience resentment in the face of wrongdoing is just a testament to the fact that we are members of a moral community and can experience reactive attitudes to others' behavior. If we were able to look upon the world and those around us in a perfectly objective way, Peter Strawson describes how that would free us from feelings such as resentment due to the fact that we would not think ourselves wronged even if we were harmed because we would be able to reflect in an objective light on the "offender" and his act. However, he argues that "a sustained objectivity of inter-personal attitudes and the human isolation which that would entail does not seem to be something of which human beings would be capable."<sup>46</sup> In practice, we are affected by another's treatment of us and many times will experience negative feelings in the face of offense. This is because as members of society, we implicitly agree to abide by certain norms and to defend such values such as justice.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC)<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 95

<sup>46</sup> Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 9

<sup>47</sup> This following account of the workings of the TRC is based on the work of Minow in *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, particularly Chap. 4 on truth commissions.

exemplified the challenges of balancing forgiveness and justice. It was created in response to the violence and abuse carried out under the apartheid regime and created new norms for a society that had long promoted the mistreatment of the majority of its citizens. The goal set for the enterprise was not retribution, but reconciliation, which was to form a new norm that both black and white South Africans would have to embrace. The offenders were not required to apologize, but were offered amnesty for their crimes if they were perfectly honest in disclosing the roles they played in the unjust government. Many victims saw their aggressors go unpunished while they only received slight reparations after many years' wait. Yet many victims viewed this as the price of moving toward an all-race democracy and participated in return for a chance to make the truth publicly known. The victims and their relatives were allowed to be heard, to have their complaints and their ordeals recorded for posterity. However, it was then asked of many victims if they forgave the perpetrators for their injurious actions. Bishop Tutu, head of the TRC, firmly believed that rather than indulging in a program of retaliation or revenge, the only way to move toward peaceful coexistence was through forgiveness and living out the African concept of *ubuntu*, "meaning humaneness or an inclusive sense of community valuing everyone"<sup>48</sup> and he promoted these concepts throughout the process. Many did respond to that call, some may have done so willingly, but some might have felt pressured to do so, reluctant to give up on the idea that the perpetrators should be prosecuted under the law. It appeared to these victims that forgiveness and justice could not be

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<sup>48</sup> Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 52

reconciled, that justice could only be served through the rightful punishment of the confessed criminals.

The values of the truth commission were reflective of Christian ideals, and would perhaps have struck a chord in many of the victims. Many felt they ought to be willing to forgive, as demanded by God.<sup>49</sup> The encouragement of Bishop Tutu to forgive the perpetrators, the compassionate attention given the victim during the narrative of his losses, the hope for a better future, could all have helped the Christian accomplish the difficult act of offering forgiveness to the unrepentant.<sup>50</sup> Even if a person were not Christian himself, he would have grown up surrounded by Christians and Christian ideals and perhaps felt pressured to abandon his own judgment in favor of the judgments of others,<sup>51</sup> possibly damaging his trust in himself so requisite in judgments of moral wrongdoing.

When individuals take up the role of judges, invoking norms and affirming membership, they make use of something that is common property, the moral authority of a community... This is why it matters a great deal that individuals enjoy confidence in the rightful authority of standards, trust in themselves and others as responsive and responsible to standards, and have

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<sup>49</sup> Jesus directs his disciples to pray what is now called “the Lord’s Prayer” or the “Our Father” in which they ask God: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” Matthew 6:9-13

<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that South Africa is a predominantly Christian nation with close to 80% considering themselves Christians according to the 2001 Census.

<sup>51</sup> Minow in *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* references the work of Du Toit who worried that the Christian notion of forgiveness promoted by the TRC would cause some to not be willing to participate, 80

a hopeful attitude that the community's standards and its members are worthy of that confidence and trust.<sup>52</sup>

What the experience of testifying might have prompted then is an experience of crisis: If a victim could not forgive, she had either to question her own ability to be a trustworthy judge of moral matters, or she had to acknowledge that she did not reflect the new moral values of her community. Tutu's hope was that all citizens would be able to place the needs of the country before their own needs, and forgo vengeance for the possibility of reconciliation, forgo justice and forgive. Prior to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the victim in all likelihood believed what she thought all those around her must, and quite reasonably so, that crimes ought to be punished, and offenders ought not to be set free. To have these understandings brought into question by her own community, and a new ideal presented as greater than the ideal of justice must have come as a great shock to her, adding a new sense of insecurity and abandonment to the evils she had already been forced to undergo. I grant that the TRC promoted good peace-keeping values and attempted to repair some of the moral fabric destroyed through years of abuse in the country. It may still be too early to tell if the mission of rebuilding worked in South Africa. However, it is clear that the TRC encouraged forgiveness as an option available to victims of apartheid and many viewed it as by far second best. Forgiveness represented the scraps left to the victims of a country that did not have the financial or human

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<sup>52</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 33

resources to prosecute thousands of criminals<sup>53</sup> and as a great political sacrifice in the name of a peaceful transition to democracy. As a result, for many forgiveness became commensurate to the renouncing of justice altogether.

#### 3.4. And What of Vengeance?

If one can make the case that resentment can be a commendable moral stance, then what of vengeance? Vengeance is the natural extension of feelings of resentment and can be thought of as resentment in action. An act of vengeance simply represents the victim acting on her feelings of resentment in an attempt to recreate a balance in the world, to get even. Philosophers such as Murphy, Brudholm, and Bishop Butler have all made a case for why resentment can be justified. Murphy has also made room for *vengeance* as a justified course of action,<sup>54</sup> but he cautions us about the dangers of unbridled vengeance. Indeed, vengeance and resentment are two feelings distinguishable from other feelings that a victim might experience after wrongdoing by the fact that they demand a response. While an injured person might experience sadness, depression, mistrust, insecurity; resentment and vengeance are feelings that demand to be answered.

A vengeful person will often act in order to restore the balance he feels has been so wrongfully disrupted, but with the added goal of making his offender suffer. This in turn may lead to a response in the form of further violent action on the part of the wrongdoer resulting in a cycle of violence and the risk of things spiraling out of control. Trudy Govier is effective in showing how acts of

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<sup>53</sup> Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 58

<sup>54</sup> Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*, 24

vengeance are usually not measured and appropriate. After an illustration of post-World War II atrocities committed in France, she says:

This kind of revenge exemplifies and encourages brutality and dehumanization and is open to obvious moral criticisms. Anger may be vented on innocent persons; there is no fair procedure to establish whether persons are guilty or innocent or whether, if guilty, there may have been significant excusing or extenuating conditions that are most unlikely to emerge in the circumstances. Cruelty and sadism are all too likely to result. Without an effective rule of law, angry people are left free to exercise their fury on each other and to indulge personal vendettas.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from the fact that a vengeful agenda can take over a person's life, a vengeful person is not usually content to take an eye for an eye. People do not and sometimes cannot respond in kind to an offender and many times one's vindictive actions wind up taking a conflict to an entirely new level in a distressing cycle with no visible end.

When we think of the vengeance we would wreak, it often takes the form of the very wrong that has been done to us. If we have been physically harmed, we plan to harm someone physically. If we have been sabotaged professionally, we create out a well thought-out plan of counter-attack. In essence the vengeance that we hope to deliver is always done in such a way that our offender might come to "know what it feels like," or know that he "messed" with the wrong victim.

Murphy presents the interesting view that we are not always governed by

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<sup>55</sup> Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge*, 29

our vindictive passions in such a way as to preclude all possibility of rational action. The cases that are sensationalized and well-known to us are the examples of vengeance gone wild. However, he believes that it is possible to “get even” with “moderate and proportional” acts<sup>56</sup> and that these are neither irrational nor immoral. His argument is that anyone with any amount of respect for the moral order and his own self-worth will want to act in defense of these values and that small acts of vengeance are perfectly legitimate responses to wrongdoing. In essence, his thought is that vengeance is like many other passions in that it must simply be moderated.

I believe that passions such as resentment and vengefulness are perfectly natural, and cannot be dismissed out of hand as base or morally wrong. However, although it is true that these emotions rise up naturally in response to wrongdoing, and in some people more strongly than in others, this alone does not grant them immunity from criticism. There are many emotions that may surface in us unbidden, emotions such as lust, jealousy, dislike. At times they may even run counter to what we would want to feel. However, it is a different matter to decide to act on them. In addition, vengefulness is a feeling that is most often accompanied by hatred of the wrongdoer, and though we may have legitimate reasons to hate people, very few would argue that hatred should be encouraged.

When an offender is unrepentant for the harm he has caused, or a victim is unwilling to forgive a contrite offender, forgiveness cannot take place. What results is an estrangement between the offender and the offended. They will cease

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<sup>56</sup> Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*, 24



interacting if it was the case that they knew each other prior to the offense, or they will not seek each other out if they were unacquainted. The chasm that is created is what follows from wrongdoing that has gone unresolved. It is natural that a person will not go on pretending to be friends with someone who has berated her to others, or that an individual will not go on sharing a ride to work with someone who has shown no repentance for his unkind remarks. However, this in and of itself does not constitute vengeance. Vengeance is different in nature than the act of persevering in the estrangement that emerges naturally when two parties are at an impasse and can no longer be in each other's company. Vengeance is a desire to recreate ties, but ties of a particular nature: the vengeful person will attempt to place himself in a position of power over his aggressor. He has one or more of several goals in doing this: (1) as Hampton proposes, he hopes to re-establish the proper balance between perpetrator and victim and to disabuse the wrongdoer of his false notions of superiority over him; (2) he hopes to right the wrong that was done through the offense by taking justice into his own hands; (3) he hopes to feel better and assuage bitter feelings of having been ill used; (4) he hopes to somehow rewrite history in such a way that keeps the wrong from having occurred.

The first goal is also one of the purported goals of resentment, so it is not clear that an act of vengeance is necessary to achieve it if it is indeed achievable. However, to better consider the following three goals, let us imagine a man, Ira, who is feeling resentful toward his colleague, Victor, who made him the brunt of a joke one morning round the water cooler. Ira confronts Victor about it, but

Victor expresses no regret and Ira is left seething. As Ira sees Victor coming towards the elevator that evening, Ira chooses not to hold the door for him, but to make him wait for the next elevator knowing that this may cause Victor to miss his train. Such an action is understandable, but is it moral? Ira is attempting to ensure that his sense of justice is satisfied. And by performing an act to take Victor down a notch or two, he has given tit-for-tat. It seems as though no harm has been done. At best, Victor learns his lesson and is careful not to mock Ira again. At worst, Victor plans some petty form of vengeance of his own. Even on the best possible outcome, however, it is certain that Ira has done nothing to improve his relationship with Victor. The falling out created by Victor's wrongdoing has been confirmed by Ira's action. It could be argued that Ira has simply drawn the line to ensure that he is no one's victim in the future, but even if Victor does nothing to retaliate, his comeuppance has been achieved at the price of further deterioration in the relationship, something that must be of concern in matters of morality.

Let us imagine that Ira feels better after this "payback" and smiles smugly all the way home. That too seems as though it would be natural, but would it be moral? It is clear that Victor has been unkind and violated any friendship they might have had by publicly ridiculing Ira. However, it does not seem as though Ira has acted any better by contriving to have Victor miss his train. Ira has taken pleasure in harming Victor, just as Victor enjoyed laughing at Ira. There is the entrenched notion that comes to mind that Victor just got what he deserved. However, just because it seems natural that Ira should gloat, does not make his

gloating a moral action. To rejoice in someone's misfortune can only be a guilty pleasure, very different from the act of taking pleasure in another's well-being.

The last goal of wishing to undo what has occurred by taking action is somewhat more obscure. It would involve turning back time, thus refusing a linear view of time, and trying to create a world in which an event in the future could affect an event in the past. This is an impossible wish and certainly not rational given prevalent notions of space and time. Griswold explains the role of narrative in recovering from acts of violence and makes clear that while vengeful actions may appear to some as a way in which to rewrite the past, that to understand narrative is to recognize that there may be more effective ways of reclaiming control over one's life, one's story. He shows how often forgiveness can be a more powerful tool than vengeance in making peace with the past.

The idea of narrative helps to explain just how the past can nonetheless change without pretense to undoing it, or ignoring, avoiding, rationalizing, or forgetting it. One may adopt a different perspective on it, attach a different meaning to it, respond to it in a different way, adapt it to one's evolving life "story"... In this restricted but crucial sense, the narrative of forgiveness is a solution to what Arendt aptly called the 'predicament of irreversibility.'"<sup>57</sup>

Murphy believed that vengeful actions that were moderate were not at risk of being immoral or irrational. Yet, I believe that the preceding arguments have cast doubt on that belief. If for no other reason, vengeance is detrimental because it

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<sup>57</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 100

perseveres in harmful acts, it works to hinder and not help repair moral relationships; it destroys rather rebuilds in the wake of wrongdoing. If we accept small acts of vengeance while condemning those that are extreme, we are at risk of being inconsistent. A small act of vengeance is vengeance all the same. Although it is always good to know that justice has been done and that people have received just what they deserved, anytime we rejoice in someone's punishment, even his just punishment, we have moved that much further away from a healthy and positive relationship and from the fruits that only such a relationship could provide. This is because, though justice is served, any joy experienced at that fact must be tempered by the sadness of witnessing another's undoing. Unlike vengeance, resentment's aim is not to see an offender suffer and squirm, but to see the proper balance between victim and offender restored.

### 3.5. Blameworthiness and Resentment

Before moving on to Griswold's account of forgiveness, I would like to bring to the fore an important distinction that Scanlon makes in his book *Moral Dimensions*. He distinguishes between the notions of blame and resentment and points out that one does not always resent the person one blames. Let us take a step back to ask ourselves what is really at issue when we see a need to forgive. According to Scanlon, resentment is a moral emotion that signals the presence of a judgment of blameworthiness. Yet we may blame someone whom we never resent;<sup>58</sup> we might only be saddened by someone's blameworthy actions. His theory presents blame not just as a negative evaluation of someone's character. To

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<sup>58</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 136

*judge someone to be blameworthy* on his account is to judge that someone holds attitudes that impair her relations with others. This is distinct from the action of *blaming someone*, which he defines as revising the attitudes one has towards one's blameworthy counterpart. A third action Scanlon identifies is to seek redress or demand an apology or explanation.<sup>59</sup> Each of these is an independent action and they need not all occur in unison. The first action, judging someone to be blameworthy, is the most dense concept because it is based upon Scanlon's understanding of relationships as made up of intentions and expectations that set the norm for the ideal form of the relation. Particular relations are then compared to the ideal relationship to measure whether or not they have fallen short of (or exceeded) that standard. For example, Scanlon provides attitudes that are characteristic of friendship: being supportive, keeping confidences, confiding in turn, enjoying spending time with a friend, wishing her well.<sup>60</sup> If a friend were found to be deficient in one of these attitudes, if you were to find out that she was in fact jealous of you, you would judge her to be blameworthy and the relationship to be impaired. If you acted in accordance with this judgment in adjusting your attitude towards her or in ending the relationship altogether, you would be blaming her for her breach of the friendship.

Scanlon's idea of blame "is not a mere evaluation but a revised understanding of our relations with a person, given what he or she has done. Blame is therefore a function not only of the gravity of a person's faults but also

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<sup>59</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 129-131

<sup>60</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 132

of their significance for the agent's relations with the person who is doing the blaming."<sup>61</sup> Forgiveness would then be targeted at restoring the impaired relationship, "perhaps in modified form." Scanlon is careful to add that "what forgiveness requires is some change in attitude on the part of the blamed person that makes this restored relationship one that all parties can endorse."<sup>62</sup>

This is an important distinction to consider for any account of forgiveness because it provides a different perspective on the nature of forgiveness. Although most accounts hold that the giving up of resentment is an essential feature of forgiveness (though not its only feature), perhaps it is more precise to define this feature of forgiveness as the act of no longer blaming the perpetrator of a wrong. It seems plausible that one might not resent the person by whom one has been wronged<sup>63</sup> and yet consider him blameworthy for the harmful act. This would make blame more central than resentment to an account of forgiveness and would help to explain why accounts such as Luskin's seem incomplete. If one defines forgiveness as solely the giving up of anger and resentment, then Luskin's understanding of forgiveness could be defended. However, if it is as I am arguing also an act of moral repair in which two parties attempt to restore their relationship, then understanding forgiveness as an act that addresses blame helps to explain why giving up resentment is not enough. Even when we have given up

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<sup>61</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 150

<sup>62</sup> Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 160

<sup>63</sup> See Strawson's depiction of the objective attitude in "Freedom and Resentment." Also see Hampton's description of the person who is "beyond resentment" in *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 55-56.

resentment, there is more work to be done for as long as we blame, we cannot forgive.

This view also better defines the work of forgiveness, for often we are led astray by groundless feelings of resentment that do not warrant forgiveness, whereas blameworthiness is a condition always present where there is unexcused moral wrongdoing and thus would be a more reliable way of discerning when forgiveness was warranted. Indeed, as Bishop Butler points out, not all actions that one resents necessarily entail that there are blameworthy agents involved. We might resent without just cause though we believe we have just cause.<sup>64</sup> Consider the professional diver who receives lower marks than he thinks he deserves. He may resent the fact that a particular judge should give him a low score, but the judge would be blameworthy only if he were biased, or had a grudge against the athlete, or scored him on a basis unrelated to his performance. What this means is that in order to justly blame someone and hold him accountable, we have to examine the person's reasons for acting. And more importantly, that those whom we resent are not always blameworthy.

Griswold sees the object of our resentment as the offender, not the act. Even though we commonly refer to "resenting someone's action" in our everyday language, the offender, not the act, must be the object of our negative feelings if we are to consistently think of the offender as the object of forgiveness. He points out that offensive acts must be intentional to warrant resentment and that the

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<sup>64</sup> Butler, Sermon VIII "Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries," 4

intention<sup>65</sup> must necessarily be traced back to an agent. “Events in the world devoid of intention are not properly the object of resentment or the forswearing thereof...Forgiving an act without reference to the actor would treat the act as independently motivated; both the phenomenology and the metaphysics of the matter render that idea deeply suspect.”<sup>66</sup> I agree that an event itself cannot be blameworthy. Just as we could not blame an inanimate object, though we might speak of resenting it, it would appear irrational to blame an action in the sense of holding an action accountable to moral standards. If we were to agree that in our everyday language we speak of resenting actions, then we would have to conclude that in resenting, we simultaneously and always consider the agent of those actions *blameworthy*. The distinction would then be between the cause and the object of our resentment. The offender’s action would be the cause of our resentment, but the offender whom we consider blameworthy would be the object of our resentment. Forgiveness would then be a response to this judgment of an offender’s blameworthiness and would consist in the decision to no longer blame him, but to carry on in the relationship that we judge to be repaired, even if somewhat altered.

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<sup>65</sup> We also hold agents accountable for their negligence, not just their intentional actions and we can legitimately blame agents for their negligent actions. My thanks go to Jeffrie Murphy for this insight. Also see Butler, Sermon VIII “Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries,” 3

<sup>66</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 55



#### 4. AN ACCOUNT OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is almost invariably defined as the act of letting go of feelings of anger and resentment toward a wrongdoer. However, we have defined forgiveness more specifically as a relevant notion only in cases of moral wrongdoing and as motivated by moral reasons. Thus it differs from forgetting, or behavior modification, or hypnosis. A victim must make the conscious choice to no longer blame an offender, to fix the offense in the past and to restore the relationship.<sup>67</sup> Hampton points out that forgiveness involves coming to see the individual as capable of more than his offending actions, capable of goodness, and possessing redeeming qualities.<sup>68</sup> However, there is also Scanlon's idea that forgiveness goes farther in not only addressing the moral emotions such as resentment, but the blame that lies at their source. When we forgive, we decide to restore a relationship, even in an altered state and even if the forgiver himself has been altered by the offense. Walker cites Flanigan's view that the forgiver restructures "basic assumptions about life so that the likelihood of harm is built into a new orderly set of assumptions."<sup>69</sup> And this is why forgiveness is an act infused with hope: because it "dares to lay down a grievance now without knowing how it might appear later, the act of forgiveness itself is an expression of

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<sup>67</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 153

<sup>68</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 85

<sup>69</sup> Walker cites Beverly Flanigan's view from "Forgivers and the Unforgivable," in her *Moral Repair*, 152

hopefulness.”<sup>70</sup>

#### 4.1. The Initiative of the Offender

Griswold’s account of the steps that need to be undertaken on both the part of the forgiver and the candidate for forgiveness are an outline of what he terms a “paradigmatic scenario of forgiveness,” a scenario in which both the offender and the forgiver are present and are able to communicate, and in which the offender is repentant. It should be noted, however, that there exist situations in which these conditions do not prevail and accounts of forgiveness in which not all of these steps are included or in which some steps receive more emphasis than others. However, I have chosen Griswold’s theory because it contains the most prominent features common among different accounts of forgiveness.

It could be argued that an account of forgiveness is an impossible achievement given the variety of offenses and the individuality of those affected and that a unified view should not even be attempted; we could define forgiveness as a change of heart recognizable simply by its occurrence and brought on by a variety of experiences or beliefs. However, although each case of moral wrongdoing is unique and each victim and offender is individual in his actions and reactions, there is a common structure that belongs to cases of moral repair: “an offense, a victim’s harm and suffering, threat to security of the victim and in some instances to a community, threat or damage to conditions of moral relationship among victim, offender, and others, acceptance of responsibility and fault by an offender, and the offender’s release from further grievance by the

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<sup>70</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 173

victim.”<sup>71</sup> The process, it is true, will be embodied very differently in each case of wrongdoing, but a successful account of forgiveness will attempt to convey “the sort of achievement at which forgiveness aims, the difficulties attending it, the impact of circumstances on the likelihood of its success, and the reasons why we need it, value it, and sometimes admire it.”<sup>72</sup> Given that, here are the steps the wrongdoer must perform on Griswold’s account, and that he describes as what make forgiveness possible:

1. Acknowledgement. The wrongdoer has to take responsibility for the damaging action. Without this acknowledgement, forgiveness could not take place according to Griswold. Forgiveness is not a one-way undertaking but “the dyadic character of the process permeates it from start to finish.”<sup>73</sup> This interdependence is a testament to the social nature of an act of forgiveness: “the offender depends on the victim in order to be forgiven, and the victim depends on the offender in order to forgive.”<sup>74</sup> The act is not complete until both parties have completed the necessary steps to bring an act of forgiveness to its conclusion.

2. Repudiation. Next, the wrongdoer must recognize that what she did was wrong and damaging. She must hope to distance herself from her past action and show how she rejects the part of herself capable of performing such an act. While she remains the same person, she disassociates herself from the part of her nature

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<sup>71</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 153

<sup>72</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 154

<sup>73</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 48

<sup>74</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 49

that has given cause for the offense.

3. Regret. The wrongdoer must express regret for her action and Griswold makes the interesting point that this regret must be expressly communicated to the offended. Given the dyadic character of forgiveness, it is important that the responsible party not only feel the regret, but also that she relate her regret to the person she has wronged. This ties into Jean Hampton's point about the nature of wrongdoing. She states that "when someone wrongs another, she does not regard her victim as the sort of person who is valuable enough to require better treatment."<sup>75</sup> The wrongdoer, in performing the wrongful action, is in essence sending a message to the victim and the surrounding moral community that her victim deserved nothing better. This is why the expression of regret is so essential. To regret her action is to retract that message. It equates to an admission that she was wrong in mistreating the person and that she regrets not showing her victim the respect that was his due.

4. A commitment to change. It is not sufficient that an offender regret her past actions. It is essential that her victim believe that she is no longer the sort of person who would perform the offending action again. The offender must show signs of a commitment to change in what she says and what she does, and show the contrition necessary to satisfy her victim and the moral community that she is capable of change.

5. Sympathy. The wrongdoer must show that she grasps the magnitude of the injury done, that she has seen from the perspective of the victim what damage

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<sup>75</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 44

her action has wreaked. She must be capable of imagining herself as the victim and experiencing the disappointment, pain, disbelief, horror that the victim would have experienced. She must do this by listening to the victim's account and sympathizing with him and expressing what she has understood.

6. An explanation. The foremost question in a victim's mind is often "Why?" Why have I been injured, what was the offender thinking, what could have prompted such behavior? And he demands an explanation. The offender provides this explanation in the form of a narrative. She describes what situations led up to the offense, her rationale, the pressures she experienced, the false beliefs she held. All of these are necessary elements of a narrative without which a victim will have a hard time regaining trust in the community that surrounds him. "In trusting we do make ourselves vulnerable to others by basing our actions on their anticipated behavior and so exposing ourselves to upset, disadvantage, or in some cases danger or loss if they do not perform as trusted."<sup>76</sup> Without an understanding of how the injury could come about, a victim will have a difficult time trusting that others might not harm him in the same way.

While I believe that Griswold's account of the steps the offender must undertake to make forgiveness possible is accurate, I don't think he sufficiently developed his fourth step concerning what kinds of changes should be expected on the part of an offender. He spoke of actions and words that would testify to the fact that the offender had embraced a different way of life. However, I think that the kinds of actions that would best testify to a change of heart would be those

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<sup>76</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 78

that aimed at making amends. Granted the victim is expecting the offender's behavior to change in the future. However, it is often the case that the victim has suffered emotional, physical, and or/material damages. Demonstrating a change of heart will not be sufficient in most victims' eyes. They will expect to be "repaid" for their losses, whether in the form of material compensation, time invested in the victim's concerns, or services provided to the victim to aid in his recovery. If the process truly is of a dyadic nature, then it would appear that a change of heart that happened on the offender's end would need to go hand in hand with a commitment to express that change of heart to the victim in real and concrete ways. Making the necessary amends exceeds the "contrition" Griswold described as "requisite to a convincing appeal for forgiveness."<sup>77</sup> Therefore, I propose an enhanced version of Griswold's six steps towards forgiveness, with a more robust fourth step.

Another point I would make is that Griswold's fifth point helps us to understand how revenge is a distortion of the goal of sympathizing. When Griswold speaks of sympathy, he describes it as the process by which an offender comes to understand a victim's pain. However, when one takes revenge upon a wrongdoer, one wants to force the offender to feel one's pain, to experience one's despair or an equivalent level of harm. If one has lost a loved one, one might hope to inflict the same pain by killing a loved one of the offender. If one has experienced deep humiliation, one may want to humiliate one's attacker in turn. This represents the fifth in the abuses of resentment of which Bishop Butler

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<sup>77</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 51

speaks: we abuse when we retaliate and inflict harm out of a feeling of resentment. We hope not only to provide the offender with an idea of our pain, but also to make him experience it in the flesh.

Separately, Griswold does not go into details, but every victim at this stage in the process will have to grapple with the dilemma: when has an offender sympathized sufficiently? Will it be enough if he has shed tears, or made a public announcement of his remorse and regret, or if he has devoted his life to a good cause, or will it be enough only when he experiences nightmares, depression, insecurity, and other forms of emotional, psychological, and physical pain? Griswold alludes to the importance of judgment in the decision as to whether or not a plea for forgiveness can be accepted. This type of struggle highlights why that will be the case.

#### 4.2. The Undertaking of the Forgiver

In addition to the steps required of the offender, there are steps the victim must complete in order to make possible an act of forgiveness. They are as follows:

1. The forswearing of revenge. Clearly one cannot forgive someone whom one intends to harm. Hoping to take revenge on someone is an activity that can quickly become an obsession for an agent, the kind of obsession that necessarily rules out any measures that could be conducive to forgiveness. Revenge cuts all negotiations short because it is an event that often elicits a violent response leading to ever-escalating cycles of violence. And as we have seen, even moderate acts of revenge are not conducive to the restoration of relationships at which

forgiveness aims.

2. The moderation of resentment. Griswold makes an important distinction between forgiveness as a completed act, and forgiveness as a process. Oftentimes, we make a commitment to forgive and have to remind ourselves of that very commitment because it is difficult to overcome resentment altogether. Griswold argues that one does not have to immediately forswear all negative feelings toward an offender. In fact, Bishop Butler believed that resentment in moderation provided a safeguard for justice in the world and Jean Hampton argues that it is “a certain kind of personal defense.”<sup>78</sup> However, resentment in its harsher forms must be relinquished, such as feelings of “contempt and scorn.”<sup>79</sup>

3. The commitment to let go of all resentment eventually. Given that it is a process that Griswold believes has cognitive as well as affective characteristics, it is not simply a change in beliefs that will allow one to forgive. He acknowledges “that a sentiment such as resentment does not respond immediately and wholly to cognitive emendations or to one’s will... Forgiveness will require other virtues, such as self-command, understanding, and trust, exercised over time.”<sup>80</sup>

4. Reframing the wrongdoer. An injured party must be able to separate the crime from the criminal, not rendering the criminal innocent but realizing that there are other good traits that the criminal possesses; that the offending action is not representative of the person as a whole. One comes to see the offender in a

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<sup>78</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 55

<sup>79</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 41

<sup>80</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 42-43



new light, and not to think of her as rotten or depraved or someone who should be ostracized from the community forever. Narrative is often useful in this case in providing a context for why the criminal acted as she did.

5. Reframing oneself. An important step in becoming capable of forgiveness is to let go of notions that one is morally superior to the offender. One must come to the realization of a “shared humanity”<sup>81</sup> with the offender and of one’s own imperfections. A victim must come to think of himself as something other than a victim, and gain a new perspective on himself as a member of a social and moral community.

6. Declaring forgiveness as granted. This is an important step to mark the end of the contentious relationship between the forgiver and the forgiven. There are occasions when the bonds of relationship will not be restored nor created (if they never existed in the first place). However, even in these cases, there is a respectful action to honor the official end of hostility between the parties. It may take the form of a statement such as “I release you Ebenezer Scrooge with a full heart” or a handshake, for example, but it is essential that the forgiver verbally express his forgiveness to the offender. To speak the words “I forgive you” is to bind oneself to the promise of forgiving an offender and to make a commitment to her that would otherwise remain ambiguous. However, often there will be a restoration of a pre-existing friendship or relationship and this is celebrated by both parties in various ways such as an embrace, a shared activity, an intimate conversation. Some might argue that these gestures are forms of reconciliation

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<sup>81</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 58

rather than forgiveness proper. Yet, the practical benefits of forgiveness simply are the end of conflict, the removal of sources of tension, and the ability to move on with one's life. Without these expressions to mark the onset of reconciliation and the accomplishment of forgiveness, forgiveness just remains a theoretical exercise.

## 5. A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS

Griswold's is not the only account of forgiveness that could be put forth. His is a secular account and therefore is relevant to situations in the political arena and to a wider variety of interpersonal contexts. Yet religious accounts of forgiveness still garner support among believers. I would like to draw attention to one facet of some Christian accounts that varies widely from Griswold's theory: the belief that a victim should be prepared to forgive unconditionally, i.e. even in the event that an offender is not repentant. Given many psychologists' belief that forgiveness is a therapeutic experience to improve one's mental and physical health, this particular Christian view could be supported in a psychological framework, for example one such as Luskin's. However, I would like to propose that even on secular philosophical accounts of forgiveness, which emphasize the added dimension of moral repair in the relationship between offended and offender, a victim can be prepared to forgive an unrepentant offender without compromising other values such as justice or self-respect. I believe the unconditional willingness to forgive can be shown to be perfectly reconcilable with the many goods that resentment would defend and that it is in fact not possible to ever forgive too soon.

### 5.1. The Structure of an Act of Forgiveness

Most philosophical accounts situate forgiveness within the power of the forgiver. However, this has made possible the psychological accounts such as Luskin's in which a forgiver can forgive in a one-sided fashion without further interaction with his offender. Wishing to maintain the notion that forgiveness is

interpersonal in nature, some philosophers have highlighted the fact that forgiveness brings about the moral repair of the relationship between the offender and the offended.<sup>82</sup> However, if forgiveness is truly interpersonal in nature, it must be understood to consist in an action on the part of the offender and an action on the part of the victim. Only understanding forgiveness in this way can preserve its interpersonal character. Otherwise, it is understandable how one could quickly slip into one-sided accounts. This is also why accounts of unconditional forgiveness are misleading. Forgiveness by its very nature is always conditional given that it is contingent upon a victim's willingness to forgive and an offender's sincere repentance. What "unconditional forgiveness" is referring to in most theories is the scenario in which a victim is *willing to forgive* an unrepentant transgressor without waiting for an apology or any expression of regret. However, forgiveness itself cannot take place until an offender has accepted the forgiveness being offered. One simply cannot forgive someone who will not be forgiven even if one wanted to, because the moral repair, which is the very essence of forgiveness, would not have taken place. Traditionally, it has been thought that forgiveness could not take place if a victim was unwilling to forgive. What I am arguing is that, in addition to the preceding condition, *forgiveness cannot take place unless an offender accepts to be forgiven.*

However, it is very important to note there is value in being willing to forgive, just as there is value in being repentant, even when forgiveness has not been achieved. Many victims are able to set aside their feelings of anger and

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<sup>82</sup> This is the position of Bash in *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, and Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*.

bitterness, to no longer be dominated by feelings of hatred, and no longer guided by a desire for revenge. These are the only choices over which a victim has any control because no one can force an offender to repent, thus a victim can do no more than become willing to forgive. Similarly, an offender has no control over whether or not a victim will be willing to forgive him, but experiencing true repentance for his offense is important and valuable to him for it will enable him to act differently in the future, to make different choices, to attempt to make amends, to not be the sort of person who harms people in a similar way. These are therefore choices that are accompanied by many benefits. They just cannot effect the work of forgiveness independently of one another because the repair in a relationship is not a one-sided matter and only occurs as a conjunction of the actions of both parties.

How can one understand the colloquial usage of the expression “I forgive you,” which certainly leads one to believe that forgiveness is a gift offered by a victim and at his sole discretion? I believe that it must be understood in the same way as one understands the statement “I married Mary.” Though Bob may speak of marrying Mary, a marriage did not take place unless Mary also married Bob. Marriage is the kind of event that is contingent upon the actions of both parties because it could never exist in a one-sided manner, but must necessarily consist in reciprocated actions in order for it to have taken place. Two conscious decisional acts<sup>83</sup> are what result in marriage, which is commonly considered an event that alters the relationship between two people. Similarly, two conscious decisional

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<sup>83</sup> Kolnai, “Forgiveness,” 96

acts lead to forgiveness, the act of offering forgiveness and the reciprocated action of accepting forgiveness. Only then does forgiveness result, which is also an event commonly considered to alter the relationship between two people.

Accounts such as Griswold's also stipulate that acts of forgiveness are contingent upon both the repentance and the willingness to forgive of the parties. However, he too situates forgiveness within the forgiver and thus must allow for accounts of unconditional forgiveness and for situations in which offenders who did not accomplish his suggested steps could nevertheless be forgiven. If forgiveness is the prerogative of the victim, then the victim can choose to forgive the offender at any time, for any reason, without the offender having shown repentance of any kind. He would argue that repentance is necessary in any *paradigmatic* scenario of forgiveness. I am arguing that repentance is necessary if forgiveness is to take place at all.

He is correct to show how discrete actions are necessary on the part of both parties to the offense. However, he does this with the view of showing when forgiveness would be warranted. On my account, there is no scenario in which unwarranted forgiveness could occur, though it is true that a victim might be *willing to forgive* before Griswold would think it justifiable. However, forgiveness itself could only occur between a victim and a truly repentant offender and as a result of their combined actions, not as result of any single action of one of the parties. Let us examine why this would be the case.

Forgiveness is the result of several discrete actions: the victim being willing to forgive, the offender's act of requesting forgiveness, the forgiver's act of

offering forgiveness, and the offender's act of accepting<sup>84</sup> forgiveness. The important difference between this view and most accounts of forgiveness is that on this view a victim's willingness to forgive is not conditional upon an offender's display of repentance. Most views would collapse a victim's willingness to forgive and her offer of forgiveness into one step: A victim would forgive following an offender's request for forgiveness if she judged the offender's repentance to be sincere. However, I would like to show why this need not be the case. If we examine the second and fourth of the actions on my account, the offender's request for forgiveness and his acceptance of the forgiveness offered, we see that they are closely related because it is implicit in his request that an offender would accept the victim's forgiveness if offered. One does not request what one has no intention of accepting or what one would not be willing to receive. Conversely, one could argue that implicit in an offender's acceptance of forgiveness is the fact that he feels that he is in need of forgiveness. A wrongdoer would not accept forgiveness if he believed that he had done nothing wrong.<sup>85</sup> He would hardly think himself in need of forgiveness, let alone accept the proffered forgiveness.

It could be further argued then, that a wrongdoer only accepts the victim's offer of forgiveness because he acknowledges his wrongdoing and recognizes that

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<sup>84</sup> I will use the notions of accepting and receiving forgiveness interchangeably though I acknowledge that accepting typically involves a different notion of agency than receiving. The reader should consider my use of receiving to be active in the same way as accepting is active, though this is not crucial to my understanding of forgiveness which hinges more on the process leading up to the acceptance of forgiveness.

<sup>85</sup> Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge*, 46. Also Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*, 58.

he is at fault in having harmed the victim. Indeed, if he did not recognize his actions as harmful or damaging or the character traits that led to their performance as ones from which he wished to distance himself, then though he might accept responsibility for his actions, he would not see the need to be forgiven for them. However, what if the offender felt no regret for his action? Then, once again, he would not seek out forgiveness but would rather rationalize his action by using some argument of the variety, “It was the lesser of two evils,” “The end justified the means,” or some other such statement. Therefore the first three stages in Griswold’s process would necessarily have to be fulfilled in order for an offender to accept forgiveness, and forgiveness would not be free but rather come at the price of accountability, an admission of having done harm, and feelings of regret.

Furthermore, I would argue that to make a sincere appeal for forgiveness just is a commitment to change and would come as a result of having sympathized with one’s victim and recognized how one’s actions affected her. If one went through the motions of making a request for forgiveness knowing all the while that one would repeat the offense again should the need arise, the appeal would not be authentic and an act of forgiveness could never take place under these circumstances because while one might dupe others about one’s sincerity, a person of sound mind could never dupe himself. Therefore, to receive the benefits of a release from the burden of guilt, one must have recognized the need to change in the future out of true sympathy with the victim’s plight. And, Griswold’s last step follows from the preceding ones, because a sincere applicant would be prepared to provide a narrative upon request of how the offense came to



pass, if only to make himself appear to better advantage in the victim's eyes.

It would appear then that "there is no free lunch," as the economists say. In order to be in a position to receive the forgiveness that a victim offers, a wrongdoer would in all likelihood have accomplished all of the steps in Griswold's process, thus ensuring that forgiveness could never be equated with condoning. There is no risk of being willing to forgive too quickly on my account, because if an act of forgiveness is only achieved once the transgressor has accepted the forgiveness, and if a transgressor can be in a position to accept forgiveness only if he has completed the process described, then it becomes impossible for an undeserving wrongdoer to be forgiven. More importantly, it becomes unnecessary to make one's willingness to forgive contingent upon an offender's request.

Some might say that this account places the wrongdoer in a position of power *vis à vis* his victim,<sup>86</sup> by not allowing forgiveness to take place until he has repented and comes to accept his own culpability and need for forgiveness. However, there is a benefit to the victim in the willingness to forgive itself. While there is no reconciliation to be hoped for, and one can never really "close the book" without forgiveness, a victim will already experience the advantages of giving up her feelings of resentment, of living without harboring ill feelings for anyone around her, without having her life soured by the offensive act. In essence, she is in a position to reclaim her life by being prepared to forgive, while the

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<sup>86</sup> Murphy in *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*, 80 references Enright's article "Counseling Within the Forgiveness Triad: On Forgiving, Receiving Forgiveness, and Self-Forgiveness," in *Counseling and Values* 40, 2 (January 1996): 109

transgressor will never experience any of its benefits until he repents. Luskin's psychological account and my account match up in this interesting way: one can experience psychological well-being by simply being willing to forgive. Our accounts differ in that Luskin would consider forgiveness a *fait accompli* at this stage, whereas I would see it as a positive step in the direction of a completed act of forgiveness.

Some might argue that a weakness of my account is that though it can explain forgiveness in a metaphysically satisfying way, pragmatically a victim could be abused. Whether or not forgiveness had actually occurred in a metaphysical sense would not stop an insincere transgressor who did not truly regret his act from reaping the benefits of an early offer of forgiveness by pretending to repent. He would be welcomed back into the community, into the company of those who had shunned him. His reputation might be partially restored; he would once again know the comforts to which he had been accustomed. This is the essential risk that most secular accounts wish to avoid: the unrepentant wrongdoer would not have to pay a price. However, there is an equal risk of this even on accounts that make the offer of forgiveness contingent upon repentance. There may be some who will make insincere appeals for forgiveness and make all the outward gestures required of them without really ever experiencing contrition. This type of transgressor would then appear to be due forgiveness,<sup>87</sup> so that on both views, a transgressor might attempt to abuse of a victim's trust. Griswold would reply that judgment is what must be relied on in

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<sup>87</sup> Griswold's idea of being "due forgiveness" can be found in his *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 69

these cases to avoid forgiving the unrepentant, but it is clear that our judgment can be mistaken at times. That would just be a pitfall of Griswold's process of which one would need to be wary. On my account, as stated above, an unrepentant transgressor is never forgiven if he is insincere in his request for forgiveness, so though he might benefit from being reinstated in his former position as community member, he would be adding another offense to his previous offense by living a lie, and could not ever reap the benefits of a clear conscience or a genuinely repaired relationship.

Let us compare how this would play out in the case of the openly unrepentant wrongdoer. On Griswold's account, this person would simply not qualify for forgiveness and there would be no risk of an offender abusing of a victim's trust. The offender would remain unforgiven. On my account, though a victim might be willing to forgive her transgressor, the unrepentant wrongdoer would not be forgiven because forgiveness is metaphysically impossible for an unrepentant offender. Neither would he necessarily be welcomed back into the fold. A willingness to forgive does not equate to an offer of reconciliation because reconciliation can only result from a completed act of forgiveness and as a further sign of moral repair. If an offender does not take responsibility for his actions or acknowledge and regret the harm he has done, then there can be no reweaving of the relationship that was damaged subsequent to wrongdoing. I very much agree with Scanlon's view that to forgive is to no longer blame an offender and to seek to renew the relationship even in an altered form. The difference between our accounts is this: repentance does not provide just a good reason to forgive. It is

necessary in order for forgiveness to take place.

A concern that might be raised is that situating the locus of forgiveness outside of the forgiver makes it difficult to recognize when an act of forgiveness has been achieved. There could be the risk that two parties would be unaware that forgiveness had occurred or perhaps falsely think that it had occurred when it had not. Once the forgiver's own conscious decision or change of heart<sup>88</sup> is no longer the means of determining if forgiveness has been accomplished, how could it be discerned? This dilemma can be illustrated by the following scenario in which it could not be said that forgiveness had taken place. Imagine that Victor makes a general kind of statement to Ira such as "I know that I have done a lot of bad things to a lot of people and I feel badly about all of that, but I really don't have the time to go and apologize to each person I've offended." Ira who has long been willing to forgive Victor for all of his offensive acts remains perplexed. He is not sure whether or not he is included among the parties about which Victor is speaking or if Victor is even referring to the specific acts which Ira found offensive. It is clear that a situation such as this would be very unsatisfying to Ira and that it could hardly constitute the kind of scenario that would enable Ira to understand that an act of forgiveness had occurred. He would not be able to move forward in a way that was indicative of a morally repaired relationship. In short, it would be distressing to think that forgiveness could be metaphysically real and yet that that fact would not be made explicitly clear to the parties involved. If forgiveness occurs when a victim is willing to forgive an offender for the same act

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<sup>88</sup> McCord Adams, "Forgiveness: A Christian Model," 294

for which the offender is repentant then, in order for this idea to make sense, we must understand in which way this cannot take place without the occurrence of actions that are reflective of that fact in the physical world. I believe that when an offender is truly repentant and a victim is truly willing to forgive, this translates into actions of a certain kind on the part of both the offender and the victim that enable the two parties to understand that an act of forgiveness has occurred.

It seems that if a person is truly repentant for his offense, he will make the effort to apologize to the one he has offended specifically and explicitly, and that anything short of that might be termed repentance, but it would not cross the threshold necessary to bring about an act of forgiveness. Likewise, it might be the case that a victim is willing to forgive an offender, but unless he is willing to make a firm commitment to release an offender from any further obligations and to explicitly indicate to an offender that he has been forgiven, it is possible that a victim's willingness to forgive could prove insufficient for an act of forgiveness to occur. Think of the physical image of a moving ball striking a second stationary ball. We know that, without sufficient force, the second ball will not be set in motion. However, if the threshold of force is met then the second ball will move necessarily. In the same way, there is a threshold of repentance which, when crossed, will constitute a level of repentance sufficient to bring about an act of forgiveness (in conjunction with a sufficient willingness to forgive on the victim's part). This level of repentance will enable the offender to put aside his pride, his fear of retribution, his reputation in order to apologize to the victim for his act, which is very different from making vague statements about regret and

avoiding difficult situations with those whom he has harmed. This is one reason why forgiveness will not take place in some metaphysical realm alone, but will be very much understood to have occurred by both victim and offender, thus ensuring that forgiveness remain an interpersonal act aimed at repairing the bonds between those who were a party to wrongdoing.

We considered whether it was possible for forgiveness to occur in a metaphysical sense without the relevant parties being aware of it. Since I have shown why that cannot be the case, let us now consider whether the reverse could be possible: if an act of forgiveness had not occurred, could it mistakenly be thought to have occurred by the parties involved? Imagine that Victor approaches Ira and says “Ira, I know I shouldn’t have laughed behind your back at the water cooler. I am really sorry about it.” Let us imagine that Victor has made this statement in order to garner Ira’s favorable opinion in advance of the upcoming peer reviews. Is it possible that Ira could be taken in and believe that an act of forgiveness had occurred? I believe that though Ira might be fooled initially, he would eventually come to see that forgiveness had not taken place and that Victor had never been truly repentant *through Victor’s own behavior*. If forgiveness aims at repairing the bonds between an offender and a victim, then this repair will not take place without forgiveness. I believe that it would be borne out in the future relations between Victor and Ira whether or not forgiveness had actually occurred. Likewise, if Victor had been truly repentant, but Ira had only pretended to forgive Victor in order to enlist an additional supporter in his Elks club fundraiser, then Victor might be initially fooled. However, once again, I believe that it would

eventually become apparent that Ira had not truly forgiven him as evidenced by Ira's future behavior.

## 5.2. Values Preserved

In the previous section on the nature of resentment, I pointed out some of the goods that resentment hopes to achieve. Bishop Butler argued for resentment as a deterrent against vice. Hampton and Murphy are strong proponents of resentment as a means to defend one's self-respect. And Jean Améry and Brudholm defend the resentful stance as sometimes being the most moral stance and in defense of justice. If it is the case that resentment can produce these goods, then we should be careful before supporting a theory of forgiveness that, in ruling out resentment, might do away with its benefits as well.

I think the misunderstanding that often occurs is the belief that if a victim forgives too freely, she risks becoming a "punching bag" for an unrepentant wrongdoer. Many believe that to forgive without attempting to stand up for one's self-respect through an enduring resentment, is to allow oneself to become a "push-over;" it is to confirm one's status as victim. However, I think that this is one of the most significant misunderstandings in the literature on forgiveness. A forgiving person is not a push-over. He is not the scrawny kid in high school who is repeatedly abused by the group of bullies on a daily basis. On the contrary, the scrawny kid is anything but a forgiving person. Although he is abused and does nothing to defend himself, recent high school shootings sadly testify to the fact that he is in all likelihood harboring severe feelings of resentment. *The forgiving*

*person*<sup>89</sup> *is not this victim*. The forgiving person is not letting things just happen to him. He is freely making a choice. *And the choice to forgive is not equivalent to the choice to continue to be someone's victim*. It is perfectly reconcilable both to forgive and to remove oneself from dangerous situations, to forgive and yet pursue criminal justice for the sake of one's safety and of the safety of those in the surrounding community when one is confronted with an offender with compulsive or addictive behavior.

Just as forgiving does not serve to demean the forgiver, so does resenting not serve to defend his self-respect. Murphy believes that "the primary value defended by the passion of resentment is self-respect, that proper self-respect is essentially tied to the passion of resentment, and that a person who does not resent moral injuries done to him ... is almost necessarily a person lacking in self-respect."<sup>90</sup> However, it is not clear in what way resentment really is tied to self-respect for there are many self-respecting people who do not often resent and many resentful people who do not exemplify very much self-respect. As Walker states, "people need not hold themselves highly, indeed need not respect or esteem themselves at a basically decent level, to be great resinters ... while... those who enjoy robust self-respect may be magnanimous or respond with confidence or determination rather than resentment, even when they are

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<sup>89</sup> The term "forgiving" can apply to a person offering forgiveness in just one case or to a person with a generally forgiving disposition who offers forgiveness routinely.

<sup>90</sup> Murphy in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 16



themselves treated ill or are the object of neglect or undeserved indifference.”<sup>91</sup> So the association of a strong sense of self-respect with strong feelings of resentment is unfounded, as is the association of a low sense of worth with a lack of resentful feelings. If we apply Scanlon’s understanding of blame to this picture, all that would be required of a self-respecting person is that he recognize that a wrongdoing had been done and blame the appropriate offender. He need not ever resent.

I agree that one requires a certain amount of self-respect to recognize that one has suffered a true injustice, but it is not clear why that awareness need be accompanied by resentment. It could just be the case that resentment is tied to a feeling of powerlessness to right the wrong that one experiences in the face of perceived injustice.<sup>92</sup> Where one’s feeling of powerlessness was strong, one’s sense of resentment would be strong. If a person felt powerless to respond to an insult, it might happen to be because he had little self-respect, but that would not need to be the case. People with a healthy amount of self-respect might also experience resentment in situations in which they felt there was very little they could do to respond. If, on the contrary, a person felt very confident in his ability to respond to an affront, it is unlikely that he would experience as much, if any resentment. It is true that one could think of scenarios in which a person’s resentment was low in a situation of powerlessness, but what I am proposing is

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<sup>91</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 122

<sup>92</sup> This theory can be compared to Margaret Walker’s theory in her *Moral Repair*, 123-133 in which resentment is directed at threats to norms, bringing into question the authority of those norms, and the victim’s competence as a judge of his community’s norms.

that that person's resentment would be lower still in a situation in which he felt empowered to respond. Likewise, there are people who due to varying reasons might resent even in situations in which they felt empowered to respond. These people, I am surmising, would feel even more resentful in situations in which they felt powerless to set things right. This theory may or not be comprehensive enough to stand as it is. However, it may be sufficiently robust to cast doubt on Hampton's and Murphy's theory and could provide an answer to the discrepancies that Margaret Walker points out.

Another reason to resist associating resentment with self-respect is provided by Bishop Butler's example of those who resent when there has been no affront.<sup>93</sup> Surely that cannot be an indication that one has a healthy amount of self-respect. It probably means that people feel powerless in many situations and assign blame to those they hold responsible. In sum, I believe that self-respect does not demand that resentment be felt as a consequence of having been wronged. Self-respect enables one to recognize that one has been wronged but resentment seems instead to be related to the varying perception of one's own power in the face of the affronts one has recognized.

Sometimes, it occurs that self-respect is lacking and a person is unable to recognize injustice, but this is not a reason to discourage forgiveness altogether. What Murphy suggests is that forgiveness cannot be recommended as a universal answer because it has no place in scenarios where an offense has not been recognized. "There are, I think, cases that should be troubling to the uncritical

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<sup>93</sup> Butler, Sermon VIII "Upon Resentment and the Forgiveness of Injuries," 4

boosters for universal forgiveness - cases where the victim does not “see” his moral status and dignity lessened, not because the victim’s self-respect is so well grounded as to be impervious to assault but because the victim had an improperly low view of his moral status and dignity in the first place.”<sup>94</sup> In this case, forgiveness could not be recommended as an appropriate response. Indeed, if the victim did not see himself degraded by the offensive act, he would harbor no feelings of resentment because he would not perceive that an injustice had been done. On the contrary, he would believe that he was just getting what he deserved. There would be no cause to forgive. The notion of forgiveness only becomes relevant when an offense has been recognized. So this scenario would not present a case of the pitfalls of forgiving too readily, it would highlight that in cases of low self esteem, there is much to be done before forgiveness can take place. What would need to be addressed is the victim’s psychological state so that he could, with therapy, come to recognize his own self-worth and perhaps even come to see his value as unimpeachable. People in this state are not perpetuating a state of victimhood through a willingness to forgive; they are not even aware that an offense has been committed that would require forgiveness. The reason they remain victims is because of their own unhealthy psychological states.

The important point that must be made is that on my account of forgiveness, the idea that a victim can be unconditionally prepared to forgive is possible for more than just a Christian. If we agree that a forgiver will never risk forgiving an unrepentant offender, then all victims become able to embrace forgiveness with

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<sup>94</sup> Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*, 78

much less risk of being abused. Many offenders who participated in the work of the TRC did not apologize and may not have experienced regret and some victims were reluctant as a result to favor forgiveness. However, these offenders remain unforgiven due to their own choice. Those offenders who did seek out forgiveness out of contrition and regret had a chance at renewed relationships through forgiveness. But the decision to forgive would not have hampered justice. If it was decided that criminals ought not be prosecuted, this was a purely political decision about how best to transition to a new political regime.<sup>95</sup> Forgiveness did not prevent justice. And forgiveness and justice should not be understood as mutually exclusive. A victim can forgive an offender who is being prosecuted for crimes just as an offender can seek forgiveness knowing all the while that he will be prosecuted. It is not an either/or situation. The fact that the TRC promoted forgiveness did not have to preclude the prosecution of criminals (and some were in fact convicted). Conversely, many criminal trials are conducted without mention of forgiveness, but neither need this be the case.

However, without understanding forgiveness in the way that I have proposed, it is clear why people would see it as conflicting with justice: it would seem as though they were willing to forgive undeserving criminals; perhaps giving the impression that the crime could be overlooked; that they were somehow complicit in the crime by their willingness to forgive. The worry is that to espouse a forgiving attitude too freely could be to condone the injury inflicted. Améry writes that he does not want to “become an accomplice of his torturers”

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<sup>95</sup> Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 55

and indeed accept both the proposal to “look but to the future” and the advocacy of an “internalization” that asks the victim to condone or acquiesce in evil and the status quo it has left behind.”<sup>96</sup> Forgiveness and condoning differ, though, in that forgiveness presupposes that the perpetrator has committed an injurious act that requires forgiveness. In condoning one does not consider the act blameworthy. Jean Hampton writes about the differences between condoning and forgiving and how it is possible to forgive a deserving offender in answer to a paradox discovered by Aurel Kolnai.

What seems required to make a change of heart towards a wrongdoer something other than condonation supplies the foundation for explaining and justifying that change of heart as something other than forgiveness. The paradox might move some to conclude that the concept of forgiveness is internally incoherent, so that one who commends it is speaking either of condonation or of the practice of valuing others in accordance with their virtue.<sup>97</sup>

Indeed, if one were willing to forgive an offender for an offense before an offender repented, this could be viewed as a simple case of condonation of the offensive act. If, however, one were willing to forgive an offender for an offense that he sincerely regretted and after which he had shown signs of being a changed person, it would appear that there would be nothing left to forgive. The offense would be past and the offender would have repudiated the offending

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<sup>96</sup> Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue*, 118

<sup>97</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 42

characteristics that would have prompted the resentment, at which point one would simply be treating him as he deserved by no longer feeling resentful. This would then no longer qualify as a case of forgiveness. Hampton resolves the dilemma by showing how one overcomes one's malice or spite or one's moral hatred of the individual and resentment and indignation at the act by coming to think of the offender as capable of more than just his evil action. The forgiver does not condone the past offense that he still considers wrong, but rather forgives the offender when she comes to see more in him than just a morally depraved person. She comes to trust that he could accomplish better things in the future. "She does not condone something bad by forgiving him, because the forgiveness is precisely the decision that he isn't bad (even though his action and the character trait that precipitated it are)."<sup>98</sup> Thus she manages to forgive the transgressor for the part of him that made the injury possible. Yet she does not take those blameworthy traits as the only or even dominant traits he possesses. In this way, forgiveness is differentiated from condoning and forgiveness and justice are shown not to be mutually exclusive, but perfectly reconcilable values.

In sum, it appears that forgiveness is an impediment neither to self-respect nor to justice, and that it can even be reconciled with criminal prosecution. More importantly, resentment has been shown to have little or no effect in securing the aforementioned goods. Therefore, we always have good reasons to be willing to forgive.

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<sup>98</sup> Hampton in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 85

### 5.3. A Conciliatory Spirit

Griswold presents a rather confusing picture of if and when forgiveness can be demanded.<sup>99</sup> He begins by stating “forgiveness may not be demanded or compelled: nobody has an (enforceable) “right” to forgiveness.” And yet his entire six-step process leads him to conclude that if an offender has sincerely undertaken all of the necessary steps in his request for forgiveness that “forgiveness is commendable because it is what the offender is due.” Somehow we must understand that the offender is due forgiveness and yet that not he nor anyone on his behalf may demand it; that “it is not unjust for a victim to fail to forgive the offender, though it may be blamable.” He wavers between defining forgiveness as supererogatory, “not something that can be morally demanded, but is good to do” and the idea that there are certain conditions that would make a person blameworthy if she withheld her forgiveness, thus making forgiveness something that can be morally demanded after all.

He clarifies this aspect of his theory by stating that *forgivingness* is a virtue and thus must be expressed under certain conditions that provide sufficient reasons to forgive. If an offender sincerely regrets the offense, has shown a change of heart, and attempted to make amends, then he has created a situation in which a virtuous person would be led to forgive. However, an offender can never compel forgiveness because it would be a testament to the fact that his attitude had not changed after all and that he still disrespected his victim. In addition,

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<sup>99</sup> See Griswold’s account in his *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 67-69

Griswold states that because “the sentiments are not wholly at the command of the will, the forswearing of resentment cannot be obligatory let alone subject to coercion.” He is careful to note that his understanding of forgiveness is not that it should be freely and unconditionally offered. As we have seen, on his account there are many steps the offender must fulfill to create a situation in which forgiveness would be fitting. His point is that when that situation is at hand, it is blamable not to forgive, just as it would be blamable to be lacking in virtue. Justice can therefore not mandate forgiveness. It is rather made appropriate by the right circumstances converging to create a scenario in which it would be expected of a virtuous person that she would forgive. An unforgiving victim is guilty and thus “blamable” of not recognizing that “resentment for injuries should be proportionate; that a wrong-doer who has taken all the necessary steps to rejoin the moral community would be disrespected in turn if forgiveness were withheld; that sustaining the moral community is a good to be promoted, as is repairing the causes and results of wrong-doing...Forgiveness is a virtue that both expresses and promotes the ethical excellence of its possessor.”<sup>100</sup>

Bishop Butler takes a more pragmatic approach to the question of why a victim should forgive. He explains that a victim of offense should forgive because she will someday be in a position in which she will have wronged another and require forgiveness. He makes the point in his closing statement:

Suppose yourselves under the apprehensions of approaching death; that you were just going to appear naked and without disguise before the judge of all

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<sup>100</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 69-70



the earth, to give an account of your behaviour towards your fellow creatures: could any thing raise more dreadful apprehensions of that judgment, than the reflection, that you had been implacable, and without mercy towards those who had offended you; without that forgiving spirit towards others, which, that it may now be exercised towards yourselves, is your only hope?<sup>101</sup>

Forgiving because one will someday be in need of forgiveness might be viewed as a self-serving attitude, but Murphy presents it rather as an exercise in “moral humility.”<sup>102</sup> Murphy like Griswold believes that it is virtuous to be forgiving. Yet he agrees that although forgiveness cannot be demanded, not forgiving a truly contrite offender can be blamable because it would no longer be appropriate to hold on to feelings of resentment once the offender has repented.

[F]or why should I resent you now for holding me in contempt when your sincere repentance makes it clear that you do not now hold me in contempt? There is a clear sense in which it is simply not rational to continue holding attitudes when I have come to see their inappropriateness and thus - as a rational being - I ought to forswear those attitudes. Just as rational beings value true beliefs, so they should, I think, value appropriate attitudes - attitudes fitting to their objects.<sup>103</sup>

Recently, Murphy re-examined his ideas on letting go of resentment, because he

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<sup>101</sup> Butler, Sermon IX “Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries,” 7

<sup>102</sup> Murphy in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 32

<sup>103</sup> Murphy in Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 29

acknowledged that emotions have an affective component that is not entirely under our control and cannot always be “rationalized” away. We may continue to feel resentment long past the moment in which we recognize that it is no longer fitting. So while we may be able to provide reasons for why a person should give up his resentment, these may supply insufficient motivation to change for an agent who has suffered and is still subject to the affective power of the emotion of resentment.

A philosophical account of forgiveness as the giving up of blame is well suited to the consideration of reasons. Reasons are provided to judge whether or not one should continue to blame, and when there is sufficient reason to blame no longer an agent theoretically forgives. However, the majority of cases of blame are also accompanied by the emotion of resentment. Most resent the perpetrators of the harm they have been caused and, though my account of forgiveness is effective in addressing the cognitive component of resentment by presenting the decided limitations of resentment and by reducing the risks in being willing to forgive, my account seems less effective in addressing the affective ramifications of wrongdoing. Certainly reasons to be willing to forgive may become compelling when the initial shock of wrongdoing has passed and the original feeling of resentment has been softened by the passage of time. It is perhaps at that moment that sound reasons to give up resentment might “tip the scales” in favor of forgiveness.

Yet Murphy arms us with an additional and valuable perspective, what one might call a preventative course of action. He separates the act of forgiveness

from the virtue of character that engenders it, what some have called “forgivingness”<sup>104</sup> and what he calls a “forgiving character.” In order to develop this forgiving character, a person would have to make the sort of choices that would eventually enable him to be less prone to resentment and that would allow him to cultivate an aptitude for forgiveness within himself.

This can often give me indirect control over resentment in that I choose now (a matter of direct control) to set myself on a future course that in the long run I have reasonable grounds to believe will make it likely (to paraphrase Aristotle) that my resentments will be at the right time, directed at the right person for the right reason, proportional to the gravity of the wrong and the culpability of the wrongdoer, and weakening or even coming to an end when this is appropriate.<sup>105</sup>

Murphy draws this idea from Kant’s description of a conciliatory spirit. Kant believed that it was a person’s duty to refrain from hating his enemy or trying to exact vengeance upon him; that a person should rather be conscious of his own failings and seek to be reconciled with people as a mark of a virtuous character. He understood that people could not always be brought to do what duty set out for them, and thus believed that one could cultivate compassionate traits by constant exposure to those who were sick or in need. He believed that by providing oneself with opportunities to develop one’s more sympathetic feelings one could, over time, become the sort of person who would be slow to experience contempt and

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<sup>104</sup> Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, 17

<sup>105</sup> Murphy, “Response to Neu, Zipursky, and Steiker” in “The work of Jeffrie G. Murphy: Symposium,” 56

resentment of others.<sup>106</sup>

This process that Aristotle called habituation is what would help us to develop the kind of control over our emotions that could give more weight to reasons in decisions of whether or not to endorse forgiveness. If reasons alone will sometimes not suffice in changing a victim's heart, then the affective nature of resentment must be addressed. And as we have seen, the best way to develop a character of forgivingness is to value forgiveness, desire to be the kind of person who can forgive, and take the steps necessary to develop the character traits that will enable one to forgive in the future.

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<sup>106</sup> Taken from Murphy's description of Kant's view in his "Response to Neu, Zipursky, and Steiker" in "The work of Jeffrie G. Murphy: Symposium," 56-57

## 6. CONCLUSION

Forgiveness is a topic that is deeply interesting to many who are interested in the dynamics of relationships. It is one of many responses to moral wrongdoing and is motivated by the desire to repair what was damaged in one's relationships with another. Many grapple with the difficulties of how to relate to others after wrongdoing and how to balance values of self-respect and justice with a desire to forgive. Resentment has long been thought to be the emotion that one must overcome in forgiveness, but I believe that to be willing to forgive is to no longer blame those by whom we have been harmed. Although we may recognize that we have been harmed, by offering forgiveness we decide to no longer judge that our relationships with our offenders are impaired. We come to see in them more than just the potential for harmful actions. And when this willingness to forgive is met with repentance on their part, an act of forgiveness occurs and with it the moral repair that only the combined actions of those involved can bring about.

Griswold's and my accounts of forgiveness bear many resemblances, although they provide a victim with fundamentally different reasons to want to forgive. On both accounts forgiveness is a dyadic process that begins and ends with the participation of both an offending and a forgiving party. And on both accounts, the offender must show repentance. He must take responsibility for the act, recognize it as an injury, regret the harm done, make a commitment to change his future behavior, sympathize with the one whom he has wronged, and provide a narrative as a way of explanation for how the wrong came to pass. According to his theory, repentance is necessary to make forgiveness appropriate. Only when

the forgiver has deemed the offender sufficiently repentant should he be forgiven on Griswold's account. On my account, the offender is required to complete the same process so that he is able to receive the forgiveness should a victim be willing to offer it. Only then will an act of forgiveness come about.

Ultimately, being able to forgive will have a deep impact on our relationships with others. Even valuing forgiveness or attempting to forgive will be a step in the direction towards repairing "impaired relationships." I have not addressed if one should always forgive. However, in showing that much less is preserved in resentment than might have been thought, I hoped to present forgiveness as a more viable alternative than it is frequently thought to be. Also in removing some of the risks commonly associated with being willing to forgive, I hoped to show in which ways one can be in favor of forgiveness, achieve psychological well-being, start on a path toward moral repair, and not be at risk of condoning wrongdoing or acting contrary to the demands of justice. If we think of forgiveness as the act of no longer blaming someone where blame is a purely cognitive notion, then my theoretical approach to forgiveness is very appropriate and effective. However, in the cases in which blame is accompanied by the feeling of resentment, we come up against the roadblock that all theories face when confronting the emotions. A rational theory may not be enough to enable a victim to give up his resentment. It may nevertheless be effective in helping a victim resolve to at least try to give it up. As Griswold mentioned, resentment might be let go of only progressively, but in order to truly forgive we must make a commitment to abandon resentment altogether at some point in the future. There

may be reasons to continue to experience resentment, but I hope I have shown that those reasons cannot be the intent to defend one's self-respect, or uphold justice in the world. Those projects can be safely accomplished without experiencing resentment at all. I am suspicious that there could be any good reason to continue to choose to resent. Certainly the feeling will not be commanded by rational arguments alone, but in developing a forgiving disposition, one can hope to always be in favor of forgiveness, less disposed to experience injury, and less willing to be resentful.

It cannot be denied that resentment is a perfectly valid emotion that has received a lot of bad press and that it need not be viewed in a negative light. However, given that the decisions a person makes in the wake of wrongdoing will affect her view of the world and others, and her relationships with other members of her community, it is important to understand the limitations of resentment. Resentment may not secure all the goods that it appears to promise. And one can judge someone to be blameworthy without resenting him. Also, one should understand that forgiveness is not necessarily the risky business it has been portrayed as being, and that being willing to forgive can be a rational approach to offense. If forgiveness by its very nature can only take place once an offender has repented, it becomes a more viable alternative to those who have suffered wrongdoing at the hands of another.

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