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# UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVINGNESS

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# UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVINGNESS

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## DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

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2015

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVINGNESS

In the last few decades, some scholars have questioned the moral value of forgiveness. They have argued that in order for a victim to preserve his self-respect, to not condone the wrongdoing, and to avoid unjustly pardoning the offender, he must consider forgiving only after the offender has satisfied specific conditions that have been demanded of him. Forgiveness, they claim, is morally permissible only when it is given conditionally. Unconditional forgiveness cannot be virtuous.

This dissertation addresses the issues surrounding this claim. I argue that *Forgivingness*, which is the virtue associated with forgiving, causes its possessor to reliably offer unconditional forgiveness to every person who offends him. Further, I contend that instances of forgiveness, arising from or contributing to the development of this virtue, are never morally impermissible even though their moral quality may not be ideal.

To support my thesis, I develop a model of *Forgivingness* that represents it as a multi-faceted virtue of cognitive, affective, motivational, and action components that, independently of the actions and attitudes of the offender, produce unilateral, unconditional forgiveness. I describe *Forgivingness*'s dependency on the characteristic of moral love—a quality that values an offender's ultimate moral good and ideal self, displays good will towards him, and assimilates the virtue of self-forgetfulness into the possessor's deliberations, desires, and actions—and explain the virtue's relationship to ancillary or homologous emotions including hope, humility, magnanimity, and anger.

I then defend the forgiveness that multi-faceted *Forgivingness* produces against criticisms that are commonly levied against unconditional forgiveness. In doing so, I reinforce a theme that runs throughout the entire work—that is, that virtuous forgiveness is distinct from minimal forgiveness. When relevant, I show the weaknesses in minimal forgiveness so as to emphasize the moral strength and beauty of virtuous forgiveness. Further, I distinguish virtuous forgiveness from forgetting, reconciliation, and excuse-making and explain how it can be compatible with disciplining the offender. Consequently, I demonstrate why virtuous forgiveness that is given according to my model of the virtue is immune to the criticisms that may be relevant to other forms of forgiveness.

KEYWORDS: unconditional forgiveness, Forgivingness, model, virtue, minimal forgiveness, anger

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To my Dad, whose personality I fortunately inherited.

To my Mom, who instilled that personality with intellectual tenacity.

To my husband, who has helped me grow roots so strong that  
I can be sustained anywhere.

To my six-year-old son, who has reminded me that fireworks await  
the completion of this project and who has said to me several times,  
“I’ve got to go write my dissertation.”

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# CHAPTER 1

## PROLOGOMENA AND METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

Forgiveness. What is it? What are its limits? Is it virtuous to forgive or is it a manifestation of weakness? Is forgiveness required of everyone? Over the last few decades, philosophers have had a renewed interest in questions of this sort and in the study of forgiveness in general.

The philosophical study of forgiveness is approached from many different angles. Some philosophers have done fresh conceptual analysis on the concept; others have responded and refined their positions. Some have reviewed forgiveness historically. Others focus on how it can be used and misused in psychotherapy, or in times of political disturbance. While many scholars sing its praises for its often irreplaceable role in humbling, unifying, reconciling, and peacemaking, a particularly potent strand of philosophical scholarship, as well as some thinkers in other disciplines including psychology and sociology, have questioned the morality of forgiveness in certain instances. These scholars claim that not only is it ill-advised to forgive in certain cases, but that forgiving is sometimes *morally* wrong.<sup>1</sup>

The assertion that forgiveness is sometimes morally wrong is one that questions

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Griswold believes that it is morally wrong for someone to forgive if the offender has not reformed or made amends for the offenses, and some offenses are too severe to forgive (and this is meant in a normative sense). Griswold is a “conditionalist,” meaning that he believes that victims should require that an offender meet some conditions before being forgiven. A conditionalist believes that any instance of unconditional forgiveness is either morally wrong or at least extremely unwise. Griswold is among those who present unconditional forgiveness as morally wrong. See Charles L. Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Jeffrie Murphy argues that forgiveness is wrong anytime it is incompatible with the victim’s self-respect, with the rules of the moral order, or with respect for other people. Jeffrie G. Murphy, “Forgiveness and Resentment,” in Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 29. I do not disagree with Murphy’s point, but neither would Griswold, and my position is starkly different from Griswold’s. The theme of self-respect underlies or surfaces in many discussions of the impermissibility of some instances of forgiveness. Like Murphy, David Novitz identifies a lack of self-respect as being a feature of morally impermissible forgiveness. See David Novitz, “Forgiveness and Self-Respect,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58 (1998): 299-315. While I agree with this *prima facie*, I disagree when instances of forgiveness are classified as self-disrespecting merely because they are unconditional. This will be discussed more throughout the next chapters.

the inherent goodness of forgiveness. Since these scholars make categorical statements about the nature of forgiveness,<sup>2</sup> those making this assertion seem to be accepting the idea that all forms of forgiveness have the same quality or that there is only one form of forgiveness. Thus, the assertion that it is sometimes morally wrong to forgive also evokes questions about what it means to forgive and what forgiveness is. Arguments that support this assertion are arguments that, whether directly or indirectly, usually imply that forgiveness should not be viewed as something that should always be given and that it should never be “without strings attached.”

In response to the arguments that suggest that a person who consistently and unconditionally forgives is morally wrong to do so,<sup>3</sup> this dissertation aims to show that a categorical rejection of consistent, unconditional forgiveness is itself wrong. My thesis is that *Forgivingness* is a multifaceted virtue that always results in unconditional forgiveness and that giving such forgiveness is never immoral. While discussing some of the cognitive, affective, motivational, and action components of *Forgivingness* that make it multifaceted, I reveal a more complete sketch of a virtuously-forgiving person. After developing the model of ideal, unilateral, unconditional *Forgivingness*, I defend it against those scholars who categorically claim that unconditional forgiveness is morally wrong and from those whose arguments lead to the inference that there cannot be a virtuously-forgiving person who always, unconditionally forgives.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, some suggest that forgiveness (or its associated virtue) must never be unconditional. Unconditional forgiveness is not forgiveness, but is a form of servility.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Joseph Butler says, “A forgiving spirit is therefore absolutely necessary, as ever we hope for pardon of our own sins, as ever we hope for peace of mind in our dying moments, or for the divine mercy at that day when we shall most stand in need of it.” Joseph Butler, “Upon Forgiveness of Injuries,” in *The Works of Bishop Butler*, ed. David E. White (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 102. Despite the lack of an official Christian position, there are many Christians, laypersons and scholars alike, who believe that people should always forgive their trespassers so that God will forgive them—recall what is commonly called the “Lord’s Prayer.” They may also hold this view because Jesus told Peter that he should forgive his “brother” (*adelphos*) seventy times seven, indicating that limitless forgiveness is expected, at least within the context of fellow Christians and family members, and less conservatively, for everyone (Matthew 18:21ff). For a scholarly theological argument for unconditional forgiveness, see Randy W. Nelson “Exegeting Forgiveness,” *American Theological Inquiry* 5.2 (July 2012): 33–58.

## Factors Contributing to the Complexity of the Study of Forgiveness

Contributing to the complexities of the study of forgiveness is the fact that there are many viewpoints from which to approach it: philosophically, sociologically, psychologically, historically, politically, theologically, anthropologically, and therapeutically. Forgiveness has been explored with a focus on how it occurs and what it might be in societies and group situations, between nations, how it is given to or by a personal deity, how it might be given from a group of people to an individual, from an individual to a group,<sup>4</sup> from one person to another, how it can be given to someone who is dead, and how it might be given to oneself. These viewpoints provide valuable insights into the nature of forgiveness and people's experiences and perceptions of it, but on the whole, there is little unity among the views as the disciplines may not even share the same definition of forgiveness. Interdisciplinary study of the topic may seem daunting because the various understandings of forgiveness are either vague and ungrounded or so focused in one discipline that it may appear to be incommensurable with many other contexts.

As Beverly Flanigan has noted, the concept of forgiveness itself is "fraught with methodological, analytic, and conceptual difficulties."<sup>5</sup> Because of these difficulties, scholars have described forgiveness in many different ways. Hannah Arendt points out that forgiveness is "the necessary corrective for the inevitable damages resulting from action."<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff suggests that it is "the enacted resolution of the victim no longer to hold against the wrongdoer what he did to one."<sup>7</sup> Charles Griswold accepts forgiveness as a resolution to decrease negative feelings towards the wrongdoer, but does not require that this resolution be fully completed. Other scholars suggest that

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony Bash has provided a clear account of why any type of corporate forgiveness does not "stand up to analytical scrutiny." See Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 111-40.

<sup>5</sup> Beverly Flanigan "Forgivers and the Unforgivable," in *Exploring Forgiveness*, ed. Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 95.

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 239.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 169.

forgiveness involves or is a perfect duty, an imperfect duty, an ideal,<sup>8</sup> a virtue,<sup>9</sup> a gift to the victim from himself, a gift to the offender from the victim, a process,<sup>10</sup> a decision, a dismissal of debt,<sup>11</sup> a remittance of punishment,<sup>12</sup> a reframing of personal narrative,<sup>13</sup> a change of heart,<sup>14</sup> a speech act or performative utterance,<sup>15</sup> a shift in judgment,<sup>16</sup> a part of reconciliation,<sup>17</sup> the mastery over a wound and ultimate liberator.<sup>18</sup> This list is by no means exhaustive. Among those who broadly agree about its general nature, there may

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<sup>8</sup> For example, see Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*.

<sup>9</sup> See Griswold, *Forgiveness*, and Robert C. Roberts, "Forgivingness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1995): 289-306. Downie defends the assumption that "readiness to forgive is a virtue and inability to forgive, or at least unwillingness to try, a vice." See R.S. Downie, "Forgiveness," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1965): 128. Even though some may have revived the term for the virtuous form, this does not mean that they define the virtue in the absolute terms that I do here.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Margaret R. Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (October 1993): 341-52. Also see Kim Atkins, "Friendship, Trust and Forgiveness," *Philosophia* 29 (May 2002): 111-132.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 84-85. Swinburne suggests that forgiveness wipes away guilt, but he thinks it should be done when the offender has made reparation, apologized, and repented.

<sup>12</sup> John Calvin says this is true of God's forgiveness of humans. See Calvin Institutes 3.4.30.

<sup>13</sup> Keith E. Yandell, "The Metaphysics and Morality of Forgiveness," in *Exploring Forgiveness*, ed. Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 42 ff. Also see Joanna North in "The 'Ideal' of Forgiveness" (See *ibid.*, 24 ff).

<sup>14</sup> See Margaret R. Holmgren, *Forgiveness and Retribution: Responding to Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 32.

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Joram Graf Haber, *Forgiveness* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991). Also see Glen Pettigrove in both "The Forgiveness We Speak: The Illocutionary Force of Forgiving," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 42 (Fall 2004): 371-92, and "Unapologetic Forgiveness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (July 2004): 187-204.

<sup>16</sup> Pamela Hieronymi, "Articulating and Uncompromising Forgiveness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 62 (May, 2001): 529-555.

<sup>17</sup> John Wilson who argues that repentance is a necessary condition of forgiveness thinks that because of the dynamic which occurs in the bilateral relationship and because of what repentance restores (i.e., an agreement; trust, norms, etc.), forgiveness is "a reconciliation and a fresh start, with no debts outstanding and nothing still held against the wrongdoer." See John Wilson, "Why Forgiveness Requires Repentance," *Philosophy* 63 (1988): 534. Also, but to a lesser degree, Robert C. Roberts indicates that "the aim of reconciliation is basic to forgiveness." His claim is "not that forgiveness is reconciliation, but that it aims at it." Roberts, "Forgivingness," 294.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Trudy Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 65. Govier points out that Flanigan is writing as a therapist, not a philosopher and thus does not offer a specific defense of unilateral forgiveness, although she does have an implicit ethical focus. *Ibid.*, 179 (note 9). Also compare to Beverly Flanigan, *Forgiving the Unforgivable: Overcoming the Bitter Legacy of Intimate Wounds* (New York: Collier Books/Macmillan, 1993).

be disagreement about its specific characteristics and what it requires of a victim. For example, only a few scholars have treated *Forgiveness* as a virtue. Out of those presenting forgiveness as being associated with a virtue, some see it generally as a good character trait or human excellence whose instances should abound, while others consider it as virtuous only when it falls within a limited, Aristotelian mean.<sup>19</sup>

When people hold different views about the nature and definition of forgiveness, this affects their beliefs about when and how forgiveness should be given. Some people think that true instances of forgiveness must be expressed to the offender. Some claim that forgiveness cannot be given until the offender has asked for it, perhaps through a sincere apology or by making reparations. Those people who suggest that the victim's forgiveness, in some way, should be dependent on the behavior or attitudes of the offender are bilateralists. A bilateral view of the nature of forgiveness is bilateral in the sense that it is dependent on each party who is involved (i.e., the offender and the victim) rather than only dependent on the victim. Some bilateral theorists think forgiveness is bilateral in an even stronger sense. They claim that a victim cannot say he has forgiven until the offender has accepted the victim's forgiveness.<sup>20</sup>

I argue in this dissertation that virtuous forgiveness is unilateral (i.e. forgiveness that is dependent only on the victim for its occurrence) and unconditional (i.e. forgiveness that is not contingent on requirements being met). Unilateral, unconditional forgiveness (UUF), as opposed to bilateral, conditional forgiveness (BCF) is a partial description of the forgiveness that *Forgiveness* produces.

John Howell notices that Margaret Holmgren provides an important variation on UUF.<sup>21</sup> This unique variation is that forgiveness should be considered unilateral and unconditional concerning the offender, but that the victim must meet certain conditions before forgiveness is viable. These standards are not represented by rules that must be

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<sup>19</sup> Griswold thinks it falls between hard-heartedness and servility. Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Wrongdoers who will not accept their guilt do not accept forgiveness. This is true in a unilateral framework, as Trudy Govier suggests, but it is primarily a bilateral assumption to say that unless a person admits his guilt and accepts his forgiveness, he cannot be forgiven. See Trudy Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 74.

<sup>21</sup> John G. Howell III, "Forgiveness in Kierkegaard's Ethic of Neighbor Love" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2009), 43.

followed or necessary conditions that are applicable in all situations, but serve as general guidelines to suggest how people should respond to personal offense. Holmgren maintains that “the appropriateness of forgiveness has nothing to do with the actions, attitudes, or position of the wrongdoer. Instead it depends on the internal preparation of the person who forgives.”<sup>22</sup>

Holmgren suggests that part of the internal preparation that should be taken by a victim who wants to genuinely forgive is that she must “recover her self-esteem,” “come to recognize that the perpetration against her was wrong, and she must also understand why it was wrong,” acknowledge “her feelings,” and, depending on the circumstances, she may need to “express her beliefs and feelings to the wrongdoer.”<sup>23</sup> The victim also “faces the task of assessing her situation with respect to the offender,” determining the steps “to avoid further victimization,” and determining “whether she wants to seek restitution from the offender.”<sup>24</sup> According to Holmgren, the goal of a self-respecting victim is not to forget the offense done against her, but “to reach a point where she no longer remembers the incident vindictively, or allows it to prevent her from holding an attitude of real goodwill towards the offender.”<sup>25</sup>

Holmgren describes “genuine forgiveness” in the following way:

A victim’s forgiveness is genuine only if she regards herself with sufficient self-respect, and if she does not condone the wrong, engage in self-deception, or evade any of the issues she needs to address with the offender as a result of his offense. The victim who reaches a state of genuine forgiveness does not deceive herself about her own status as a person or about the nature of the wrong. She does not deceive herself about her feelings concerning the offense, or about the wrongdoer’s attitudes and behavior patterns. Instead, she forgives him with a clear understanding of these matters, knowing that she has addressed with him the issues that need to be addressed, and that she has taken the steps she needs to take to honor her own needs.<sup>26</sup>

Even though she values these victim-affirming goals and thinks they are necessary to

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<sup>22</sup> Holmgren, “Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value,” 342.

<sup>23</sup> Holmgren, 343-44.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Holmgren, *Forgiveness and Retribution*, 63.



“genuine” forgiveness, Holmgren understands that morally-praiseworthy forgiveness is unilateral and unconditional. It is unconditional in the sense that the offender is not required to do anything to earn or bring about forgiveness in the victim, even though the victim’s forgiveness is conditional on whether she has done certain things in order to forgive. The latter sense of conditionality is not typical of those who I will refer to and define as “conditionalists” later in this chapter, so Holmgren’s thoughts about forgiveness will be considered as an example of an unconditional forgiveness.

My model of *Forgivingness* fundamentally resonates with Holmgren’s views in that it, too, values forgiveness, is unilateral, and is concerned with the victim’s side of the forgiveness experience. Additionally, neither requires that the offender do anything to warrant or earn forgiveness. There are several differences in these accounts, nonetheless. For instance, Holmgren expects a forgiving victim to have real goodwill towards the offender. My account strengthens the meaning of “real goodwill,” presenting it as one aspect of moral love, which I consider to be the substrate of virtuous forgiveness. Holmgren argues that “self-respect is the primary virtue that governs the process of addressing the wrong.”<sup>27</sup> While I agree that a virtuously-forgiving agent will be self-respecting, I argue that moral love is the primary virtue that governs virtuous forgiveness and motivates the victim to address the wrongdoing. Additionally, while I agree with Holmgren that the appropriateness of forgiveness is dependent on “the internal preparation of the person who forgives,” Holmgren’s focus is on the preparation that a victim must make in order to properly forgive for a *particular* wrongdoing. My interest in the victim’s internal preparation relates to the long-term development of his moral character. Further, whereas Holmgren offers steps that a victim must take in order to achieve genuine forgiveness in particular circumstances, I only offer a general account of what must be done in order for a victim to forgive a particular offender. This is because I am theorizing about the reliable character traits of someone who possesses the virtue associated with every instance of well-given forgiveness. I frame the issue on a broader level than Holmgren’s account. Finally, Holmgren says that her task is to provide a “broadly coherent position on how we ought to respond to wrongdoing . . . perpetrated

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 59.

against us.”<sup>28</sup> By “us,” she is referring to people who are not “advanced spiritual masters” and are not those who have already “become very adept at responding to wrongdoing.”<sup>29</sup> This dissertation, on the other hand, is concerned with those people who have already become very adept at forgiving well. While considering the characteristics of ideal forgiveness and forgivers, those of us who are not yet adept at forgiving may learn to forgive more virtuously.

There are several other elements that complicate most any philosophical discussion of the ethical issues associated with ideal forgiveness. Despite the recent interest in forgiveness among scholars, there has not been nearly enough attention given to its virtue, *Forgivingness*. Robert Roberts is one of the first to use this phrase to denote the virtue,<sup>30</sup> and only a few scholars have discussed it at any length.<sup>31</sup> R. S. Downie refers to a “forgiving spirit”<sup>32</sup> rather than *Forgivingness* but his discussion of it seems to be unaware of the distinction between the act of forgiving and the general tendency to forgive. In fact, most of the treatments of forgiveness by those who do not recognize the virtue as separate from the action seem to muddle the concepts. Using the terms “forgiveness” and “*Forgivingness*,” helps prevent this problem. It provides a grammatical way to distinguish between the act and the virtue, and this is something from which many current discussions may benefit. *Forgivingness* can be used as a noun to describe the character trait associated with forgiveness—perhaps denoting, among other things, one’s willingness to forgive—while forgiveness can be reserved for the act of forgiving. Another benefit of using the term “*Forgivingness*” is that it paves the way to separate an action that looks like a virtuous action and in fact occurs because of an agent’s well-developed character trait from an act that arises from a developing virtue-in-progress that is not yet fully virtuous, and further, from an act that occurs completely independently from the virtue.

One way to avoid some of the confusion and “logical havoc”<sup>33</sup> potentially

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, “Forgivingness,” 289-306.

<sup>31</sup> Most notably Charles L. Griswold. See Griswold, *Forgiveness*.

<sup>32</sup> Downie, 128.

<sup>33</sup> Aurel Kolnai, “Forgiveness,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 74 (1973-74): 99.

inherent in this study of forgiveness is to point out ambiguities and problematic issues when they are relevant. One problem is that there are a limited number of ways to intelligibly define “forgiveness” and still imbue it with meaning, but the definition that one chooses naturally inclines or logically commits one to certain other assumptions. For example, the definition one has of forgiveness frequently seems to place the thinker on a natural path towards accepting forgiveness as either a unilateral or bilateral phenomenon—something that also seems to incline the thinker towards or against adding conditions for the wrongdoer to meet if he is to be forgiven. Deciding what forgiveness is and what it entails involves some degree of non-vicious circularity. A scholar may begin her study by first accepting a definition of forgiveness and seeing what that entails about related issues, or she may work from other assumptions she has and then determine what definition best fits those assumptions. The difficulty arises, as it does with analyses of other abstract concepts, when the thinker has finally created an internally coherent view of forgiveness but has failed to recognize the part that her own preconceptions have played in its development.<sup>34</sup> Most of what has been written on forgiveness so far indicates that people choose a conceptual forgiveness framework and express their opinions from within it, but rarely provide strong arguments for why they chose that particular framework. Of course, providing justification for foundational assumptions is not always required. It is nonetheless interesting to note the foundational assumptions that support any particular view, especially when they contrast with those assumptions that undergird alternate theories.<sup>35</sup>

### **Ethical Assumptions and Limitations**

I will now mention some of my own assumptions about ethics in general so as to dissuade the reader from thinking that I have ignored these assumptions or have been

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<sup>34</sup> Psychologists, Steven Sandage and Ian Williamson, have studied and categorized some of the basic assumptions of different types of forgivers. They have noticed that those people who view forgiveness as a bilateral act, for example, tend to interpret the world more collectively than those who hold unilateral views. Steven J. Sandage and Ian Williamson, “Forgiveness in Cultural Context,” in *Handbook of Forgiveness*, Everett L. Worthington, Jr., ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 45.

<sup>35</sup> I mention this because the assumptions that support my unilateral, unconditional account of Forgiveness are very different from those assumptions of Charles Griswold, whose bilateral, conditional account was presented in his 2007 book. See Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 49-ff.

otherwise unaware of their existence and influence on this project. As Nicholas Wolterstorff says, “one cannot just insert forgiveness into any ethical orientation whatsoever. There are frameworks of thought within which forgiveness can find no home.”<sup>36</sup> The following are some of my own assumptions, and they are compatible with virtuous unilateral, unconditional *Forgivingness* as it will be presented in a later chapter.

My first assumption is that there are several objective moral laws, or at least principles, for which all people must be held accountable; further, there are some objective goods that are universally valuable. In many cases, the ultimate standards for what is intrinsically good or right should not ultimately be decided based on what the most “successful” people do, what makes us feel the best, what people have agreed to contractually, what comes from our primal instincts, or what seems most rational (although reason, successful people, feelings, and contracts often are in accordance with what is right and good and can help us discern it). Rather, many times we must refer to an ultimate source of Goodness as the final measure of cases of moral goodness or values.

Mentioning this assumption here is necessary because in the literature on forgiveness, and in many works on other topics, there are scholars who do not take it for granted that morally appropriate forms of forgiveness, love, charity, and good will are better or more important for humans to value than hatred, resentment, and indifference towards people. All other things being equal, if these scholars were to have the choice to act lovingly or in a neutral way towards another person, they would believe they have no morally justifiable reason to do one over the other. If matters are then complicated by the object of the love or neutrality being a person who has committed an offense against them, then they see nothing that is preferable about loving the offender rather than treating him neutrally. In their opinion, love has no special or intrinsic value. In human relations, however, I consider love for others to be qualitatively better than neutrality and exponentially better than hatred. There is a place in the ethical life for love, neutrality, hatred, and anger. Nevertheless, when faced with the choice of loving, hating, or being neutral towards those who offend us, I take it as foundational that choosing the loving option is best.

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<sup>36</sup> Wolterstorff, 185.

In the absence of a reason to act lovingly rather than neutrally towards an offender, I recognize that those who do not hold this assumption may not be convinced that this is necessary. As R.S. Downie states of his own work,

In my analysis I began by assuming that readiness to forgive is a virtue and unwillingness to try to forgive a vice, and I wish to conclude by attempting to justify the assumption. It is possible to justify the assumption, however, only within moral systems which share a certain outlook on life. The justification, that is, will not convince anyone influenced by such an ethic as that of Nietzsche, who would regard readiness to forgive as a characteristic of “slave morality.” If it is objected that, being limited in this way, what is provided cannot be justification at all, I am willing to retract the term ‘justification’ and admit that all I am doing is to point to the position of forgiveness in moral systems, religious or secular, influenced by Judaistic conceptions.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, and since this dissertation is neither on ethical obligation nor epistemology or metaethics, I am mentioning my basic assumption, without providing a defense, that moral love is more morally praiseworthy than neutrality towards others.

I also assume that moral laws concerning action do not comprise a comprehensive ethic, for much of one’s ethical life is comprised of honing one’s desires, attitudes, motives and practical wisdom so that one can do not only what is required of one in a minimal sense but also what is required of one who is most excellent, praiseworthy, and lovely. Thus, I approach the topic of ideal forgiveness by assuming that even though people may not see a reason to act in the best way possible way, as long as their actions are morally permissible, this does not mean that people should not strive for the ideal. While people are not always required to act supererogatorily, I do not classify having the virtue of Forgivingness as supererogation. The main question provoking this dissertation is “Is it morally best to always and unconditionally forgive?” While this is a question about actions, the answer lies in the ethics of character, not the ethics of right action. Of course, right action and good character are connected, but I am providing an answer from the perspective of character-ethics rather than a rule-oriented ethical approach.

Although ethical rules are always outstripped by life’s situations, the resulting area of ambiguity and messiness is an amazingly ripe place through which to expose moral greatness and excellence. The areas where the ideal exceeds the permissible and

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<sup>37</sup> Downie, 133.

there are no clear limits or moral rules are those in which Robert M. Adams' edifying concept, "being for the Good," becomes especially useful. Adams explains that *being for* something involves "dispositions to favor [it] in action, desire, emotion, or feeling"<sup>38</sup> (i.e., it must broadly engage the will—an "intellectual appetitive faculty"<sup>39</sup>), and may be seen in a variety of ways including: "loving it, liking it, respecting it, wanting it, wishing for it, appreciating it, thinking highly of it, speaking in favor of it and otherwise intentionally standing for it symbolically, acting to promote or protect it, and being disposed to do such things."<sup>40</sup> When one is *for* something, one normally believes that it is good or right and favors that good or right thing when one acts, feels, and desires. When one does this excellently and persistently, according to Adams, one possesses the relevant virtue. Whatever good thing someone is for, one must be for it excellently if one is to satisfy Adam's criteria for virtue. "Excellence," he says, "is the objective and non-instrumental goodness of that which is worthy to be honored, loved, admired, or (in the extreme case) worshiped, for its own sake . . . and not merely for the sake of any consequences."<sup>41</sup> It is a particular form of goodness which is worth prizing for its own sake as it is something which makes life worth living. He further explains that excellence consists in resembling the Good (which he equates with God), and that which resembles the Good accurately shares important properties with the Good, even though it does so imperfectly.<sup>42</sup>

Adams' theory of virtue, especially his concept of being for the Good, and his definition of excellence relate to my understanding of forgiveness in several ways. First, *Forgivingness* is a virtue that involves a disposition to favor a wrongdoer, to intentionally promote him in some way, or to wish for his ultimate good; it also allows the victim to favor and promote himself and his own ultimate good. In my account, when a victim forgives, he is at least symbolically standing for the offender's ultimate good or what I will call his "ideal self." While the injured person may not be standing directly for the

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32-33.

offender *qua* offender, and thus he may not seem to be directly standing for the offender at all, my view allows him to stand for what is good (i.e., moral improvement) and to stand for at least one thing that is good in the person (i.e., who he should become; his ideal moral self). Second, this theory of virtue is non-consequentialist in the sense that the good that forgivingness is for is the people's ideal selves, objects, and entities (perhaps intangible entities) involved in the situation caused by the wrongdoing. It is not the state of affairs (e.g., restoring lost property, making the offender suffer, making relationships go back to normal, saving face) that is hoped for after forgiveness is virtuously given. A person who possesses the virtue of *Forgivingness* does not forgive merely, or primarily, for the sake of consequences. Forgiveness actually and symbolically stands for who the offender and the victim needs to become as excelling moral and spiritual beings who live in a social context. In this sense, the good that forgiveness stands for includes morality and the non-instrumental, potential goodness of human beings. Thus, I assume that all living human beings have ideal, moral selves. Given that humans have moral flaws, every person can be better than he is currently. Even those people who will not ever become morally better people have the potential to improve. I believe that this potential, however slight, is worth valuing in ourselves and in others.

Adams' view of excellence and my understanding of virtuous forgiveness also relate in that they both consider virtue to be associated with the possessor's emotions, actions, desires, motivations, and intentions, not simply with action. Forgiveness affects one's actions, emotions and motivations in countless ways, some of which will be articulated in the third chapter. A primary goal of forgiveness is to move these aspects of the victim in a way that exemplifies more excellence in standing for the Good. Fourth, it provides a way to understand why a person would perform actions that manifest the virtue even when those actions seem unbeneficial or may appear to be harmful in some ways to the victim's personal interests. Consequently, the concept of standing excellent for the Good helps to bridge the gap between right character and right action.

As mentioned above, it is sometimes difficult to convince people that existing at a mere moral minimum is something to avoid when possible. Classifying moral action is quite messy and there are actions that do not clearly fall into any widely-used category.

The moral category, “supererogatory,” or, being above duty, denotes a class of actions that seems not to be morally required even though it is highly praiseworthy. In an attempt to classify the bindingness of a moral action, Kant distinguishes types of duties. A perfect duty admits of no exception while an imperfect duty is something one must do to some extent at least sometimes. One might be tempted to think of imperfect duties as supererogatory, for they are not always required and they both have moral value. But upon closer investigation, imperfect duties and supererogatory actions are not equivalent concepts. A substantive difference is that the imperfect duty *must* be done sometimes, but the supererogatory act is supposedly always optional.

The category that forgiveness falls into is highly debatable. Some say it is a duty; others maintain that it is supererogatory. Some argue that it is a duty in some instances, or it is at least morally acceptable, and it is morally prohibited in other situations. My position is that all people should desire and make progress toward having the attitudes, beliefs, motivations and actions that are associated with virtuous forgiveness because these qualities equip the forgiver with a better moral character and enable him to perform ideally with regards to forgiving. I also believe that all people have a moral duty to attempt to become morally better people. But when people severely lack the characteristics required to forgive well, they sometimes do not have a duty to forgive. Their lack of progress towards developing some of the *Forgivingness*-related qualities indicates moral deficiency for which they are blameworthy, even though their lack of forgiveness in some instances may not break a moral requirement. *Forgivingness* is part of a class of actions and attitudes that are morally required, yet have more merit than actions performed simply because an agent believes that it is her duty. The agents who perform these acts are praiseworthy because they go beyond mere duty and they resemble or stand for the Good while doing so.

Wolterstorff distinguishes between what someone should do and what they ought to do. The former is what is best for them to do; not doing what they should do will make them unwise. The latter is that they have an obligation to do X; not doing so will make them guilty and blameworthy. Perhaps always offering unilateral, unconditional



forgiveness in a virtuous way is what one should do, rather than what one ought to do.<sup>43</sup> But do we not have some form of moral obligation to avoid being unwise?<sup>44</sup>

In some literature, especially that written by some psychologists, it is claimed that the demands of unconditional forgiveness are impossible for a victim to fulfill, especially when the wrong is particularly severe or traumatic. In other words, forgiveness may sometimes be psychologically impossible. When someone cannot forgive, they suggest, it is wrong for others to claim that he *should* forgive. Similarly, philosopher David Novitz believes “there can be no duty to forgive; this is simply because it is not directly within one’s power to do so,”<sup>45</sup> and Jerome Neu claims, “even if we were persuaded we would be better off if we forgave someone who had trespassed against us, we might find ourselves unable to forgive. That is not necessarily something (a further something) to blame ourselves for.”<sup>46</sup>

I am inclined to predominantly disagree with this view. Ethical prescriptions will be very shallow if they are always based on what frail, flawed, and hurt humans can do naturally. Ethical reasoning simply cannot consistently proceed from what is the case in human behavior to what ought to be. Such reasoning may more properly be found in sociological efforts, not ethical projects. Plus, it may be that complete moral fulfillment may always be a little beyond a human’s reach; it may be that none of us can ever behave and feel exactly as we ought all of the time. This does not decrease the value of ethical prescriptions nor does it decrease the value of human effort in becoming more ethical; rather, it makes a life well-lived more laudable. Hopefully, it can spur us to be more appreciative of people’s attempts—even failed attempts—to do the “right thing” and be the best sort of person possible.

To the extent that those who believe that forgiveness may sometimes be impossible are only making therapeutic suggestions, I will not flatly disagree. In order to

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<sup>43</sup> See Wolterstorff, 186, n. 12. He does not use this distinction to support unconditional forgiveness.

<sup>44</sup> Aristotle and Hume are among those who equate being virtuous as being our duty. I am happy to join such company.

<sup>45</sup> Novitz, “Forgiveness and Self-Respect,” 313.

<sup>46</sup> Jerome Neu, “To Understand All is to Forgive All—Or is It?” in *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*, ed. Sharon Lamb and Jeffrie G. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 25.

help a victim forgive, a therapist may find that initial acceptance of unforgiveness may have important consequences that lead to an eventual ability to forgive. But even some therapists question whether forgiveness should be the ultimate goal of therapy, especially if it does not come easily for the victim. Psychologist Judith L. Herman considers forgiveness to sometimes be a “fantasy” which can become “cruel torture, because it remains out of reach for most ordinary human beings” and which frequently “becomes a formidable impediment to mourning” and healing.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps a victim will recover from mental trauma more effectively if she seeks revenge or if she simply forgets.

Psychotherapists believe that recovery, no matter how it is attained, is an important aspiration for a victim who has already suffered enough. Consequently, there have been concerns about how far therapy should go in an attempt to promote forgiveness. In “Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training,”<sup>48</sup> for instance, the authors evaluate therapeutic interventions that explicitly promote forgiveness and they also evaluate opposition to therapy that promotes forgiveness. Although they see this style of forgiveness therapy as useful in some situations, they still express some skepticism of forgiveness interventions. Other people who have reacted against these interventions in therapy are concerned about how such a method affects the therapeutic process and the good of the victim. Many judge that the effects are substantially dependent on the given therapist’s skill.

But suggestions about therapy are kept separate from the more strictly ethical concerns entertained here. Even those scholars whose definition of “ethical” is much more limited than my own have been inclined to overlook the point that while they are related, therapy and ethics must not be muddled together without first understanding that they are distinct. One reason that this dissertation will avoid discussing strictly therapeutic objections to unconditional forgiveness is because the goals of psychotherapy and ethics are often dissimilar. For many (if not most) psychotherapists, the goal of

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<sup>47</sup> Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 190. Quoted in Thomas Brudholm, *Resentment’s Virtue: Jean Améry and the Refusal to Forgive* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 40.

<sup>48</sup> Nathaniel G. Wade, Chad V. Johnson, and Julia E. Meyer, “Understanding Concerns about Interventions to Promote Forgiveness: A Review of the Literature,” *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 45 (March 2008), 88-102.

therapy is to help the patient achieve happiness or at least to be functional within the world. This is usually done in whatever way that works, perhaps at the sacrifice of truth and moral principles. On the other hand, philosophy (at least as I conceive of it) upholds truth and is not willing to sacrifice it for someone's emotional happiness. Fortunately, truth often helps liberate and heal wounds; it is often a part of overall moral and spiritual flourishing. But when the truth by itself does not heal, the philosopher must not dispense with it. Perhaps a psychologist might find this more amenable to his goal, but a forfeiture of truth should not be acceptable in philosophy. For this reason, and because more hard-hearted people may not be able to forgive much of anything, I will not refute the idea that since it is sometimes psychologically difficult to forgive, it is morally permissible to not forgive in those instances. Similarly, I will not discuss the claim that unconditional forgiveness may sometimes be the least helpful therapeutic alternative. As Anthony Bash correctly writes, "Forgiveness, then, is a moral issue with psychological implications; it is not a psychological issue with moral undertones."<sup>49</sup>

Ethical concerns are the focus here, and there are a plethora of such issues to evaluate. Always offering unilateral, unconditional forgiveness seems unpalatable to some thinkers for several reasons. At the most fundamental level, unconditional forgiveness seems, at least to conditionalists, to deviate from the essential nature of forgiveness. Some people conjecture that if forgiveness is a virtue, it has to be given at the right time, to the right people, in the right way and they assume that these requirements of the virtue cannot be fulfilled if forgiveness is always given. Others say that forgiveness loses its value if it is required of a victim because it is supposed to be a free gift. Further opposition to unconditional forgiveness suggests that it disregards a victim's legitimate need to harbor resentment; not only is it unhealthy to not experience resentment, but not resenting in certain situations may indicate a significant character flaw in the victim—particularly, servility. Relatedly, those who support unconditional forgiveness seem to ignore the idea that there are certain instances of evil and certain evildoers who necessarily preclude being forgiven. Perhaps unconditional forgiveness even condones the wrongdoing or unjustly pardons the offender.

Such accusations made against invariable and unconditional forgiveness should

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<sup>49</sup> Bash, 46.

give us pause before we endorse this form of forgiveness as a moral rule, ideal, or virtue. If the opponents of this form of forgiveness are correct, and forgiving can sometimes be morally wrong merely because it is given unconditionally, or if it is not morally better to give virtuous forgiveness than to withhold it, then forgiveness advocates have been mistaken about several important ethical concerns, including who the ideal moral person is, what morality requires, and even what counts as goodness. If unconditional and invariable forgiveness and the character traits that accompany it (or comprise it) are not absolutely good, it may be that resentment, desire for revenge, the desire to have nothing to do with an offender or to not think about him, and related traits actually have moral merits as well—or more merit than we had originally believed.

### **Preview**

To offer support for the moral praiseworthiness of always and unconditionally virtuously forgiving, the remainder of this chapter will define forgiveness and will illuminate some of the issues and concepts that are related to it. It will explain the differences between conditional, unconditional, bilateral, and unilateral forms of forgiveness. It will also provide definitions for minimal and virtuous forgiveness, the virtuously-forgiving victim, and the virtue of *Forgiveness*. The chapter will end with an excellent example of virtuous forgiveness being given for a significant, moral offense.

In order to make arguments for many of the positions taken in this project, it is necessary for the reader to have an advanced understanding of the concepts involved in those arguments. Chapter 2 will lay the groundwork for the virtue of *Forgiveness* as a multi-faceted, unilateral, unconditional phenomenon and it will establish a preliminary sketch of minimal and virtuous forgiveness, drawing out important distinctions between them. It will discuss moral love, the self-forgetfulness that accompanies it, the ultimate good of the offender, and the offender's ideal self. Additionally, it will discuss the relationship of excuses, reconciliation, and forgetting to virtuous forgiveness. Chapter 2 offers reasons for conceiving of the elements of virtuous forgiveness in the way that it proposes, but it does not argue for every aspect of the virtue that it reveals, nor does it argue that virtuous forgiveness is always better than unforgiveness. Arguments for those broader topics will be presented in the remaining chapters. One of the main goals of

Chapter 2 is to develop the vocabulary to make those arguments. The arguments cannot be made if the only vocabulary that exists to use within them are defined by the scholars whose positions I am refuting. So in a sense, Chapters 1 and 2 attempt to reclaim the terms and concepts used in current scholarly discussions of forgiveness for the sake of unilateral, unconditional forgiveness.

Chapter 3 will present a comparatively full conception of the virtue of *Forgivingness* presented as a multidimensional phenomenon. The virtue is referred to as multidimensional because it has four main components (i.e., affective, cognitive, motivational, and action) and many facets that can arise in each component. To describe them all is beyond the scope of this project, but the affective dimension is discussed in some detail since that is the aspect of forgiveness that is usually most closely associated with it. Some of the negatively-valenced emotions, and their positive, cognitive counterparts, that are addressed in Chapter 3 include: anger, hate, contempt, envy, frustration, fear, delight in the misfortune of an offender, sadness, disappointment, moral love, hope, compassion, understanding, gratitude, and self-respect.<sup>50</sup> Anger will be given the most attention and a specific way of understanding it will give rise to its compatibility with the moral love that is operative in *Forgivingness*. It will also discuss the action tendencies of *Forgivingness*, explaining the compatibility of disciplinary action with the virtue.

Chapter 4 will defend my model of *Forgivingness*—a unilateral and unconditional model (UUF model)—from some of the criticisms often levied against unconditional forgiveness: that it unjustly pardons the offender, that it condones the wrongdoing, and that it comes from or contributes to the servility of the victim. During this chapter, the topic of who may forgive will be addressed. Various definitions of condoning will be acknowledged, and comments will be made about the tricky relationship between pardoning, excusing, and forgiveness. This chapter will reiterate why virtuous forgiveness is much better than minimal forgiveness, especially in the face of serious moral offenses and unrepentant offenders. It will also present Robin Dillon’s excellent way of understanding self-respect and will show that virtuous forgiveness is not a conduit

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<sup>50</sup> Some of these are not emotions, but may serve as a “counterpart” to an emotion or another attitude.

for passivity. Overall, Chapter 4 argues that the UUF version of *Forgivingness* that I develop is immune to the criticisms typically raised against unconditional forgiveness.

As already stated, the remainder of the current chapter aims to present some definitions for terms used throughout this project. It distinguishes between several established forms of forgiveness and will differentiate between minimal and virtuous forgiveness, as conceived of in this project. Before any of this is done, however, the conditions that must arise if forgiveness is to be an option will be presented.

### **Three Prerequisite Conditions for Forgiveness**

If forgiveness, in any form, is to occur, three conditions must be present. These conditions are:

1. A victim must believe he has been wronged.
2. The wronged person must recognize that he was wronged by the offender.<sup>51</sup>
3. The person who was wronged views the offense as unappreciated or impermissible.<sup>52</sup>

The first and second conditions are necessary if forgiveness is to be an option because a victim cannot have the opportunity to forgive if he does not experience, or recognize that he has experienced, anything that warrants forgiveness. The third condition is necessary because a victim must believe that, at least in some sense, the offense should not have been done. Without this condition, the victim will have no serious grounds to claim that he was wronged.

### **Defining Forgiveness and Other Concepts**

With the prerequisites for any form of forgiveness stipulated, this chapter will attempt to define forgiveness and distinguish among different forms of it. The four broad classifications that will be presented first emphasize varying views of the relevance of the victim-offender relationship to forgiveness. These forms are: unilateral unconditional forgiveness; unilateral conditional forgiveness; bilateral unconditional forgiveness; and bilateral conditional forgiveness. The model of the virtue that I support in this

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<sup>51</sup> Without there being blame, then the releasing of negative emotions by a victim is likely to be result of an excuse, not of forgiveness.

<sup>52</sup> Wolterstorff presents a list of prerequisites. Especially see Wolterstorff, 167.

dissertation is unilateral and unconditional. Its primary contender is bilateral conditional forgiveness.

### **Bilateral Forgiveness**

Bilateral forgiveness is other-dependent forgiveness. It usually involves some interaction between the victim and the offender and for this reason, it has a two-way dynamic. For example, a victim may require the offender to apologize or repent before he will forgive him. A bilaterally forgiving victim may think that in order to forgive, he must express the hurt he experienced to his offender, or at least tell the offender that he has been forgiven. Bilateral forgiveness does not include instances where a victim freely forgives an offender on his own accord without it being necessary that he interact with his offender in order to forgive. Instead, for bilateral forgiveness, it is necessary that the offender be involved in the forgiveness process. Many writers who favor bilateral forgiveness do so because they recognize the state of mutuality and vulnerability in which we live with others and through which we have meaningful relationships.<sup>53</sup>

### **Unilateral Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is unilateral when there is a one-way forgiveness dynamic. Forgiveness occurs in the victim without consideration of the perpetrator's subsequent actions, attitudes, or associations. Forgiveness may or may not be expressed to the offender, but any expression of it is not necessary for forgiveness to be given. In fact, it is not necessary for the offender to be involved in any direct way in the forgiveness process. Unilateral forgiveness is solely dependent on the victim. Many writers favor it because it allows forgiveness of the dead, of those wrongdoers who we do not know, and even of those offenders who are currently abusing us. Additionally, it allows every victim the chance to partake of the health benefits that forgiveness is claimed to have. Unilateral forgiveness is characteristic of this project's view of *Forgivingness*.

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<sup>53</sup> Kim Adkins suggests that bilateral views can be more or less individualistic. She offers an account of forgiveness which she believes to be less individualistic and more in favor of mutuality than many other bilateral views. See Kim Atkins, "Friendship, Trust and Forgiveness," *Philosophia* 29 (May 2002).

## Conditional Forgiveness

When forgiveness is conditional, there are conditions that must be fulfilled before the victim forgives. Conditional forgiveness occurs if and only if someone (usually, the offender) does something to warrant it.<sup>54</sup> In a sense, the offender is thought to earn his forgiveness or to at least give the victim an obvious reason to consider forgiving him. The conditions for one forgiving another might include an offender's apology,<sup>55</sup> an offender having already suffered "enough," the offender repenting,<sup>56</sup> making reparation,<sup>57</sup> or penance.<sup>58</sup> Depending on the circumstances (and the assumptions of the particular thinker's view who is writing on the issue), a victim may or may not be obligated to forgive someone who has done the right things to make amends and to remove his guilt. But common to conditional forgivers is that without something being done on the part of the offender, the victim will not forgive. Many people who prefer this form of forgiveness do so because it is thought to preserve the self-respect of the victim and it seems to prevent condonation of the wrong. Griswold's view of *Forgiveness* makes forgiveness conditional.

## Unconditional Forgiveness

When forgiveness is unconditional, it is given by a victim without any conditions first being met. The perpetrator does not have to repent, make reparations, ask for forgiveness, have a conversion experience, have a change of heart, nor does he have to

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<sup>54</sup> Defending this view, Griswold makes his paradigm case of forgiveness something which is owed to an offender since the offender has earned it. Griswold, 64-65. One may also refer to Jeffrie G. Murphy, "Forgiveness and Resentment," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 7 (1982): 508, and Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 73-92. Swinburne sees moral wrong as a debt and believes the offender should try to repent, apologize, make reparation, and do penance as a means to removing their guilt and the consequences of it as much as possible. Forgiveness is a response to the offender's atonement for his wrong and it removes his guilt.

<sup>55</sup> An apology is an admission of guilt and a public disowning of a wrong.

<sup>56</sup> Repenting, figuratively, is turning the self in a different direction that leads away from the wrong. It is to inwardly disown the wrong action or attitude and to resolve to be separate from it in the future.

<sup>57</sup> Making reparation is repairing. It is removing the harm, to the extent that it is possible to do so.

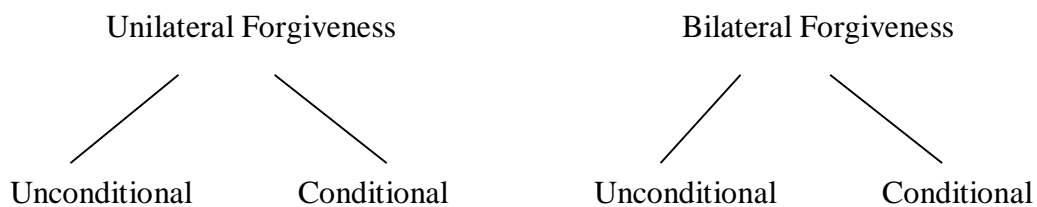
<sup>58</sup> According to Swinburne, penance is further punishment taken on by the offender to solidify the sincerity of his apology and to further aid in the process of guilt removal. It is an additional way to disown the wrong and the associated attitudes. Swinburne, 83-84.



cease the bad behavior.<sup>59</sup> The victim does not first have to express his anger and perspective to the offender or tell the offender that he is forgiven. Nor are there conditions the victim must meet before she can forgive and the forgiveness be considered morally appropriate. For instance, there is no proper time period for which she must remain angry before she forgives. Of course, there may be psychological stages through which the victim progresses before she is psychologically able to forgive. But as far as virtuous forgiveness is concerned, there are no necessary prerequisites that must be met in order to give the victim permission to forgive. (The three prerequisites mentioned above are features of every type of forgiveness and cannot properly be considered as conditions for forgiveness.) People who prefer this view usually do so because it does not require that the victim continue to be “victimized” by the emotions he experiences as a result of the offense even though the offender might refuse to agree to the conditions of forgiveness. Further, it allows the victim to distance himself from potentially damaging forms of hatred, anger, resentment.<sup>60</sup>

#### Four Combinations of the Forms of Forgiveness

The following figure represents one way to conceptualize the four, basic forms of forgiveness:




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<sup>59</sup> For this view, see Eve Garrard and David McNaughton, “In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 103 (2003). Also see C. Bennett, “Personal and Redemptive Forgiveness,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 11 (2003): 127-144.

<sup>60</sup> Anita Superson points out that some scholars may not view this second reason for preferring unconditional forgiveness as a strong reason because they may think that forgiving for the sake of being better off psychologically is incompatible with the true spirit of forgiveness. I believe, on the contrary, that the psychological condition one allows oneself to be in greatly affects one’s current and future ability to feel and behave in a morally praiseworthy way. Thus, there is a sense in which distancing oneself from potentially damaging emotions and attitudes is a normative issue and is a good reason—one compatible with the virtue associated with forgiving—to favor unconditional forgiveness. Anita Superson, (Professor of Philosophy, University of Kentucky, May 2015) in an email to the author.

Logically there is nothing that prevents the combination of any of these forms, but there are tendencies towards natural kinds. Unconditional forgiveness is most likely to be a species of unilateral forgiveness since conditions are not usually placed on an offender unless the victim expects something of the offender or of the forgiveness process that cannot be achieved without the offender's involvement. Although one bilateral unconditional form of forgiveness does not require the offender or the offended to meet any conditions but requires that the forgiveness be expressed to the offender, this form is rarely discussed in the literature and seems, empirically, to be rarely practiced.

Conditional forgiveness, on the other hand, is frequently bilateral because it takes the interaction of the wrongdoer and the victim to satisfy any of the conditions leading to the possibility of forgiveness. As mentioned above, Margaret Holmgren holds to a version of conditional forgiveness that is unilateral instead of bilateral.<sup>61</sup> It is unilateral in that it is given without regard for the further actions and attitudes of the offender, but it is conditional in that the victim (not the offender) must meet certain requirements before forgiveness can be given.<sup>62</sup> The requirements stipulate the steps that the victim goes through in order to preserve her self-respect and to achieve forgiveness.

As stated above, I argue that the form of forgiveness that is characteristic of the virtue associated with forgiving—and consequently, the form that is most praiseworthy—is a particular type of unilateral and unconditional forgiveness. I will describe this form of forgiveness and argue for my conception of the virtue throughout this project.

### **Always Forgiving/Invariable Forgiveness**

A superficial reading of the literature on unconditional forgiveness may lead one to infer that unconditional forgiveness is synonymous with always forgiving. Since unconditional forgivers often try to always forgive, it is easy to miss that always forgiving and forgiving unconditionally are distinguishable concepts. One could forgive without requiring anything from the offender yet only do this for certain offenders. On the other hand, theoretically, there could be the most amiable, apologetic, repentant offenders who always make reparations. One could always forgive these offenders but

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<sup>61</sup> Howell III, "Forgiveness in Kierkegaard's Ethic," 43.

<sup>62</sup> Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value," 341-52.

never have to do it in a way that gives meaning to the forgiveness being unconditional. Just because someone always forgives, this does not mean that this person has had the occasion to do so without placing conditions on his offender. Just because someone forgives unconditionally, this does not mean that he always forgives.

For the sake of clarity, this project will use the terms “unconditional forgiveness,” “unilateral forgiveness” and “always forgiving” when clarity calls for the distinction to be made. The goal of this project is to support a view of the virtue associated with a forgiver who forgives unconditionally and always. “Always forgiving” or “invariably offering forgiveness” means that forgiveness is offered by a victim in every instance when she has been wronged. It does not necessarily refer to the entirety of a person’s life, but can refer to any significant measure of time in which a victim forgives consistently and has occasion to not forgive. As I will argue, the person who has the virtue associated with forgiving will, once she possesses the virtue, always and reliably forgive unilaterally and unconditionally.

Almost no one would claim that every instance of forgiveness is categorically problematic. Such an assertion has no reasonable justification. But certain instances of extreme evil that are done by an unrepentant offender, for example, make it difficult to see how someone’s well-intentioned resolve to always and unconditionally forgive could be always morally good. This dissertation does not merely support someone who forgives without placing conditions on his offender, but someone who *always* does this, even when it appears, in some scholars’ opinions, to be immoral or beyond moral requirements. The argument for this unfolds in the next chapters.

### **Minimal Forgiveness/To Forgive (Minimally)**

I have explained the four basic forms of forgiveness. They are typically grouped and discussed in philosophical literature as unilateral, unconditional forgiveness and as bilateral, conditional forgiveness. Utilizing terms that emphasize features not captured by these groupings can also be useful. Instead of emphasizing aspects of the victim-offender relationship, “minimal forgiveness”<sup>63</sup> (which will be contrasted with virtuous

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<sup>63</sup> Cheshire Calhoun writes of a “minimalist forgiveness” that she contrasts with “aspirational forgiveness.” Aspirational forgiveness is that for which we would like to aspire to give. It is not given out of duty but it reflects a change of heart that is given freely, not because it

forgiveness) underscores the lack of moral reasoning and reflection that is characteristic of some instances of forgiveness. I will argue that minimal forgiveness is morally permissible for a certain category of offenses and rarely acceptable in other cases.

“Forgiveness” refers to a discrete action or event, as opposed to a characteristic or virtue. Each instance of forgiveness can be evaluated as a discrete event. One instance of forgiveness can be more virtuous or less virtuous depending on the quality of the reasons or inclinations that motivated it, the ease in which it is given, the beauty of its execution, its intent on standing for the Good, and similar considerations. Some instances of forgiveness are less logical and more selfish than others. For example, one can imagine the leader of a violent gang becoming angry at a new recruit for not following certain protocols concerning speaking with him (even though no one informed the new recruit of the protocol). After making some convincing threats against the recruit’s physical safety, the leader tells the recruit that he will forgive him this once. It may not make sense to hold someone guilty of breaking protocol if he had never been informed of it, and so it makes little sense to say that the recruit needs to be forgiven, but to the extent that the leader’s anger is actually assuaged, he has forgiven the recruit.

But this instance of forgiveness should seem morally tainted and unsettling. It originates in the context of someone (who probably has no right to be angry) who purposefully exerts a façade of unwarranted self-control for the advancement of his own purposes. To the extent that his anger towards the recruit for this offense goes away, he is forgiving. But this form of forgiveness is rooted in the manipulation of unjustified anger rather than anything that occurs for a moral reason. The motivation, the quality, and the context of this lessening of anger-at-wrongdoing yields a low quality of forgiveness. It might be a form of what can be called “minimal forgiveness.”

Minimal forgiveness is one of the most important concepts presented in this

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is what justice demands. The problems with minimalist forgiveness, she thinks, are that it takes away the free choice to forgive and it results in a change in the condition of the heart without the presence of justice. A further problem is that minimal forgiveness fails to treat the offender as a wrongdoer and treats him, instead, as one who deserves forgiveness. See Cheshire Calhoun, “Changing One’s Heart,” *Ethics* 103 (October 1992): 79. Although my concerns are different from Calhoun’s, my distinction between minimal and virtuous forgiveness is an attempt to differentiate between a mundane forgiveness that may sometimes collapse into excusing or overlooking wrongdoing and those instances of forgiveness to which we should aspire.

project and its distinction from virtuous forgiveness is fundamental to this work. Recognizing that it exists as a separate form of forgiveness from virtuous forgiveness is necessary because it serves as a comparison with virtuous forgiveness, which is the main topic of this project. “Minimal forgiveness” is not a label that intends to capture the “least common denominator” among all cases of forgiveness, although it does that in part. Instead, it seeks to indicate the stunted moral quality of some instances of forgiveness or their mundane nature.

Minimal forgiveness, as opposed to virtuous forgiveness, can be given by almost anyone, even by moral agents with severely corrupted characters. As a rough-and-ready definition, minimal forgiveness can be said to occur when the victim’s negative feelings for and actions towards his offender (which arose in response to a particular offense) are foresworn and are partially or completely dissolved.

Minimal forgiveness can occur for any reason but is often the result of amoral or immoral reasons. It can be achieved through self-control, hypnosis, empathy or other emotions external to it, forgetfulness, a desire to seem powerful, general goodness of character, or through any other means and motivations. One can be said to minimally forgive one’s offender if one forgets the offense naturally or through the help of psychotherapy, if one convinces oneself of the personal value of no longer hating the offender, or if one no longer harbors negative emotions towards the offender because one has secretly gotten revenge against the offender and has achieved an emotional release from this. It is called “minimal forgiveness” mainly because it requires only a minimum amount of moral effort from the offender and it can be done whenever the victim wishes to forgive. In other words, it only requires the foreswearing or dissolution of bad emotions and action tendencies towards the offender that resulted from the offense (or supposed offense) and does not require that positive emotions replace the offender-opposing emotions or accurate judgments about the nature and severity of the offense. Additionally, the minimally forgiving victim chooses to forgive selectively, on a case-by-case basis. One can forgive minimally once and never again, if one wishes, because there is nothing within minimal forgiveness itself that compels forgiveness. Minimal forgiveness does not require the victim to be in a habit of forgiving or have a trait that may, in any way, resemble a virtue. Particular instances of minimal forgiveness may

stand in vastly different relationships to moral goodness.

The example of the gang leader minimally forgiving the new recruit paints this form of forgiveness in a negative light. The following is another example of minimal forgiveness that occurs because of less-than-admirable reasons but that has more positive results and arises in a more positive context than the gang leader scenario: Jodi is generally annoying to most of the people in her high school class. Her grouchiness, melodrama, and self-centeredness display themselves frequently. One day at a weekend school retreat when she had been particularly mean to everyone, Jodi went to take a shower in the locker room. Her towel and clothes were hanging in the changing room directly outside the shower curtain. A couple of the girls to whom Jodi had been particularly abusive that day decided to steal Jodi's towel. They knew she would have to wear her wet clothes back to the dorm without drying off, but they were happy to have her suffer in that small way since they had to put up with her seemingly willful immaturity all the time. Plus, they reasoned, it was not as if they stole her clothes as well. After hearing the shower turn off and Jodi's over-dramatic shrieks of frustration, the two girls felt much better and were emotionally freed to endure the rest of the weekend with Jodi. Jodi never knows who did this to her and she never knows for certain why they did it. She goes on with her life, remembering the event as painful, but she has been only slightly inconvenienced. Because of this incident, however, the two girls almost feel as if they like Jodi again. They no longer harbor ill-will and negative feelings towards her, at least for now.

It is reasonable to think that the towel-stealing act aided in these two girl's forgiveness of Jodi and acted as a cathartic process that led to minimal forgiveness. The girls' restrained response to Jodi—while not to be encouraged or admired—likely helped them regain the sense that they could have good will towards Jodi again. Since the release of negative feelings occurred and they no longer have the desire to punish Jodi, they can be said to forgive in the minimal sense. The origin of their forgiveness, and the actions they had to perform in order to forgive, however, leave something to be desired.

Other situations illustrate minimal forgiveness as it is carried out in the mundane sense. If we bump into someone accidentally on a crowded subway platform, the person may excuse us, or in the minimal sense, forgive us for what ever-so-slight harm we

caused him. It is likely that situations like this call for minimal forgiveness and nothing else. Thus, while minimal forgiveness covers instances of forgiveness that are less than morally laudable, but for which theorists would benefit from having a label to reference it, minimal forgiveness is also a morally acceptable response to some small slights or those which may cover the misapplication of etiquette.

### **Virtuous Forgiveness**

When some scholars try to establish the necessary and sufficient conditions for forgiveness, they sometimes mix conceptions of minimal forgiveness with ideal notions of forgiveness. The result is unconvincing reasoning and muddled concepts. Distinguishing minimal from virtuous forgiveness helps bring clarity to one's understanding of what forgiveness is and what should be required from people who forgive in different ways.

Virtuous forgiveness refers to an instance of forgiveness that aligns with the virtue in that it either:

1. comes from a person whose character embodies *Forgiveness* (the virtue associated with forgiveness) and so, exemplifies the excellence of the virtue in a plenary sense, or
2. it is not a perfect example of the virtue, but it mimics many of its good, multi-dimensional qualities well, thus placing or continuing the forgiver on a trajectory of moral development that may perfect the virtue as a part of the forgiver's character. (A more precise definition is provided below.)

Thus, virtuous forgiveness can take on two forms: It can be developing or fully virtuous.<sup>64</sup> An example of virtuous forgiveness could be seen when the instance embodies praiseworthy qualities but, when evaluated as part of an existing or expected pattern, there is reason to think that it is an isolated event that is not part of a reliable character trait. The forgiveness was given selectively rather than invariably, for instance, or was given well in a way that seems like an anomaly for this forgiver. An instance of fully virtuous forgiveness not only has praiseworthy qualities but it comes

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<sup>64</sup> Charles Griswold distinguishes between *Forgiveness* that is "either completed or under way." His distinctions concern a particular instance of forgiveness whereas mine indicate different stages of virtue development in an individual agent. See Griswold, 17.

reliably from the person who gives it, as proven in the past. The idea of not forgiving is not an option that the victim is willing to entertain, so even though it may take moral effort, the forgiver will forswear the negative or relationship-fracturing feelings and actions he desires to take until they dissolve in the appropriate way.<sup>65</sup> Both stages of virtuous-forgiveness-development are distinct from minimal forgiveness, but what makes them similar to it is that they share similar desires and action tendencies that stand for the Good, even though they may possess them in different strengths or demonstrated them in different ways.

Virtuous forgiveness is a process that a victim can enter once he recognized that he has been done wrong. The process is expedient and relatively efficient and is characterized by 1) the presence of moral love, hope, humility, magnanimity, and some homologous or ancillary beliefs and emotions that create or enhance the victim's desire to promote and, when appropriate, to try to actualize the offender's ultimate good; 2) the absence or efficient elimination of certain affects, including resentment, malicious hate, envy, *Schadenfreude*, and contempt; 3) deliberation concerning the nature of the offense, the offender's ultimate well-being, and how his ideal self might be promoted; and 4) motivations and actions that are not opposed to general good will towards the offender.<sup>66</sup> The ultimate good of an offender is his advancement towards ideal moral health; it is the actualization of his moral and spiritual improvement.<sup>67</sup> Because of the various emotions

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<sup>65</sup> What counts as being appropriate will be discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>66</sup> Margaret Holmgren is among those to use the concept of good will in her definition of forgiveness. See Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value." Jean Hampton suggests that forgiveness involves seeing even the people we would label as a moral monster as a person whom we ought to be for rather than against. Jean Hampton, "The Retributive Idea," in Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 151. This is similar to my idea that a virtuously forgiving victim will desire to stand for Goodness and for what is good in the offender. But to be "for" someone, in my mind, is to will their ultimate good and to want to advance their ideal selves. Hampton also suggests that when our evaluation of others is more about seeing him diminished rather than understanding him, this is malicious, not moral (*ibid.*, 150). I agree, but I do not think that learning to judge an offender's human worth separately from his actions is enough for the virtuous forgiver, who is willing to go a step further, when possible, and advance goodness for and in the offender.

<sup>67</sup> Anita Superson contends that some offenders will not ever be moral persons and their victims would not be incorrect to think that their offenders would not have the chance of becoming morally better people. A victim should not have to be "deluded," Superson claims, about the offender's "goodness in order to experience the virtue of *Forgiveness*." Anita Superson, (Professor of Philosophy, University of Kentucky, Jan 15, 2015), in personal correspondence with the author. As I acknowledge elsewhere in this dissertation, there may be



and actions that are part of virtuous forgiveness, the virtue that produces it can be referred to as multi-dimensional or multi-faceted.

The idea that forgiveness requires an absence or elimination of some negative affect is not particularly unique; in fact, it is one element that virtuous forgiveness shares with minimal forgiveness. In order to forgive, one must not hate the offender and must have done something to lessen one's anger towards him. Some people speak of a victim "foreswearing" his anger towards the offender. The language of "foreswearing" negative emotions has been popular at least since the time of Joseph Butler, whose understanding of forgiveness has become an oft-referenced *locus classicus*.

But virtuous forgiveness has different ways of standing for the Good that are not realized in minimal forgiveness. Minimal forgiveness does not require that negative emotions be replaced with some type of good will towards the offender, but virtuous forgiveness does. I argue that virtuous forgivers experience other emotions that counteract potential, immoral offender-opposing emotions and transform already-actualized emotions that are potentially problematic into something that is compatible with moral love and the other facets of *Forgiveness*. The presence of certain positive emotions and supporting beliefs also cause the virtuously forgiving victim to want and to advance, when possible, the ultimate good of the offender. In a sense, then, virtuous forgiveness often goes beyond a minimal forgiveness that only eliminates ill will towards the offender. Virtuous forgivers stand for goodness in a stronger (and usually more active) way than minimal forgiveness allows, as they wish for the ultimate good of the offender and, whenever possible, actively promote the offender's ideal self.

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virtually no chance that some offenders will actually improve. The hope that a victim has that his offender will change, however, is conceptually distinct from the wish that he has that the offender will change. The wish is necessary to the virtue in a much stronger degree than the hope/expectation is. As I explain in Chapter 3, the strength of one's hope is partially dependent on how strongly one believes one is correct in expecting a change. For some offenders, a victim may have very little hope. Nevertheless, the victim's desire that the offender will change should be very strong. (It is often those people who we do not expect to change that are in need of the most improvement and are the ones for whom we must hope the most.) The virtuously forgiving person does not have to be deluded about the probability of her offender's moral improvement. The victim must simply possess the desire for that person to change and have the willingness, if she is presented with the task, to try (within reason) to help the change occur. This desire naturally occurs in a victim who possesses the virtue because she possesses good will towards others. The fact that someone is unlikely to benefit from her good will towards him is immaterial to her having good will.

Some scholars have suggested that having good will towards an offender involves separating the “sin from the sinner,” loving the person but not his behavior. Unfortunately, many presentations of how it might be possible to love someone but to reject his behavior fail to adequately address the fact that for an unrepentant offender, the terrible actions he does against others arise out of his identity—from the condition of his heart or character. Wrongdoers often choose to behave immorally because they have corrupt characters; in other words, an extremely important part of an offender’s identity is significantly flawed. The sin and the sinner are bound together, and separating them—making one part an item to be shunned and the other as an object to be affirmed—is difficult for anyone, especially for the individual who has been wronged. In order for a distinction to be drawn between what it is about an offender that should be loved and what should not be loved (for surely the sin must be rejected, at least), an account of what it is that remains to be loved should be given. It is at this point when the concept of the offender’s ultimate good begins to function. The ultimate good of any individual is his overall moral and spiritual improvement. This will be discussed further in a later section.

### **The Virtuously-Forgiving Agent<sup>68</sup>**

The virtuously forgiving agent, in the fullest sense, is a person who has the multi-dimensional virtue of *Forgiveness*. He has a strong inclination and motivation to do what he believes is morally good concerning his emotions, desires, beliefs, and actions. This desire continues to exist when he is faced with wrongdoing-done-against-him. He believes that forgiveness is good and should be chosen. He tends to act for the sake of Goodness itself or for others rather than merely for himself. By choosing to exercise virtuous forgiveness, he attempts to excellently stand for the Good or to reclaim what has become bad for the sake of goodness. Through always and unconditionally forgiving, the virtuously forgiving victim would have the tandem goal of becoming a more altruistic, self-mastered, and peace-promoting person. He values these things, just as he values

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<sup>68</sup> Since there are alternate conceptions of *Forgiveness* that present the virtue as a bilateral and conditional phenomenon, there may be some cases throughout this project where “virtuously-forgiving agent” will refer to a person who forgives in the right way according to the bilateral, conditional standards. The particular meaning of the term will be used in a context that will make it obvious whether it is referring to its conditionalist or unconditionalist usage.

developing moral love, but he disvalues resentment and other offender-opposing stances. In possessing the virtue, the virtuous forgiver reliably forgives, for it is part of his character to forgive and to take a broadly forgiving stance towards others. This means that he always and unconditionally forgives and he tends to not become angry or agitated at trite offenses that usually bother other people. As will be shown throughout this project, the virtuous forgiver will operate with unilateral assumptions about forgiveness.

As demonstrated in the multi-faceted nature of the virtue that he possesses, the virtuous forgiver has a relatively highly developed ethical and emotional intelligence. He is able to interact with maturity about many practical matters related to the ethical treatment of personal offenders and he is without many of the psychological problems that those who do not possess the virtue seem to naturally have, including excessive, generalized pride, apathy, and anger management issues. Because he possesses the virtue, his responses after being wronged are not the only responses that have been altered—his stance towards others before he is wronged by them is also different in some ways from that of most people who lack the virtue.

### ***Forgivingness***

When forgiveness is given in the right way for the right reasons towards the right people as it occurs from a healthy habit that has been developed over time, it is likely that these instances of forgiveness come from the virtue of *Forgivingness*. *Forgivingness* will be defined as the multifaceted virtue that always results in a virtuous, unilateral, unconditional forgiveness being given to one's personal offenders.

The process one goes through in order to forgive virtuously slightly varies depending on the external circumstances, emotions of the victim and offender, and whether the last steps of the process are necessary to address the offense. When faced with significant offense, however, a virtuously forgiving victim is likely to complete each part of the process, which begins by recognizing the offense as a wrongdoing, and by feeling her disapproval of the offense and the offender for committing it. From that point, she will use some of the cognitive aspects of *Forgivingness*—specifically, her moral beliefs—in order to adjust and modify her current feelings and thoughts so that they will be aligned with her pre-established beliefs. This is usually the part of the

forgiveness process that occurs more quickly for the virtuously forgiving victim than for one who does not have *Forgivingness*. This aspect of the forgiveness process may precede or occur conjointly with the deliberation component. The victim assesses the effects of the offense on the victim, offender, and others and tries to determine how to nullify the negative effects in order to advance goodness in all parties, especially in the offender. In some cases, the forgiveness process concludes at this point. In other cases, it is able to act on the fruits of the deliberation. Depending on the magnitude of the offense, the scope of the effects, the victim's abilities, and many other factors, the deliberating and action parts of the forgivingness process may linger until the victim decides that the majority of her active efforts are no longer wise or profitable.

Virtuously forgiving victims are usually active in responding to a significant offense. They derive a significant portion of their motivation from deeply held moral beliefs and the emotions that they have cultivated to be active when they encounter wrongdoing committed against them. When responding with action, those with *Forgivingness* display moral love and homologous qualities including hope, humility, patience, and magnanimity. The virtue consistently promotes altruism and self-forgetfulness and it occurs primarily for the sake of the offender and for Goodness. It arises from and reinforces the relevant parts of the character of its possessor who is already self-controlled and properly altruistic in the face of wrongdoing, and who wishes to persist in those qualities.

Every wrongdoing is best addressed by a virtuous forgiver, but virtuous forgiveness can sometimes outwardly manifest as minimal forgiveness when the offense is slight. The quality of the virtuously forgiving victim's minimal forgiveness, however, will be different from that of a merely minimal forgiver who lacks the virtue. Even though minimal forgiveness may be given by the virtuously forgiving victim in some circumstances, his forgiveness is not minimal forgiveness in the morally weak sense. Minimal forgiveness that is given by someone who is not close to developing the virtue may be permissible in some cases, but its quality will never be ideal and it will be morally faulty if it is applied in the wrong cases.

In the paradigm case, a person who has *Forgivingness* displays the most perfect instance of forgiveness that can be offered in that particular situation. The virtue's

goodness is seen in its unconditionality, in its self-motivation, in its purity of concern for the offender, in its relative quickness, in its attempt to act for the purposes of advancing the offender's moral good, and in its endurance. It is the type of forgiveness that we would want to be given if we were in need of forgiveness for a serious offense.

Although much more about the virtue and its elements will be described in detail in this chapter and the next, the type of virtuous forgiveness that *Forgivingness* produces can be seen in the following example.

### **An Example of Virtuous Forgiving: Marietta Jaeger**

Based on the information presented in "The Power and Reality of Forgiveness: Forgiving the Murderer of One's Child,"<sup>69</sup> Marietta Jaeger provides a true and heart-wrenching example of virtuous forgiveness. Jaeger and her family took a "once-in-a-lifetime" vacation in Montana. Jaeger's youngest of five children, Susie, was seven years old at the time. On the first week of their trip, Susie was discovered missing. Someone had slashed a hole through the tent and removed her. Everyone began looking for her, including the FBI, but the kidnapper and Susie were long gone. There was one point at which Jaeger said to her husband, "Even if the kidnapper were to bring Susie back, alive and well, this very moment, I could still kill him for what he has done to my family." She continues, "I believed I could have done so with my bare hands and a big smile on my face. . . . I knew the death penalty could be an option, and . . . I had every right to avenge whatever had happened to her."<sup>70</sup>

Jaeger then explains that she had always been taught to "reach for the highest moral ground," believing that "to give [herself] to that ugly mindset" would violate her own values and contribute to an unhealthy psychological condition.<sup>71</sup> She decided to forgive the kidnapper although his occasional hints that he would exchange Susie for ransom made the ordeal last for months. It was exactly one year after Suzie was taken that the kidnapper called again, in the middle of the night. He taunted Jaeger with his words about how he was never going to be found and how he was the one with power.

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<sup>69</sup> Marietta Jaeger, in *Exploring Forgiveness*, ed. Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998): 9-14.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

She surprised herself with her response. What she says in her essay is worth quoting at length:

To my own amazement, as smug and nasty as he was being, something utterly unforeseen began to happen in me. From that time a year before, in Montana, where I had surrendered my rage and desire for revenge, I had truly tried to cooperate with moving my heart from fury to forgiveness. I had reminded myself repeatedly:

- that, however I felt about the kidnapper, in God's eyes he was just as precious as my little girl. I claim to believe in a God who is crazy about each of us, no matter who we are and what we've done, and I had to be unremitting in calling myself to that.
- that, even though he wasn't behaving like one, this man was a son of God, and, as such, just by virtue of his membership in the human family, he had dignity and worth, which meant for me that I had to think and speak of him with respect and not use the derogatory terms that came so easily to mind as I went month after month without knowing where my little girl was.
- that, as a Christian, I am called to pray for my enemies, a category for which he certainly qualified. In the beginning, that was the last thing I felt like doing, but as I sought to desire his well-being authentically and sincerely, the easier it became to do so. I realized how important it was that he experience good fortune and affirmation—the love of God—in his life. If he still had Susie, I wanted him to be good to her, and if he didn't have her, I wanted him to have the courage it would take to come forth and tell what had happened.

I've heard people say that forgiveness is for wimps. Well, I say then that they must never have tried it. Forgiveness is *hard work*. It demands diligent self-discipline, constant corralling of our basest instincts, custody of the tongue, and a steadfast refusal not to get caught up in the mean-spiritedness of our times. It doesn't mean we forget, we condone, or we absolve responsibility. It does mean that we let go of the hate, that we try to separate the loss and the cost from the recompense or punishment we deem is due.

That night, Jaeger and her little girl's kidnapper spoke for over an hour. With kindness and true concern for the man, Jaeger asked the kidnapper what she could do to help him. He was so touched by this that he wept. Her gentleness and concern for him made him talk to her more respectfully although she knew that he was still in much turmoil.

Although the call had not been traced, Jaeger had recorded their conversation. She submitted the recordings to the authorities. When the Montana agents heard the tape, they discovered enough information about the offender to identify him. They did not find Suzie—she had been murdered a week after she was kidnapped. He was arrested, but at

Jaeger's urging, he received a life sentence with no possibility of parole instead of the death penalty. Jaeger says that by that time,

I had finally come to believe that real justice is not punishment but restoration, not necessarily to how things used to be, but to how they really should be. In both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures whence my belief and values come, the God who rises up from them is a God of mercy and compassion, a God who seeks not to punish, destroy, or put us to death, but a God who works unceasingly to help and heal us, rehabilitate and reconcile us, restore us to the richness and fullness of life for which we have been created. This, now, was the justice I wanted for this man who had taken my little girl.<sup>72</sup>

Jaeger remains convinced that she was right to forgive, and that although families in similar situations are justified in being angry and experiencing hatred, she maintains that it is only forgiveness that promotes a healthy life for the offender and the victims. As she says, "Anger, hatred, resentment, bitterness, revenge—they are death-dealing spirits, and they will 'take our lives' on some level. . . . Though I would *never* have chosen it so, the first person to receive a gift of life from the death of my daughter . . . was me."<sup>73</sup>

Jaeger's account of her psychological and spiritual transformation prompted by the kidnapping and murder of her daughter represents virtuous forgiveness well. A moral wrongdoing occurred against her and the offender was blamable for the offense. Jaeger never accepted what the offender did as morally right and she never forgot about her daughter. She recognized that the offender needed to suffer repercussions for his actions and not be permitted to do this sort of thing again. Although her forgiveness did not occur instantaneously and automatically, she became committed to forgiving the offender no matter what. She did not wait for him to confess all that he had done, explain himself, offer excuses, attempt to make amends, be punished, or anything else. She committed to dissolving her intense hatred and desires for revenge and her moral and religious belief systems provided salient reasons for the doing so. She was also able to come to a point where she valued the offender as a human being—for her, she valued him as a child of God—and genuinely became concerned for his ultimate and immediate welfare. Through

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 14. Emphasis in original.

good will, she tried to promote it for his own sake. In a virtuous way, she used forgiveness to stand for what is Good, reclaiming what was bad for the sake of goodness. Through the process, she promoted peace and love.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **GROUNDWORK FOR UUF *FORGIVINGNESS***

#### **Introduction**

This purpose of this chapter is to lay the conceptual groundwork for a model of unilateral, unconditional *Forgivingness* that will be presented in Chapter 3 and defended against criticisms of unconditional forgiveness in Chapter 4. The current chapter will provide a description of certain terms that comprise the definition of the virtue as well as some concepts that are distinct from it. Among the most important aspects of the definition of *Forgivingness* are moral love, the offender's ultimate good, and the offender's ideal self. These terms are a guiding force in the proposed model of *Forgivingness*.

In order to differentiate other phenomena from the forgiveness that flows from this virtue, I will interact with some of the primary traditional and contemporary sources on the concepts with which forgiveness is occasionally confused; these include excusing and reconciling. To begin, I will contrast virtuous forgiveness with a non-virtuous form of minimal forgiveness and draw some conclusions about the nature and appropriateness of each form, as well as about unforgiveness.

#### **Contrasting Minimal and Virtuous Forgiveness**

Why should a scholar distinguish among different forms of forgiveness? One answer is that when considering various instances of forgiveness with which we are familiar, there are some cases which intuitively seem to be of higher moral quality than others. For example, an Amish family who freely forgives and embraces the family of the one who murdered their child and took his own life extends a different quality of forgiveness to the murderer than does the person who gets over her anger at a colleague for openly disagreeing with her, only after she retaliates by stealing a copy of a journal from his mailbox. A victim who forgives flippantly, without consideration of the moral implications involved with a serious wrongdoing, is not as praiseworthy as a victim who is willing to put in effort to forgive an offender for a serious offense because she has, over time, developed the type of morally good character that forgives.

The moral quality of an instance of forgiveness can be affected by many other things as well. Nicholas Wolterstorff indicates the potentially varying quality of forgiveness when he asks, “Is one taking the deed and its doer with sufficient moral seriousness if one consigns the episode to a mere bygone? And if not, is one then not demeaning oneself and insulting the wrongdoer?”<sup>1</sup> Although it is not his point, one can notice that his questions suggest that certain reasons for forgiving are associated with a higher quality of forgiveness than those motivated only by base or immoral reasons and motivations. Observation reveals many other differences in particular instances of forgiveness. Some forms of forgiveness are less selfish than others. Some forms represent beauty and wisdom in moral action that is performed well, whereas some manifest weakness or apathy. Some forms display a victim’s self-respect and respect for his offender better than others. Some forms occur easily and joyfully while others are performed begrudgingly. Other scholars notice a difference in qualities of forgiveness and use various labels to denote the most praiseworthy kind. Holmgren refers to “genuine forgiveness”<sup>2</sup> and Stephen Cherry to “healthy forgiveness.”<sup>3</sup> Cheshire Calhoun calls it “aspirational forgiveness.”<sup>4</sup> Bash calls it “ideal forgiveness.”<sup>5</sup>

I suggest that the differences in the moral qualities displayed through different instances of forgiveness should be interpreted as a revelation of each instance’s relationship to the virtue. The more like the virtue that an instance of forgiveness is, the more excellent and praiseworthy it is. Recognizing that there are various qualities of forgiveness not only explicates why some instances seem more or less ideal, but it also helps provide a moral explanation as to why some people seem to forgive less begrudgingly and more praiseworthily than other people do. Throughout their lives, moral agents are at different stages of moral progress and virtue development. Any person may be more or less close to developing the virtue of *Forgiveness* than another

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 175.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret R. Holmgren, *Forgiveness and Retribution: Responding to Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Cherry in personal correspondence with Anthony Bash. See Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 50 n27.

<sup>4</sup> Cheshire Calhoun, “Changing One’s Heart,” *Ethics* 103 (October 1992): 79.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

person may be. Those people who are closer to possessing the virtue robustly will display a more ideal form of forgiveness than those with a weaker grasp of the virtue.<sup>6</sup>

Is one justified in speaking of a virtue associated with forgiveness? It is not regularly spoken of in common vernacular, and overall, there is little scholarly work on the subject. Nevertheless, as Charles Griswold suggests, “If forgivingness is a virtue in a sense of the term ‘virtue’ inspired by Aristotle (in spite of his unwillingness to count it as a virtue), then it will involve several other characteristics: the shaping (habituating) of a passion or emotion or disposition (moral education, in short); being concerned with both feelings and actions; requiring a central role for practical reason or judgment; and assuming a conception of the good to which the agent aims in molding his or her character.” He continues, “To exercise the virtue is by definition to feel and to act just as one should given the particulars of the situation. . . . I believe that all of these claims are true of forgiveness.”<sup>7</sup>

*Forgivingness* is Aristotelian in the ways that Griswold mentions, but it also fits other conceptions of virtue. Alistair MacIntyre explains three different conceptions of virtue when he explores the meaning of virtue: “a virtue is a quality which enables an individual to discharge his or her social role (Homer); a virtue is a quality which enables an individual to move towards the achievement of the specifically human *telos*, whether natural or supernatural (Aristotle, the New Testament and Aquinas); a virtue is a quality which has utility in achieving earthly and heavenly success (Franklin).”<sup>8</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams considers “virtue, or goodness of moral character, as persisting excellence in being for the good, and particular virtues as traits whose excellence can be part of the excellence of virtue.”<sup>9</sup> *Forgivingness* fits each of these expectations and it

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<sup>6</sup> If this project is right about the multifaceted nature of *Forgivingness*, this helps to explain why so many people lack this virtue—that is, it is a difficult one to develop because of its many components, which may include modified and justified anger, a relatively correct perception of offenses, wisdom and humility about how to improve another person, a high degree of concern for an enemy, *et cetera*.

<sup>7</sup> Charles L. Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Alistair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), 185. MacIntyre goes on from this point to show a sense in which these conceptions are unified. It extends into his discussion of a “practice.”

<sup>9</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48.

serves a practical function of enabling us to have a grammatically-correct term signifying the character trait possessed by person who has what Downie calls a “forgiving spirit.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, it is both practically advantageous and theoretically beneficial to speak of *Forgivingness* as the virtue associated with morally praiseworthy forgiveness.

### **Distinctions between Minimal and Virtuous Forgiveness**

So far, it has been argued that there are different qualities of forgiveness, that the morally ideal quality can be called virtuous, and that instances of forgiveness can be evaluated according to their similarity to the virtue. Even though the nature of the virtue will not be explained until Chapter 3, some of the differences between virtuous and minimal forgiveness can be made now since “minimal forgiveness” was defined in Chapter 1.

So as not to make the division between minimal and virtuous forgiveness greater than it is, it should be mentioned that there are cases in which the categories of virtuous and minimal forgiveness are not mutually exclusive. When a virtuous forgiver forgives an offender for a relatively insignificant offense, his forgiveness may appear to be minimal. In such cases, the virtuous forgiver’s display of forgiveness may manifest the same observable traits as minimal forgiveness and, in some circumstances, may have some of the same unobservable traits as minimal forgiveness. When minimal forgiveness is a morally good response to a particular offense and offender, given the situation, then a robust display of virtuous forgiveness is unnecessary. When given by a minimal forgiver in these circumstances, minimal forgiveness is permissible. When given by a virtuous forgiver in these circumstances, minimal forgiveness is permissible but, due to the quality of the character judging it as permissible, is of a higher quality. But this, as it will be argued, is the point of overlap between these categories of forgiveness.

The major differences between minimal and virtuous forgiveness include: minimal forgiveness is a deficient and morally inappropriate response to moral offenses whereas virtuous forgiveness is not; minimal forgivers has less praiseworthy or even harmful reasons and motivations for forgiving while those who forgive in accordance with the virtue have praiseworthy reasons and motivations; minimal forgivers display less

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<sup>10</sup> See R.S. Downie, “Forgiveness,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1965): 128, 130-31.

(or negative) moral value through their forgiveness; minimal forgiveness requires little or no concern for the offender whereas virtuous forgiveness occurs because the victim has deep concern for the offender. These claims will now be explained.

## **Quality**

When the virtue is present in a forgiver, the act of forgiveness is more praiseworthy than it would be if minimal forgiveness is given apart from the virtue. This is partly because the virtue is intrinsically valuable and minimal forgiveness is only instrumentally valuable. When it is utilized within the scope of morally appropriate circumstances, minimal forgiveness is beneficial to society and, usually, to the moral agent who gives it. Its benefits include ameliorating problematic social relations and allowing the forgiver's character to be open to virtue development. But when minimal forgiveness is given inappropriately—especially when it is erroneously applied to serious wrongdoings which it cannot adequately address or when it manifests from a character flaw in the victim (e.g., a deficient sense of self-worth)—it may result in negative consequences and its moral value may be nonexistent or negative. On the other hand, virtuous forgiveness, because of its complex, multi-faceted, and virtuous nature, is qualitatively good. It is formed of many morally good attitudes, motivations, and emotions that empower the victim to stand for goodness and not just against moral offense. As such, it displays balanced and praiseworthy views, feelings, and actions. The intrinsic value of the virtue is enhanced by its possessor's praiseworthy perceptual capacity that affects the way she regards the offense, the wrongdoer, and herself. The virtuous forgiver exudes a morally praiseworthy form of love and practical wisdom, and her relevant emotions and actions are, consequently, altered.<sup>11</sup> Virtuous forgiveness, then, is intrinsically good, regardless of the consequences it creates, whereas minimal forgiveness is without these capacities and its value is dependent on the consequences it authors. As will be shown, virtuous forgiveness is morally appropriate in all situations and for all offenses and offenders. It is the most praiseworthy response to very serious interpersonal offenses and is always preferable to unforgiveness. Minimal forgiveness,

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<sup>11</sup> This capacity will be explained in Chapter 3.

on the other hand, may not be morally permissible in many cases and may sometimes be a less preferable response than unforgiveness.

### **Forgiveness and its Reasons<sup>12</sup>**

Another distinction between minimal and virtuous forgiveness is the underlying reasons and motivations that the forgiver has to forgive. Many scholars claim that forgiveness only occurs when a victim has purposeful, moral reasons for forgiving. In one of the earliest contemporary statements to this effect, Norvin Richards claims if the reasons for forgiving are solely for the benefit of the victim, and are, thus, self-absorbed, the absence of resentment that might have occurred is not an extension of forgiveness. Forgiveness, says Richards, should be about other people or about providing a good response to what another person has done. "To change one's attitude entirely out of self-interest might be (sensibly) to forget what someone did, but it is not to forgive him for having done it."<sup>13</sup> General scholarly consensus is that one cannot be said to forgive if one purposefully or accidentally forgets the offense, if one no longer remembers the offense, if one loses one's memory or recognition of oneself, or if one has undergone psychotherapy that has inadvertently blocked the offense from one's memory. Purposeful, moral considerations, many claim, must be involved in order for a victim's relinquishment of anger and desires for revenge to be considered forgiveness.

Understanding that forgiveness can exist in a more or less virtuous way suggests that victims can get rid of their anger in many different ways and for many different reasons that still count as forgiveness; some reasons and motivations, like some forms of forgiveness, however, are better than others in a moral sense. While it may not exemplify the virtue, there is no argument supporting the idea that a change of attitude towards an offender done solely for a victim's self-interest should not count as forgiveness. If a person values mental and physical wellness, or a healthy relationship with his offender, and significantly modifies or forswears his offender-opposing emotions evoked by an offense because of these reasons, the victim has done nothing other than forgiven. What other thing has this victim done? He did not remain unforgiving. Whether the victim

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<sup>12</sup> I am assuming, along with what seems to be the majority position, that reasons can be causal explanations of actions.

<sup>13</sup> Norvin Richards, "Forgiveness," *Ethics* 99 (1988): 80.

forgave in accordance with the virtuous form of forgiveness, however, is another issue.

Minimal forgiveness can occur for amoral reasons. A victim may think, “Being this angry makes my head hurt, so I’ll just forgive him.” It may occur for moral reasons. A victim might believe, categorically, that harboring resentment against other people is immoral and let go of his anger so as not to have immoral emotions. A victim might forgive for psychological reasons, perhaps being motivated by compassion or by the offender’s attempt to make amends. Someone may forgive for religious reasons, having been taught that God expects inter-personal forgiveness. Minimal forgiveness can have pragmatic motivations. One victim might think, “If I forgive my husband, my friends won’t find out what a fool he is and I’ll save face.” Minimal forgiveness might also occur because of immoral beliefs as the victim thinks, “I’m so much better than my offender that I can’t be harmed by him” or immoral attitudes—“I can’t hold this against him since I really don’t deserve to be treated any better.”

Virtuous forgiveness, on the contrary, is not evoked by immoral beliefs and attitudes. A person with *Forgivingness* has, over a significant amount of time, developed the necessary, morally-praiseworthy character traits that enable him to reliably forgive. These traits are fundamentally reinforced by morally-acceptable (and laudable) beliefs about himself and others. Anthony Bash, in speaking of the moral response that is part of forgiveness, mentions some of the beliefs held by a person who forgives well: “It may be to recognize that both victim and wrongdoer share a common identity as human beings and that the ‘family’ of humanity is damaged through unforgiveness, that wrongdoing is common to all people (and so the victim is in fact morally little different from the wrongdoer).”<sup>14</sup> Margaret Holmgren believes that for a victim to “truly forgive her offender,”<sup>15</sup> she will first respect herself as a person, respect the wrongdoer as a moral agent, respect morality, and will work to recognize the intrinsic value of the wrongdoer. She indicates that this type of true forgiveness includes a particular amount of self-respect, moral maturity, compassion, and respect for persons that cannot be expected of everyone.<sup>16</sup> But the relevant beliefs and attitudes held by a person with *Forgivingness*

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<sup>14</sup> Bash, 55.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret R. Holmgren, “Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (October 1993): 343.

<sup>16</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, 344.

are, in fact, like those described by Bash and Holmgren, as will be explained in the next chapter. Further—as Chapter 3 will also explain—because a victim with *Forgiveness* has moral love for other people, his forgiveness is not self-absorbed or merely self-interested. He acts, through forgiveness, for the good of the offender, even though this at least means that he is advancing the goodness of his own moral character. While the virtuously-forgiving victim may experience psychological, physical, and tangible benefits from forgiving, and while he will hope that he is able to help the offender benefit from being forgiven, what matters most for one with *Forgiveness* is that, as Bash says, “forgiveness is a moral, not a pragmatic, response to a wrongdoer.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Forgetting**

Some strands of popular culture suggest that we should “forgive and forget,” frequently assuming that forgetting that an offense occurred is part of real forgiveness. Since many scholars suggest that purposely or accidentally forgetting an offense does not qualify as forgiveness, a few remarks should be made here about the virtuously-forgiving person’s relationship to forgetting. As will be shown, forgiveness is not forgetting, but sometimes virtuous forgiveness must include it and sometimes must exclude it.

The mark of a virtuous forgiver is that if she does remember an offense, she uses that memory in a way that is compatible with advancing the offender’s ultimate good and does not allow herself to use it to the offender’s or her own detriment.<sup>18</sup> In fact, some offenses are best remembered, especially by virtuous forgivers. The uncle who drank too much at your holiday party last year is better off if you hide the alcohol or his car keys from him at this year’s party.<sup>19</sup> Although you may have forgiven him for his outlandish behavior last year, remembering his taste for the drink and acting accordingly is likely to benefit him. Not forgetting can be part of the type of best forgiveness that the uncle could be given. In the paradigm situation, a person with *Forgiveness* will remember

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<sup>17</sup> Bash, 55.

<sup>18</sup> For example, a virtuous forgiver would not remember the offense in such a way that it would consume her thought life, making her bitter or unproductive in her relationships with others and her ability to act within the world.

<sup>19</sup> I am borrowing this style of example from Glen Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 50. A similar example will be used again in a later chapter.



serious offenses or repeated insignificant offenses that indicate character flaws in the offender so that he might be more likely to promote the offender's ultimate good with this knowledge, or at least hope, with more specificity, for his improvement.

In other situations, forgetting the offense might be part of the best type of forgiveness that someone could be given. It would usually be of no good to anyone to remember insignificant and isolated slights, for example. The offender would not need to be treated in any special way with regards to that sort of offense. Remembering some offenses may be nothing more than rumination and would hinder forgiveness. Thus, virtuous forgiveness will not be plagued by inappropriate remembering.

One caveat should be mentioned. There are no rules for the virtuous forgiver that require him to be forgetful in some situations and to remember in others. Whether or not a person remembers a tragic or a mundane offense is dependent on many amoral factors that are external to the forgiveness process. The important aspect to notice is that when a virtuously-forgiving victim does have a memory of an offense, he does not allow it to harm the offender, but to help him when possible. The memory occurs along with the good will that the virtuously-forgiving victim has for his offender and this is markedly different from the experience of the unforgiving or minimally forgiving victim.

### **Actual and Perceived Wrongdoing**

Another difference between minimal and virtuous forgiveness is their relationship to and perception of offense. One view in contemporary scholarship suggests that forgiveness is a legitimate option only when a moral transgression (including causing harm) has occurred.<sup>20</sup> In other words, unless the offense is a moral transgression, it does not count as an object for true forgiveness. This position admittedly seems counterintuitive. Practical experience suggests that people can forgive (i.e., forswear their inappropriately negative emotions and modify the corresponding actions) for things that seem to the victim to be offensive even though other people would not consider them offensive. In other words, people can rid themselves of negative emotions even when those emotions should not have arisen. As R. S. Downie suggests, it is always

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<sup>20</sup> Margaret Holmgren is one such scholar. See Holmgren, *Forgiveness and Retribution*, 57.

praiseworthy to have a forgiving spirit, even when a third party spectator would not think forgiveness should be given.<sup>21</sup>

Even though it does not seem to correspond with some aspects of practical experience, the idea that there needs to be a moral offense that initiates a forgiveness complex,<sup>22</sup> rather than an imaginary one, also seems to be true. People cannot rightly contrive offenses for which to forgive others. Doing so reflects an unreasonable disconnect with reality. It suggests that the person does not recognize or is not concerned with the difference between what is moral and what is amoral, or that the person does not have any sense of the gravity of severe offenses and the frivolousness of merely personal concerns. Without having any concern for these distinctions, the person does not properly value morality.

When considering the relationship of forgiveness to perceived and actual offense, two options have traditionally been presented. 1) Forgiveness only addresses moral offenses—a position that makes little sense according to practical experience but prevents the abuses associated with fabricated offenses. 2) Forgiveness addresses any kind of offense, whether it is moral, amoral, or imaginary—a position that may be guilty of improperly valuing morality and may lead to superficial treatment of serious moral offenses. With the help of the “minimal” and “virtuous” forgiveness categories, this false dichotomy is avoided. Since there are two types of forgiveness, it may be the case that minimal forgiveness is appropriate for small slights, amoral offenses, and, perhaps, those offenses that are merely contrived in the mind of the ‘victim.’ Virtuous forgiveness, although it can be given for amoral slights, is the type of forgiveness that is appropriate to address moral offenders or those who have caused significant harm.<sup>23</sup>

Thinking about excuses helps to partly clarify this issue. People say “I’m sorry” as easily as they say “excuse me” when they wish to be courteous while walking past

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<sup>21</sup> See Downie, “Forgiveness,” 128-134.

<sup>22</sup> By complex, I do not mean a repressed, psychological system of interrelated, emotion-charged ideas and feelings that might give rise to pathology. Rather, I mean the rather complicated process of forgiveness that has the occasion to begin because of a perceived wrongdoing as its stimulus.

<sup>23</sup> This scenario is not suggesting that a virtuously-forgiving agent can take offense at something that is not truly an offense. It suggests, instead, that her cognitive or emotional response to something that is slightly offensive may or may not occur, but that if it does, the outward display of her goodness does not have to be limited by the insignificance of the offense.

someone in a store aisle. This interchange of terms may indicate that the relationship between excusing and forgiving needs to be clarified. Wolterstorff explains that when we excuse someone, we do not think worse of him for doing what he did; we do not view his deed as part of his moral history. One's moral history is "that ensemble of things he did that contribute to determining his moral condition, things he did that contribute to determining in which respects and to what degree he is a morally good person and in which respects and to what degree he is morally bad."<sup>24</sup> Not everything is part of or should be interpreted as part of a person's moral history. Amoral offenses are of this sort. Wolterstorff might suggest that these types of offenses should be excused, not forgiven, because amoral offenses are neither an indication of an offender's character or an expression of his moral history. Forgiveness operates according to the belief that an act belongs to one's moral history; excusing acts as if the offense should not be considered as part of his moral history.<sup>25</sup>

My suggestion is slightly different. The distinction between minimal and virtuous forgiveness helps to illuminate why "excuse me" and "sorry" are interchangeable in the context of etiquette, and it helps to reveal why there is a difference between the forgiveness of amoral offenses and the forgiveness that addresses those who have caused significant harm or have committed moral offenses. In matters where the offense or inconvenience that has been caused is amoral, the "victim" may forgive, but minimal forgiveness is all that is required. Since the offense is not an indication of the offender's character and should not be counted as part of his moral history, the only thing that needs to be done by the victim is to not hold the offense against the offender. This is what minimal forgiveness can rightly do in this situation. It would be unreasonable for the victim to hold an amoral offense against the offender because the offense does not reveal the moral character of the offender. The commission of an amoral offense merely displays a fact about the offender's own existence that is true of everyone's existence: humans are sometimes in each other's way; we sometimes make mistakes; we are imperfect. Like excusing, minimal forgiveness "moves on" without much further thought. In the case of amoral offenses, there is rarely a moral reason to do anything else.

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<sup>24</sup> Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love*, 170.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

When a moral offense or significant harm has occurred, however, minimal forgiveness and simple excusing do not adequately address the offense or treat the offender properly. In the case of a moral offense, minimal forgiveness treats the fact that morality has been disregarded as if the disregard means nothing; it treats the offender as if he did not display a significant moral flaw. In the case of significant harm that is not indicative of a character flaw in the offender, minimal forgiveness causes the victim to treat himself as if his own self means nothing; it also treats the offender, who may be very remorseful to have the harm he caused as part of his moral history, as if he does not need to be addressed as the author of a harm. Virtuous forgiveness, as will be explained in the next two chapters, sufficiently addresses the actual, moral transgression or significant harm, while maintaining concern for the offender.<sup>26</sup>

There are at least two additional considerations that lend support to the idea that an ideal, or virtuous, exhibition of *Forgivingness* will respond to actual rather than merely perceived wrongdoing or amoral offenses. First, a person with *Forgivingness* has a sufficient amount of moral awareness that usually inclines him to see moral demands as taking precedence over individual preferences. Some aspects of the virtue also lend him confidence in other moral areas of life, as he interacts with others who lack moral awareness and who mistakenly give individual *mores* and preferences the same ontological value as morality itself. For example, consider a four-year-old son who repeatedly ignores his mother's request that he put on his pajamas. After trying several parenting tricks to encourage compliance and still being disobeyed, she speaks loudly and harshly at him, directing him to change into his pajamas. He begins to cry, knowing that he now has to comply and that his mother is unhappy. He tells her that she should ask for forgiveness for making him cry. If forgiveness in the virtuous sense is reserved for (and required by) moral offenses, then the mother can explain that it was he rather than she who was in the wrong and that he is in need of forgiveness, not her. This way, the son learns to place blame correctly and is encouraged to develop emotional maturity because the mother has the confidence to distinguish who is actually at fault.

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<sup>26</sup> The issue of causing significant harm is an interesting one. It is not exactly the same as transgressing morality, but does share some similarities since the person who causes another significant harm but is not culpable for it often regrets having caused this harm and feels that it has become part of his moral history. This issue will have to be set aside for another project.

Second, it is an offense to an alleged wrongdoer to portray him as a wrongdoer when he has actually caused no significant harm and has done nothing morally offensive; forgiving him for what he has not done wrong adds insult to injury. If you announce that you have forgiven me, but you are the only person who would think my action is offensive since the act broke no moral rules or reasonable moral inferences, then I could rightly feel that you had wronged me by accusing me of doing something that needs forgiveness. This is especially true of the insult laid on a person who has consciously been trying to not do what you have accused them of doing. It is particularly unjust and offensive for a person who is morally upright in a particular area to be accused of doing wrong in that area. Moral progress and moral success should be appreciated, encouraged and protected, not unfairly questioned and misunderstood. The ideal form of forgiveness—i.e., that which flows from *Forgivingness*—will attempt to be sensitive to such concerns.

Subjectively, the emotional experience of a victim who responds to an amoral offense may not be different from that of the person who responds to a moral offense. The process that someone goes through in order to forgive in each situation may also be similar. One main difference that should not be ignored, however, is that the person who has suffered the moral offense must respond to something that has actually upset the moral balance between him and the offender rather than a merely subjective experience. While the anger, hatred, resentment, desires for revenge, sadness, *et cetera* of the victim who is offended amorally are real, and while something should be done in order for the victim to alleviate these offender-opposing emotions, the stimuli does not need to be treated as a moral issue.

Virtuous forgiveness is predominantly a moral notion, not simply a psychological or social one. If Ander's mood towards Sasha was altered initially through no fault of Sasha's, and primarily because of Ander's subjective experience (which was not rightly based on moral norms), then Ander's "forgiveness" of Sasha is simply another mood change directed at Sasha. While it may qualify as minimal forgiveness, its quality is not pure enough to call it virtuous forgiveness because its object is the result of something that is not associated closely enough with moral norms.

If the virtue of *Forgivingness* indicates the ideal qualities of forgiveness, then

virtuous forgiveness should avoid perpetuating moral misunderstanding. If a view of forgiveness permits that a person is able to forgive, in the virtuous sense, for what is not actually wrong, then it is open to contributing to the victim's moral misunderstandings and potential abuses of other people through forgiveness. Further, when someone is offended for something that he should not consider to be offensive, this happens either because the "victim" is too easily angered and offended (indicating a character flaw) or because there was a mistake or misunderstanding on his part. The latter creates an ambiguous area. While a virtuously-forgiving victim does not have to be morally or epistemically infallible, the character of a virtuously forgiving victim generally makes her less likely to make significant mistakes in assigning blame and makes her quicker to fix her mistakes than other people will be inclined to be.<sup>27</sup>

Some scholars have described virtues as being accompanied by special perceptual capacities that equip their possessors with a way of viewing things differently from those who lack the virtue. One way the perceptual capacity of those with *Forgiveness* operates is that virtuously-forgiving victims are usually willing to take the time to consider various perspectives concerning the situation surrounding the offense in addition to their own and they are open to being emotionally affected by new information that comes available. Although they are not perfect in their assessments, virtuous forgivers have enough moral sense and control of their emotions to gather adequate information before they jump to conclusions about someone's guilt. They have a stronger ability to perceive broader themes and grand narratives than those without the virtue, and this allows them to place offenses committed against them into different categories. People who do not have this perceptual capacity conflate small offenses and sometimes de-emphasize significant moral offenses. They are also more likely to jump to conclusions and be closed-minded to accepting revelatory facts about the wrongdoer and the offense as these facts become available. They are more likely to be offended by a larger number of things and will want to have the power to give or withhold forgiveness concerning trite offenses. *Forgiveness*, however, helps prevent a person from being overly-reactive and too-easily-offended.

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<sup>27</sup> As it will be explained in the next chapter, this characteristic of the virtuously forgiving victim results from her humility.

## Forgiving [Too] Quickly

Virtuous and minimal forgivers also differ in the duration of the anger they experience or utilize. In cases other than mundane offenses, the duration of virtuous forgiveness is generally shorter than minimal forgiveness since the virtuous forgiver is in better control of his anger (and has a different type of anger)<sup>28</sup> than a minimal forgiver. The following sections will describe why this is the case and it will speak of the duration of offender-opposing anger as falling into three main categories of duration: the normal time frame, the longer than normal time frame, and the shorter than normal time frame.

It is helpful to think of anger's duration in these categories because it provides a point of commonality with some critics of unilateral, unconditional forgiveness who speak of the duration of an unconditional forgiver's anger as possibly being "too brief" for the severity of the offense. Reflection reveals that anger can only be considered as "too brief" if there is a duration that one is reasonably expected to meet. Charles Griswold, who has established a bilateral, conditional model of *Forgivingness*,<sup>29</sup> constructs his model of the virtue on the idea that there is a specific duration of anger-against-an-offender that is expected to occur in a virtuous person. People whose offender-opposing anger is too brief cannot be virtuous. This means that people who forgive "too quickly," not sustaining their anger into the normal duration time frame, are morally defective. The opposite, however, can be true: people who have the virtue of *Forgivingness* are often able to more quickly and more easily forgive. In terms of the anger duration time frame, this suggests that virtuous forgiveness may occur before the normal anger time frame begins and will never allow anger to persist past the normal duration time frame. I argue that virtuous forgiveness usually occurs quicker than is conventionally expected even though this view contradicts much of what Griswold and other critics of unilateral, unconditional forgiveness, taking inspiration from Aristotle, have claimed is true.

Aristotle describes appropriate anger as a virtue and he maintains that such anger has a number of features. One feature of virtuous anger is an appropriate window of

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<sup>28</sup> The anger of a virtuous forgiver will be described in Chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> Charles L. Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

existence—an appropriate duration. According to Aristotle, the person “who is angry at the right things and with the right people, and, further, as he ought, when he ought, and *as long as he ought*, is praised.”<sup>30</sup> The idea that offender-opposing anger has a virtuous duration, and that it cannot be virtuous if its duration is too long or too short, has been repeated in much of the current literature on forgiveness, especially in the writings of the critics of unilateral, unconditional forgiveness.<sup>31</sup>

Against the Aristotelian notion of an appropriate duration for anger, however, are many people’s intuitions that victims who are “the best” at forgiving are also quick to forgive and find it relatively easy to do so. If someone takes a long time to forgive and has to work really hard to forgive, it does not seem as if he has a virtue displaying forgiveness as a character trait. To state this as a general observation: if a person has a more difficult time forgiving than other people generally do, and if it takes a long time for him to have the ability to forgive (i.e., let go of his offender-opposing anger) compared to other people, it is highly unlikely that he has a character trait/virtue that makes him forgive well. People who are generous give more readily than those who are not generous. People who are courageous are able to display bravery more readily than those who are not courageous. Similarly, people who have *Forgiveness* are more readily able to forgive than those who do not have the virtue. Thus, there is tension between the suggestion that the virtue of *Forgiveness* includes a quality that makes forgiveness occur expediently, as suggested here, and the claim that *Forgiveness* must include enduring anger against the offender, as suggested by Griswold and others.

One thing that makes the latter problematic is that it assumes that the proper duration of anger is rigidly fixed by the moral law, alterable slightly only by the details of each situation. If this is true, then it is reasonable to assume that everyone must experience anger within the normal interval of time if they are to be called virtuous. If, on the other hand, the boundaries of the normal anger interval are not as fixed as

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<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1125b -- 1126a, trans, W.D. Ross [online], accessed 1 August 2015, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.4.iv.html>; Internet. Emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> In this section, I am only referring to the type of anger that is offender opposing rather than all types of anger at wrongdoing. The form of anger that is generally observable in the cultural setting is the kind that outwardly shows anger against a person. It will be shown in a later section that some long-term anger is compatible with the virtue of *Forgiveness*. The context of the current discussion naturally limits it to hostile, offender-opposing anger.



Griswold's view suggests, or if the demarcation of the bounds of that category are not established by morality but something else, then there is less reason to suggest that the virtue requires anger to be experienced within that normal time frame.

Although there does seem to be a standard duration of anger that many people consider to be appropriate—affected by the severity of the offense, who committed the offense, *et cetera*—this notion seems culturally derived rather than being an explicitly moral notion. Even though the culture needs a relatively defined limit suggesting when people are too angry and thus behaving inappropriately so as to help prevent them from acting to the detriment of other people, the lower boundary requiring a particular duration of offender-opposing anger to occur is less necessary for social cohesion and is more difficult to support with rational argument.<sup>32</sup>

When anger occurs in a victim, there is a natural duration that people come to accept as an appropriate duration of anger-against-a-wrongdoer. A natural or generally accepted amount of anger is not necessarily the same thing as the amount or duration of anger that morality permits or requires. For instance, being angry for at least a particular length of time when someone jilts you may be customary, but it is not morally required.<sup>33</sup> The interval in which critics of unilateral, unconditional forgiveness believe that a victim must experience anger has been established primarily by custom. Customary anger-against-a-wrongdoer can vary depending on one's civilization and social standing. Social requirements for the minimal experience of this type of anger are loosely analogous to the social expectations of mourning. Individuals from diverse cultures mourn the loss of loved ones in a variety of methods and predetermined durations. For example, "Jewish tradition separates out six graduated periods of mourning, during which the mourner can

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<sup>32</sup> A related point will be argued in a later chapter. Let it suffice to say here that a society can operate well if its citizens are peace-loving and self-controlled. When some members of the society take advantage of others, the victims can stand up for themselves (and other people) without anger continuously being directed at the offenders. Anger is not the only motivation people have to act against wrongdoing.

<sup>33</sup> This is an assertion that will be argued in chapters three, four and five. If this assertion will be granted now for the sake of argument, one can see some things that are likely to be true about the Aristotelian anger time frame and about virtuous forgiveness.

gradually express feelings of grief.”<sup>34</sup> The first seven days after a burial are the time of *shiva*, during which friends visit to offer condolences. Visiting the first three days after the funeral is often discouraged as it is “seen as a time for weeping and lamentation.”<sup>35</sup> After the seven days of “sitting *shiva*,” mourners complete a period called *sheloshim*, a 30 day period (which includes the seven days of *shiva*), during which they acclimate back into their regular duties and lifestyle. The entire mourning period lasts for eleven months and includes both *shiva* and *sheloshim*. “At the end of eleven months, the mourner is not expected to continue mourning” (with a few exceptions).<sup>36</sup>

L. Gregory Jones notes that “the traditions that cultivate particular practices and, through them, specific habits of thinking, feeling, and acting make a crucial difference in how we describe and respond to . . . crisis circumstances.”<sup>37</sup> Specific timeframes for mourning (and anger) are relevant to the particular culture they are intended to unify. Similarly, specific timeframes for the duration of one’s anger have cultural ramifications for the society that adopts those timeframes. The particular customs that are adopted provide guidelines within which a culture’s well-participating members may act. The customs serve a regulatory function that helps to prevent abuse of the society or its members by the individuals that comprise that culture. Customarily limiting anger helps prevent people from being consumed by their anger-against-their-offender and from harming others in the process. Sometimes, then, customs serve to encourage people to behave morally and reinforce moral principles.

But customs are not synonymous with morals. Customs can be mostly arbitrary; customs can be completely unrelated to moral precepts; customs can allow people to behave in ways that are acceptable within the culture but not excellent with respect to morality. One problem with allowing custom to establish requirements for offender-opposing anger is that it provides weak justification for those who use custom as a rule. For a scholar to say that moral precepts require a victim to experience a certain amount

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<sup>34</sup> Ellen Levine, “Jewish Views and Customs on Death,” in *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures*, ed. Colin Murray Parkes, Pittu Laungani, William Young (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 112.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>37</sup> L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 92.

of offender-opposing anger when he is offended to be authoritative, she needs a strong argument. A prescription requiring a person to experience a particular amount of anger lacks the moral authority that is held by the requirement to not harm others through an excessive display of anger.<sup>38</sup> So far, critics of unilateral, unconditional forgiveness lack a convincing argument.

Another problem with thinking that custom can establish a requirement for a victim to be angry for a particular interval of time is that some offenses are so severe that the normal, customary guidelines provide little or no support to help guide behavior and expectations. If one's daughter is tortured and held captive before being released a few years later, our cultural norms about the proper duration of anger have little to guide people in the face of such atrocity. People might wonder if, sixty years later, the parent of the girl is still allowed to hold a grudge as intensely as he did fifty years before. People might try to figure out the answer to this question by asking themselves, "What do I think I would do in this situation?" and then prescribing their hypothetical expectations as what is reasonable for the victim. Morality, however, is not the type of thing that is discovered by one asking oneself such a question.

Customs can suggest what is expected of a person's basic behavior in the context of what is reasonable for a member of a particular society to do. When those customs are not at odds with morality and when a person follows the advice of the custom, he is showing respect for himself, his society, and other people. This, in itself, is praiseworthy insofar as it helps people behave more morally. But if there is an excellent way to show respect for oneself and other people other than the way the custom suggests—a way that does not offend the moral law—then the custom cannot rightfully limit the moral agent from choosing the other excellent way of respecting others.

*Forgiveness* is remarkable and admirable because, in many ways, it is unnatural. It is difficult, given the natural state of a person, to be virtuous; most virtues do not exist naturally in a human, but must be developed. A virtue usually requires more of its possessor than his natural moral condition allows. *Forgiveness* is no different. In

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<sup>38</sup> As it will be explained in a later chapter, offender opposing anger is not the only type of anger that can exist. Offender opposing anger is not required of a virtuously forgiving person but the moral judgment and concern that moral wrongdoing occurs is necessary. That judgment and concern do not have to translate into a felt emotion for a virtuously forgiving victim.

normal cases of offense, a victim's anger is naturally aroused when he recognizes that he has been offended. When a victim gets angry in the correct proportion in response to the offense, he is, according to many theories, not behaving immorally.<sup>39</sup>

Since many people naturally have anger arise over certain offenses for a similar duration as other people in their society, a particular victim's unforgiveness is not as noticeable or judged to be excessive by others while it exists within that customary time frame. While the initial, sudden anger that occurs at the recognition of being done wrong has been discussed by ethicists, and anger that persists too long has also been a topic of discussion, much less attention has been given to the anger and related emotions that exist in the time frame between sudden anger and anger that lingers too long.

The anger that exists in the middle of the initial, sudden anger and its conventional conclusion is usually spoken of simply as anger. In this context, it could also be referred to as middle anger, since it is the anger occurring somewhere in the middle of its onset and its end. It is not conventional to think of middle anger as unforgiveness in any morally problematic sense. If an offender were to say "please forgive me" as soon as the offense was committed (and well within the acceptable anger time frame), the angry victim might reply, "I can't forgive you, at least not yet." Onlookers would not judge the victim negatively even though he had not forgiven at this point. There is a sense in which the angry victim is unforgiving as he experiences anger during the conventional duration, but it is accepted by many as morally permissible and thus, the victim does not cross over in people's minds as being hard-hearted or unforgiving. While the acceptable time frame of the duration of anger is inexact, it operates clandestinely in people's assumptions about how long a victim's anger can legitimately endure regarding a particular offense without others judging the victim negatively.

As custom seems to have it, once the acceptable time frame has expired and the

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<sup>39</sup> If this is true, it does not entail that a person who does not become angry when he recognizes that he has been done wrong is morally wrong, as some argue. Also note that some people believe that not experiencing anger is a goal of the good life. This is not the position taken in this dissertation, however. While I recognize the role of the moral saint who overcomes and transcends anger, I do not believe that anger that is prevented because of moral apathy, for instance, is ideal, nor do I believe that all anger is to be avoided.

victim's anger-at-the-offender lingers, the victim is said to be unforgiving; some people even judge him to be blameworthy. He might be judged as having too much resentment. As Griswold explains the term's etymology, "The English word derives from the French, '*ressentir*,' where this point is clearer. The reproduction of anger considerably past the event that occasioned it requires not just memory of that event, but a memory that continues to provoke."<sup>40</sup> To resent is to feel a sentiment again and again and to be provoked (to continued anger or action) by it. A person who does not forgive an offender continues indefinitely in this state until forgiveness arrives or until he forgets the incident ever happened.<sup>41</sup>

Resentment is a transformation of the anger that came on suddenly at the recognition of an offense into something unhealthy that persists longer than it should. Unforgiveness is a state of resentment; it does not let go of or forswear unhealthy offender-opposing anger and other offender-opposing emotions within a reasonable time. A victim has not forgiven until the relevant, unhealthy and offender-opposing emotions that accompanied the sudden anger dissipate.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, there are four states in which forgiveness or unforgiveness can stand in relationship to the conventional anger time frame: one can forgive noticeably early before the time frame begins, noticeably early during the time frame, at the natural end of the time frame, or after the time frame has expired. I argue that virtuous forgivers who have been seriously wronged are usually able to forgive noticeably early or before the end of the conventional time frame of anger; in doing so, they do not act immorally. Minimal forgivers may also forgive quickly in similar circumstances, but in doing so, they act immorally.

During the customary time frame of offender-opposing anger, any victim can earn the label "forgiving" if he forgives before the usual interval has expired. People who

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<sup>40</sup> Griswold, 23.

<sup>41</sup> The forgiveness that is given by a person who was angry for too long can be minimal or virtuous. If it is virtuous, however, it is in a developing state. It is acting in accordance with the virtue even though it does not come from the firmly developed character trait, *Forgiveness*. One who thoroughly possesses *Forgiveness* does not hold anger too long; he does not resent because he does not experience anger that exceeds the acceptable duration. (The next chapter will discuss different senses of resentment.)

<sup>42</sup> These emotions will be discussed in the next chapter.

might be labeled as unforgiving either hold a grudge indefinitely or remain angry at the offender for noticeably longer than the customary duration anticipates. A person might be labeled as being “forgiving” (i.e., having the character trait of *Forgiveness*) when he gets rid of offender-opposing anger more quickly than other people.

In many situations, a minimal forgiver’s anger endures for the typical, customary time. Nothing noticeable or remarkable occurs in the minimal forgiver to make his forgiveness seem virtuous to observers. He simply quits being angry in the time that it usually takes people to quit being angry for a similar offense. The cessation of anger occurs naturally, without moral effort, moral deliberation, and probably, without concern for or good will towards the offender. The minimal forgiver does nothing laudatory but he also avoids being “hard-hearted” or “taking it [the offense] too seriously.” While this duration of anger is not exemplary, its natural cessation is considered to be typical of a mentally healthy person from that culture. Its occurrence is acceptable since the initial anger indicates that the victim recognizes the wrongdoing, disapproves of it, and cares enough about himself to emotionally protest against the offense. Its natural cessation is acceptable because it shows that he is not too angry and begrudging and that he is complying with social expectations.

When minimal forgiveness is not behaving typically, it will occur quickly. In many situations, quick minimal forgiveness is contrary to moral excellence and may be immoral. This is because it reveals the minimal forgiver’s flippant attitude towards the moral transgression or towards himself as a person who should not be purposefully harmed or offended in this way. The minimal forgiver’s haste indicates that the victim has failed to deliberate and be self-reflective in a way that is probably necessary if he is going to process the ramifications of the offense and address the wrongdoing and wrongdoer in a praiseworthy way.

While some amoral, trite offenses do not need to be treated more seriously than minimal forgiveness treats them, any time that a wrongdoing of a more significant nature has occurred, there needs to be a good, moral reason for not treating it with a relatively proportionate amount of disdain and moral consideration. Minimal forgivers lack the appropriate disdain for the offense and they fail to have a morally acceptable reason for not experiencing it. This is partly because their forgiveness usually has no connection—

or only a very loose one—with moral motivations for forgiving. Because they have not consciously chosen to develop the related virtues and moral beliefs that would make them forgive virtuously, minimal forgivers open themselves to the possibility of forgiving with poor motives or for problematic reasons. Instead of being motivated by inherently good moral love and concern for Goodness as virtuously-forgiving victims are, minimal forgivers may forgive because they are morally apathetic, because they do not care for themselves, other potential victims, or the offender’s moral improvement, or because they condone the offense. They may forgive because they do not have the ability or concern to mentally process the ramifications of the offense or because they lack an adequate sense of self-worth and are servile. It is possible that minimal forgivers have more ethically astute reasons for forgiving quickly, but even when this is the case, their forgiveness fails for another reason, which I will explain momentarily.

In her article, “Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons,” Margaret Holmgren suggests that premature forgiveness is morally inappropriate. She argues that a victim needs to work through a process of responding to an offense if she is to genuinely forgive. This process can include the victim recovering her self-esteem, recognizing and understanding why the offense is wrong, acknowledging her feelings, expressing her feelings to the offender, “assessing her situation with respect to the offender,” and determining “whether she wants to seek restitution from the offender.”<sup>43</sup>

Holmgren explains that these tasks enable a victim to be self-respecting. Because some forgivers quickly forgive without doing anything like Holmgren’s steps for achieving genuine, self-respecting forgiveness, other scholars argue that quick forgiveness always results in servility, condonation of the offense, emotional harm, *et cetera*. Thus, they conclude that quickly-given forgiveness or the absence of initial and proportionately sustained anger is immoral and that virtuous forgiveness must be selectively and conditionally given in the “right time.” If these scholars are correct, my model of *Forgivingness* is not, since I claim that virtuous forgiveness is frequently given quickly, sometimes effortlessly, and always unconditionally.

The distinction between minimal and virtuous forgiveness, however, allows the

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<sup>43</sup> Margaret R. Holmgren, “Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (October 1993): 344.

issue to be reframed in a way that supports my position. While *minimal* forgivers who have severely compromised self-respect or severely damaged self-esteem may forgive too quickly because of these flaws, and while this may result in an immoral form of forgiveness, scholars cannot conclude that *virtuous* forgiveness that is given quickly is also immoral. Their reasoning commits the fallacy of composition. Contra Griswold, a lack of anger in a virtuously-forgiving person does not indicate that he is servile or that he condones the offense.<sup>44</sup> Virtuous forgivers, as it will be argued in Chapter 3, have particular moral beliefs and attitudes that cause them to not lack self-respect in any way that might make their forgiveness servile. Their character has been formed, over time, to rest on the belief that forgiveness has moral value and is important for themselves and others. They not only go through a process, when necessary, of assessing their situation with respect to their offenders' habits and attitudes, making self-respecting changes to the relationship dynamic, but they are also able and willing to assess how they might alter the situation for the good of their offenders. Although this kind of deliberation and self-assessment takes time, the virtuous forgiver can experience a quicker-than-customary absence or cessation of anger and still continue the forgiveness process that includes the deliberation and assessment and active elements. This is why minimal forgiveness given quickly fails to be a proper response to less-than-mundane offenses even when the forgiver has morally acceptable reasons for forgiving: minimal forgivers quickly waive their anger and do not go through the type of process necessary to treat the offense as a wrongdoing. Whereas a minimal forgiver who dissolves his negative emotions quickly will not frequently not have or take the time to concern himself about whether he should exercise his right to punishment or discipline (if he has one), a virtuously-forgiving victim takes this time since he is concerned, because he has moral love for others, about how to help the offender become a better person. Since virtuous forgiveness is a complex process, a virtuously-forgiving victim can initiate the forgiveness process by ridding himself of or by transforming his anger quickly, yet not be servile and not condone the offense.

In the case of the virtuous forgiver, early or quick forgiveness is not only indicative of praiseworthy moral work done over time (since the anger does not quickly

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<sup>44</sup> Griswold, 18



expire naturally and it takes practice and effort to develop the willingness to forgive well), but it is connected to praiseworthy, moral beliefs and motivations that have deeply affected the victim's character. Concerning their forgiveness, and unlike what is possible of the minimal forgiver, virtuously-forgiving victims are not guilty of condoning the wrongdoing, nor of self-disrespect, nor of a failure to take morality seriously, even when they forgive very quickly or never experience offender-opposing anger at all. Their relevant character traits, which will be explained in Chapter 3, provide them with a way to forgive excellently and as if by second nature.

To reiterate, I am not suggesting that everyone who forgives quickly has the virtue of *Forgiveness*. There are ways of forgiving excellently, in accordance with the virtue, and ways of forgiving that are not excellent and are, hence, unlike the virtue. Those who release offender-opposing anger quickly in an unhealthy or condemnable way do not possess *Forgiveness*. Their failure to become angry or to remain angry as long as is typical may be the result of a psychological or moral defect that cannot be characteristic of the virtuously-forgiving victim. For now, it is important to notice that some quick-forgiving victims can forgive virtuously but that most quick-forgiving minimal forgivers may forgive condemnably.

### **Appropriateness**

Perhaps the most important of the differences between minimal and virtuous forgiveness are the situations in which each can be appropriately applied. My purposes in this discussion are to reiterate the concept that virtuous and minimal forgiveness are distinct and to provide some evidence that an instance of unilateral, unconditional model of *Forgiveness* as I present it cannot be called immoral by scholars who prefer conditional forgiveness. It will be shown that minimal forgiveness is not morally acceptable in cases where the offense is of any magnitude although it may be acceptable in addressing insignificant, amoral offenses, whereas virtuous forgiveness can be used in every situation.

**Insignificant, Amoral Offenses.** Imagine that you accidentally bump into a man while trying to walk through a large group of people gathered on a subway platform. Common and courteous parlance has you say, "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry," and you

comply with this expectation. Since the conditions are crowded and you did not bump into the man because you had ill intent or because of culpable negligence, you did not do anything morally wrong. You did not disrespect the man and it would be unconvincing and out-of-proportion if you were accused of invading his privacy or his right to be left alone. This was a small, amoral offense.

In this case, is it best for the offended person to be unforgiving, to forgive minimally, or—if he has the virtue—to forgive virtuously. Unforgiveness is sometimes thought to be an attractive response to wrongdoing because it protects the self-respect of the victim as it protests the offenses. Perhaps it also helps to deter the offender from treating the victim this way again. In the situation described, however, unforgiveness is out of place. When insignificant amoral offenses occur, it is unbecoming and unkind for the victim to retaliate. It is also unnecessary for him to respond with an intent to “teach you a lesson.” This interaction does not provide him with enough evidence to warrant him attempting to correct what he suspects to be your “behavioral problem.” Bumping into the man occurred because of features of a human condition which we all share. For a person to withhold minimal forgiveness from another human being for a common offense which one has committed or will likely commit reveals a character flaw in the unforgiving person. Holding a grudge for a slight of this sort does nothing to protect the offended person from future interactions like this, nor does it help him in other ways. If he holds a grudge, then he would be judged as unreasonable, curmudgeonly, or morally deficient. Unforgiveness is unreasonable and unhelpful for such offenses.

If unforgiveness is unreasonable, is minimal or virtuous forgiveness required? The answer is “either.” Situations like the one in this example do not permit a great deal of interaction between the parties, so not a lot is expected or morally required of the offender or the victim. A minimal or virtuous forgiver can quickly let go of any initial anger that he may have experienced, accepting that these sorts of occurrences cannot be prevented in crowded areas. To at least minimally forgive for an insignificant, amoral offense is to address the offender with the general recognition respect that appreciates the person’s inherent worth and the common condition that all people share. Minimal forgiveness avoids the unreasonableness of holding a grudge, it is a sufficient response for the amount of interaction and knowledge that the parties have of each other, and it

does not deter healthy social interactions.

Virtuous forgiveness would also be permissible in the same case. In this type of case, a virtuous forgiver may forgive with the exact outward manifestations as the minimal forgiver did and they may even share similar emotional experiences. Although the brevity and insignificance of the encounter in this example requires little from either party, some virtuous forgivers, however, may be inclined to act kindly to the offender, or will feel kindness rather than neutrality towards him. This may be displayed in his actions only slightly, perhaps through a genuine smile. Virtuous forgivers, because they have certain character traits, beliefs, and motivations, are more inclined to feel and act with kindness when it is not required. While the extra kindness in action or feelings is not required in this situation, even of a virtuous person, there is nothing morally wrong with its occurrence. In fact, it reinforces a positive habit and outlook in the virtuously-forgiving victim and may have a positive effect on the offender, although it would admittedly be very slight.

Thus, minimal and virtuous forgiveness are both appropriate responses to relatively insignificant, amoral offenses. Unforgiveness, on the other hand, is not morally good in these circumstances.

**Insignificant, Moral Offenses.** Small slights—those that result in minimal damage or are less serious in nature—become moral issues if they are associated with ill-intent or culpable negligence or if they break a moral precept. If the previous example is slightly altered, the small, amoral offense becomes a moral offense that is still insignificant. If I partake in good-natured but rowdy and obnoxious behavior with my friends, which includes me jumping on my friends' backs in a congested area, and this causes me to bump into the man in the above example, then he has a right to be angrier with me than he did when the offense was purely accidental. The offense arises from my lack of an appropriate respect for crowded situations and the people in them, or happens because, through a long series of events in my life, I have decided to disregard reasonable social norms and behaviors for crowded places. The man I bumped into has reason to be angry with me for this moral oversight or disregard because it points to a morally inappropriate attitude and a flaw in my mode of interacting with others. Arguably, it may

also infringe on his rights; he has a right to expect other people to put forth reasonable effort to not bump into him. Depending on the degree to which the victim recognizes my character flaw and inappropriate disregard for others, or on how badly he was physically jarred, the victim may justifiably experience an increased amount of offender-opposing anger when compared to the previous scenario in which the offense was an amoral accident.

When the offense was amoral and insignificant, minimal and virtuous forgiveness were appropriate responses. Neither one disregarded the offense, nor did they make them more significant than they were, as unforgiveness seems to do. They both acknowledge the realities of human interaction while having adequate respect for the victim and the offender. Are minimal and virtuous forgiveness both acceptable responses to relatively insignificant, moral offenses? The answer is “sometimes.”

The virtue of *Forgiveness* is multi-faceted. It includes some motivational and affective components that make the virtuously-forgiving victim reflect, assess, and try to improve the situation surrounding the offense.<sup>45</sup> In many cases, this means that the victim tries to consider how he might be effective at helping the offender recognize the error of his wrongdoing or how he can be encouraged to develop more concern for other people. In many cases, a victim has almost no evidence that an insignificant offense is the result of an offender’s long-term character flaws or immoral attitudes. Without this evidence, a virtuously-forgiving victim would be free to do what seems appropriate for the situation in his attempt to lovingly encourage the offender to make his actions become more respectful of others.

Nevertheless, when considering the need for the offender to improve morally, one can conclude that a small moral offense only gives the victim enough evidence to warrant thinking that the offender needs slight moral improvement in order to measure up to the moral standard of which he has fallen short. In itself, an insignificant, moral offense does not indicate that the offender has a preference for evil, has embraced his disregard for morality, or did anything other than make a foolish mistake. Thus, based on the degree of moral failure indicated by the insignificance of the offense, it is unfair to treat the offender as if he has embraced evil or performed a more serious moral offense than he

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<sup>45</sup> These will be explained in the next chapter.

has. The virtuously-forgiving victim would need to be sensitive in the assumptions that he makes and the vigor with which he encourages the offender to improve. Both should be tempered.<sup>46</sup> In some cases, the virtuously-forgiving victim may even choose to do nothing. His forgiveness would, perhaps, look and feel almost like that of the minimal forgiver. Since feelings of good will that he might have for the offender would not be immoral, and this or some act of good will is the only potential outward difference between his forgiveness and minimal forgiveness, it stands to reason that virtuous forgiveness is not inappropriate to give for an insignificant but moral offense.

Since being a moral issue is inherent within the nature of a moral offense, a moral offense is more adequately addressed by a morally-linked response that reflects the seriousness of the moral offense than would be the case with an amoral offense. This symmetry helps to keep the offense and the response balanced and proportionate.<sup>47</sup> It also allows the victim to adequately react to the fact that the offender has revealed, by means of the moral transgression, that he is an offender of morality, however insignificantly. The danger associated with minimally forgiving a small, moral offense is that the minimal forgiver may develop a habit of ignoring moral details, perhaps leading to moral blind spots about larger issues.

If the victim does not acknowledge the immorality of the offense and consider the best way to address it, then he is at risk of condoning other, more serious wrongdoing committed by himself and others. Minimal forgiveness treats amoral and immoral offenses as if they were the same. Of course, even though the damage may be insignificant in this category, what makes it different from small, amoral offenses is that the offense is truly wrong and not merely interpreted as wrong. When someone does something to offend another's tastes, there is nothing necessary but for the person who has been offended to let his anger go or to reinterpret the offense as something more

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<sup>46</sup> The next chapters will show that the virtuously-forgiving victim always needs to use practical wisdom and humility in desiring and acting to advance his offender's moral good.

<sup>47</sup> Some scholars suggest that a proportionate reaction requires a victim to experience enough anger in response to the offense. The suggestion here is that proportion comes as a moral offense is treated with a moral response and an amoral offense is addressed by an amoral response of a similar effort. Further, proportion occurs when the motivational and active parts of forgiveness are helpful enough (or desire to be adequately helpful enough) to the victim so as to be roughly proportionate to the severity of the offense.

positive. When someone does something to transgress moral precepts, however, the offense is automatically more serious than an offense against an individual's preferences. One's reaction to it may need to be more severe.

If a theorist wishes to err on the side of caution, she will encourage virtuous forgiveness of all moral transgressions rather than minimal forgiveness. Virtuous forgiveness has a better chance of properly addressing a moral offense than minimal forgiveness or unforgiveness does because *Forgiveness*, as it will be argued in the next chapter, has an action component that is motivated by moral love and guided by practical wisdom. It also prevents the victim from condoning the offense, whereas minimal forgiveness may condone. While it may not be reprehensible to ignore or condone some minor moral offenses, it is certainly problematic to make a habit of doing so. Minimal forgiveness of small, occasional moral offenses may be permissible even if it fails to encourage the offender to become better and, sometimes, even if it condones. While condonation of serious wrongdoing is never acceptable, the condonation of occasional and minor wrongdoings may be acceptable, especially when it is assessed as a temporary quality of the offender. In fact, condonation of small moral flaws may be necessary for human beings to live together harmoniously.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, one should never allow oneself to condone because of moral apathy, nor to habitually condone so that one loses sight of moral truths or develops blind spots that cause moral failure in oneself. Virtuous forgiveness prevents the problem of condonation, it helps to reinforce good character traits in the victim, and it treats the offender with respect and desires to encourage his moral goodness. The virtue supervenes on components of forgiveness that motivate the victim to care about and to exercise that concern for the offender. To the extent, then, that minimal forgiveness condones insignificant moral offenses and harms the victim's character for doing so, virtuous forgiveness is preferable to minimal forgiveness.

**Unforgiveness of Insignificant Offenses.** One can then ask if unforgiveness is an acceptable or morally preferable option when the offense is relatively insignificant but is no longer an amoral concern. There are two competing answers. Unforgiveness has

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<sup>48</sup> Aurel Kolnai, "Forgiveness," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 74 (1973-1974): 96.

the advantage of not overlooking or condoning the wrongdoing. This benefit is valuable in itself. Whereas some forms of minimal forgiveness may treat the small, moral offense as if it is not a moral offense at all, unforgiveness acknowledges the wrongdoing as a moral transgression and stands against it, thereby, not condoning it. In this respect, unforgiveness has an advantage over some forms of minimal forgiveness.

On the other hand, minimal forgiveness has three possible advantages over unforgiveness. First, minimal forgiveness has the advantage of keeping the victim open to developing virtuous forgiveness. (At this point, one must grant, for the sake of argument, that developing this virtue is valuable). While an unforgiving person may also develop the virtue, it is generally more difficult for him to do so. Much like those forms of respect that are developed as people learn to have and appreciate the respect for others that displaying manners encourages, the disposition to forgive is partially cultivated by favorably approaching the amoral or morally mundane exchanges that occur in human relations and interactions. An experimental philosopher might find that a person who refuses to forgive others for small offenses is generally at odds with other people (who are seen as annoyances or threats), more likely to retaliate, more likely to interpret the offense as being worse than it was, and generally more agitated with others. Being unforgiving does not cause him to be this way, but it reinforces his unhealthy attitudes and response tendencies that culminate in unforgiveness. If such a person learned to minimally forgive, his life would likely improve, not because of his increased likelihood of minimally forgiving, but because he would be slightly closer to possessing the relevant ways of perceiving and interacting with others that pervade a worldview that supports *Forgiveness*. His character would improve to the degree that the relevant beliefs and action tendencies of *Forgiveness* merged into his worldview. The minimal forgiver who is learning to transform his anger-responses is one step closer to developing the virtue when he gives minimal forgiveness in appropriate situations.

If practicing minimal forgiveness leaves the victim open to developing the virtue, this might be enough reason to suggest that, as long as the offense is insignificant, it is not as important to avoid condoning it as it is to keep the victim closer to developing the virtue. On the other hand, this path of development is unpredictable. When one has the ability to forgive minimal in a morally permissible way, this does not ensure that one will

develop the virtue. *Forgivingness* is accompanied by relatively sophisticated moral skills and attitudes, as well as particular beliefs and emotions that can only be acquired through teaching, observation, and practice. For example, a minimal forgiver who forgives in appropriate situations will not automatically learn to show moral love in the appropriate way for different offenders and offenses; that is a skill that has been developed by someone who possesses the virtue and that does not come naturally. If a person is concerned to orient herself towards goodness in other ways—attempting to make moral progress in other areas, valuing people who forgive virtuously, reading about humility and love and respect, for instance—her chances of developing the virtue have increased. In this case, developing the ability to forgive minimally far surpasses unforgiveness because it allows the forgiver to remain in a state of developmental openness.

Second, a pattern of unforgiveness reveals a character flaw in the victim. In the earlier example, if the man at the subway station refuses to at least minimally forgive me for my collision with him (even though I should have been more careful to not bump him), then his omission of social grace reveals him to be philistine. If his unwillingness to forgive in this situation is indicative of his general attitudes and tendencies, one may be justified to conclude that he views himself as having more rights than others, or that he does not respect the fact that humans are imperfect, or that he has some other faulty way of viewing the human condition. An unwillingness to forgive, at least minimally, shows that the victim lacks some form of respect for the offender.<sup>49</sup> Forgiveness for small imperfections shows a victim's willingness to respect others in this way. When considering the victim's own moral state, he will do well to recognize that the small, moral offense committed against him is reminiscent of those small, moral offenses that he has committed against others. This consideration suggests that unforgiveness for small, moral offenses is appropriate. Most victims would do well to exercise moral humility by at least minimally forgiving.

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<sup>49</sup> Robin Dillon uses "agentive recognition self-respect" as a category of respect one can have for oneself. Robin S. Dillon, "How to Lose Your Self-Respect," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (April 1992): 133-34. Presumably, one can have agentive respect for other people. Agentive respect allows one to treat other people as moral agents—it expects them to be concerned about morality but it also accepts that all people are imperfect. Aspects of self-respect will be discussed further near the end of the last chapter.



A third reason to prefer minimal forgiveness to unforgiveness when the offense is insignificant is that minimal forgiveness prohibits revenge. If minimal forgiveness occurs quickly enough, the minimally forgiving victim is less likely to damage his offender or his interests. Some people may argue that damaging an offender's interests is a good goal and is just if he has damaged another's. While this may seem right according to some theories of justice, it would bring disvalue to society if such a principle is rendered over minor personal offenses. Too much time and energy would be put forth in trying to achieve justice over small slights and the attitudes that such endeavors would evoke for other people would be counterproductive to flourishing. Forfeiting the desire for revenge and the actions that are likely to spring from that desire would promote better personal relationships.

There are a couple of additional reasons to prefer (in most cases) minimal forgiveness to unforgiveness of relatively insignificant, moral offenses. A forgiving victim will be less likely to displace his anger (since it will have dissipated) onto those people who were not involved in the incident than an unforgiving person is. Minimal forgiveness may also provide a victim with the potential emotional and physical health benefits that usually accompany forgiveness.

A caveat must be included, however. In order to forgive as well as a minimal forgiver must, the victim must have at least a minimal sense of her self-worth. If a victim's appreciation for herself is so low that she thinks that she has no moral right to not be treated poorly in serious matters, it may be best for her to not forgive minimally when a small moral offense is committed against her by certain people. Unforgiveness may be a tool that, if used selectively, might enable her to reclaim her own conception of her value as a person of moral worth. If this person, who is incapable of forgiving virtuously and who is extremely unlikely to be able to develop the virtue in her current state, becomes angry about being treated improperly, her enduring anger may remind her that there are some ways of being treated that are beneath her. If this feeling is then transformed by wise and effective moral instruction, her view of her worth and of other people's worth may be altered so that being on the path to developing *Forgiveness* might be possible. But it is harmful to advise someone with a severely compromised sense of self-worth to be an unforgiving person. A license to be unforgiving is a license

to be unkind and immoral. A person in this situation needs to learn to adjudicate between those who do moral wrong to her regularly and those who make mistakes. She might need to distinguish between true offenses against her worth and those offenses that do not directly mean to detract from her personhood.

I have argued that when an offense is insignificant and for amoral offenses, minimal forgiveness is better than unforgiveness. Virtuous forgiveness is also a praiseworthy response for these offenses but it will often appear to be equivalent to minimal forgiveness. When responding to insignificant, moral offenses, virtuous forgiveness is morally best. Since only those who have or are developing the virtue can give virtuous forgiveness, minimal forgiveness and unforgiveness are the response options. For people who are overcoming normal experiences of anger, minimal forgiveness is preferred to unforgiveness. For those people who systematically lack an experience of anger because their sense of worth has been severely diminished, some instances of unforgiveness may be permissible. These would serve as a prerequisite step to helping the victim advance towards ideal *Forgivingness*. For the vast majority of cases, however, unforgiveness is a morally deficient option.

**Significant, Moral Offenses.** This dissertation is dedicated to arguing that virtuous forgiveness is always morally appropriate—even for significant, moral offenses—and that virtuous forgiveness is always better than unforgiveness. To the extent that minimal forgiveness keeps the forgiver open to developing *Forgivingness*, minimal forgiveness is preferable to unforgiveness. But minimal forgiveness lacks the moral excellence of virtuous forgiveness and it is sometimes inappropriate to give, even though it is usually preferable to unforgiveness. This section will explain why instances of minimal forgiveness that are disconnected to the process of virtue-formation are insufficient responses to significant, moral offenses. As such, it adds weight to the cumulative case being made through this dissertation that people should strive to become ideal and virtuous forgivers.

One of the main problems with minimal forgiveness is that it is frequently and wrongly given in situations that necessitate an active response of high moral quality that the minimal forgiver is unable to provide. The moral insufficiency of minimal

forgiveness in addressing significant moral offenses involves two criticisms that have traditionally been raised against unconditional forgiveness in general. While they are not true of the virtuous form of unconditional forgiveness, they may be true of those forms of minimal forgiveness that are not given in accordance with the virtue. The first criticism is that minimal forgiveness condones serious wrongdoing, which is the type of wrongdoing which should definitely not be overlooked or ignored. The second is that minimal forgiveness can contribute to a victim's malformed sense of self and morality. These will be discussed in turn.

Traditionally, there are scholars who claim that forgiveness is always distinct from condonation. Support for this position comes from the fact that, theoretically, forgiveness responds to the wrongdoing as if it is wrong, whereas condonation acts as if the wrongdoing is not wrong or that the transgression did not occur. Aurel Kolnai, one of the earliest to begin the revival of philosophical study of forgiveness in contemporary scholarship, was among the first to explain that forgiveness is not condonation since the wronged person is acutely aware of the wrongness of the offense even though he may deliberately refrain from responding with retribution for other reasons.<sup>50</sup> But Kolnai strongly warns that condoning "in its graver forms, is not only undignified and self-soiling, but also unfair."<sup>51</sup> He, along with other scholars, notably R. S. Downie, warn about condonation masquerading as forgiveness. While they maintain that forgiveness does not condone even when it appears to, the concern that some forms of forgiveness actually do condone has worried some other scholars. Their concern is that forgiveness, in an unconditional form, condones. As Cheshire Calhoun suggests, when one is prone to "minimizing, rationalizing, or ignoring injuries," and "telling a story that unrealistically portrays the wrongdoer as more deserving of benevolent attitudes than in fact he is," his forgiveness condones.<sup>52</sup> This occurs when a victim applies minimal forgiveness to cases of significant wrongdoing.

In most cases, minimal forgiveness is a morally acceptable response to insignificant, amoral offenses because, based on the knowledge of an offender's

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<sup>50</sup> Kolnai, "Forgiveness," 96.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Cheshire Calhoun, "Changing One's Heart," *Ethics* 103 (October 1992): 86.

character, these do not warrant significant (or any) form of correction and the victim does not need to go to any lengths to protect himself or stand up for morality.<sup>53</sup> But morally serious offenses are not like minimal offenses in this way. By their very nature, they are significant *moral* offenses. Treating them as if they do not matter is immoral because it does not indicate that they are moral transgressions worth standing against.

All instances of minimal forgiveness are similar in that they can be applied inappropriately, may not have a praiseworthy moral quality, may be the result of a character flaw, and may occur too quickly. They can inappropriately include forgetting the offense, doing nothing to stand against the offense or for morality. This is because, unlike the forgiveness that comes from *Forgiveness*, minimal forgiveness lacks a substantial nature. None of its instances necessarily share any particular features that ensure that they occur in similar ways, except that they include a general change from negative, offender-opposing emotions to neutral or more positive ones. This basic change in affect has no definite motivation, does not have a corresponding action tendency (except for prohibiting revenge), and may not involve any positive and reliable features that serve to standardize it. Minimal forgiveness does not necessarily occur for any set of praiseworthy reasons; it can occur because of a wide variety of motivations as the person is acted upon by external circumstances or the particularities of his personality. It can be given wisely or unwisely. In a sense, then, the minimal forgiver does not forgive essentially but almost accidentally. As Chapter 3 will explain, however, virtuous forgiveness has a motivational component, an affective component, an action component, and a cognitive component. Certain elements in each of these components serve as standardizing markers by which the virtue can be identified.

Since an instance of minimal forgiveness is basically a conglomeration of accidental qualities rather than the substantiation of an essential nature of a virtue, minimal forgiveness may condone significant wrongdoing in one or more of three ways. Minimal forgiveness is always guilty of the first.

As a general rule, if one is concerned about other people, one will wish that other people are not morally depraved. Provided the right context and motivation, one might

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<sup>53</sup> This is likely the category of wrongdoing that Kolnai had in mind when he refers to “minor faults” that may sometimes be condoned. Kolnai, “Forgiveness,” 96.

even try to help other people become better in some way. Because of the severity of a significant moral offense, the victim has warrant to believe that the offender has begun to develop his character in an obviously negative direction. The severity of the significant moral offense also creates a situation in which the victim must take notice of the severity of the offense; she would be wrong to ignore it as if it were a mundane flaw. Since a morally serious offense should not be ignored, and since it has been directed against a particular person, this person finds herself in a morally-laden context that she should not ignore. Once a person forgives minimally, her emotions go from offender-opposing to neutral or positive. The process that she goes through to precipitate that change can be long or short, self-disrespecting or self-respecting, and can occur for moral or immoral reasons. Once her emotions have changed, however, her forgiveness has been given. There is nothing else. This is not true of virtuous forgiveness, which includes a process of assessment, reflection, and serious concern for the offender. The virtuously forgiving victim recognizes the moral context created by the offense, assesses the relevant information, and is motivated to figure out how to help the offender see the error of his ways, to give him reason to improve his behavior, or to reclaim the situation for the sake of Goodness, to the extent that she can. Particular elements of the virtue have caused the victim to be motivated to do this, when it is possible. Without going through this process—something that minimal forgiveness does not include—the victim views the severe moral offense as if can be ignored from a moral standpoint. Further, minimal forgiveness treats the offender, who is guilty of serious moral wrongdoing, as if the moral state of his character is inconsequential. This is not an attitude that is held by a virtuous forgiver who, because of certain attitudinal and affective components of the virtue, is concerned whether other people who directly affect him behave well or poorly with regards to morality.

Second, minimal forgiveness usually results in a form of neutrality towards the offender that also lets go of a negative stance towards the wrongdoing. This occurs because minimal forgiveness is without any inherent and well-developed factor that motivates the victim to forgive and because the minimal forgiver lacks the attitudes and

beliefs required to experience the appropriate transformation of anger.<sup>54</sup> His view of the offense and the offender usually work together. If a victim finds the ability to relinquish negative feelings towards the offense, he will also let go of his negative feelings towards the wrongdoer. Conversely, the victim may find the ability to forswear negative feelings towards the offender once he relinquishes his negative view of the offense. Therefore, a minimally-forgiving victim can change favorably towards the offender because he has altered his view of the wrongdoing or the victim can first change his view of the offender to make himself become more accepting of the wrongdoing. If the former occurs, he is guilty of condonation because he mistakenly views a moral transgression as morally permissible.<sup>55</sup>

Third, the minimal forgiver does not necessarily operate from morally-praiseworthy motivations. The minimal forgiver can become inclined to change his position on either the offender or the offense because of any number of reasons outside of forgiveness itself, but not because of any essential quality of his forgiveness. He may, for instance, be moved to forgive by parts of his personality or for reasons that are outside of forgiveness. He may be servile and this may cause him to defer to the offender and, thus, to forgive him in an inappropriate, minimal sense. His pity for a particular offender may arise and might lead to forgiveness. He might forgive because of “old times sake.” But minimal forgiveness lacks any inherent emotion or motivational or cognitive component that is essentially connected to his forgiveness. Whereas virtuous forgiveness is inseparable from moral love, which is always a morally praiseworthy factor in his decision to forgive, minimal forgiveness is separable from everything except its basic definition. Hence, when the minimal forgiver rids himself of negative emotions against his offender, he condones the offense if he does not do so for directly moral reasons and with the good of the offender in mind, as the virtuous forgiver does. Without forgiving for moral reasons, the minimal forgiver condones the serious wrongdoing because his

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<sup>54</sup> Double-concern/double-construal anger—a form that is evidence in *Forgivingness*—will be explained in the next chapter.

<sup>55</sup> Virtuous forgiveness operates differently. It can let go of offender-opposing anger while retaining anger-that-moral-offenses-occur, or can retain a negative judgment about the fact that the offense occurred even when the emotion is not present. This does not allow the virtuous forgiver to condone the wrongdoing while offering forgiveness. Again, later chapters will explain this in better detail.

other motivations for forgiving are either immoral themselves or are in too low of an ontological category to serve as proper warrant for forgiving moral wrongdoing.

The second main reason that minimal forgiveness should not be applied to serious offenses is because it is likely to contribute both to a victim's malformed sense of self, if his sense of self is already malformed, and to the offender's moral impoverishment. Minimal forgiveness often presents itself as the passing over of wrongdoing, an attempt to get-back-to-normal, a rough-but-ready response that does not require sophisticated moral reasoning. While this is appropriate if someone accidentally makes you spill your coffee or steps on your toe, it is not permissible for more significant, moral offenses. The person who minimally forgives not only fails to treat the moral transgression as serious enough, but fails to assert to himself and others that his interests should not be disregarded. In some cases, minimal forgiveness fails to assert that the victim is a human being who has worth. When an offender is allowed to seriously offend morality in a way that also seriously disregards another's value as a person, he is allowed to subsist in his own moral impecuniosity. If the victim's sense of self-worth is significantly deficient, minimal forgiveness does nothing to correct the victim's understanding of herself since it lacks a systematic motivation mechanism for addressing the offense.

Norvin Richards writes that although some suggest that negative feelings harbored toward a wrongdoer should be avoided because they are distressing to the victim, preclude certain close relationships, and can be overwhelming, it makes good sense to be on one's guard against certain people.<sup>56</sup> When serious wrongdoing has occurred, a victim should be prudent with regards to her future interaction with the wrongdoer. This is one way that she can assert and reaffirm her sense of self-worth. But minimal forgivers tend to ignore or forswear the oppositional feelings they have without first exploring the moral issues involved and considering the best possible response. Since the nature of minimal forgiveness lacks an explicitly moral foundation and since it does not necessarily have any component other than an emotional change, the minimal forgiver is likely to act as if the offense did not occur, is not severe, or that it does not indicate a flaw in the offender's character. The minimal forgiver unknowingly engrains

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<sup>56</sup> Norvin Richards, "Forgiveness," *Ethics* 99 (1988): 83.

her compromised sense of her worth further into her character. In many cases, minimal forgiveness will also reinforce her erroneous views of herself because she will lack the motivation to deter the offender from continuing to devalue her.<sup>57</sup>

Even if a repeat victim originally has a reasonably strong sense of her worth, forgiving minimally for many offenses may severely compromise it or destroy it. As a minimal forgiver repeats the pattern of becoming angry about a serious offense but then quickly becoming neutral or positive towards the offender for reasons that are not solidly grounded in ethical precepts, she trains herself to skip the recognition of the wrongdoing and to avoid considering the morally praiseworthy way that she should behave in response to the offender. The minimal forgiver revises her thoughts about herself and her offender. For example, the victim may think, “He’s worth putting up with. What he’s doing is not so bad. I deserve it anyway. Why should I expect him to be any different? It’s not worth fighting it.” If these belief revisions occur multiple times as the victim repeatedly and minimally forgives serious offenses, her sense of morality will no longer be as sharp as it may have originally been and she will become apathetic about protecting herself (and possibly others) against the type of offense in question.

Consider a girl who recurrently watches her parents defer to and minimally forgive her wealthy uncle, no matter how badly he abuses her and harms her family. They minimally forgive so that the uncle will continue to provide the family with occasional monetary windfalls which they desperately need. The girl may eventually draw the conclusion, at least subconsciously, that when older, powerful men abuse her, she must accept their mistreatment and not feel ill towards them. This is what the minimal forgiveness displayed by her family has conditioned her to think.<sup>58</sup> As she watches her parents not stand up for her or for moral principles over the years, she is trained to think things about herself and about moral demands that are not true. Years of minimal forgiveness take the opportunity to blur her moral vision and to pry the truth

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<sup>57</sup> If other parts of his personality or external situations do this, he may benefit from them. But minimal forgiveness has no component to ensure that this occurs.

<sup>58</sup> A girl I have in mind will not be able to forgive the uncle virtuously. Children are especially prone to being unable to distinguish right from wrong, especially when it is suggested to them that wrongdoing done against them is permissible. The average child has also not had enough experience or moral education to forgive virtuously, usually being capable only of minimal forgiveness.



about her own self-worth from her grasp as it replaces an appropriately angry stance against the mistreatment with one that accepts wrongdoing as something not worth fighting against and as something about which it is not worth being angry. The girl has repeatedly been encouraged to look the other way, to have neutral feelings (or inappropriately positive ones) towards someone who does wrong, to treat great moral offenses as if they are amoral issues. Consequently, when this girl grows into adulthood, she is more likely to be mistreated in similar ways since she has grown to acquiesce in mistreatment of this nature. Minimal forgiveness was an improper response to the serious wrongdoing that occurred to her and her family, in part, because it did not allow others nor herself the ability to treat her as if she has inherent worth and moral value. Minimal forgiveness was a tool that skewed her understanding of how to properly respect herself. Furthermore, it condoned the wrongdoing.

Minimal forgiveness cannot be an effective or morally permissible response to serious wrongdoing because it fails to treat the moral seriousness of the offense seriously enough. Overlooking the moral seriousness of an offense is impermissible because it condones the offense, leaving something that is significantly wrong to appear as if it is morally permissible and the disconnect with morality that it creates can skew the affected person's self-concept from what it should be. Ideally, a victim and an offender will take themselves seriously as agents who are bound and affected by moral laws. Minimally forgiving serious moral wrongdoing risks not portraying them as such and, thus, the repeated misuse of minimal forgiveness contributes to self-misconceptions and lack of respect for the involved party's moral agency. It should be concluded that minimal forgiveness is a morally problematic response to serious, moral offenses and that in some respects, even unforgiveness is preferable to it. It will soon be argued, however, that *Forgivingness* is the best response to serious, moral offenses and is preferable to unforgiveness and the unforgiveness that comes along with conditional forgiveness.

**Significant, Amoral Offenses.** An act is considered to be a significant, amoral offense if it causes significant damage to the victim but the offender was not culpably negligent and the wrongdoing was not intentional and there were no moral laws broken. An example of an offender who has committed such an action is seen in the following

example: Connor drives through what he honestly perceives to be a green traffic light, even though it was red, colliding with another car whose driver, Shirley, legitimately had a green light. Connor was unhurt, but Shirley's arm had to be amputated and her three year old daughter was killed. This terrible accident occurred because the height of the sun and the reflection from a green store sign, positioned in exactly the right spot to reflect green off of a mirror and onto the traffic light, created an illusion of green and hid the red from Connor's view. It would have been perceived this way by anyone at this exact spot, but it was Connor who happened to meet this situation at the intersection. There are at least three ways of viewing this situation and its relationship to forgiveness (rather than unforgiveness). They differ on the responsibility they permit Connor to hold for the accident. First, forgiveness can be given to the offender because he is considered to be guilty. Second, the victim can consider the offender to not be in need of forgiveness since he has done nothing morally wrong and did not cause the harm intentionally. Third, the victim can try to allow the offender's psychological needs to help determine whether she offers forgiveness or considers it to be an accident that is not in need of forgiveness.

The first option interprets the offender to be guilty and a candidate for forgiveness. Shirley will need to forgive Connor for causing the death of her daughter and the loss of her arm. Connor was the moral agent who contributed to the damage and so, even though it was accidental, he stands in need of forgiveness. The second option suggests that although Connor was the moral agent who caused the damage, he is guilty of harming but not guilty of moral wrongdoing and, thus, does not stand in need of forgiveness.<sup>59</sup> One practical factor that affects this situation is whether or not the forgiver knows that the offender is not guilty of wrongdoing. If the victim understands that the offender is not guilty of moral wrongdoing and does not believe that the offender needs to be forgiven, then, as long as the victim's emotions correspond to his thoughts,

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<sup>59</sup> One way to address significant harm caused by someone with an exculpatory excuse is to say that forgiveness is not a proper way to respond to him or at least it is unnecessary. As Govier suggests, much may need to be understood and accepted rather than forgiven by the secondary and tertiary victims. See Trudy Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 55-56. David Bradshaw has suggested that an alternate approach is to see forgiveness as a means of helping the person with an exculpatory excuse to heal. David Bradshaw (Professor of Philosophy, University of Kentucky, 2015) in discussion with the author.

forgiveness is unnecessary because he will not experience the relevant offender-opposing emotions that normally need to be dissolved. But at a given time, a particular victim may not have enough information to judge whether the offender is guilty of moral wrongdoing or not. Shirley may experience anger, confusion, and sadness because of the repercussions of the accident. If she does not realize that Connor has an excuse for causing the harm, she may be angry at him and consider him guilty of wrongdoing. If she thinks he was drunk while driving, she could also be angry and consider him guilty of wrongdoing. The third option assumes that forgiveness is available if the offender expresses a desire to be forgiven but that the harm that was caused, being accidental, is not a moral offense and does not automatically stand in need of forgiveness.

It may be very difficult for a victim to forgive someone for causing them severe, enduring heart-ache. For harm as severe as this, some people might naturally never be able to forgive. As explained in the first chapter, nonetheless, the ability to forgive is a psychological issue and not a moral one and so, will not be discussed in detail here. The moral question is what the relationship of minimal forgiveness, virtuous forgiveness, and unforgiveness is to serious, amoral offenses.

If Shirley refuses to forgive, she fails to recognize the legitimate excuse that Connor has for his role in causing the harm. It is unjust to hold someone morally responsible for something that—to use Wolterstorff’s language—should not be a part of his moral history. Not attempting to forgive Connor, then, would be morally impermissible provided that Shirley knew of the legitimate excuses he had that removes his culpability. If Shirley does not know of these excuses, however, she would not be acting praiseworthily until she had tried to determine whether or not he had such an excuse.

If the situation was different from the example described above, and Shirley discovered that Connor was morally culpable, then unforgiveness would be a natural option. As mentioned above, however, the present discussion will not entertain that option. The other chapters are needed to present the case that unforgiveness is inferior to forgiveness. If this methodology is temporarily granted, then, several forgiving options are possible for Shirley.

If Shirley is a virtuously-forgiving victim and if Connor is not morally culpable,

Shirley may interpret the situation in different ways. In one interpretation, she may view the offender as being guilty of something that is not morally wrong but that is significant enough to be associated with his personal (but not moral) history. In this case, she would work towards forgiving him. As will be explained in the next chapter, forgiving does not mean that Shirley must not feel sadness about the event, or that she must not hate that it occurred. What virtuous forgiveness means for serious amoral offenses is that the forgiver does not have offender-opposing emotions and does not experience other emotions to a degree that allows her to resent that the offense happened in a way or to a degree that prevents her from living a flourishing life with respect to the offense. Shirley would also be sensitive of Connor's perceptions. Since it would be reasonable for him to also think of the offense as being a significant part of his personal history, Shirley would be sensitive to this possibility when considering whether and how to express her forgiveness to him. She can forgive him because there is no moral reason not to forgive, and it will benefit her and the offender if she does.

In another interpretation, Shirley could view Connor as someone who is not in need of forgiveness at all. With this assumption, she might approach things in one of two ways. First, she could ceremonially forgive Connor for the harm if he desires to be forgiven. Second, she could try to convince Connor that he is not in need of forgiveness and that he should redefine his view of his own guilt. One drawback to the latter approach is that it is unlikely to be convincing to Connor that he does not need forgiveness if he interprets the event as a negative part of his personal history. This approach risks being insensitive to the offender and his process of healing from the contributory role he played in the harm. Situations of this nature are probably among the best candidates for ceremonial forgiveness. But either approach corresponds with virtuous forgiveness. In both situations, the virtuously-forgiving victim has the opportunity to be sensitive to her own abilities and to the offender's needs. Both options offer the possibility that they will work in the favor of advancing the good of both parties, helping them heal and recover from this personal, although not immoral, tragedy.

If the offender interprets himself as in need of forgiveness in the case of a significant, amoral offense, then the virtuously-forgiving victim will forgive in whatever sense is relevant. One with *Forgiveness* will not refuse to forgive the offender. She is

unjustifiably inconsiderate to the offender if she holds a grudge because holding a grudge in this case does nothing to preserve her self-respect, protect herself or others, or maintain moral standards. Her unwillingness to forgive without having any moral reason not to forgive him is morally impermissible. Unforgiveness is an impermissible choice for severe, amoral offenses, even though one's forgiveness may be accompanied by a great deal of sadness and sense of loss.

Before moving on, a few remarks should be made about the relationship of minimal forgiveness to those who commit significant amoral offenses: Virtuous forgiveness is always preferable to minimal forgiveness if it is possible for the particular offender to forgive virtuously. In the case that this is not possible, then for these types of offense, minimal forgiveness should be given. It is not rational to consider an offense for which an offender is not morally culpable as part of his moral history. Unforgiveness does not reflect this belief. It allows the victim to mistakenly place moral blame on a morally blameless (at least with respect to this offense) person. Unforgiveness only exposes the character flaw that a hard-hearted person has. Minimal forgiveness allows the victim and offender to move on. With regards to the evidence revealed by the offense about the offender's moral character, minimal forgiveness is respectful to him since he is not culpable.

**Relationship to Excuses.** In the above section called "Actual and Perceived Wrongdoing," the topic of excuses was introduced. It was suggested that a legitimate excuse is a factor that prevents the offense from being part of the offender's moral history. The last section used the story of Shirley to discuss the relationship of forgiveness to significant amoral offenses. From that section, it can be inferred that if Shirley is behaving rationally, her emotions towards Connor will become more positive as she discovers the excuse that makes his actions be part of his personal history but not his moral history. Being willing to reserve harsh judgment about an offender's character and his actions until there has been a reasonable amount of time to investigate whether or not there are excuses of this sort may be part of virtuous forgiveness. More can be said of excusing and its relationship to forgiveness, however, especially with regards to moral offenses.

Most all of the contemporary literature agrees that the concept of forgiveness should be kept distinct from the concept of excuse. Charles Griswold explains that “at a minimum we may say that to excuse is not to hold the agent responsible, even while his or her action is recognized as wrong. . . . To forgive someone, by contrast, assumes their responsibility for the wrong-doing.”<sup>60</sup> In practice, keeping these concepts distinct is difficult because forgiveness can respond to excuses; someone having a legitimate excuse contributes to the reasons a victim has to forgive him. For instance, a victim’s negative feelings for a wrongdoer may be attenuated as he learns that the wrongdoer’s agency was compromised or if he comes to see his offender as a less responsible moral agent than he originally believed him to be. In these cases, these excuses rightly factor in to the virtuously-forgiving victim’s reasons for forgiving and the corresponding actions that he may take in dealing with the offender. Thus, there is practical overlap between excusing and the diminishment of offender-opposing emotions or judgments.<sup>61</sup> When excuses are legitimate, minimal or virtuous forgivers may find themselves forgiving the offender since the revelation of the excuse suggests that their offender-opposing emotions are somewhat illegitimate. Legitimate excuses can serve as legitimate reasons to forgive.<sup>62</sup>

Although a reason for forgiving is not the same thing as forgiveness itself, the reason for which forgiveness is given affects the quality of the forgiveness. Just as a minimal forgiver is usually less concerned with forgiving for upright reasons than a virtuous forgiver is, the minimal forgiver’s use of or need for excuses differ as well. A generally unforgiving person may more easily become a minimal forgiver if he receives an excuse from his offender.<sup>63</sup> If his forgiveness required an excuse from the offender, his form of forgiveness is more externally-dependent than a virtuous forgiver’s would be. The quality of his forgiveness is less like the virtue in these situations since those persons

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<sup>60</sup> Griswold, 7.

<sup>61</sup> From the side of the offender, it makes sense for him to offer excuses in an attempt to be forgiven; offenders sometimes want the victim to see their point-of-view, to understand the pressures that affected them, or to understand that they were not malicious or negligent. Giving legitimate excuses may be as important as receiving them.

<sup>62</sup> Excuses are not the only reason one can forgive a wrongdoer; he may need forgiveness because he has no excuse. Even though excuses and forgiveness may sometimes occur together, forgiveness can occur for many reasons other than the revelation of an offender’s diminished agency, so the concepts are distinct.

<sup>63</sup> Govier, 55-56.

who have *Forgivingness* will have the ability to forgive without an excuse being given.

The minimal forgiver's relationship to excuses places the minimal forgiver at a moral disadvantage when forgiveness is aimed at a moral offense. Minimal forgivers are motivated by a desire, for whatever reason, to rid themselves of negative affect. When someone does this without having moral grounds for doing so and without considering the moral ramifications of his emotional alteration, he is more likely to accept or create illegitimate excuses for the offender, failing to give proper consideration that the offender is a blameworthy moral offender. A victim in this position might think, "That's just what men do," or "Boys will be boys," or "He had to get his fix," to excuse and thereby no longer make the appropriate judgments about one's relationship with the offender and the offender's relationship to morality. When the victim makes poor excuses for the offender or accepts poor excuses from him as a reason to forgive, this form of minimal forgiveness is morally wrong. It may also reinforce her role as victim and perpetuate that part of the offender's self-conception that supports or enables the immoral behavior.

A virtuous forgiver's relationship to excuses is somewhat different. Although she has the capacity to be emotionally responsive to excuses, her forgiveness is not dependent on them.<sup>64</sup> This trait, along with her relatively intact understanding of morality, provides her with a disincentive to fabricate false excuses for her offender. When legitimate excuses are offered to the virtuous forgiver, however, this may serve as another reason for her to forgive the offender and as information that she will use to determine the best way to behave towards him. In other words, victims who have the virtue of *Forgivingness* offer forgiveness in the absence of excuses, but giving consideration to legitimate excuses helps the victim determine the offender's culpability. This is helpful when the forgiver is determining what outward responses the victim can or should take to

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<sup>64</sup> For a forgiver to entertain excuses by an offender so that the forgiver's emotions can be affected by them is not the only perspective to consider excuses. There is also the side of the offender. The unforgiving person who wants to forgive but finds it difficult may desire an excuse from the offender. The ideal virtuous forgiver desires an excuse only if she thinks it will be beneficial for the offender. Her forgiveness is not excuse-driven. The virtuous person, however, may recognize that it is beneficial for the offender's ultimate interests for him to express his excuses. In doing so, the wise and virtuous forgiver may enter into a dialogue with his offender about the excuses and, to the extent that he is able, help the offender distinguish between legitimate excuses and those that serve as a barrier to his recognition of his own responsibility for the offense.

try to advance the offender's moral good.<sup>65</sup> Another important feature of *Forgiveness* is that it allows the offender to stand for Goodness. Since being aligned as much as possible with Truth and Morality is also alignment with the Good, the virtuous forgiver tries to be clear about those things for which the offender is being forgiven and tries to experience the appropriate emotions and judgments. Legitimate excuses, when they are made known to the virtuously-forgiving victim, help her determine what aspect of the wrongdoing is the target of her forgiveness. Excuses thus help the forgiver become clearer about those things for which the offender was not responsible, and hence, for which he does not need to be forgiven.<sup>66</sup>

### **A Summary of Fundamental Distinctions of Minimal and Virtuous Forgiveness**

Throughout this discussion, more detail has been added to the preliminary sketch of minimal forgiveness that was presented in the first chapter. Although a full picture of virtuous forgiveness has not yet been presented, some contrasts between it and minimal forgiveness have been made. A fundamental distinction between the two forms of forgiveness is that minimal forgiveness seems to lack a substantial nature. In other words, it is essential one-dimensional, consisting only of an affect change. This relatively simple transition of emotions are precipitated by reasons or motivations external to minimal forgiveness itself and those reasons often have no connection to moral considerations. Minimal forgiveness is a movement from anger/resentment and similar emotions to a stance of neutrality or sometimes to favor towards the offender or even the offense. The anger that occurs initially can be focused on the offender or the offense or it may have a nondescript object. It takes minimal moral effort to forgive minimally and its occurrence is accidental to it rather than essential. It is usually heavily, externally dependent on other features of the victim's personality, the situation

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<sup>65</sup> Behaving in this manner is a natural action tendency of the virtue. Again, more detail will be given about this feature of *Forgiveness* in the next chapters.

<sup>66</sup> The virtuous forgiver may be fooled by a crafty offender. Sometimes his anger towards his offender may be mistakenly lessened by an excuse that the offender does not deserve to use. Nevertheless, any such mistake of this nature will be moot because the virtuous offender has other, morally good reasons to forgive. These forgivers understand that forgiveness is the best moral response to wrongdoing for which an offender is morally culpable.



surrounding the wrongdoing, and any excuses that the offender might have for committing the offense. It may occur sometimes and not others. When it occurs reliably in response to all types of offenses, it may increase the moral problems of the victim, as it can contribute to moral apathy, condonation of wrongdoing, disrespect of one's own worth, disrespect for the moral agency of the offender, and further victimization.

All of these things are in stark contrast to forgiveness that comes from the virtue. *Forgivingness* is multi-dimensional; its essential nature is complex and its forgiveness is comprised of characteristic cognitive, affective, motivational, and affective components. Built within it are elements that necessarily give rise to a virtuous form of forgiveness. It is not dependent on external motivations and it occurs reliably rather than haphazardly. The reasons for virtuous forgiveness being given are necessarily connected to a concern for moral considerations, for the substrate of the virtue is moral love. The virtuously-forgiving victim deliberates about moral issues involved in the forgiveness nexus and considers the best way, according to practical reason and moral love, to interact with offenders in the future. The fact that virtuous forgiveness occurs reliably and in response to all types of offenses actually strengthens the virtue (and related moral strengths, including appropriate anger and the perception of moral transgressions) of the one who already possesses it. It occurs relatively effortlessly and quickly for the virtuously-forgiving victim, since the virtue stands for the Good in a different way than is characteristic of typical experiences of anger or unforgiveness. Rather than being motivated by personal or moral weakness or character flaws that may be characteristic of those who habitually forgive minimally, virtuous forgiveness is the result of moral effort that has allowed the virtuous forgiver to develop the ability to forgive excellently in all circumstances.

### **Forgiveness That We Desire**

Another reason that gives support to the idea that there are minimal and virtuous forms of forgiveness, and a virtue to which they can be compared, is that there seem to be certain modes of forgiving that ideally correspond to the way in which we would want to be forgiven if we were in need of it. In *Forgiveness and Love*, Glen Pettigrove discusses the forgiveness that we tend to give, and more importantly, the forgiveness for which we

hope. In this rich way of viewing forgiveness, “our commitment to our own interests prompts us to desire not merely passable treatment from others, but excellent treatment from them.” He continues,

The forgiveness for which we hope includes the current absence of hostile reactive attitudes and the presence of positive regard. But it is not only the present that concerns us. We also desire reassurance that hostile reactive attitudes based on this wrongdoing will remain absent in future, and the positive regard will continue. . . . Likewise, the forgiveness we seek includes the commitment not to retaliate, the forswearing of hostile reactive attitudes and a commitment to our well-being. . . . We also hope for the absence of hostile reactive attitudes and the presence of positive regard.<sup>67</sup>

When people need to be forgiven and they desire forgiveness, they do not long for hatred, revenge, mistreatment, and hostility. What people want forgiveness to be is something that affirms them and accepts them. Of course, when someone wants something to be a certain way, this does not make it so. Nevertheless, the presence of this desire may suggest that there is a pure and good forgiveness that is different from the kind of forgiveness that passes over wrongdoing, that is accompanied by hatred and hostility, or that affirms the wrongdoing. None of these types of forgiveness are ideal. They are minimal, at best.

### **Evidence for Love’s Connection with Forgiveness**

There is an element of the ideal form of forgiveness that standardizes all instances of it and allows those offenders who desperately desire to be forgiven to have the best chance of receiving what they ultimately need from their victims. This element is moral love. The belief that forgiveness is connected to love is intuitive for many people, it has historical and religious support and it is a commonly accepted belief by scholars and laypeople alike. In a study published in 2004, the top association that participants made (out of more than 70 possibilities) with forgiveness was “consequence of a wrongdoing” at 33.33 percent. In second place, 29.17 percent of participants associated forgiveness with understanding. Tied for third (27.7 percent) was the conception that “forgiveness is

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<sup>67</sup> Pettigrove, 18-19.

an act of love.”<sup>68</sup> Eleonore Stump has made the case that “whatever exactly is required for forgiveness, it must involve some species of love for the person in need of forgiveness.”<sup>69</sup>

In this respect, Pettigrove points to Augustine, a major historical influence from the fourth century, who characterizes forgiveness as an action of love.<sup>70</sup> In pointing out the importance that forgiveness has in a variety of religious worldviews and in Christianity in particular, Anthony Bash says that forgiveness in the Christian view is “imitative of the love that God has shown human beings (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13, 3:13) and offered in the confidence that to forgive is a moral good.”<sup>71</sup> Thinking that forgiveness involves a form of love corresponds to the Bible’s urging for Christians to love their enemies (Matthew 5:44) and to forgive their enemies (Matthew 6:12). This belief is not limited to Western Christianity. As Elizabeth A. Gassin explains “Orthodox Christians who forgive an offender with a heart undarkened by the passions of pride and

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<sup>68</sup> See the chart in Jill Kearns and Frank Fincham, “A Prototype Analysis of Forgiveness,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30 (2004): 843. In summary, Kearns and Fincham write, “No single feature [of forgiveness] was mentioned by all of the participants. Rather, there was substantial variability in how frequently each feature came to mind. For example, 33% of respondents listed a consequence of a wrongdoing as a feature of forgiveness, whereas only 1% mentioned having the upper hand. However, participants did agree on certain features. Other frequently listed features included understanding, relief, forgetting the incident, and an act of love” (ibid., 842).

<sup>69</sup> Eleonore Stump, “Love, By All Accounts,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 80 (2006): 35. Hannah Arendt makes the somewhat different connection, following Jesus of Nazareth, that those who are forgiven much, love much. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago, Press, 1998), 241-42.

<sup>70</sup> Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. J.F. Shaw (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1961), 86. Pettigrove also lists some sources that I interact with in this section. These additional sources make connections between love and forgiveness and include the following: Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 119, 165; Robin Downie, “Forgiveness,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1965): 133; Fabiola Azar, Etienne Mullet, and Genevieve Vinsonneau, “The Propensity to Forgive: Findings from Lebanon,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (1999): 170-71; Robert Enright, *Forgiveness Is a Choice* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001) 35-39; Eve Garrard and David McNaughton, “In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 103 (2003): 44ff., and Linda Radzik, *Making Amends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 119. See Pettigrove, 73 for this list.

<sup>71</sup> Bash, 24.

anger continue to be purified by the Spirit of Love.”<sup>72</sup> Psychologist Everett L. Worthington, Jr. and his coauthors contend that “Loving others often requires that we forgive them for transgressions against us.”<sup>73</sup> Some theorists have suggested that love for the offender that is operative in forgiveness or that can cause a victim to forgive arises from a victim’s self-love and an attempt to understand and loosely identify oneself empathetically with the offender.<sup>74</sup> David Novitz is among those philosophers who view love as playing an important role in forgiveness as it helps the victim attempt to identify imaginatively with the offender, connecting conceptions of self with the other.<sup>75</sup>

Joseph Butler is one of the many theorists who recognize a close connection between love and forgiveness. In his famous, philosophical sermon, Butler defines forgiveness as “the forswearing of the abuses of resentment...leaving real goodwill towards the offender.”<sup>76</sup> According to Butler, the change that occurs in forgiveness is the restoration of love that people naturally have for each other, and it can be a fulfilled possibility as long as the people are not blinded by corrupted self-love. He says, “love to our enemies, and those who have been injurious to us...is in truth the law of our nature, and what everyone must see and own, who is not quite blinded with self-love.”<sup>77</sup> Further, he proclaims:

As to that love of our enemies which is commanded [in the Bible]; this supposes the general obligation to benevolence or good will towards mankind: and this being supposed, that precept is no more than to forgive injuries; that is, to keep clear of those abuses before mentioned; because, that we have the habitual temper of benevolence, is taken for granted.<sup>78</sup>

Then he adds that “guilt, though in the highest degree, does not, as hath been shewn,

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<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth A. Gassin, “Interpersonal Forgiveness from an Eastern Orthodox Perspective,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 29 (2001): 196.

<sup>73</sup> Everett L. Worthington, Jr., Constance B. Sharp, and Andrea J. Lerner and Jeffrey R. Sharp, “Interpersonal Forgiveness as an Example of Loving One’s Enemies” in *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34 (2006): 32.

<sup>74</sup> Pettigrove, 70.

<sup>75</sup> David Novitz, “Forgiveness and Self-Respect,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58 (1998): 309.

<sup>76</sup> See Joseph Butler, “‘Sermon IX’ of *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*,” in *The Works of Joseph Butler*, vol. 2, ed. W. E. Gladstone (New York: MacMillan, 1896), 162.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Butler, *The Works of Bishop Butler*, ed. David E. White (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 99.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

dispense with or supersede the duty of love and good will.”<sup>79</sup>

These considerations are mentioned here, not to prove that forgiveness and love are connected, since they offer no such proof, but to suggest that it is not unreasonable to believe that they are connected. In fact, they may suggest that those who do not believe that forgiveness and love are connected must bear the burden of proof. In other words, leaving love out of the direct equation for virtuous *Forgiveness* needs an explanation, unless some very similar element stands in its place.<sup>80</sup> From this point on, then, it will be assumed that some form of love is a necessary component of virtuous forgiveness although not of minimal forgiveness. The ensuing discussion will explain the type of love that is thought to be operative in virtuous forgiveness.

### **Moral Love: What it Is and Is Not<sup>81</sup>**

Moral love is the most important element of UUF *Forgiveness* and it is a phenomenon unlike other loves, but with some close similarities to several of them. It is a substrate, a stance towards others, an attitude of being, a mode of interaction. It is an ability to view other people in an abstract way and to treat them with kindness and concern. One way to better understand it is to see how it is related to similar concepts. Some of the concepts with which moral love can be compared have been well-discussed in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in ancient Greek thought. Moral love shares many similarities with these views of love and some differences.

In the Old Testament, the two main Hebrew words used for love are ‘*ahab* and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sharon Lamb claims that compassion should be encouraged instead of forgiveness, without elaborating on their connection or disconnection. Sharon Lamb, “Women Abuse, and Forgiveness: A Special Case,” in *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*, ed. Sharon Lamb and Jeffrie G. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 155-71. Some philosophers have suggested that a component of forgiveness is compassion, however. I agree that it can be a component, but I am holding to the view that love is more fundamental than compassion and that the type of love that is necessarily involved with forgiveness would support compassion for the offender.

<sup>81</sup> Jean Hampton uses the term “moral love” to mean something quite different from what I mean. She uses it to denote what we might feel for someone whose moral cause we respect and hope to see prevail. I mean something similar to ‘*ahab* or *agapé*, although they are not equivalent either. See Jean Hampton, “Forgiveness, Resentment, and Hatred,” in Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 61.

*hesed*. ‘*Aheb* is a broad and general term used in reference to romantic interests, family, friendship, political loyalties, love for nonpersonal things, God’s love for people, and people’s love for God.<sup>82</sup> This form of love concerns one’s desires and experiences. The term indicates the sense of conscious action on behalf of the beloved and conveys a sense of personal responsibility for the relationships or larger community of which the lover and beloved may be a part.

*Hesed* is used in the Old Testament more frequently. It refers to love within established relationships, never making reference to love for things. It captures the sense of love that strives to promote life, illustrated most clearly in situations where someone is in desperate distress and the lover freely decides to provide them with assistance. It is enduring and exhibits fidelity, as seen in the Biblical stories of Ruth’s love for her mother-in-law, Naomi, in God’s commitment to Israel, in the love a parent has for his or her children, in Jacob’s willingness to work for fourteen years for the right to marry Rachel, and in David’s life-long friendship with Jonathan.<sup>83</sup> The most important quality that *hesed* demonstrates is action; it is “faithful, committed love expressed in concrete actions.”<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, moral love is an active love. Like *hesed*, it is not whimsical or transient. Although its action does not have to persist forever, moral love is inclined to act in loving ways towards the other well beyond the time frame that would be experienced by people who do not have moral love. It is faithful and committed to the other person’s best interests and, like ‘*aheb*, it consciously acts to further those interests. While considering what is best for the beloved, the person with ‘*aheb* and with moral love also considers how those interests best fit into the other relationships he has as well as their relationships to their community. The lover feels a personal sense of responsibility to take these aspects of his and other people’s lives into consideration.

*Erōs*, which is not used at all in the Bible, connotes an intense desire and longing for someone or something and is beautifully discussed and defined in Plato’s *Symposium*. *Erōs* has been interpreted to be a selfish form of love, resulting in the lover’s desire to

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<sup>82</sup> Bernard V. Brady, *Christian Love* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-18.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

acquire the beloved in response to the perceived merits of the beloved. This type of love, as Plato and others describe it, seems to respond to reasons for loving something.<sup>85</sup> It is sometimes thought to describe sexual desire as well.

But moral love is unlike *Erōs* because it is not selfish, does not wish to possess the other, and does not love the other merely because of his merits. Further, moral love has nothing to do with sexual desire. *Philia*, which is used only a few times in the New Testament and is more popular in other Greek sources, has the connotation of loving in a way such that the lover regards the beloved as his own. *Philia* is a friendly and affectionate form of love. It can refer to such feelings directed at a number of different people, including one's family or one's country. This is unlike moral love because moral love does not have to include friendliness and preference for the beloved as if the beloved is one's own. Moral love is active and considers what is best for the beloved, but it does not wish to possess the other for its own and it may even strongly disassociate with the beloved.

In the New Testament, the dominant word for love is *agapē* (ἀγάπη).<sup>86</sup> Bernard Brady explains that the authors of the New Testament used the terms for love as the translators of the Septuagint did.<sup>87</sup> They utilized the word, *agapē*, which has become a term frequently used in our culture, because it helped them distinguish the type of love discussed in the religious text from terms that were popular in secular philosophical writings. Since *agapē* was relatively unused in other settings, the type of love that it refers to has to be understood independently of the Greek philosophical sources.

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<sup>85</sup> See Alan G. Soble, *The Structure of Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Nygren also describes it this way—see Anders Nygren, *Agapē and Erōs* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1953).

<sup>86</sup> There is some disagreement over whether or not *agapē* is the quintessential form of Christian love. Edward Vacek, for instance, suggests that “*philia* is the foundation and goal of Christian life.” Edward Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC Georgetown University Press, 1994), 280-81, quoted in Brady, 259. Vacek suggests that this type of love values people, not for their own sakes nor for the sake of the one who loves, but for the sake of the relationship which is shared. The special relationships and feelings of camaraderie with others is what nurtures and binds human communities together. Plus, humans usually learn the infinite value of others when we interact with special people in special relationships. See Vacek, 295, quoted in Brady, 260. So it is *philia* which is the most complete type of Christian love rather than *agape*. Settling this debate is irrelevant to this project.

<sup>87</sup> The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was translated about two hundred and fifty years before Jesus was alive.

Unlike *philia* or *erōs*, Brady suggests that the meaning of *agapē* is not best understood through linguistic study but through stories of people who have displayed this form of love. For example, “Jesus revealed the meaning of love by his life”<sup>88</sup>—a life that was self-sacrificial and that bestowed value on humans. Neera Badhwar explains that *agapē* is “independent of the loved individual’s fundamental characteristics as the particular person she is.”<sup>89</sup> *Agapē* creates value instead of responding to value that is already in the object.<sup>90</sup> The inherently loving nature of the divine enables value to be bestowed on humankind, even when the merits of the person suggest there is relatively little reason to value the person. The agapic love revealed in Jesus has been described as refusing “to be controlled by the value of its object, and being determined only by its own intrinsic nature.”<sup>91</sup> This is why Jesus could be friends with tax collectors, prostitutes, debtors, a woman threatened with divorce, sinners. *Agapē* was shown for the person regardless of his or her status, situation, conduct, or character. Likewise, *agapē* is described as bestowing good things on even the unjust person.

Like *agapē*, moral love is not motivated by externals or the obvious merits of a person who is being loved. It primarily comes, instead, from the character of the person who displays it. This does not make moral love arbitrary. Rather, it makes it self-originating in a way that *erōs* and *philia* are not. As mentioned above, moral love also tends to be more self-sacrificing than *erōs* and *philia*.

In English, ‘love’ is a term that means many different things, including a strong affinity for some activity or object, an identification with something that gives meaning and value to one’s personal life, an enjoyment of and concern for a non-human object or person, and a concern for someone for his or her own sake. Edward Vacek suggests that a way different forms of loves can be distinguished is by noticing the person of thing for whose sake the love exists. *Philia*, for example, loves for the sake of the relationship. When someone loves for the sake of oneself, this love is *erōs*. When someone loves for

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<sup>88</sup> Brady, 54.

<sup>89</sup> Neera K. Badhwar, “Love,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Practical Ethics*, ed. Hugh. LaFollette (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 58.

<sup>90</sup> Brady, 87-88.

<sup>91</sup> Nygren, 76.



the sake of the object of his love, it is *agapē*.<sup>92</sup> If this theory is correct, moral love is, again, like *agapē*. Although it may benefit the lover indirectly, it is motivated by a concern for the good of the beloved. Unlike *erōs*, the motivation behind moral love is not for the sake of the one who loves and it is not an intense desire to acquire the other; it is not selfish, although it does give consideration to one's own needs as well as the needs of the beloved.

Another contemporary way of distinguishing types of love comes from Bennett Helm who, "tentatively and hesitantly," classifies theories of love into four types: "love as union, love as robust concern, love as valuing, and love as an emotion."<sup>93</sup> Moral love recognizes that the lover and the beloved are at least loosely united in some way, it can include an emotive element, and it does value the other person. But moral love is mostly a robust concern for the beloved that displays itself in the lover's thoughts and actions. In the context of forgiveness, moral love allows the victim to appreciate the offender as a fellow human being and as a moral agent. It allows the victim to recognize that, because of the wrongdoing, he is linked with the offender in a new way. Although it requires the victim's actions to reflect the goodness of his character towards the offender when possible, moral love does not expect the victim to feel lovingly towards the offender or to foster an intimate relationship with him.

Like most other complex emotions, most forms of love can be both conscious and subconscious and have cognitive and affective dimensions. The affective dimension of love is difficult to characterize because there is usually no one, particular feeling that people experience when they love another. The feelings of love that a man has for his spouse are different from those feelings he has for his child, his friend, his sports team, or his favorite hobby. The feelings of love experienced for one of these beloveds might change over long periods of time or even in the moment. A man may not be conscious of what it is that makes him love his beloved, and sometimes he may not perceive his love for the beloved. But what the different affective dimensions of love have in common is that they share a common cognitive component—that is, they embody a "pro-attitude"

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<sup>92</sup> See Vacek 157-58, quoted in Brady, 259.

<sup>93</sup> Bennett Helm, "Love," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013 ed. [online]. Accessed 6 August 2014. Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/love/>; Internet.

towards the beloved. This pro-attitude affects many of the emotions of its possessor.

The pro-attitude towards an offender is one connection between the cognitive element of love and that of forgiveness. The attitude of a virtuously-forgiving victim is the pro-attitude of love. Although forgiveness, like love, may have different felt affects (if it is felt) depending on who is being forgiven, the contextual situations, and factors internal to the victim, those feelings will not be contrary to a pro-attitude towards an offender that arises in the victim's cognitive stance towards the offender. When an emotion is not felt, the virtuously-forgiving victim's moral love will allow the cognitive stance towards the offender to remain positive. This pro-attitude, coupled with the fact that moral love (like *agapē*) is internally motivated rather than responsive only to external merits, prevents the virtuously-forgiving victim from thinking that the offender is morally good when he is not. Moral love does prompt the victim, however, to consistently believe that the offender himself is valuable enough to have his ultimate good advanced. Hence, moral love allows somewhat of a paradoxical occurrence: a virtuously-forgiving victim can forgive from the goodness of his own virtue, believing the offender to not merit the love, but thinking also that the offender is worth loving. This paradox will be resolved in the following section.

Like *ahēb*, moral love consciously tries to act on behalf of the beloved as the forgiver does not ignore his broad responsibility to not hinder the relationships or community of which they are a part. Like *hesed*, moral love is freely given in order to promote the good life of all the relevant parties. Moral love is a robust concern for the other and is a way of valuing him. It requires the victim to want what is likely to advance the offender's ultimate good and to act to promote this good unless there are overriding reasons not to do so. Like *agapē*,<sup>94</sup> moral love is self-originating since it is not given because of the value or disvalue of the object but because of the character of the one who loves. It desires what is good for the beloved and portrays eagerness to advance that good. Further, moral love is available universally, even for an offender for whom it is difficult to experience other forms of love.

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<sup>94</sup> For another an analysis of *agapē*, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.26.4, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Providence (London: R & T Washbourn, 1917), 317. He portrays it as willing the good for the other.

Moral love, nonetheless, is not equivalent to *agapē*. It has three main differences. First, moral love can be reserved in its insistence that self-sacrificial love be given for one's offenders. Whereas *agapē* seems to be endless in its attempts to help others, moral love operates within the bounds of human reason. For example, one who displays *agapē* may continue to the point of death in order to do good to another. Perhaps someone with moral love would do the same, but it is not advised or expected, and may not be expected of *agapē* either. The point is that moral love is more reserved in its expectation of self-sacrifice, although it is in no way selfish. Although moral love has the quality of self-forgetfulness, which will be explained in the next chapter, it may lack the empowerment that *agapē* has to be completely self-sacrificing. In a case where the person with moral love looks for ways to help an offender but finds none, he is no longer required to look. When moral love seeks to interact with the offender, it does so in ways that seem safe and socially proper, only going out of its way to the extent that is obviously unselfish. Thus, even though one with moral love works for the good of others, it may be the case that *agapē* is more relentless in its efforts to perform that good.

One reason that moral love may be more reserved in this way stems from another way that it differs from *agapē*. Moral love is thought to be theoretically possible for anyone to attain, at least to some degree, as long as he develops the relevant views and attitudes that are related to *Forgiveness*. *Agapē*, on the other hand, is often thought to be unattainable apart from divine assistance, whether it be through the means of religious ritual, a direct work of God within an individual, or by a particular means of grace (i.e., a sacrament of the church). Apart from divine assistance, *agapē* may be impossible to experience and it might be humanly improbable to display love that is “universal in its scope, boundless in energy, [and] perfectly enduring.”<sup>95</sup> Moral love, however, although not easy to achieve, is thought to be possible to attain without direct divine intervention. Although it does not occur naturally, it can be developed over time if much moral effort is given to developing it.

A third difference between *agapē* and moral love is that moral love is more

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<sup>95</sup> Stephen G. Post, “Nature, Grace, and Measuring *Agapē*: Science, Religion and the ‘Flame of Love,’” in *Visions of Agapē: Problems and Possibilities in Human and Divine Love* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 33.

focused concerning the objects of its action than *agapé* is. Moral love does permeate the lover's general stance towards others, but its tendency to act can remain dormant until a specific need arises. In some descriptions, *agapé* seems to not only permeate the lover's general stance towards others, but actually causes its possessor to create opportunities to extend this love to other people. For example, Christians are instructed to love their neighbors. "Neighbors" refers to friends and foes. Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez claims that "[t]he neighbor [...] is not the one whom I find in my path, but rather the one in whose path I place myself, the one whom I approach and actively seek...this is why Matthew's text says we will be definitively judged by our love for others, by our capacity to create comradely conditions for life"<sup>96</sup> Moral love never stands in contradiction to wanting what is good for other people, but it usually does not actively seek to create goodness for others without first being provided with the opportunity to do so. If *agapē* seeks people out in order to do them good, moral love usually responds with goodness when the situation arises naturally. To initiate acts of love may be expected, to some degree, for a person with *agapē*, but this type of self-initiation is supererogatory for those who only have moral love.

Nevertheless, one of the most important qualities that moral love shares with *agapé* is its tendency to express itself in action. A victim who has moral love for her offender is provoked by the presence of moral love to advance the ultimate good of her offender. (The topic of an offender's ultimate good is discussed in the next section.) Moral love, with its way of providing structure to one's related emotions, also prevents or modifies certain other emotions potentially experienced by a victim, thereby affecting his actions towards his offender and the attitude that he reflects while performing these actions. (This topic will also be discussed in more detail in a later section.)

Joseph Butler asserts that humans have a duty to love others and that loving others includes forgiving. Butler also suggests that a human's natural tendency is to love others and have good will towards them, and that resentment comes only when we believe we have been wronged. Forgiving, he suggests, restores the love and good will that wrongdoing mars. In explaining Butler's view, Charles Griswold suggests that

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<sup>96</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973), 198.

forgiveness does not require that a victim feel affection for the offender although the sentiments will not remain unaffected, but forgiveness is love “in the sense that it affirms our commonality, as human beings, with the morally worst amongst us.”<sup>97</sup> Moral love, as it is described here, is not incompatible with Griswold’s description of the love that is operative in virtuous forgiveness. Virtuous forgiveness, as conceived of in this project, is a manifestation or an extension of moral love because it attempts, in whatever reasonable way it can, to advance the goodness of the offender using wisdom, humility, and good will. This activity and the mindset that accompanies it is inherently loving. A lack of moral love leads to the inability to forgive virtuously.

Contra Butler, however, some humans may not naturally have love and good will for each other. This is especially true when a person’s own sense of self is thought to be in competition with another. Although people may experience love for others, people also have a tendency to love themselves more than others. Having moral love for other people does not necessarily come naturally. As Butler mentions, humans can be blinded by self-love and self-interest. When the interests of others and one’s own interests do not coincide, people frequently fail to care about the other person enough or they become apathetic towards his station in life. Being offended by another person usually makes it more difficult to love him or to be concerned about his interests. Moral love must be developed within a person if he is going to have the possibility of forgiving them in a virtuous way. *Forgiveness* requires moral love; developing forgiveness and moral love both require moral effort.

### **Moral Love in *Forgiveness***

Moral love is one of the most important phenomena that creates and comprises *Forgiveness*. It operates in every instance of virtuous forgiveness because it is the substrate of virtuous forgiveness and it serves as a force of motivation that helps a victim want to act to improve the goodness of the situation, when possible. Moral love has at least three characteristics that are reliable identification markers. First, moral love demonstrates the quality of self-forgetfulness. Second, it desires the other’s ultimate good. Third, it includes good will towards the other.

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<sup>97</sup> Griswold, 34.

## Self-forgetfulness

One quality that moral love always has is “self-forgetfulness.” It is at odds with many of the suggestions about love made by contemporary culture, so some examples of self-forgetfulness are necessary to describe the type of thing it is. C.S. Lewis discusses the concept of self-forgetfulness and likens it to humility. He posits that a truly humble person does not leave others thinking that he thinks poorly of himself. Rather, the humble person is interested in the other. He explains that if you enter a conversation with one who is truly humble, you will find that he “will not be a sort of . . . person who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody.” Instead, you will think that he has taken “a real interest in what *you* said to *him*.” Lewis states that the humble person “will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.”<sup>98</sup>

Two deductions can be made from this. One is that self-forgetfulness is not self-abasement or self-disrespect, both of which fail to treat the self with the proper regard that it deserves. Self-forgetfulness does not require thinking of or speaking poorly of oneself. Instead, self-forgetfulness allows a person to be self-respecting while placing a high value on someone or something else. Perhaps the self-forgetful person occasionally does without dinner so that she can give her food to someone who is hungrier than she. Perhaps he drives an unreliable car so that his child can take violin lessons. Perhaps the situation is more serious. The self-forgetful person may live with good feelings towards her neighbor even though most people say that he should pay for his negligence that caused her to lose her leg. Self-forgetfulness may be the same stance taken by a person who sacrifices her own life for the sake of someone else. For example, one could look to the acts of sacrifice made by passengers on Flight 93 and the numerous safety workers who risked or lost their lives helping people in the World Trade Center towers and at the Pentagon during the terrorist acts on America on September 11, 2001. Self-forgetfulness manifests itself in many altruistic ways, but the commonality shared by each expression of it arises from an attitude that oneself does not have to be front-and-center of one’s gaze and concerns.

The second deduction is that self-forgetfulness is essentially anticompetitive. It

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<sup>98</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 114.

does not wish to be competitive with or encourage essential competitiveness between oneself and others.<sup>99</sup> An attitude of competition between selves exists when a person makes comparisons and derives pleasure from faring better than others. The competitor derives little pleasure from possessing the things for which he competes, but feels the most pleasure when he exhibits his power over his competitor.<sup>100</sup> The person with self-forgetfulness does not seek to exhibit power over a competitor, but wishes to provide assistance to a person whose ultimate interests he wishes to advance just as he wishes to advance his own ultimate interests. Competition is unnecessary because both people can concurrently advance their ultimate good while not depriving the other person of anything. Further, whether or not it is known by the self-forgetful person, gaining power over the other person for the pleasure of gaining that power is at enmity with advancing one's own ultimate good.

What is sometimes demonstrated in the virtuously-forgiving victim, then, is the skill of not needing to think about herself or calculate for her own interests. Whereas those people who refuse to forgive their offenders or who forgive them conditionally are typically concerned about what message about them is being sent to their offenders and others through forgiveness, the UUF forgiver has stopped viewing these interactions as if they affect her sense of identity and self-worth. She recognizes that the way she interacts with other people does not have to be about herself, and her protection, and her self-respect, and her demands to get what is due to her so far as justice is concerned. While it is perfectly reasonable for a victim to consider such things and to want justice, the attitudes and actions of a self-forgetful forgiver are not dictated by these considerations.

Opponents of unconditional forgiveness (i.e., conditionalists), might claim that self-forgetfulness is a state of weakness. Nevertheless, it is not. It is actually a state of freedom and moral strength. In forgetting oneself in the sense described here, one becomes free from mental enslavement to the judgment of other people and even of oneself. A helpful analogy compares an inflated balloon to the self-identity of a person who does not have the ability to be self-forgetful. (This comparison does not necessarily

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<sup>99</sup> It does not prevent a friendly game and the competition that might accompany it, but it prevents competition between the essential selves at a more fundamental level.

<sup>100</sup> *Lewis, 110.*

describe all people who are not self-forgetful or who forgive conditionally, but it accurately describes some of them and illustrates something that may be true, to a lesser extent, of all conditional forgivers.) On the inside, a balloon is relatively empty but its molecules are busy moving about doing things in its own space. It always exists at the risk of being deflated or punctured by something sharp because it depends on being filled with air to maintain its shape. People whose sense of self-worth needs a significant level of reassurance from others on a regular basis to confirm and reaffirm that they are valuable are like this balloon. Wrongdoing done against them pricks their sense of self. In order to not deflate, they vigilantly observe others, seeing the good things that they get, and then busily rushing around in an effort to make sure they also get the good things that they also deserve. They compare themselves and their situation with that of other people and make judgments about these comparisons.

The person who forgives conditionally and selectively, as well as some who are only capable of forgiving minimally, may be like the balloon just described. Such a victim's allegedly mature sense of self is too significantly dependent on the input of others. Certainly other people's perceptions of us affect our own perception of ourselves during our early stages of development. Eventually, however, people become mature enough to accept or reject other people's views of them, at least enough to allow competing views to affect them as well, and then, to establish their own view. They become responsible for their thoughts. This loosely corresponds to the point at which people are held fully accountable for their choices and actions.

It may be the case that many people who choose to forgive conditionally are overly focused on how they appear to others and on ensuring that they get treated as they believe other people get treated, or better. When an offense against them occurs, they act with zeal and anger in order to recover their self-image and protect their self-worth from deflation. This recovery mechanism may include revenge-taking or grudge-holding. It may include "saving face" by insisting that the offender publically admit that he was wrong. It always assumes a "them-or-me" attitude. When a victim responds to offense with these forms of self-defense and self-esteem bolstering mechanisms, it indicates that the victim's self-worth is predominantly at the mercy of others. Because of this, their self-conception and moral character are weak and vulnerable. This weakness would be



severely diminished, however, if the victims developed the quality of self-forgetfulness. Because those forgivers who have *Forgiveness* also have self-forgetfulness, they have an automatic position of strength from which to operate. Unlike those who are not developing the virtue, virtuously-forgiving victims begin their journey to transcend the effects of offense from a non-competitive, secure, and healthy position of self-respect.

The self of the victim who has been transformed by the multi-faceted virtue of *Forgiveness* operates in a different way concerning other people, partly because of the element of self-forgetfulness that is part of moral love. The UUF forgiver does not crave the elusive verdict of others to appreciate his own worth. His identity and self-regard is not rooted in the offender's disvalue of him or in any on-lookers' evaluation of whether or not he has protected and preserved himself adequately. His sense of worth already exists and, in most situations, the offense will not be a stimulus to doubt the existence of his worth.<sup>101</sup> This is not because the virtuously-forgiving person is above harm or immune to injury, nor because he is so much better than others that they cannot really insult him.<sup>102</sup> Instead, it is because he has separated his own worth from others.' Similarly, moral love allows him to view the worth of other people separately from his and other people's evaluations. The self-forgetful person recognizes that everyone has faults and strengths but does not believe that one's faults or strengths pronounce final judgment about their worth. Their worth, at least in the relevant sense, is inherent in their existence. So is his own.

This is partly why the virtuously-forgiving victim may sometimes not get angry even when he has a right to be. His own identity is not wrapped up with what other people, or even he himself, thinks about himself. He is usually unaffected by the implications of wrongdoer's actions for his value because his concern is ultimately for the Goodness, not for himself directly. Since he thinks about himself less in this regard, he can be strong and free as he operates in the world from that stance. Self-forgetfulness, then, this stance is not one of thinking less of oneself, but of about thinking of oneself

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<sup>101</sup> How his initial sense of self is developed and the roles that social influences play in it needs explanation. This is a task for another project and is unnecessary for the current one.

<sup>102</sup> This last tactic is used frequently in contemporary culture. We are sometimes advised to ignore other people's criticisms of us because "they're not worth your time," for example.

less in a morally empowering way.<sup>103</sup>

### **The Ultimate Good and Ideal Self**

Self-forgetfulness and concern for others are related: when one is secure enough in the fact of one's inherent worth that one does not have to earn it from others or compete with them for it, one is able to value others in a new way and one sees the value in doing so. In conjunction with self-forgetfulness, the moral love that is characteristic of *Forgiveness* demonstrates general concern for other people that will be manifested as a concern for their ultimate good and as good will towards them. Moral love is more like the Golden Rule (i.e., do unto others as you would have them do unto you) than the negative Golden Rule (i.e., do not do unto others what you would not want them to do to you.) The difference in the two is that moral love is the possessor's impetus for *doing for* others rather than *refraining from* doing to others.

Since the moral love that is characteristic of *Forgiveness* makes the possessor concerned for the offender in at least two ways (i.e., for his ultimate good and in a way that corresponds to good will towards him), both of these tendencies will be discussed. In order to understand what it means to desire one's ultimate good, however, one must also appreciate the concept of the ideal self.

In *The Disciplined Heart*, Caroline J. Simon speaks of personhood as something "that *potentially* 'is' but *actually* 'is not'"<sup>104</sup> and she connects this concept with the concept of imagination, which, "when directed towards persons, amounts to insight into someone's destiny."<sup>105</sup> Rather than imaginative insight into someone's destiny being a mere construction of a fictional narrative, Simon argues that it is connected to "a range of possibilities that *should* be brought to fruition but which a person can choose not to cultivate."<sup>106</sup> As she acknowledges, one's personal destiny may differ very much from another person's destiny. Even from a God's-Eye perspective, people may be called to

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<sup>103</sup> *Lewis, 114.*

<sup>104</sup> Caroline J. Simon, *The Disciplined Heart: Love, Destiny & Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 15.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* Italics mine.

different vocations, for example.<sup>107</sup> Even so, human beings seem to share a broadly similar *telos*. One thing all human beings have in common, especially in the context of forgiveness, is that our destinies include—that is, our lives *should* embody, even if they do not—a transformation into morally better humans.<sup>108</sup> Human life, then, as Alasdair MacIntyre famously points out, is our way of being on a quest for our true selves. It is the true, or ideal, self that virtuous forgiveness wishes or helps to advance in the offender.

Moral life is a necessary component of one's true self. As will be argued later, an offender's true or ideal self—who the offender *should* be; his moral destiny as seen through an upright moral imagination—is to be the object of love from an offended victim, even when other aspects of the offender seem unworthy of love. The ideal self can be separated from the current, unlovable aspects, leaving the “sinner” to be loved and the “sin” rejected. Although a victim can despise and stand against the immoral actions of an offender (and must do so when the wrongdoing is not trite or excuse-worthy), the victim can still love the offender by willing that he become more like a morally ideal human.

People may conceive of the “morally ideal human” in a variety of ways. Those conceptions will be affected by the culture and sub-cultures in which a person is a member. They will also be affected by the person's religious and ethical beliefs, preferences, *et cetera*. Unfortunately, it is impossible to eradicate the differences in people's conceptions of another's ideal self. When I write of the ideal self, I am referring to an entity that would emerge and be agreed upon if all people could see and interpret morality correctly. Since this is not possible in practice, the best that can be expected is that the one who conceives of another's “morally ideal self” does so with humility, recognizing that he can be wrong in his conception, and, unless he can persuasively justify doing otherwise, encouraging others to follow the moral prescriptions that are commonly accepted for all people. This will often keep his focus on more inclusive rather than specifically-focused ethical beliefs. For instance, he can more securely

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<sup>107</sup> See Robert Adams “Vocation,” *Faith and Philosophy* 4 (October 1987): 450.

<sup>108</sup> This is an assumption that will not be supported here, but it is one that arises from personal knowledge and observations of how far every human being seems to be from being his or her ideal moral self and from a firm commitment that a moral life contributes to the good of all humans.

encourage another not to steal or kill than he can encourage a woman to not work outside her home. A person is also justified in more vigorously holding and promoting those ethical beliefs for which he has more evidence than he is those for which he has less warrant for believing. If his conception of an aspect of another's ideal self is a minority view within his culture, he would ideally try to figure out why he believes his view is justified before promoting it. Since the other has the opportunity to accept or reject the conception of his ideal self that is being promoted, however, not too much is usually at stake if the conception is amiss. In cases where the other's life can substantially be negatively altered, the person should reflectively reconsider whether that particular aspect of the other's ideal self must be advanced. As long as one tries to advance the ideal self of another with kindness and humility, and is relatively justified in conceiving of the particular aspect of the ideal self that one is wishing to advance, one is likely to do as well as practically possible in this situation.

**Practical Principles.** Ultimate goodness is not immediate and it does not directly concern transient goods. It involves long-lasting goods of character, and thus, represents moral and spiritual improvement. Virtuous forgiveness not only dissolves or significantly alters offender-opposing emotions and thoughts that stem from the offense in question, but it replaces them with a wish for the offender's ideal self to be actualized. Promoting the ideal self or ultimate good of the offender will help him respect himself properly, will help him avoid condoning the offense, and might help deter the offender from harming future victims.

All virtuously-forgiving victims will act in certain ways that are characteristic of the practical wisdom and altruism that are part of the virtue. These actions include advancing the offender's ideal self in tangible ways that are appropriate within the context of their relationship. The following is a description of six guidelines that are likely to be characteristic of the actions and effort taken by a virtuously-forgiving victim on behalf of the ultimate good and ideal self of the offender:

1. The offender's ultimate good is a salient consideration in situations that require the forgiver to actively respond to the offender. These considerations count at least as much as the considerations made for the victim's personal good and the broader good of society.

2. Whenever it is likely that an offender will morally improve through the discipline of a morally sanctioned third party (e.g., the criminal law system, a parent or guardian, etc.), such discipline is sought for the offender by the forgiving victim or by a proxy chosen by the victim.
  - a. If the offense is serious and third-party discipline is unlikely to be effective because the offender is almost certain to be intractable, such discipline is still chosen; in this case, less “official” and more personal attempts to improve the offender remain permissible so long as they are morally defensible.
  - b. When a forgiving victim seeks third-party discipline for the offender, this does not require or prohibit the victim from being directly and appropriately involved with the offender.
  - c. When an offense is slight and/or does not seem to be indicative of an offender’s moral flaw, avoiding third-party discipline is preferable.
3. A forgiving victim who has no need to seek third-party discipline purposefully considers the value of his own, potential action responses and chooses the option for responding that he believes is most helpful in advancing his offender’s ultimate good while remembering that:
  - a. He has limited time, resources, and emotional energy.
  - b. He has a responsibility to act wisely in this situation.
  - c. His actions will potentially affect the offender, himself, and possibly his community.
  - d. What is best for an offender (and himself) may not be easy to execute.
  - e. The ultimate good of the offender, the victim, and the community intersect.
4. A forgiving victim is not required to cause harm himself to help advance the offender’s ultimate good although he may be required to be inconvenienced.
  - a. The victim will not put himself in extreme physical, emotional, or financial danger unless he has solid, conscious, and self-respecting reasons for doing so.
  - b. The victim will not neglect his responsibility to advance the ultimate welfare of the offender because of apathy.
5. The victim will try to become aware of the nuances of his modes of expression if he wishes to directly address the offender about the offense so as to be as effective as possible at affirming the offender’s ideal self.
6. If a serious offender is dead or unknown, the forgiving victim will benefit from considering how he would respond to the offender if he were present. He would then hold the wish that he could respond in such a manner.

These principles of effort include safeguards that help protect the victim as well as the offender. They encourage action on the part of the virtuously-forgiving victim that is both self-respecting to himself and respectful of his offender and that tries to advance the ideal self of each party concurrently.

Outside of these guidelines, it is difficult to state specific rules that cover the active moral requirements that virtuous forgiveness embodies. The specific actions that can be justified by the principles vary between victims based on a range of factors including his personality type, his strengths and opportunities, his resources and time, his relationship with the offender, his emotional energy, the nature of the offense, the possibility of social reinforcement, his level of practical wisdom in the relevant area, *et cetera*. The quality possessed by the virtuous forgiver that helps him determine how much effort he should put into the offender is analogous to what Aristotle called *megalopropeia*. This virtue, translated as “magnificence,” consists in the correct judgment about an expense being worth the result that it will get.<sup>109</sup> While the magnificence that is inherent within *Forgiveness* is not transactional in the way it responds to offender (due to qualities including self-forgetfulness), it does aid the victim in determining how much and what types of effort should be put forth in order to advance the ideal self of the offender without harming one’s own ultimate interests.

The extent to which the offender’s ultimate good must actively be promoted varies with the particulars of the case. In some instances, the victim will actively promote the offender’s ultimate good for a long duration. Perhaps he is in a position to become a mentor to the offender, developing a relationship which lasts for years. On the other hand, a smile and a verbal acceptance of an apology may be all that is required. In some cases there will be significant sacrifices made by the victim for the sake of the offender. In Victor Hugo’s novel, *Les Misérables*, for example, a protagonist, Valjean, steals the few pieces of silver possessed by a kindly priest who had given him lodging for the night. When caught by the police, who make Valjean (who is now guilty of crime) confront the priest again, the priest suggests to the officers that he had given it to Valjean as a gift. The priest acts disappointed that Valjean did not take a silver candlestick from his residence as well. After the police leave, the priest privately encourages Valjean to use the silver to become a virtuous person. Assuming that the priest forgave Valjean for the robbery as indicated by his loving actions towards him, he sacrificed his possessions

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<sup>109</sup> Aristotle limits *megalopropeia* to expenditure of wealth. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.2, trans. and ed. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 65-67. In this project, I am using this term analogously in the area of expenditures related to human relationship.

in order to help lessen Valjean's bitterness towards others. In word and deed, the priest sought to advance Valjean's ideal self.

While acts of this magnitude are not always required by the circumstances surrounding forgiveness, the virtuous forgiver will be willing to do something of this sort if he is able and if he believes that it will be an effective means of reforming the offender. In other circumstances, however, a victim's virtuous forgiveness may require that he do nothing but make sure that the offender is held accountable for his actions by an outside party. For instance, a victim may need to tell the parents of his teenage offender about an offense done by their son and suggest that they force him to do community service at a local pet shelter.

If the victim cannot mentor the offender, to sacrifice for him, or even to smile at him, and if he does not have the means to see that the offender is punished by proper authorities, then the virtuously-forgiving victim's actions can be judged on their congruence with his wish that he could do such things. Every virtuously-forgiving victim will have a desire to promote the offender's ultimate good or (in the case of small slights) at least not be opposed to the offender's ultimate good being promoted by someone else. Virtuous forgiveness requires that the victim promote the offender's ultimate good because its foundation includes moral love. When Marietta Jaeger, whose example of virtuous forgiveness was discussed at the end of Chapter 1, was able to forgive her daughter's kidnapper and murderer, she extended love to him. Her process of virtuous forgiveness included holding him accountable for his actions. She worked with the authorities who would make that happen, while she did what she could to show kindness to the offender. This came naturally from the loving and virtuous quality of forgiveness that she gave him.

**Promoting the Offender's Ideal Self.** It may be easy to imagine what is loveable about some offenders and why a victim might easily be able to have good will for them. For other offenders, it may seem as if they do not deserve good will and that there is nothing in them that can reasonably be affirmed without the victim also affirming evil. In those cases, since virtuous forgiveness cannot affirm evil or else it would cease to be virtuous, there is a dilemma that needs to be resolved. As Anselm rightly suggests

in Book 2 of *Cur Deus Homo*, one should “hate and shun evil, and love and choose good.”<sup>110</sup> An unrepentant, evil offender is a person who, rightly or wrongly, may be judged as an “evil person.” If what is evil should be shunned and person X is evil, it *prima facie* seems morally unacceptable to love him, since it is not morally praiseworthy to love what is bad.

According to this reasoning, a person who unrepentantly abuses his wife should not be loved by his wife because he is evil, or more generically, he is “bad.” Abusing one’s wife is morally unacceptable and the person who does so without remorse is morally corrupt or extremely confused. His considerable moral failure is enough to warrant the judgment that he has a bad character. When an individual has a bad character, he is a bad person, and thus, is not worthy of being loved since morally bad objects should not be loved. Or so someone might reason.

Some of the difficulties that arise when making these sorts of judgments about people—as opposed to single traits or actions—are: a person’s character and actions may not correspond neatly with each other; a person’s character (since humans are complex and our knowledge is limited) is not always easy to judge with accuracy; relationships the person has may morph over time for various reasons; a person’s chronological endurance can reveal and reform his character; experiences, opportunities, and spiritual conversions have the potential to make someone into a new or morally better person. Human beings, and our relationships with others and ourselves, are not static. We are laden with various amounts of potential and we create history. Additionally, if it is possible to look synchronically at a person’s character and judge it as “overall, good” or “overall, evil” with accuracy, this synchronic evaluation would still be lacking something important that a diachronic evaluation would not.

Further, people can have different but legitimate reasons for loving someone who seems to others to be unlovable. Although there may also be illegitimate reasons for loving someone, this does not discredit the legitimate reasons. Consider the abusive

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<sup>110</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 2.1, in *Proslogium, Monologium, An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon, and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago, Open Court, 1903), 240.



spouse. The wife may have reasons to love him that other people do not have. She may legitimately love him even though there is nothing currently revealed in his behavior or attitude toward her that makes him loveable. She could love him because of the connection he has with their earlier, happy relationship. She might love him because he is the father of their children. She may love him because she understands that, even though his behavior is wrong, the stresses of his current job and their dire financial situation place pressures on him that he cannot handle well, causing him to lash out at her, despite his other redeeming qualities. None of these reasons for loving the abusive husband are excuses for his abuse. The wife may not love the abuse nor approve of it nor put up with it. But as Pettigrove mentions, one person who has a shared biographical history with another might have other reasons to value the other person rather than his currently perceived moral status.<sup>111</sup> Whereas it would be morally amiss to love him for his violence, for his insults, for his disrespect, for his anger, for his lack of wisdom and for his lovelessness, it is still morally permissible for someone to love him.

The reasons given so far that legitimate loving a “bad person” have been associated with good acts that he has done in the past or good relationships that he may have had with the one who loves him. Even though many forms of love may be permissible for these reasons, moral love does not have to depend on external reasons for loving. It loves for reasons that are internal to it. While it does not love for external merit, it can exist because its object is a member of humanity.

An Augustinian believes, for example, that everything is good to the extent that it exists, so it is right to value even the worst of people because they exist with the goodness of existence. A Kantian may see such value in an immoral person’s ability to reason that he believes that value exists even when a person is not actively reasoning well or the ability has been compromised. A utilitarian could say that the person’s capacity to experience pleasure or pain grounds the moral worth of even a wicked person.<sup>112</sup> Some suggest that a human’s dignity is valuable or loveable in itself because it is the human dignity that he possesses which is to be valued. Some theists would say that a person who has been terribly corrupted by sin is still worth loving because he has the image of

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<sup>111</sup> Pettigrove, 78.

<sup>112</sup> See *ibid.*, 79.

God within him even though most of it has been marred. These theoretical considerations suggest that there are ways to support the belief that even though an offender might not kindle up fondness in others through his objectively good traits, and may not have a prior bond with the victim, and even though he may be obviously morally corrupt, an immoral person's personhood is worthy of moral love.

The phrase traditionally suggested to capture this concept is that people should love the sinner but hate the sin. While this phrase has almost a trite ring to it, it contains truth and should not be easily dismissed. One can dislike or hate someone's behavior and attitudes but still see him as worthy of love.<sup>113</sup> Although the problem seems to be especially complex when someone's character displays so many evil actions and so many bad traits that he is thought by some to not possess any sort of value, the theories just mentioned give reasons for valuing or loving those persons as well.

Up to this point it has been shown that several main ethical theories support the idea that there is something worth loving in a person who has been deemed to be corrupt

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<sup>113</sup> I do not expect a skeptic to naturally accept the idea that because someone is a member of humanity, he or she deserves to be the recipient of moral love. Anita Superson asks, "What is it to be a part of humanity, and what makes that so special that we have to love anyone who has this?" Anita Superson (Professor of Philosophy, University of Kentucky) email message to author, May 2015. In my estimation, it is not an empty concept to say that someone is part of humanity, and so deserves to have moral love shown to him by people who value displaying moral love. This is because being a part of the human species is a worth-bestowing feature. There are no other species that have the innate (although frequently unactualized) ability to produce works of art, do complicated mathematical or logical problems, interact with each other on a high level, etc. Not everyone does this with the same ability. I cannot write like Herman Melville or compose like Sergi Rachmaninoff, but I am a member of the same species as them. Sharing a biological class with something else closely associates that thing with the other instances of its kind. In the case of human beings, the class as a whole deserves respect for what it is. Being a member (at least in the sense of "membership" needed to deserve similar levels of a base-line respect for the thing's kind) means identifying biologically with that kind. Being a member of humanity, for the purposes of deserving a minimal amount of moral love for humans, does not mean participating as part of the moral community. If a human does not participate in the moral community, he does not lose his status as a human, but some other, very important, type of respect. If a person values showing moral love to others but withholds moral love from, for example, a sociopath, this reveals his own blind spot, similar to people who think enslaved humans are not equally human. It is morally dangerous to select which members of a biological species to include as a part of the species when what is at stake is a minimal concern for the people's moral advancement.

or evil. This project suggests that the most appropriate, morally legitimate object of moral love directed toward an evil offender is the offender's ideal self. As explained above, the offender's ideal self is who the offender *should* be; it is his moral destiny as seen through an upright, moral imagination. When a victim cannot seem to find anything good to love in a seemingly evil offender, he can love the offender's ideal self even though it may be far from being actualized. Loving what is ideally good in this instance cannot be immoral, as long as it is loved in a morally appropriate way, because the ideal, moral self is an entity that is good and lovely in itself. For offenders who have not been judged as evil, the victim may find other appropriate aspects of the offender to love in addition to the offender's ideal self. In fact, when other qualities are there to be loved, there seems (at least to the victim) to be less need to actively love the ideal self. But as a common denominator, a morally praiseworthy love of any offender includes at least an implicit love of his ideal self. This object of love is appropriate for those who are basically judged as "good" as well as those who are thought to be the human epitome of evil. It can permissibly be loved rather than shunned because it is good.

### **Good Will**

The third quality that moral love exemplifies is good will for the offender. When a victim has moral love, she not only wishes to affirm the ideal self and promote the ultimate good of the offender, but she is accepting of his attainment of other, more immediate goods and she desires his ultimate good for his sake. This approval and purity of desire demonstrates general good will towards the offender. The presence of genuine good will for the offender is one way that minimal forgiveness is likely to differ from virtuous forgiveness.

Minimal forgivers might say that they wish the offender would behave better. If wishing for an offender's moral improvement makes the offender less of a problem for the victim, then a minimal forgiver can wish for the offender to improve despite the victim's lack of concern for the offender or for goodness. A minimal forgiver can forswear his anger while saying, "I wish he'd watch where he is going" to the guy who missteps or can think, with underlying sarcasm, "I hope her day gets better so she won't be so cranky." These wishes might be construed as having intent for the moral

improvement of the offender, yet their quality cannot be made equal with that which comes from virtuous forgiveness. A virtuously-forgiving victim's wish for his offender to become a morally better person differs in motivation and content from the wish of a minimal forgiver. Another crucial difference is that in many cases, virtuous forgiveness includes deliberation about the offender's ultimate good, how it might be promoted, and will embrace a wish for the offender to improve for his own sake.

One way to describe the wish made for the offender's sake, as it intersects with good will towards him, is to say that such a wish is not contrary to other people viewing him as better, in a social sense, than he once was. Increased social prowess of an offender may include a mixture of goodness of character, an increase in external goods, and the attainment of social currency or clout. It includes the idea that in becoming more noble, the offender may also gain valuable tangible and probably intangible goods that will make him appear better, and perhaps more regal, to others. Virtuous forgiveness is not opposed to this, whereas minimal forgiveness (the form not given by virtuously-forgiving victims) will oppose the offender's gain of these benefits. When a victim can affirm these benefits, the good will that he has towards his offender is apparent.

A practical example will give substance to this discussion. Consider a co-worker who purposefully speaks ill of Jan often enough in front of the boss and unfairly biases the boss against giving Jan a promotion that she deserves. When the co-worker is given the promotion Jan deserved, Jan becomes angry at the co-worker but decides to forgive him. Jan can forgive him in two ways, which will be represented by Jan 1 and Jan 2. Jan 1 forgives minimally out of self-interest. At first, she could feel hatred for her coworker and may be in emotional distress thinking about how unfair and unjust this situation is. But when she decides to forgive him, she does so by talking herself into not letting her anger "get the best" of her. She determines not to act hatefully towards her co-worker and, after a while, her anger subsides as she forces herself to "not let it bother her" anymore; she does not like to be angry. She hopes the guy will quit bad-mouthing her, and she would be especially glad if the guy would quit his job, but she decides to "let it go" and not do anything to try to make that happen.

Jan 2 forgives virtuously, out of a desire for the good of the offender's ideal self and for the sake of goodness. This means that she may have considered talking to the

boss about any negative bias held against her due to the co-worker and that she has thought about discussing the offense with her coworker. Depending on the specifics of the situation, she may or may not decide to do this. Nevertheless, she does not hate her coworker even though she can be opposed that this injustice has occurred. A virtuously-forgiving victim's self-forgetfulness counters the tendency that she could have to be angry that her adversary now makes more money than her; her good will towards him assents to the goodness of the fact that he now has more money to provide for himself and his family. Jan 2 genuinely and purposefully acts kind and supportive towards the co-worker, who is now her immediate superior, in an attempt to be a good moral example to him and to not hinder his new role as a boss.

A natural tendency for those without *Forgivingness* would be to place qualifications on the good that came for the offender. She might say, "I would be happy for him if he hadn't gotten this money unjustly," or "I would be happy for him if he didn't already make more money than me." She might think, "I would be happy for him if I didn't need the money so badly," or "I would be happy if I didn't know that he was going to waste it." The forgiver who forgives virtuously does not do this because she recognizes that a good thing has occurred for the offender and she accepts this with satisfaction rather than jealousy.

Things can be more complicated, however, when the initial offense is remembered anew as more opportunities to operate within a comparison-schema present themselves. Consider the following, additional scenario that reiterates the function of good will: Two weeks after the unfair promotion, the offender/new boss, shows up to work with a brand new sports car. For Jan 1, this adds insult to injury because the offender was only able to get an impractical new car because of the promotion he got unfairly, at her expense. She compares her situation with his and becomes angry again, even though she once thought she had forgiven. She decides that if she wants to mitigate her new anger against him, she will have to forgive him for this further offense (i.e., for flaunting his unfair advantage over her.) In Jan 1's opinion, it would be preferable for the offender to not gain any intangible or tangible benefits from his new job. Jan 1's minimal forgiveness lacks good will towards the offender.

Jan 2, who has forgiven virtuously, and has self-forgetfulness, an altruistic wish

for the offender's ultimate improvement, and good will, is not opposed to her boss gaining whatever benefits that accompany his advancement. She may have to remind herself of this upon seeing his new sports car for the first time that she cannot be surprised that with the job came advantages, but she can easily return to a non-begrudging acceptance of the benefits he might accrue. If you were Jan's offender and Jan had said that she had forgiven you, the best kind of forgiveness would not require that she have to repeatedly forgive you for natural and morally permissible repercussions resulting from the offense for which you were forgiven. If you had been given the best kind of forgiveness, you would not expect to have to hide the benefits of your job in order to maintain Jan's forgiveness. While there may be occasion for the virtuous forgiver to forgive you for other offenses in the future, the quality of the forgiveness would be questioned if it continues to allow jealousy to easily arise concerning situations related to the offense. Good will is seen when the forgiver accepts the morally permissible goods that are acquired by the offender, even when they are a result of the offense for which the offender needed forgiveness.

Good will does not make a virtuously-forgiving person perpetually accepting of and pleased with everything that occurs for or through the offender, of course. The virtuously-forgiving victim would not be pleased if the offender's material gain came through further immoral means or if those gains directly contributed to further moral decline.<sup>114</sup> The virtuously-forgiving victim of a drunk driver will not be glad, for instance, if the offender, who is now two weeks sober, wins free beer for a year at a local bar. But insofar as the gains received by the offender are good, good will prevents the virtuously-forgiving victim from resenting the tangible and intangible benefits that the offender might receive. Good will makes her altruism extend into scenarios which might make others freshly jealous or angry. It also allows her concern for the offender's ultimate well-being to persevere.

Unlike unforgiveness and minimal forgiveness, virtuous forgiveness, which exhibits moral love and good will towards the offender, embraces the possibility of the

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<sup>114</sup> Although one could say that every gain he receives is morally tainted because of the original injustice. I am referring to immoral actions that occur at the new event, such as if he stole a car, strong-armed someone into selling him theirs when they did not want to, *et cetera*.

betterment of the offender because it wants the offender, for the offender's sake or for the sake of Goodness, to have what is good. Good will exists instead of certain negative, oppositional emotions (including malice and jealousy) when the victim accepts the potential advancement of his offender in areas other than in his moral life, should these advancements come to him by morally acceptable means. As Marietta Jaeger wrote of the man whom she virtuously forgave for kidnapping and killing her youngest daughter, she wanted him to "experience good fortune and affirmation."<sup>115</sup> There are few greater examples of good will expressed through the desires of virtuous forgiveness than this sentiment.

### **Objections to Loving an Ideal Self**

A critic might suggest that one does not truly love another if the object of that love is something not yet actualized and that has to be imagined. This is a reasonable concern since it is hard to explain how one can love what is not yet formed. Even though loving the person himself is important, it can be argued that who we are to become is more essential to our identity than who we are at any particular point when we are less than we should be. Aristotle, for example, considers the idea of *telos* is an essential part of human identity; our goal is to become something we are to be but have not yet actualized. Having love for who someone should become with regards to his moral nature is a part of loving who he is currently since both parts of his identity are linked together in the same person. Loving a person in a manner that helps advance his own interests by promoting who he should be actually shows love for that person as he is at any given time.

Even if a critic accepts this response, however, she may be concerned that a victim may not have enough of a grasp of the ideal self of the offender in order for it to be an object of her love. This objection can be taken to mean two different things and neither one should discredit the theory. First, the critic may mean that the victim suffers from an epistemic disadvantage. Either she does not know the offender well enough to be able to promote his ultimate interests or is mistaken in her beliefs about him.

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<sup>115</sup> Marietta Jaeger, in *Exploring Forgiveness*, ed. Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 13.

In response, it should be acknowledged that most, if not all, forms of love use potentially flawed perceptions and imagination. We love our perception of the other and sometimes find out, much too late, that the person we loved was not the person we thought he was. Our more epistemically sure-footed perceptions might be corroborated by the fact that other people have the same perceptions as we do. Everyone in your family, as well as all of your friends, for example, might believe that your fiancé is as loyal and nice as you think he is. At some point in time, you discover that he is a pander. Of course you all were fooled because to some degree, your love was constructed on your perception of him rather than his complete and real self which has not yet been actualized. But mistakes indicating this type of epistemic disadvantage concern who the person currently is rather than who he should be.

We can easily misjudge someone's current character, but it is less easy to misjudge some of the commonly-agreed-upon moral attributes that all people should have, as discussed above. In cases where very little about the offender is known by the forgiving victim, the ideal self that is to be loved is affirmed by a general urging for moral improvement.<sup>116</sup> In cases where an intimate knowledge of the offender is available, more specific channeling of love may be permissible. While each person may have a specific vocation or talent that would ultimately be good for him to fulfill, all that virtuously forgiving requires is a wise guess, in good faith, as to what might help the offender become morally better. It does not require the victim to be infallible in his understanding of people's moral destiny. The virtuously-forgiving victim may also be

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<sup>116</sup> Jones suggests some ways in which we can love our enemies: "At the least we learn to love them by giving up our desires for vengeance, by learning (through prayer—perhaps initially through the power of others praying for them in our stead, and through other practices) to wish them well. Such a wish might well include a recognition that one's, or one's people's, survival may require not being able, or even desiring, to be in those enemies' presence any more. We also learn [*sic*] to love them by engaging in lament, by prophetically calling them to account, by showing them an alternative way of life. Such an alternative form of power is found in Easter and Pentecost." L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 264. Although this method may not be desirable to all virtuously forgivers, this quote indicates that there are some people who will try to advance the offender through spiritual/religious means. This can be a way of expressing the good wish or good will that a virtuously-forgiving victim has for his offender.



mistaken about how an offender will be affected by particular responses, but virtuous forgiveness does not require accurate future predictions about other people's behavior. Rather, it expects sincere concern for the offender's moral improvement.

Of course, the better the offender is known by the victim, the better the guess about how to advance his ideal self is likely to be, other things being equal. A father may be able to fine-tune his forgiveness reaction in a way for his son that he could not do for his son's classmate. The virtuous forgiver, however, will have the ideal self of the offender as his concern in either case and will make wise choices about how to advance the offender's moral goodness.

Second, the critic might also mean that some victims may not know enough about what it means to advance an offender's ideal self. Rather than the critic being concerned about the victim's lack of knowledge of a particular offender, she may be concerned about the victim's lack of moral knowledge. The critic might contend that even though someone might not be morally mature enough to want what is ultimately good for another person because he does not know or is mistaken about what moral goodness is, this should not mean that he cannot forgive. Providing some strength to this criticism is the fact that the ideal self is a moralized concept that some victims may not understand or care about.

Insofar as forgiveness is merely about not actively feeling anger or desires for revenge (i.e., forgiving minimally), perhaps the critic is right. But this is not true for the virtuously-forgiving victim. Although she will be morally flawed, confused, and have moral blind spots, the virtuously-forgiving victim will have necessarily developed many positive and virtuous traits that are related to forgiveness. As will be explained in the next chapter, *Forgiveness* is a multifaceted virtue. One who has this virtue necessarily has many other well-developed emotions, views, and act tendencies that are morally praiseworthy. As it will be explicated, moral love that is the substrate of *Forgiveness* imposes structural limits on some emotions (e.g., anger and fear) and enhances others (e.g., hope and gratitude). The components of *Forgiveness* are relatively pervasive in the virtuously forgiving person's character. Virtuous forgiveness requires a certain degree of moral uprightness, reflection, and moral reasoning that is not naturally exhibited by those without the virtue. People who are not capable of this level of moral

ability are not able to forgive in a virtuous way. That hardened criminals are not usually known for their forgiving nature is evidence of this. As a general rule, the further one is from appreciating morality, the further one is from having the capacity to forgive virtuously. Thus, a person who has the ability to forgive virtuously has enough of a connection to moral precepts to have a sufficient understanding of anyone's ideal self and how it might be encouraged. Although one's own moral virtue does not always transfer into one's ability to promote virtue in others, the virtuously-forgiving victim is as likely to have that skill as anyone else and is often more apt to have it.

Another potential criticism of loving an offender's ideal self is that sometimes it appears irrelevant to do so. If there is not any time or any clear way to advance an offender's ideal self, it seems unnecessary for the victim to concern herself with such matters. For example, if an unrepentant, serial murderer is about to be executed, trying to show concern for the advancement of his moral good seems to have no practical value. Two things can be said in response. First, the person who has this type of love and concern for others will have no reason to "turn it off" for the person who is at the end of his life. It may even continue as a wish for his best interests to be done if there is a "next life." Since moral love is a stance that someone takes towards all other people, it is not something that quits occurring. It can be redirected to pursuits that are judged to be more meaningful, but this judgment would have to come from other aspects of the victim's psychological makeup and his practical situation rather than from moral love itself. Moral love itself does not choose to quit loving. The value that another person's ideal self possesses exists at least as long as the person exists, so again, there is no reason to no longer value it. As long as a person's humanity endures, his ideal self can be valued. Second, loving the ideal self of another person does not merely have benefits for the other person; it also enhances the life of the virtuous forgiver.

Through virtuous forgiveness, a forgiver moves his attention from offender-opposing negative emotions and thoughts and simultaneously develops affirming and supportive emotions towards the offender's ideal moral self and the currently existing part of him that may be connected with it. The ideal self may seem disconnected with the offender and, thus, critics may suggest that there is nothing there to love since it is not yet a part of the person. This concern is mistaken, however. The love that is operative in

virtuous forgiveness has the ability to look beyond the veil of appearances toward a reality that occasionally presents itself in intangible ways even though that reality may often seem elusive.<sup>117</sup> Affirming a person's ideal self is an indirect way of providing support to who he currently is, since the version of himself that currently exists (even though it may be corrupt) must necessarily exist if the ideal self is to be achieved at a point in the future.

Further, there are many cases in which the affirmation of one's ideal self requires that he be extended good will as he is. Much like a person whose ideal self includes being a classical pianist, the current person must begin taking lessons and be provided a piano. Similarly, a person whose ideal self includes being a healthy, helpful, and active member of society must (even though he may now be a jobless drug addict) be given the means to live safely and break his addiction so that he can become better.

### **Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

Scholars are undecided about whether reconciliation is part of forgiveness, a goal of forgiveness, or only a tangentially related concept. Charles Griswold, a bilateralist who places a strong emphasis on reconciliation in his paradigm form of forgiveness, individuates acceptance reconciliation from affirmation reconciliation. When reconciliation exists as "acceptance," each party involved in forgiveness is committed to not interfering with the other. Forgiveness, as he describes it, leads to this kind of reconciliation. When reconciliation exists as affirmation, "something like friendship and support or a renewal of any previous ties of affection" returns to the relationship. But, he says, "there is no reason to think that forgiveness *must* lead to 'affirmative reconciliation' as one might call it."<sup>118</sup> Griswold is right to suggest that different forms of reconciliation relate differently to forgiveness.

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<sup>117</sup> I realize that this view might also evoke the criticism that since what is being loved is not yet (and may never be) actual, the real offender is not being loved. This does not seem, from my perspective, to be a criticism about which to worry because one's ideal self, which is never fully actualized, is the most important part of even the current person. We love the actual state of the person derivatively but concurrently as we love what is most important about them. Making children learn to read and reason, for example, is an attempt to actualize their ideal selves. Those who teach them these skills with a respect for the ideal selves which are becoming progressively more actualized are loving the child as he is now and who he may become.

<sup>118</sup> Griswold, 111.

Another schema for classifying reconciliation separates external and physical relationships from the internal feelings that might be shared by both people or only experienced by the victim. People can reconcile internally without reconciling externally and vice versa, and each type of reconciliation can occur without forgiveness occurring. An example of external reconciliation that is not accompanied by forgiveness is two people who regularly do business together over the phone but who live on opposite sides of their country. Even though one purposely and unfairly gained a competitive advantage at the other's expense and no forgiveness has occurred, each person maintains cordial and professional telephone and internet exchanges as he previously did. The relationship continues as usual. An example of someone who can reconcile internally without forgiving is seen when a victim holds a grudge for an offense but has softer feelings for the offender arise in other aspects of one's life. The victim may experience a deep and important emotional connection with the offender and still withhold forgiveness for the offense. These examples provide support for the position that forgiveness and reconciliation are not equivalent and do not necessarily require each other.

The two concepts do relate in theory and in practice, nevertheless. Three things should be noticed. First, some instances of forgiveness naturally anticipate external and internal reconciliation. If the appropriate form of reconciliation is withheld in these cases, the sincerity of one's forgiveness might be questioned. When minimal forgiveness is properly operating in the realm of insignificant and amoral offenses, it may support a superficial form of internal or external reconciliation. For example, if I supposedly forgive my son for breaking my favorite platter, it would indicate that I have not forgiven him if I continue to resent him for it, refuse to look at him, or refuse to stay in the same room as him. Another example that occurs in the context of significant wrongdoing is the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 of the New Testament. Given the information provided, the father seems to forgive virtuously and externally and internally reconciles with his son. Had the father shunned his son, the latter may have not felt that he had been forgiven, especially since the father-son bond which existed before the son's offense was strong.

Second, some virtuous instances of forgiveness prohibit external reconciliation and severely limit internal reconciliation. Contrary to some people's assumptions, loving

an offender, promoting his ideal self, and having good will towards him does not correspond to allowing him to continue to victimize or to avoid negative repercussions of his actions that might serve to reform him. As will be explained in Chapter 3, moral love wishes for the offender to not behave immorally; it will motivate the virtuously-forgiving victim to do what he can to alter the situation so that the immorality does not persist. This may mean that a victim must sever ties with the offender. A battered wife, for instance, may have to physically leave her home and emotionally disconnect herself from the relationship with her abusive husband so that he no longer has the opportunity to abuse her. The physical removal not only improves her situation, but it gives him one less context in which to practice immorality. Taking away this outlet for abuse shows concern for his ultimate good; it is loving and respectful. When she limits her internal reconciliation, she prevents herself from being vulnerable to him in other ways.

Third, *Forgiveness* prohibits non-interference or what Griswold refers to as acceptance reconciliation in most cases where the offense is severe. For the most part, acceptance reconciliation is limited to minimal forgiveness because the action component of virtuous forgiveness inclines the forgiver, when possible, to something other than non-interference. Minimal forgiveness may result in non-interference—especially through the resolve to refrain from revenge—but virtuous forgiveness potentially supports a victim’s involvement in an aspect of the offender’s life as it relates to the offense. Moral love may incline a virtuous forgiver to encourage certain actions from the offender (e.g., to make reparations, to submit to discipline, to attempt to reform, to apologize) because those actions may advance the offender’s ultimate good. Interference, then, may be necessitated by moral love and, therefore, required by *Forgiveness*.

Fourth, all forms of forgiveness involve at least a weak, unilateral form of internal reconciliation. Through the foreswearing or dissolution of their offender-opposing emotions, those giving minimal and virtuous forgiveness create their own, internal harmony with the offender which may or may not be reciprocated. The harmony created by the victim’s forgiveness may, wisely, be too cautious to result in external reconciliation or in a level of internal reconciliation that restores the offender to an amicable place of favor. But, in the mind of the forgiver, virtuous forgiveness reaffirms one’s acceptance of the offender’s worth as a human; it reaffirms commonality between

the two parties; it affirms a belief that the world is compatible for both parties. This is necessarily some form of internal reconciliation.

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that virtuous forgiveness does not necessarily require or permit external reconciliation or some forms of internal reconciliation. Equating reconciliation with forgiveness is a mistake. The virtue only sometimes supports physical reconciliation and it consistently requires only a minimal sense of internal reconciliation. Only under certain conditions is external reconciliation or a high degree of internal reconciliation is strongly encouraged by *Forgiveness*. At other times, the virtue prohibits relationship reconciliation.

### **Character Traits and Ongoing Offense**

Many times forgiveness is given for an isolated moral failure or for an event or series of offenses that have been completed in the past. Offenses completed in the past can be forgiven when they are already in the past or when the victim has the expectation that the offending behavior has a limit. In more difficult circumstances, however, a victim may not be able to see that the offending behavior has a finite duration because the offense is currently on-going and the offender does not wish to change.

There are episodic offenses for which an offender is remorseful and those for which he is not. There are offenses which are persistent because they arise from an offender's settled bad attitudes, habits, wrong beliefs, and traits. There are also on-going offenses that, although they no longer physically occur, persist mentally or metaphysically because the offender is not remorseful or the situation is otherwise unresolved. A victim may be "trapped" in an abusive relationship with an offender who repeatedly does offensive things because of his poor moral character or emotional state. When individual offenses bombard the victim so that there are too many to mentally process, then if there is a candidate for forgiveness, it may be the offender's bad character trait rather than a particular offense.

A victim may be faced with the opportunity to forgive a repentant or unrepentant offender for an offense, a group of offenses, or for a bad character trait.<sup>119</sup> Sometimes a

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<sup>119</sup> Pettigrove is possibly the first person to write in-depth on forgiving character traits. See Pettigrove 44-47.

victim might choose to forgive her offender for a particular offense but decide not to forgive her for the enduring character flaw or bad habit that causes her to repeat that type of offense. Consider this example: Olivia forgives her college roommate, Heidi, for neglecting to buy an inexpensive airplane ticket so she could attend Olivia's wedding, as Heidi promised she would. By forgiving Heidi *for this particular offense*, Olivia does not resent Heidi (because she believes it is likely that Heidi squandered money on less important things and honestly could not purchase the ticket) and she does not wish anything bad to happen to Heidi (because that would be out of proportion to the offense), and she is willing to help Heidi—financially, emotionally, *et cetera*—in almost any way that she can so that good things will come to Heidi (showing evidence of Olivia's good will). But there are some harsh and negative feelings that Olivia still experiences when thinking about Heidi and the event. Even though Olivia has forgiven Heidi for a particular offense, she has noticed and has become personally bothered by Heidi's inability to prioritize what should matter, or, she resents the fact that Heidi has a tendency to squander money and has finally become angry about it now that it has affected her directly. In other words, she is angry not just about one incident, but because of her friend's bad character trait and habit.

Forgiving for an incident is different from forgiving for a bad trait. A victim may honestly believe that he has forgiven for the particular offense in question, and maybe he is right to think he has forgiven (likely in a minimal way), but unless he can identify and forgive for the character trait that produces offenses like this, the victim is likely to want others to "know how the offender really is" and he will try to let others know, to the detriment of the offender.<sup>120</sup> For a victim, becoming aware of this extra dimension concerning the offender's need of forgiveness not only helps the victim avoid bad responsive behaviors such as defamation, passive aggressive actions, *et cetera*, but it aids a virtuously-forgiving victim in his effort to encourage the offender's ultimate good.

Bad character traits are usually indicated by a repetition of similar, bad behaviors and attitudes or by repeated offenses in the same relevant scope of action. A repeated

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<sup>120</sup> When the victim tries to let other people know how the offender "really is," this may or may not be morally acceptable. If it is to harm the offender, it is obviously morally inappropriate. If it is truly and only for the sake of preventing harm to another potential victim, then it is morally permissible.

offense can serve to support the victim's suspicion or belief that the offensive occurrences relate to a character flaw of the particular offender. A minimal forgiver is likely to grow tired of giving minimal forgiveness to cover the same offense that stems from a character flaw. He may minimally forgive several times, according to how many reasons he believes makes forgiveness worth his while, but he will have no long-term motivation to allow himself to force his anger to subside because of one instance, only to be justifiably angered again at a repeat offense. An advantage of virtuous forgiveness, however, is that it is accompanied by moral love rather than neutrality towards the victim. Moral love structures the way the victim perceives repeat offenses and the offender who repeats them. The reasons a virtuous forgiver has to forgive (i.e., reasons that reflect a concern for moral goodness and a desire to help the offender make moral advancements) continue to be reasons to forgive for multiple offenses and character flaws.

Repeat and severe offenses, especially when the victim is enduring the wrongdoing and the offender is unrepentant, is unquestionably the most difficult type of situation in which to forgive. If always and unconditionally forgiving is characteristic of virtuous forgiveness, as I argue that it is, giving virtuous forgiveness during the midst of serious, inescapable harm and wrongdoing done by an unrepentant offender may be a time when forgiving virtuously, with expediency, is supererogatory. Nevertheless, it may be that within this context, the glory and beauty of *Forgivingness* shines brightest and those forgivers without the virtue are most likely to display their deficit, as understandable and expected as it may be.<sup>121</sup>

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided several definitions and distinctions that are foundational to the development of a model of *Forgivingness*. Among the most important distinctions that was made separates minimal and virtuous forgiveness. These forms of forgiveness can differ in their quality, motivations, views of the offense and the offender, the time it takes for them to occur, and in their action tendency. Essentially,

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<sup>121</sup> I remember hearing an interview on the radio with a nun who was beaten, raped, and left for dead in the trunk of a car. She recounted her forgiveness of them and her genuine concern for them during the beatings and the rape.



minimal forgiveness is dependent on external factors rather than itself for its occurrence and it does not require moral deliberation or reflection. This is, in part, why it is an inappropriate response to serious offenses and even some insignificant moral offenses. Those who forgive minimally in these cases may be guilty of condoning the wrongdoing, which is a moral offense in itself. Further, certain victims who forgive minimally also risk marring their own self-image in a way that makes them disrespect themselves.

Most cases of virtuous forgiveness are significantly different from minimal forgiveness and, as will be argued in the next two chapters, virtuous forgiveness is a praiseworthy response to every form and severity of offense. To some extent, this is because it is distinct from external reconciliation. It is also due to the rich substrate—moral love—upon which it is established and through which it acts. As will be shown, moral love affects the victim's initial experience and perception of the offense and offender, it encourages the presence of certain emotions and prohibits others, it encourages wise and kindly action directed towards the offender, and it helps the victim uphold the value of morality with regards to herself and to others.

This chapter has also commented on issues specifically related to moral love and its role in *Forgivingness*. Notably, moral love brings a praiseworthy form of self-forgetfulness to its possessor, providing the victim with moral strength and helping her maintain a solid sense of non-competitive self-worth that is remarkably independent of other people's treatment and view of her. Accordingly, moral love entails good will towards the offender and sincere concern for his ultimate good. Although the goodness of all forms of love is not without qualification, moral love is particularly praiseworthy because its object is the offender's ideal self, which is an inherently good object and, thus, is a proper object of love. Further, because it operates in conjunction with many other good moral characteristics and beliefs, as well as with a reasonable amount of moral wisdom, it is unlikely to manifest itself in foolish actions.

To advance the thesis that the virtue of *Forgivingness* is the disposition to always and unconditionally forgive and that forgiveness arising from or contributing to the development of this virtue is not morally prohibited, the next chapter will present a multifaceted, unilateral, unconditional model of *Forgivingness* (UUF). It will comment on the main components of the virtue, focusing especially on the affective elements. It

will also discuss the relationship of punishment or discipline to moral love and *Forgiveness*. These remarks will then lead to an argument that the main objections that usually arise against unconditional forgiveness are irrelevant to UUF. These objections include the idea that unconditional forgiveness unjustly pardons the offender, condones the wrongdoing, and contributes to the victim's servility.

## CHAPTER 3 A SKETCH OF A UUF MODEL

### Introduction

The UUF version of *Forgiveness* is analogous to a multi-faceted gemstone. When in the hands of a gemcutter, an ordinary gem can become polished and beautiful. Some gems, like the opal, are cut into cabochons or “cabs.” An amateur can perfect this cut with some practice and the results can be moderately profitable. The most profitable and perhaps most stunning cutting of gemstones results when a skilled gemcutter cuts many flat, geometrically arranged sides onto a gem to bring out its brilliance. Each cut, or each side, is called a facet. A multifaceted gem is complex and, in many gems, its numerous sides help it reflect light well. Forgiveness, like a gemstone, possesses inherent beauty and is generally considered to be valuable.

Some forms of forgiveness are like gems that have been left in the rough, without smoothing, polishing, or cutting. A misapplied instance of minimal forgiveness might be like this. It has flaws and is lackluster. Virtuous forgiveness, in its paradigmatic sense, has been well-developed over time, as if by a skilled workman, to dazzle from many different angles. It is not rough, but refined, and its possessor is enriched for possessing it. While it shares an underlying similarity with other types of forgiveness—just as a raw gemstone has the same unifying chemical structure as others of its type—virtuous forgiveness’ particular shaping and unique display reveals its refinement, complexity, and superior quality. Virtuous forgiveness may share similarities with minimal forgiveness, but the many facets of well-formed virtuous forgiveness make it much more distinct and valuable. As a well-cut gem has multiple facets, virtuous forgiveness does also. They include numerous emotions that are experienced by the forgiver, the actions that he chooses to take in response to the offense, the motivations that he has to advance the ideal self of the offender, and the specific combination of thoughts, wishes, beliefs, and attitudes that occur in his willingness to forgive. *Forgiveness*, then, cannot be represented on an Aristotelian continuum as a mean between two extremes.<sup>1</sup> That would

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Griswold represents it as the mean between servility and hard-heartedness; he presents it as a virtue primarily associated with anger. Charles L. Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18.

be severely and inaccurately reductionistic. Rather, it should be seen as a multi-faceted possessor of various but distinctive arrangements of beauty. To ignore the complexity of virtuous forgiveness is to misunderstand its brilliance and to reduce it to a lesser form that it has already transcended. Since the virtue of *Forgivingness* has many facets, it cannot be described merely as a proper experience of anger, an impeccable display of self-control, or a proper display of love. While it includes each of these elements, it cannot be equated with any one of them.

The imagery of *Forgivingness* as a multi-faceted gem depicts that there are many things about its possessor's character that must already be well-formed or are being formed well if one is to forgive virtuously. An inquiry into at least some of these elements is necessary for this conception of the nature of *Forgivingness* to be satisfying. Thus, many of the elements that comprise virtuous forgiveness will be considered in this chapter. Some facets of *Forgivingness* are emotions, some are motivations, some are thoughts or judgments, some are action tendencies. Several of these facets are virtues in the traditional Aristotelian sense—they lie in the mean of an excess and deficiency relative to the person.<sup>2</sup> Other facets may not be this sort of virtue, but may be a good quality or healthy tendency in another sense.<sup>3</sup>

When examining instances of *Forgivingness*, one may see different facets of the virtue displayed. Although every occurrence of virtuous forgiveness will contain some of the same elements as every other instance, each will look slightly different. *Forgivingness* instances can differ since the qualities that are held by different possessors can be held in different ways, the moods and emotional states of the possessors can vary,

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<sup>2</sup> Here are two examples. First, proper self-regard (self-forgetfulness) may fall within a mean between the excessive desires to over-protect oneself and a desire to destroy oneself. One does not have *Forgivingness* if one falls too closely to either extreme since the virtue requires its possessor to care for himself but to care about others as much. Second, the chronic refusal to act in response to an offense and being over-reactive to small slights are opposing excesses of properly addressing the offense and offender, which is necessary for possessing *Forgivingness*. Another way to look at this is that the victim must not go towards the extremes of irrational pacifism or irrational revenge.

<sup>3</sup> For example, a virtuously forgiving offender needs to have a relatively accurate understanding of the wrongness of the offense. Being able to discern this understanding is a good trait and if one were deluded about the particulars or could not discern any of the morally salient features of the situation, one would not be able to forgive virtuously. But this quality does not fall between two extremes.

and the perceiver may see some facets revealed to a greater or lesser degree than other facets depending on his point of view. Also affecting the potential variations are the particulars of the situations, including the severity of the offense, the significance of its potential repercussions, the relationship of the offender to the victim, the number of times a similar offense has occurred, the ways the offender has been addressed in the past, the likelihood that the offender will be punished or will be held liable, the victim's physical health and resources, *et cetera*. These differences account, in part, for why there are no binding and specific requirements about whether or how virtuous forgiveness is to be expressed to an offender or about the particular manifestation of moral love that is to arise. Nevertheless, every instance of *Forgiveness* is similar enough in its underlying structure to be recognizable in its outcome of unconditional forgiveness.

#### **Four Components of Virtuous Forgiveness<sup>4</sup>**

A helpful way to think about the basic structure of virtuous instances of forgiveness is to understand them as having four components: cognition, affect, motivation, and action.<sup>5</sup> Margaret Holmgren speaks of attitudes as having the first three of these components.<sup>6</sup> She considers forgiveness and resentment to be attitudes and she comments that attitudes can further be described as “integrated, conflicted, and fragmented.”<sup>7</sup> When someone has an attitude that is morally worthy, he has an “accurate recognition of the morally salient features of a situation.”<sup>8</sup> He also has feelings that are appropriate to those features and motives that “correspond to the way in which the

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<sup>4</sup> This is an attempt to highlight some aspects of forgiveness that have major roles. In some instances, the groups may overlap.

<sup>5</sup> The presence of these different elements suggests that forgiveness is not merely an emotion. Emotions can cause motivation, but they are not equivalent. See Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 195 for an explanation.

<sup>6</sup> As far as I can tell, Holmgren believes that forgiveness includes the affective, cognitive, and motivational components. There may be certain actions that accompany forgiveness as well, but she does not emphasize an action component as a part of forgiveness in the sense that the others are. See Margaret R. Holmgren, *Forgiveness and Retribution: Responding to Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 34ff.

<sup>7</sup> Holmgren, 9. Conflicted attitudes lack harmony between the components or within its components. A fragmented attitude has one or more of its components suppressed. (See *ibid.*, 25).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

situation could most appropriately be resolved.”<sup>9</sup> Holmgren argues that genuine forgiveness has each of the three features of a morally worthy attitude. Building on these components is her conception of a virtue as “a morally worthy integrated attitude that has been sufficiently ingrained to constitute a fairly regular response to a given type of recurring situation.”<sup>10</sup> She views genuine forgiveness as a virtue because it has these three components, is integrated, and is morally worthy.<sup>11</sup>

Holmgren says of the cognitive component of forgiveness that when we forgive, our most salient beliefs are those that we hold about the offender as a person. . . . [It] includes . . . salient awareness of the offender as a sentient being who is capable of experiencing happiness and misery, and who, like us, wants to experience happiness. It includes an acute awareness that like us, the offender is subject to various needs, pressures, and confusions in life and is vulnerable to error. And it includes a salient recognition that the offender is a valuable human being with a moral status equal to our own.<sup>12</sup>

As she describes the affective component, she says that it

Consists of feelings of compassion and kindness toward the offender (as opposed to the moral anger that constitutes the affective component of an attitude of resentment) and respect for his personhood. . . . And depending on the circumstances, we may experience a variety of other positive emotions toward the offender.<sup>13</sup>

Holmgren believes the motivational component to be something that “consists of a desire that things go well for the offender, and that he flourish as a person.”<sup>14</sup> She names this “real goodwill.”<sup>15</sup>

I also recognize a role for the cognitive, affective, and motivational components of virtuous forgiveness, but I conceive of them slightly differently. In the case of virtuous forgiveness, the components can be thought of in this way:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 35. As explained earlier, the motivation for (or reasons for) forgiving may come from the victim holding other commitments that he believes require or proclaim the goodness of forgiving, or thinking that forgiveness is morally beneficial for whatever reason. The reasons one has for forgiving will likely carry through in his efforts to forgive.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

1. a cognitive component that includes the mental phenomena associated with relevant, salient beliefs and views about the offender and oneself, or humanity, and presents forgiveness as a morally good option of response to wrongdoing; this component judges how to rightly address the situation created by the wrongdoing; it deliberates about how to advance the offender's ultimate good;
2. an affective component that includes emotions (whether felt consciously or unconsciously) that are "for" the offender and that limit or modify emotions or attitudes that are contrary to good will towards the offender;
3. a motivational component (rooted in moral love) that appreciates and values moral goodness and the ultimate good of the offender as a moral agent.

These three components are characteristic of *Forgiveness*, but there is another component—the action component—whose presence in virtuous forgiveness has not been given enough prominence by many scholars. Although Holmgren mentions some of its effects, she does not emphasize action as a component since her discussion of forgiveness codifies it as an attitude.<sup>16</sup> In the UUF model presented herein, the virtue includes an action tendency that is interconnected with the three parts of its corresponding attitude. When these three parts are integrated in a virtuous way, they produce a tendency to behave and act in a way that is characteristic of the virtue. To continue the list from above, virtuous forgiveness also includes:

4. an action tendency that helps to advance the offender's moral development, thus attempting to promote the actualization of the offender's ideal self. It, with the help of other components (especially the cognitive and motivational components), endeavors to advance goodness in the offender and preserve the victim's well-being.

*Forgiveness* is not only an attitude taken towards others (especially demonstrated when its possessor has been offended), but it is also a tendency to act in a certain way. Just as we can recognize a brave person through his tendency to do brave acts, we might also recognize a forgiving person through his tendency to act in a forgiving way towards his offenders.

The victim who possesses *Forgiveness* will typically act (or at least will desire to act) in such a way that she will treat the offender as if he is currently less than his morally ideal self but that his ideal self is worth advancing; she will do this in various

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<sup>16</sup> In *Forgiveness and Retribution*, Holmgren discusses retribution, punishment, and similar topics, but she does not seem to do this directly in relationship to an action component that is a necessary part of forgiveness.

degrees and ways that are in accordance with moral love. Forgiving actions done in accordance with the virtue are always infused with respect, humility, self-forgetfulness, and kindness. Nevertheless, these actions may include disciplining the offender or having him justly punished with the intent of advancing his ideal self. Correction (fairly and within reasonable bounds) of another's serious moral flaws is a way to do good to him, to advance his ultimate interests, and to treat him with respect. Acting in order to advance the offender's moral goodness is a natural tendency of one with *Forgivingness* because of the strength of the attitude that undergirds it; it is an intrinsically worthwhile action.

Because of the constraints of real life situations, an action may not materialize even though it is anticipated by theory. The actualization of the action tendency may be hindered because considerations external to the virtue make it practically impossible for the forgiver to act. Actions may also be modified or withheld when a virtuously-forgiving victim considers some morally salient features of the situation to override the importance of completing the action. Actions are, nevertheless, an indispensable part of *Forgivingness*. The tendency to act is a natural result of the virtue's underlying cognitive, affective, and motivational components and well-meaning but severely misguided actions may reveal that a forgiver lacks the virtue. Deliberation about the best ways to utilize the action tendency is a necessary part of the cognitive component. Completing the action or satisfying the drive to want to act is the natural conclusion of the forgiveness process. Thus, I consider the action component of *Forgivingness* to be an important, essential part of the virtue. It will be discussed more in a later section of this chapter, where I elaborate specifically on the role of a virtuous forgiver's actions in relationship to punishment. The topic will first turn to the cognitive, motivational, and affective components of the virtue because they underlie and directly affect the action component of the virtue.

### **Cognitive and Motivational Components**

The discussion that occurred in chapter two concerning the reasons for which forgiveness can be given provides insights that are relevant to the cognitive component of *Forgivingness*. Although the insights provided there will not be discussed again here, it



should be noticed that the level of cognition involved in a particular instance of virtuous forgiveness can vary according to many factors, including the level at which the forgiver has attained the virtue. Other things being equal, more cognitive deliberation may be involved in the initial stages of the forgiveness process when the virtue is fledgling. In situations of significant betrayal, for instance, such a victim may initially need to consciously remind herself that forgiveness is the best response because it prevents the abuses of revenge, it reclaims the immoral context for good, it helps her act in the best way, it respects herself and her offender, it puts her in a better psychological condition, *et cetera*. A forgiver who possesses the virtue more securely will not usually need to convince himself of this truth.<sup>17</sup> Such a person has cultivated himself as one who forgives virtuously; the decisions that, over time, formed his character in such a way, were also part of the cognitive component of the virtue.

But the cognitive component is not restricted to the developmental stages of *Forgivingness* or the initial stages of the forgiveness process. In all virtuous forgivers, especially those who possess a mature form of the virtue, the cognitive component always performs a necessary role in connection with the action tendencies displayed in forgiveness. In this capacity, the cognitive component causes the virtuously-forgiving victim to consider the theoretical and practical ways in which it will be possible to advance the offender's ideal self. It also provides information that contributes to the forgiver's exhibition of practical wisdom in his dealings with the offender and others who are related to the situation created by the offense. The cognitive capacity helps the forgiver recognize the morally salient features of the offense and possible responses and it allows him to detect and evaluate excuses and accurate construals of the offender. Cognitive changes, then, have a direct influence on many of the emotions involved in the forgiveness nexus.

The motivational component of forgiveness (which can be discussed as a separate category but is strongly linked to the other components) provokes the victim to pursue forgiveness and enlivens him to behave in a way that he believes is likely to help his offender become a morally better person. It helps sustain a virtuously-forgiving person's

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<sup>17</sup> If the offense is serious, the person with a fully-developed *Forgivingness* may still need to use the cognitive component consciously.

wish for the ultimate good of the offender, it provokes the victim's willingness to do what might help improve the offender's moral position, and it sustains a victim's anticipation that there will be an action component to manifest the victim's good will towards the offender in a specific direction. Thus, the motivational component of virtuous forgiveness is exhibited primarily in four areas: 1) in the desire to continue to be a forgiving person; 2) in the continuance of the forgiveness process when it becomes difficult; 3) in the willingness to contemplate and execute a plan to help the offender achieve what is ultimately good for him in an appropriate way; 4) in the good will experienced for the offender. It differs from any motivation of a minimal forgiver in that it is strong enough to activate unconditional forgiveness and to encourage the forgiver's actions and emotions to go beyond an experience of mere neutrality or of seeking punishment for punishment's sake. Because of the presence of *Forgivingness*, the virtuously forgiving person is motivated to advance the offender's ultimate interests. The minimal forgiver may forgive without concern for the offender's ultimate good and may remain neutral towards him rather than experiencing moral love. If he does either, it will be because of a factor other than the virtue.

### **Affective Components**

In many accounts of forgiveness, the affective (i.e., emotional) component is given primary attention.<sup>18</sup> This section also provides numerous remarks concerning the emotional components of forgiveness.<sup>19</sup> Since the forgiveness nexus is potentially comprised of many different emotions, however, this section will not treat the topic

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<sup>18</sup> In many cases, it is the only aspect of forgiveness that is given systematic attention.

<sup>19</sup> I have chosen to discuss some of the negatively valenced emotions that are related to anger or hate. I refer to these emotions as being offender-oppositional. A much neglected topic, as pointed out by Glen Pettigrove, is the way that emotions including sadness and disappointment—emotions that are not particularly offender-oppositional—relate to forgiveness. Unfortunately, I will not get to address this here. Nevertheless, *Forgivingness* as I present it has the flexibility to address situations that do not deal with offender-oppositional emotions. An answer to such concerns would at least involve a discussion of the qualities that those emotions have to promote the moral life (e.g., sadness, according to Ben-Ze'ev, usually puts people in a state of realistic self-reflection) and would discuss the regulating work of countertendencies (e.g., hope, gratitude, and self-forgetfulness) in preventing any apathetic inactivity and excessive self-focus that would harm the moral aspects of the victim's relationships with others and possibly her future moral character. Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, *The Subtlety of Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

comprehensively. Instead, it will explain how some of the morally permissible and impermissible emotions that are associated with the initial response to wrongdoing and to forgiveness interact in those persons who stand in various relations to the virtue. It will also discuss some of the emotions of *Forgiveness* that perform a regulatory function in counteracting, modifying, or preventing those emotions and cognitive phenomena that could prevent virtuous forgiveness from occurring.

Attempts to define forgiveness are usually focused on a victim's initial feelings and attitudes toward the offender. Much of the early, contemporary literature on forgiveness refers to the emotions involved in forgiveness as resentment: resentment is the emotion or emotion group that is to be foresworn if an offender is to be forgiven. In 1988, Norvin Richards observed that some of the most popular definitions of forgiveness made it logically impossible to forgive anyone who was not *resented* by the victim.<sup>20</sup> If the victim had only experienced contempt for the wrongdoer, or sadness due to the mistreatment, and had overcome these emotions, he would not qualify as a forgiver unless he had also experienced resentment and had overcome that as well. Thinking that this was counterintuitive, Richards suggested that the definition of forgiveness should be widened to include negative feelings in addition to resentment.

Richards explains that the foreswearing of resentment alone does not constitute forgiving; a victim can cease to resent but still have strong hostility towards or severe disappointment in the offender that prevents him from forgiving. He provides the example of a husband who has a habit of belittling his wife in public. One day he does so in front of some new people whose impression of her she considered to be particularly important. The wife is enraged and she entertains thoughts of how she might get violent revenge. But because she believes that she should forgive "lest the Lord not forgive us our own misdeeds,"<sup>21</sup> she manages to shift her emotions from hatred to something else. After this process, she no longer wants to be violent but she laughs scornfully when she thinks of him, thinks ruefully about her having put up with him for so long, and she decides to leave him as an act of self-respect. Richards notes that this woman has foresworn hatred and anger and has willfully abandoned resentment, but he suggests that

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<sup>20</sup> Norvin Richards, "Forgiveness," *Ethics* 99 (1988).

<sup>21</sup> Richards, 78.

she has not forgiven and that her husband would agree, as she packs her bags and “ridicule[s] his urgings that things should return to ‘normal.’”<sup>22</sup> Richards states, “I doubt that *she* should consider that she had forgiven him, either. After all, her efforts to do so were founded in the hope that God would later do for her as she did for her husband. Surely she does not hope the Lord will merely move from hating her to holding her in icy contempt? She wants an embrace, not a different kind of rejection.”<sup>23</sup> So, he reasons, forgiveness must include the abandonment of all negative feelings for the person, “insofar as such feelings are based on the episode in question.”<sup>24</sup>

Inquiries about forgiveness that have postdated Richard’s insistence that resentment is not the only emotion to be foresworn have resulted in different lists of emotions thought to be relevant to forgiveness. The list of negative emotions considered in this project include anger, hatred, resentment, contempt, fear, disdain, bitterness, and vengefulness. Certainly, other emotions in the same family, or variations on them, may be experienced by a particular victim. They are usually called negatively-valenced emotions.<sup>25</sup>

Thinking of forgiveness merely as the overcoming of relevant “negative

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>25</sup> As Jesse Prinz puts it, “The difference between negative and positive emotions is called a difference in ‘valence.’ There are two different valences an emotion can have, negative or positive, and all emotions seem to have one or the other.” Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 160. There are different ways to explain why certain emotions are negatively rather than positively valenced. The following sources are pointed out in Prinz, 160-78. Frijda suggests that negative emotions are negative because they are unpleasant. N. H. Frijda, “Mood, Emotion Episodes, and Emotions,” in *Handbook of Emotions*, ed. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (New York: Guilford, 1993), 381-404. Others, thinking that this is deficient since emotions can exist subconsciously without the agent feeling unpleasantness, have suggested that negative emotions register when something happens that is not congruent with an agent’s goals. See Richard Lazarus, *Emotion and Adaptation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). MacLean seems to suggest that negative emotions cause us to avoid things. P.D. MacLean, “Cerebral Evolution of Emotion,” in *Handbook of Emotions*, ed. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (New York: Guilford, 1993). Ortony, Collins, and Clore equate negative valence with highly structured, inner, negative judgments. Andrew Ortony, Gerald L. Clore, and Allan Collins, *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Some researchers refer to valence as the “hedonic tone.” Prinz, 167ff. For our purposes, anger, resentment, hatred, and the like are considered negatively-valenced.

feelings,”<sup>26</sup> as Richards calls them, is only a partial description of the phenomenon. Margaret Holmgren and others are right to suggest that positive emotions, including kindness, will accompany forgiveness. Without kind or positive emotions, there is no affect to limit or prevent the negative feelings which must be lessened and be foresworn. Even if a victim does not need affect to play a limiting role with regard to his other emotions because he has other strong motivations and reasons for forgiving, an account of virtuous forgiveness is incomplete if it ignores the more positive side of forgiveness in the cases which do require these positive emotions.<sup>27</sup> Virtuous forgiveness is not simply about the fact that one rids oneself of negativity for one’s offender. Rather, it involves how and why one does this. In many cases, the victim’s motivation, cognition, and positive emotions influence the process. Ignoring these positive influences hampers an investigation of whether or not a particular forgiveness instance is virtuous.

It stands to reason, then, that virtuous forgiveness is not just the foreswearing of negative emotions. Virtuous forgiveness is also affected by the presence of positive emotions that replace those which have been foresworn. Giving warrant to this is that many people believe the ideal forgiveness is something other than merely “getting over” negative feelings. As Richards suggests, the wife in his example would not want God to “forgive” yet still have contempt for her. She would want forgiveness to be like “an embrace.” Something positive should be displayed in or achieved by the ideal form of forgiveness. Although an embrace of reconciliation is not necessarily required by forgiveness, the positive presence of good will must be evidenced in the virtuous forgiver.<sup>28</sup> Good will and moral love may be the figurative “embrace” that Richards thinks should be characteristic of ideal forgiveness.

*Forgivingness* alters the types and experience of emotions that arise in the victim. The mature virtue precludes the experience of some forms of emotions and requires the

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<sup>26</sup> Richards, 79.

<sup>27</sup> Likely, the cases that do require the presence of positive affect are the most philosophically and psychologically interesting. They are likely to be the ones that morally require more than minimal forgiveness.

<sup>28</sup> Although positive emotions will be felt and sometimes they will not, none of a virtuously-forgiving victim’s emotions will stand in opposition to moral love and good will towards the offender.

experience of others. How a victim experiences the relevant negative and positive emotions depends on his relationship to the virtue. For ease of discussion, I will remark on those whose forgiveness is unrelated to the virtue, those whose forgiveness shares some similarities with the virtue, and those who forgive because they possess the virtue.

A minimal forgiver who does not have *Forgiveness* may experience a broad spectrum of possible negative emotions when he recognizes that he has been wronged. Some or all of those negative emotions may dissipate as he forgives. This may be because of an acceptable reason (e.g., the offense is so insignificant that it does not warrant continued emotional protest) or an immoral one (e.g., the victim has a psychological or ethical problem that results in apathy towards the offense). In minimal forgivers, some of the impermissible, negative emotions may persist even though they claim to have forgiven. This may be because such a forgiver either lacks the positive emotions that are part of the virtue that would serve to prevent the impermissible emotions from arising, because the absence of the virtue leaves the victim unable to synthesize into the forgiveness matrix any counteracting, positive emotions he might have, or because his relevant, positive emotions are too fragile to stimulate the emotional state necessary for ideal forgiveness.

In those who possess the virtue but have a less-mature form of it, some of the emotions that are incompatible with the virtue may initially occur in a victim as he recognizes the offense. Because the virtue, even in its less-developed state, provides positive emotions that help counteract impermissible ones, the victim is likely to either recognize and modify the impermissible emotions through cognitive deliberation, or those emotions will be naturally modified by the presence of the morally permissible positive emotions that are part of *Forgiveness*. The degree to which this is effective is dependent, of course, on the maturity of the virtue. As an individual's positive emotions associated with the virtue are strengthened over time, his initial emotional interpretation of the wrongdoing is altered towards the moral ideal and the efficacy of the positive emotions to modify the impermissible emotions increases.

In the paradigmatic case, the forgiver with mature *Forgiveness* will not initially experience morally impermissible emotions when he discovers that he has been done wrong. He is likely to experience morally permissible, negative emotions and morally

permissible, positive emotions that preclude the morally impermissible ones. These emotions will be discussed in this chapter. I will explain why some are morally impermissible and why others are thought to prevent or modify them.

Many accounts of forgiveness suggest that forgiveness is a change in the tone or valence of an emotional stance towards an offender, moving from negative to positive. The person who possesses *Forgivingness*, however, has a more complex relationship with emotions than this general description suggests. The virtue prevents some forms of negative, offender-oppositional emotions or thoughts from occurring at all. The virtue encompasses that not all negatively-valenced emotions should be foresworn or eradicated in order for virtuous forgiveness to be given. It also activates and enhances already-existing, underlying, affirming and supportive emotions, concern for, and affirming actions towards the offender's ideal moral self.

Jessica Wolfendale suggests, "Forgiveness is most commonly defined as a change of heart where the victim renounces negative feelings toward the wrongdoer and accepts them back into the moral community—accepts them as a person."<sup>29</sup> According to my theory, the one who forgives with paradigmatic virtue does not ever reject the offender as a person. Rather, the individual with *Forgivingness* may experience negative emotions that are morally permissible, but he does so while still respecting the offender's personhood. During this process, he turns his attention more forcefully towards the good of the ideal self of the offender. The one who forgives virtuously experiences the solidification of a certain emotional, cognitive, motivational, and active focus that will be explained in the following sections.

**Emotions, Valence, and Offender-Opposition.** So far, I have vaguely referenced negatively-valenced or offender-opposing emotions that might be foresworn,<sup>30</sup> modified, or excluded by some forms of virtuous forgiveness. Emotions that are commonly said to be negatively-valenced include anger, sadness, and hatred. Their valence is in question because there are instances in which each of these emotions may

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<sup>29</sup> Jessica Wolfendale, "The Hardened Heart: The Moral Dangers of Not Forgiving," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36 (Fall 2005): 348.

<sup>30</sup> To foreswear is to "let go of" or to "turn away from" or to "cease to adhere to" or to "release."

feel good and are welcomed by the one who experiences them. When it feels good to be angry a person does not wish to let his anger go. People sometimes pursue melancholy, an emotion on the sadness spectrum, by watching sad movies or reviewing old photos of loved ones who have died. In some instances, it may be enjoyable to hate things or other people. Despite this fact, the predominant experience and common language use is to call these sorts of emotions negative, and so, I will also refer to them as negatively-valenced.

Negative valence does not refer to a moral judgment about the emotions said to be negative. Someone can be just as immoral in her love as she can be in her hate, even though the former is positively valenced and the latter is negatively valenced. Someone can experience morally praiseworthy anger and immoral happiness, even though the former is negatively valenced and the latter is positively valenced. Many discussions of forgiveness seem to equate the emotions that should be foresworn with those that are negatively valenced simply because of their valence. I assume that the valence of an emotion does not determine its ethical status.

Nevertheless, there may be features that morally impermissible emotions share that help us identify them. Pettigrove identifies the unifying quality among the negative emotions that should be foresworn through forgiveness as their oppositional nature towards the offender. He explains that the “emotions forgiveness overcomes are these other-directed emotions. They are not just negative. They are also hard, or perhaps even hostile, in the sense of being oppositional.”<sup>31</sup> Hard and oppositional emotions may be morally appropriate, even in the context of forgiveness. One should be hard and oppositional towards crimes against humanity, for example. As Pettigrove suggests, the ethical permissibility of negatively-valenced emotions should be questioned when another human is their object. While every negatively-valenced emotion directed towards a human is not immoral, I suggest that the morally impermissible emotions are those that stand in opposition to Goodness and that fail to show proper respect for what is good in humans. If someone is contrary to or unconcerned for the ultimate well-being of themselves or others, the negative emotions or privation of emotions that promotes this fails to show proper respect for their ultimate good. Goodness entails concern for human

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<sup>31</sup> Glen Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.



beings' welfare and affirms what is good in them. In the context of forgiveness, this means that morally unacceptable emotions are those that prevent the victim from experiencing neutrality or good will towards the offender or that prevent the victim from desiring that he be able to promote the ultimate good of the offender. I will appropriate the term, "offender oppositional," to refer to those emotions associated with forgiveness that are immoral. The emotions that are hard and offender-oppositional will not be experienced by the ideally virtuous forgiver and will be foresworn by those who are hoping to virtuously forgive or to become virtuous.

Foreswearing emotions can be a very difficult process—one that is especially affected by the nature of the offense, the identity of the offender, the victim's perception of himself and others, whether the offender tried to make reparations, society's reaction to the harm, whether the offender is justly punished, *et cetera*. Other things being equal, foreswearing or not experiencing offender-oppositional emotions is easiest for two groups of people: those who have psychological or ethical problems that make them not take the wrongdoing seriously enough, and those who have developed the virtue of *Forgivingness*. As mentioned above, not every negative feeling must be foresworn or eliminated in order for virtuous forgiveness to occur. Fear, for instance, is negatively-valenced and can, in manageable amounts, be compatible with virtuous forgiveness. Virtuously-forgiving victims only need to foreswear (or experience an absence of, for morally permissible reasons) those emotions that prevent the forgiver from willing the offender's ultimate good and from having good will towards him.

**Emotional Malleability and Correction.** Having an emotion is not the same sort of phenomenon as having a broken finger. Feeling angry is not an analogous condition to having the flu. Whereas certain physical conditions are simply physical conditions, emotions have cognitive components. As such, they are things—like some but not all physical conditions—that can theoretically be altered or, sometime, prevented. Many theorists believe emotions cannot merely be physiological states. For instance, Martha Nussbaum, Gabriele Taylor, and John Rawls are among those who argue that

judgments partially constitute an emotion.<sup>32</sup> Robert Solomon presents emotions as being a kind of evaluative judgment.<sup>33</sup> Ortony, Collins, and Clore view emotions as “highly structured inner judgments rather than somatic states.”<sup>34</sup> Jesse Prinz believes that emotions are appraisals that are embodied, where an appraisal represents things that matter to the person experiencing the emotion.<sup>35</sup>

There are many reasons to think that emotions are not merely physical entities or our recognition of purely physical changes. One of these reasons is that our emotions often respond to logical argumentation and can be altered by our grasp of relevant information. Another reason is that it is difficult to make sense of the various sets of physical changes that help us label distinct emotions without there being substance to substantiate the variations. Prinz says “emotions without appraisals would lack content” and that “appraisal is the flavoring of our emotions states.”<sup>36</sup> Emotions—like desires—also seem to be *about* something, unlike other bodily sensations which can refer merely to themselves. One’s leg muscle might cramp or one may notice that one’s face is clammy and it not be *about* anything except a physical state or process. However, one gets angry *about* something; one’s anger refers to something beyond oneself.<sup>37</sup> More can be said to defend this position, but these justifications should suffice for this project. When speaking of emotions, then, I assume that emotions are not merely physical states; they contain a cognitive component.<sup>38</sup> Because of their nature as at least partially cognitive, alterable events, it is logical to discuss moral prescriptions for them.

**Negative and Positive Emotions and the Countertendencies.** As was previously mentioned, some negatively valenced emotions are morally acceptable and

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<sup>32</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 291-293. Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 1. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 481-83.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Solomon, *The Passions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 185-87.

<sup>34</sup> Ortony, Clore, and Collins, *Cognitive Structure of Emotions*, referenced in Prinz, 178.

<sup>35</sup> Prinz, 178.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 66.

<sup>38</sup> Emotions are probably more complex than I have described here, but the current description is sufficient for present purposes.

can be involved in virtuous forgiveness. In this chapter, I will discuss the following negatively-valenced emotions: anger, hate, contempt, envy, frustration, fear, *Schadenfreude* (delight in the misfortune of another), sadness, and disappointment. I will also write about the role of positively-valenced elements, including moral love—with its three essential components (desire for the offender’s ultimate good, good will, self-forgetfulness) and its homologous and ancillary emotions—hope, humility and patience. I will also discuss other positively-valenced emotions including compassion, gratitude, and self-respect and some corresponding mental phenomena including magnanimity, self-respect, and practical wisdom.

The intent is to theorize about the forms or degrees to which these emotions can be involved in virtuously-given forgiveness and to explicate the basic relationship among these affects within a person who possesses a mature form of *Forgiveness*. For each emotion that is said to be incompatible with the virtue, I will explain why it is not supported by the virtue. In doing this, I will also tell how these incompatible emotions are precluded or modified by another active cognitive or affective aspect that is characteristic of *Forgiveness*.<sup>39</sup> I refer to the cognitive or affective facets of the virtue that combat the impermissible emotions or attitudes as “countertendencies.” “Countertendencies” are those facets of *Forgiveness* that counteract some of the emotions, attitudes, and thoughts that tend to characterize a person who lacks the virtue.

*Hate, Dislike, Moral love, Compassion, Hope.* Anger is a typical and often conscious response to a harm or offense. Its object is a particular person whom the victim believes should not have done what he did, whether the offense or harm was due to carelessness or whether it was accidental or purposeful. Because anger is such a common response to offense, it, and its closely related emotional strands (e.g., resentment), are often treated as the primary emotions that forgiveness must modify or forswear. Although anger is extremely important—so much so that there will be a

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<sup>39</sup> Although some of the mental phenomena discussed in this chapter (e.g., understanding and self-respect) are not emotions, their influence on and embeddedness within emotions sometimes makes it convenient to discuss them along with the affective component of *Forgiveness* or its cognitive component. As far as I can tell, nothing significant is lost by including these mental phenomena in the discussion of affect or the cognitive component as they become applicable.

rather lengthy section devoted to it later in this chapter—I will first discuss hate. If *Forgiveness* emerges from a substrate of moral love and exhibits moral love for an offender’s ideal self, as I contend, then hatred is arguably the emotion that is most at odds with virtuous forgiveness. Any form of another emotion, including anger, that is blended with or that arises from hate will also be incompatible with *Forgiveness*.

Hate may refer to one of two things. First, and most colloquially, hatred shows intensity. It can refer to an intense dislike of someone, something, or some situation. A child can hate to eat brussel sprouts, for instance. A girl may hate it that her best friend was in a car wreck. A mother may hate that her daughter has gotten in with the wrong crowd. In this sense, the term is used to show that the boy’s dislike for brussel sprouts is intense, that the girl really wishes that the wreck would not have involved her friend, and that the mother intensely disapproves of the influence that her daughter’s new friends have over her. These ways of using the term, hate, are morally neutral. As long as the object of this type of hate or intense dislike can be worthy of intense dislike, no moral issues readily arise with its usage. When intense dislike is directed towards an offender, this may also be morally acceptable as long as the intensity or focus does not prevent the victim from willing good for the offender or cause the victim to be unable to separate the offender’s ideal self from his bad character traits or offenses.

There is a less colloquial and more serious use of “hate.” In order to use this grave sense in a morally acceptable way, and to assess its relationship to *Forgiveness*, one must be aware of its implications. As Ben-Ze’ev explains, anger’s evaluation is of a specific action rather than of a whole person, but hate makes a judgment about the whole person, or at least much more of him than anger does.<sup>40</sup> Unlike anger, hatred is an evaluation of much more than a specific act. Whereas anger may be provoked by a specific action or series of offenses or a character trait, hatred is always about more than a single act or trait. It involves the victim’s belief that the harm caused by the offender is rooted much more deeply in his character than one act or an isolated flaw might suggest. As Jon Elster says, one’s anger assumes that “because they do bad things, they are bad,”

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<sup>40</sup> Ben-Ze’ev, 380.

but one's hate assumes that "because they are bad, they do bad things."<sup>41</sup> Because a victim who hates his offender deems him to be globally bad and fundamentally flawed, the hating victim's tendency is to want to remove the offender from existence rather than to correct him or try to change him. Changing him is considered to be impossible or at least too difficult to be worth the effort since the offender's core self is fundamentally flawed. Correcting him does not do enough to prevent the future harm that he may cause again since it is unlikely to alter his character. Thus, whereas the action tendency of anger is to protest the wrongdoing, correct the wrongdoer, or to harm him in some way, the action tendency of hate is to destroy the offender. It is this sense of hatred that is always incommensurable with virtuous forgiveness because it does not stand for the Good, which is latent in the victim's ideal self. This form of hatred makes it impossible for the victim to desire to promote the goodness of the offender and his ideal self.

Hatred mixes easily with anger because, like anger, hatred can be evoked by a perceived offense and its object can be the offender.<sup>42</sup> They both have the capacity to place blame and may take delight in the expectation of getting revenge.<sup>43</sup> Further, it is easy to assume that someone is totally bad when they do particularly bad things. As Ben-Ze'ev says, there is a "fuzzy borderline between anger and hate."<sup>44</sup> Even the person experiencing hatred may not be able to readily detect its presence since it may be hard to separate from anger or because it does not have to exist within anger or other strong emotions. Many of the Nazis, for example, killed people they hated without feeling anger towards them.

When felt strongly, hate can motivate a person to destroy another or to condone or long for such destruction. While hatred may be permissible when it applies to evil things, it is not permissible when applied to persons, even when there is some reason to think that the person is unlikely to advance towards his ideal self. While there are many cases in which a victim might believe that his offender is unlikely to change for the

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<sup>41</sup> Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64-67.

<sup>42</sup> Hate may not be a response to a specific action or wrongdoing, as seen when people hate whole categories of other people without considering their individual actions.

<sup>43</sup> Ben-Ze'ev, 394.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

better, it is immoral to not wish that he would. Lacking this wish is the sign of a person who has begun to lack compassion<sup>45</sup> and moral love, both of which are virtuous and have intrinsic value. Not having this wish also indicates that one may have lost sight of the connection between the good of the society and the moral improvement of its individuals. Further, it indicates that little preference is given to Goodness itself, since it is almost tautological to suggest that individual moral improvement increases collective moral goodness, which honors the idea of goodness and benefits the society.

While some things are evil and are, perhaps, proper objects of hatred, people who care about morality must not judge others as completely evil and allow them to become objects of their hate. Concerning the topic of judging men as evil, Kant suggests that

We call a man evil, however, not because he performs actions that are evil (contrary to law) but because these actions are of such a nature that we may infer from them the presence in him of evil maxims. In and through experience we can observe actions contrary to law, and we can observe (at least in ourselves) that they are performed in the consciousness that they are unlawful; but a man's maxims, sometimes even his own, are not thus observable; consequently the judgment that the agent is an evil man cannot be made with certainty if grounded on experience.<sup>46</sup>

Although Kant is right to suggest that people lack sufficient evidence to judge whether or not another man is evil, his belief can easily be met with skepticism. Even though another person's maxims are not observable, there is sometimes good justification for thinking that a particular, unrepentant, repeatedly-offending evildoer is an evil person. Why can this type of evildoer not be an appropriate object of hate?

Even if one believes one has enough evidence to make the judgment that an offender is wholly bad and cannot change for the better, one is metaphysically, epistemologically, and morally wrong to make this judgment. When people equate a person's ideal self with his past actions, they confuse two categories that are not equivalent. A person is more than the sum of her actions; she is also a physical body, a collection of interests and goals, a person in relationships with others, a collection of

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<sup>45</sup> Whereas hate judges another person as impossible to change, compassion necessarily includes the possibility that the situation can change and it evaluates the other positively rather than negatively.

<sup>46</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T.M. Green and Hoyt Hudson (New York: Harper, 1960), 16.

potentialities and capacities, an entity with a future, a member of an impressive species, a possibly enduring soul, *et cetera*. Even more evident is that a person's ideal self is not equivalent to his past actions. The ideal self exists as an ideal that is connected to the present individual's state and as a thing in the future. Equating a person or his ideal self with his past actions is metaphysically wrong.<sup>47</sup> It is also morally problematic because it objectifies a person as a mere conglomeration of choices and actions.<sup>48</sup> To not desire that a person make moral progress is to disrespect him as a human being and as a moral agent. When we expect that a person will not make moral progress, we lose the desire to help him change or to see him change, and we settle into thinking that he does not deserve to change. This reflects a malady in our own character. Further, the epistemological method that results in the victim assuming that he knows the future actions and attitude of another person lacks substantial justification since history boasts of a plethora of radical spiritual and moral conversions.

Holmgren makes the additional point that when we conflate other people with their acts and their attitudes, and respond to them as proper objects of hatred and opposition, "we tend to reify ourselves as well, by conflating ourselves with virtuous attitudes."<sup>49</sup> We are self-righteous then, not virtuous. She continues,

We then set up a polarized drama, a contest between good and evil, in which we are the good guys and they are the bad guys. Offenders become pawns in this drama, and we respond to them in ways that are disrespectful and manipulative. We exhibit hostility toward them, judge them, rebuff them, reject them, inflict harm on them, and, in extreme cases, we kill them. What is missing in all of this is a genuine concern and respect for the offender as a person.<sup>50</sup>

When equating the offender with the sum of his deeds, when ignoring the fact that the offender is a moral agent with the capacity to change, and when treating a human being as if he does not have an ideal self that is worth trying to actualize, one is harming one's own moral character. By committing this moral offense, the victim disrespects the offender and harms his own moral condition; he purposely allows himself to be

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<sup>47</sup> Holmgren, 100. I am assuming that there are such things as moral potentials.

<sup>48</sup> Obviously many forms of existentialism are being rejected with this statement.

<sup>49</sup> Holmgren, 100.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

unconcerned about moral progress and another's welfare and permits himself to become more self-righteous and more deficient in moral love and compassion.

Since *Forgiveness* comes from moral love, which respects the offender as a person with an ideal self, it does not allow its possessor to hate an offender, even when hatred seems justified. The morally serious sense of hatred, however, may be compatible with virtuous forgiveness. Its permissibility is controlled by its object. A virtuously forgiving person may hate any evil that has occurred since evil is a proper object of hate. He will not hate the offender, nevertheless, since this either means he also indirectly or directly hates the offender's ideal self which is good, or he commits one of the metaphysical, epistemological or ethical mistakes just mentioned. These types of mistakes are out-of-character for a person who has enough moral love to forgive well. A virtuously-forgiving victim can hate an offense, he can hate that offenses of a particular sort occur at all, and he can hate the repercussions that have resulted from the offense, but he will not hate the offender's ideal self. The views, attitudes, emotions, and motivational tendencies possessed by a person who has *Forgiveness* preclude hatred of other people. In other words, he has countertendencies, which will be discussed, that quell hatred.

But a virtuously-forgiving victim may experience a morally benign form of hatred for the offender—that is, an intense dislike for him. One can strongly dislike someone yet still act respectfully towards him and have a deep concern for the actualization of his ideal self. This dislike, or colloquial use of hatred, remains compatible with *Forgiveness* as long as the dislike does not interfere with the victim's good will and moral love towards the offender. Good will for an offender cancels out an excessively intense degree of dislike for someone that would prevent the victim from accepting that good may happen for the offender. If one is not able to affirm the offender at least in this way, one cannot forgive him.

Although virtuously-forgiving victims make judgments about the actions of the offender and can make some assessments (given enough information) about the current state of his character, the forgiver does not make a final judgment about the offender's character and ideal self, he does not reduce him to his past deeds, and he does not accept that he lacks the ability to make moral improvements. Unlike hate, virtuous forgiveness



does not wish to destroy the offender, but wishes to advance the part of him that is most worthy of being promoted and which is undeniably good. Virtuous forgiveness does not promote the other's ideal self merely because the ideal self is worthy of being promoted, however. It promotes the other's ideal self because virtuous forgiveness is the kind of thing that attempts to promote goodness. Moral love, which is the substrate of *Forgivingness*, thus helps prevent the virtuously-forgiving victim from hating the offender.

In the current account of *Forgivingness*, moral love is among the most fundamental of the countertendencies. Moral love is an extremely important operative in *Forgivingness*. It counteracts or prevents hatred towards an offender. It helps one to see that one's moral interests coincide with that of others. It also motivates one to advance the interests of others and to act with kindness, even toward one's offender. Whereas hate views an offender as completely bad with no possibility of improvement, moral love views the offender as having value (and thus, some form of goodness) that is separate from instrumental considerations. Moral love is a global attitude with a positive evaluation that corrects or prevents the global negative evaluation of hate.

Another necessary emotional facet of *Forgivingness* that serves as another countertendency to hate is hope. Whereas a person who hates believes that there is no possibility for a change for the better in the future, hope, as Søren Kierkegaard says, "is the passion for the possible."<sup>51</sup> Hope looks for an improved future and not only desires it, but also considers what is desired to be of great personal importance and takes what is desired to be possible.<sup>52</sup> Hope enables the virtuously forgiving victim to want what is ultimately good for an offender even when the offender's ideal self seems rather unlikely to be realized.<sup>53</sup> It includes a desire to be in a certain, yet-unrealized situation, it assumes that being in that situation is possible, and the hopeful person deeply cares about bringing about the situation for which she hopes.<sup>54</sup> Hope for the ultimate well-being of another

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<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Ben-Ze'ev, 474.

<sup>52</sup> Ben-Ze'ev, 475.

<sup>53</sup> For an interesting but only tangentially-related philosophical perspective on the value of hope and on utopias, see Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

<sup>54</sup> Ben-Ze'ev, 475.

person is an extension of moral love and is a necessary facet of *Forgivingness*.

Hope may exist in different intensities and can be affected by one's evaluation of the likelihood that what is desired will be achieved. It is not always active in forgiveness in a robust sense, where the victim continues to spare no effort in order to materialize his desire that the offender become a morally better person. Hope grows stronger when the desired events or conditions are more likely to be achieved. The more that the agent believes she can control the desired occurrence, the more intense her hope becomes (as long as her controlling it will not prevent it.)<sup>55</sup> Hope will exist in different intensities in the virtuously forgiving person and will be helpful in the part of the forgiveness process when the victim deliberates about the amount of effort it is reasonable to put into trying to promote the offender's ideal self. Sometimes external circumstances cause a decrease in hope and indicates to the forgiving victim that significant, outward effort to improve the offender is no longer worth giving, considering her other responsibilities. But hope always exists in *Forgivingness*, at least in a weak sense, whereby the victim is never opposed to wanting the offender to improve, even if he judges that it would be unwise to spend a good deal of effort trying to bring the goal to fruition. A virtuously forgiving victim will always believe that it is at least conceivable that the offender can improve, and the victim will desire this with fervor.

*Fear, Practical Wisdom, Self-Forgetfulness, Courage, Ultimate Good.* There are at least two forms of fear. When fear exists in a form that is compatible with anger, one remains concerned that the offense could be repeated in the future. But as Aaron Ben-Ze'ev explains, fear typically works more closely alongside of hate rather than anger since what one is angry about is often in the past and the object of fear, like hatred, is typically in the future.<sup>56</sup> According to Ben-Ze'ev's analysis, hatred often includes at least a subconscious element of fear. The hater usually fears that the object's fundamental badness will never improve and that the badness is dangerous.

When fear manifests from or into hatred, it is incompatible with willing the good of the offender's ideal self and so, is incompatible with virtuous forgiveness. The person

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 486.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 394.

who experiences fear of this sort would have to fore swear this type of fear (probably by fore swearing her hate) before she could be said to have forgiven. This is likely to be psychologically difficult and it may be that a person who fears in this way never can forgive virtuously. Fortunately, because of the presence of moral love in a person with *Forgiveness*, the virtuously forgiving offender will not experience this form of hateful-fear.

When fear manifests from anger instead of hate, or exists purely and on its own, its relationship to forgiveness is not necessarily morally objectionable. Since hate does not necessarily accompany fear, it is possible for one to be fearful without hating the offender. One who recognizes a potential future threat to one's existence or to one's well-being may experience fear as a result. A victim can be wary of what his offender may do in the future and simultaneously try to help him become a person who does not do such things, or sincerely hope that others will help him improve in a relevant way. Some non-hating forms of fear may help the forgiver make good decisions about how to act towards the offender in the future. A permissible amount of non-hating fear can motivate the virtuously forgiving victim to act wisely with respect to her own interests and those of the offender. A healthy amount and type of fear may encourage the victim to seek sentencing for serious offenders, to remove himself from dangerous situations, to alert others to potential danger, *et cetera*.

When it is reasonable to believe that a threat still exists from an offender, a certain amount of fear is compatible with *Forgiveness*. Of course, it cannot be so strong that it precludes good will towards the offender or causes the victim to systematically behave irrationally or without concern for the offender. Although fear tends to influence people in this direction, the person who has *Forgiveness* has a built in safeguard to help prevent this from occurring. The cognitive part of the virtue rationally joins with fear to find reasonable solutions to help protect the victim and others and to create the situations best for advancing the offender's ideal self. Fear may motivate the virtuously-forgiving victim to do morally beneficial actions, including putting extra effort towards advancing the moral improvement of the offender or joining with others to assert her own rights in a relatively safe way.

The virtuously forgiving victim's experience of the fear associated with the

offense does not exist in the same way as the fear possessed by some people who lack the virtue.<sup>57</sup> The virtuously forgiving victim's fear is counteracted by the structural and regulating presence of moral love. Moral love, particularly its concern for the ideal self of the offender, along with its element of self-forgetfulness, dampens fear's intensity and helps the victim use the techniques he establishes for preserving his own safety for altruistic rather than self-centered purposes. Instead of the victim experiencing an intense concern for only himself and his own safety, self-forgetfulness operates similarly to courage, which is a virtue that may underlie the use of every other virtue, although I will not argue that here. Self-forgetfulness counteracts the self-centeredness that is inherent in excessive fear, allowing the victim to be open to advancing the interests of the offender. Again, self-forgetfulness may serve a similar function as courage.

Neither self-forgetfulness nor courage, taken by themselves, however, can be sufficient for sustaining the fear that is acceptable to *Forgiveness*. The part of moral love that desires the ultimate good of the offender is necessary to enhance the operation of self-forgetfulness so that it will extend the object of fear to include something more than the victim's own safety. It will also include a fear of the possibility that the ideal self of the offender will not be realized so that the part of moral love that wants to advance the offender's ultimate good will be able to operate.

A non-hating form of fear that is not overpowering can be compatible with *Forgiveness*. This is especially true if the fear includes a concern for the offender's ideal self. Virtuous forgiveness is incommensurable with any form of fear that is so intense or devoid of rationality and moral love that it fails to consider the ultimate best interest of the offender as a conjoining goal of comparable importance with the preservation of the victim's own interests.

*Contempt, Good Will, Humility, Compassion, Sadness.* As with some forms of fear, hatred may also be closely associated with contempt. As seen in the case of some Nazis, contempt and hate fuel each other. Contempt sees the other as inferior and it allows one to feel delight in being superior to its object.<sup>58</sup> Contempt can easily be

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<sup>57</sup> Some victims may be courageous. This may affect their fear as well. Courage will not extend the victim's concern to encompass the good of the offender as moral love will.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

directed toward a wrongdoer as the victim comes to think of himself as morally superior to the offender and enjoys this status. Taking this view is especially tempting when the offense is one that the victim believes he would never commit because it is “beneath” him. The victim then judges that the offender is not as good as he is. A victim may judge himself to be better in a selective area—usually in his moral value—or on a grand scale (as a person). Contempt does not consist in the mere judgment that one is better than someone else; it is also a feeling of satisfaction or delight taken in that judgment. The person with contempt is satisfied or delighted that he is superior and that the other is inferior.

Contempt promotes self-righteousness and a person with *Forgiveness* will not be self-righteous with regards to the offender. Self-righteousness is a tendency to be (perhaps illegitimately) confident in one’s own goodness or merits. This tendency is problematic for several reasons, among which is that it can easily cause the victim to ignore and persist in the blind spots concerning his own character. If he is focused on his own moral goodness in comparison to the offender’s, he is not as aware of the ways in which he might improve himself. Similarly, a self-righteous victim’s moral gaze tends to be too narrow in scope. He praises himself for not doing the type of offense that the offender did, but he does not consider the many offenses he has committed against others as a salient consideration concerning his moral condition. He also underestimates the moral depravity he would exude if he were to be put in certain circumstances. When a person has developed his character such that he has the capacity to virtuously forgive consistently, he has developed a significant degree of moral and epistemic humility. He has developed the ability to want what is good for his enemies. Throughout the lengthy time that he has been developing *Forgiveness*, he has noticed his own immoral temptations, mistakes, and need for improvement. He has reminded himself of his fallibility. He has been mindful to not define himself or others by comparisons. He has developed the ability to evaluate the value of attitudes and actions on their own terms rather than by comparison. So his evaluation of the offense or the offender’s character resists being compared with his own offenses or himself.

A victim could be aware of his own need for improvement and still judge himself to be morally better than his offender is currently. When compared with someone who

commits a wide range of severe and chronic offenses without experiencing remorse, the victim may rightly judge that he has developed more virtues than his offender and has followed moral precepts better than his offender. Despite this recognition, a victim can virtuously forgive. *Forgivingness* does not require a victim to evaluate goodness illogically, pretending that some people are not more ethically advanced than others. Some people have made better moral choices than others, some have resisted temptation in a more admirable way than others, and some deserve credit for guarding their characters in ways that others have failed to do. Even though a particular victim may have excelled in these ways in comparison to her offender, and may recognize this, it does not mean that she experiences contempt and, thus, cannot virtuously forgive. Elements of moral love counteract one or two of the necessary elements of contempt, making virtuous forgiveness possible despite the recognition of moral differences.

Moral love prevents the victim from taking pleasure in the difference. For contempt to arise, one must recognize one's superiority and find the superiority pleasurable. Whereas contempt is satisfied or delighted that another person is morally inferior, moral love considers his moral inferiority to be regretful. The virtuously forgiving victim, because of her moral love, desires that her victim become his ideal self. The concern she has for his ideal self, stirred by moral love, allows her to take no pleasure that he has fallen short of this ideal. Her humility, which is homologous to and naturally occurring in moral love, reminds her that she is still trying to improve herself—that she is not yet her ideal self. She realizes that moral progress is not a competition; it is an expectation that anyone can attempt to fulfill without depleting the resources other people have to do the same. She desires for her offender to make progress just as she wishes it for herself. She is concerned for his good since, as Ben-Ze'ev explains, "modest [humble] people are deeply concerned with the needs of other people and are not preoccupied with themselves."<sup>59</sup> Further, since moral love predisposes her to self-forgetfulness, she is more focused on wishing for her offender's ultimate good than she is in boosting her own sense of self-worth.

*Schadenfreude, Compassion, Sadness, Good Will. Schadenfreude* (the German

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 520.

word for taking pleasure-in-another's-misfortune), can become a species of hatred for an offender mixed with delight.<sup>60</sup> A hateful victim with *schadenfreude* takes delight in the expectation that the hated one will eventually be destroyed. This victim enjoys this prospect since he believes there is no goodness in the object of his hatred and that it the offender is not worthy of existence. The world, in his estimation, would be a better place without his enemy's existence since his enemy is thought to never have the opportunity to change for good. The victim with hateful *schadenfreude* obviously lacks good will for the offender and, since he wants him harmed, does not want to see his good—ultimate or otherwise—advanced. Hateful *schadenfreude* is, thus, never compatible with *Forgivingness*. The virtuously forgiving victim is not able to take delight in another's destruction because it is counteracted by the presence of good will, which the person with *Forgivingness* necessarily has. It may also be counteracted by compassion, which creates a desire to help the offender rather than to harm him. Compassion serves an ancillary function rather than a necessary one, but it is effective nonetheless.

Theoretically, victims can experience *schadenfreude* without experiencing hate. These victims would take delight in the offender not receiving something he might consider to be good, or in him being harmed in some way that does not ultimately destroy him or thwart his ultimate, moral interests. Some victims may reason that this misfortune is good because justice is being served: the offender is getting what he deserves; maybe this will teach him a lesson. When the victim genuinely views the misfortune the offender will experience as something that may advance his ultimate good, he can affirm it and still forgive virtuously. But the virtuously forgiving victim will experience a different type of satisfaction in the misfortune than the pleasure that is derived by a victim experiencing *schadenfreude*. The former's acceptance of the offender's misfortune will necessarily be altered by moral love.

One characteristic of moral love is good will. It is difficult, or impossible, to have good will towards an offender and still take a particular type of delight in his misfortune, even when the misfortune promotes his ultimate good. The paradigmatic victim possessing *Forgivingness*, when she takes pleasure in the misfortune of her offender, would likely experience some degree of sadness that the offender is in such a moral state

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 394.

to have to suffer the misfortune that might improve him. This victim may, in one sense, experience satisfaction when an offender is indicted or imprisoned since it may serve a good purpose for society, protect other people, begin to satisfy justice, and uphold moral and legal standards. In another sense, however, she would view this as regretful. To wish imprisonment or negative consequences upon someone is contrary to having good will towards him. The person who has *Forgiveness* will necessarily have good will towards the offender and, although it may not, it may cause her to become sad that this offender, or any moral agent, has to encounter such consequences. Although she might desire for the offender's moral goodness be enhanced by the penalty, she will wish that the potential good could have been brought about by some other, more pleasant, means or that the good would not have been lacking originally.

*Frustration, Hope, Moral Love, Patience.* Frustration is an emotion that expresses discontentment about a situation that the agent believes could be otherwise. As explained above, hate believes that its object is relatively permanent.<sup>61</sup> Frustration, on the contrary, differs from hate because it assumes that the situation or trait that is the source of dissatisfaction is not permanent. One becomes frustrated because things have not yet become as they should be and one is expecting and wanting them to change. Frustration is also distinct from hatred, and from many forms of anger, because the frustrated victim does not necessarily have the intent to harm or to personally punish its object. A frustrated person wishes for the situation or person with whom he is frustrated to improve, but does not wish for this to come about by means of harm and misfortune. When it arises, frustration alerts an agent that some state-of-events or person that she cares about should be improved.

Many forms of frustration do not need to be foresworn in order for minimal or virtuous forgiveness to occur. A virtuous forgiver can forgive in the fully virtuous sense and still be frustrated that things in the world are so flawed, or that the offender has not already committed to better behavior, or that her life has gotten so much harder as a result of the offense, *et cetera*. The presence of frustration can indicate that the victim cares about situations and people (herself and her offender) becoming better in tangible and

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



ultimate ways. When this is the case, it is an emotion that works hand-in-hand with another necessary facet of *Forgiveness*: hope. The virtuously forgiving victim hopes that things will improve for herself and the offender's ideal self, and thus, frustration and hope are not only affects, but they may also act as part of the motivational aspect of the virtue which helps the victim to work towards bringing about that change.

Although the right type of frustration may play a role in motivating the agent to bring about improvement in herself, the world, or in the offender, this motivation may arise from other emotions (e.g., hope), cognitive elements of the virtue, or from habits that are separate from the virtue. Although a form of frustration may be compatible with *Forgiveness*, it is not a necessary component; it will not be present in every virtuous forgiver and the quality of the forgiveness given by the one who does not experience frustration will not be deficient because of its absence. Whether a particular virtuously forgiving victim experiences frustration is a feature of her own psychology rather than a feature of the virtue.

Frustration cannot exist boundlessly if it is to be part of forgiveness. If a victim is in a heightened state of frustration about the situation surrounding the offense for an extended period of time, her own moral condition is likely to suffer. Persistent agitation or frustration takes a person's focus off of beauty and goodness and allows it to give too much prominence to badness and the mundane. Excessive frustration has the potential to drain the victim of good will, concern for others, patience with others, *et cetera*. Although through frustration, her desire to change things is evident, the excessively frustrated victim may care that they change only for her sake; she may cease to have good will towards the offender, she might lose her self-forgetful tendency, and she may be prevented by her frustration from finding ways to address the offender through moral love and wisdom. The absence of these aspects would make virtuous forgiveness impossible. Further, if excessive frustration became her default position for dealing with bothersome situations, she might also lose sight of kind ways to interact with other people, eventually becoming too demanding of others or herself. Such a person would not possess *Forgiveness*.

A victim who possesses *Forgiveness* will have certain facets of forgiveness that, if maintained, will help her not become too frustrated to forgive virtuously. Patience,

which serves an ancillary function in *Forgivingness* and is homologous with moral love— is such a facet: the exercise of moral love is never impatient. Patience prevents the victim from withholding generosity about the time it might take people to make moral progress. It also prevents her from having unrealistic expectations for things getting back to normal, and for her own recovery. Moral love provides her with a general attitude of tolerance that helps to reinforce the moral strength she receives from patience. It motivates her to act respectfully and kindly to the offender and extends good will to him. These facets of *Forgivingness* naturally limit the quality of frustration she experiences.

*Envy, Moral Love, Magnanimity.* Envy can occur in degrees. When envy is weak, the envious person wants his rival to suffer, but only if it does not harm his own interests. The envious person's own welfare takes priority over the satisfaction he believes he will get by the rival being harmed.<sup>62</sup> A person with strong envy, however, is willing to suffer or to have his own interests harmed as long as it means that the other's welfare will also decrease. Both weak and strong envy want the perceived superiority of the other to be overcome. Ben-Ze'ev claims that both forms "may be described as selfish...".<sup>63</sup>

Another person's perceived superiority can be overcome in at least two ways. First, an envious person can attempt to "bring down" the object of envy to his own level. Second, perceived superiority can be overcome as the subject attempts to raise himself to the level of the object. The former is malicious and is reflected in the proverb, "The envious man thinks that he will be able to walk better if his neighbor breaks a leg."<sup>64</sup> The latter method occurs when someone explicitly admires and aspires to be like his hero. I will refer to this as emulation or admiration instead of a species of envy.<sup>65</sup> In doing so, I will shield emulation from the moral taint that only envy deserves.

While emulation shares with envy a desire to rectify the subject-object inequality, it is not focused, as malicious envy is, on the subject's undeserved inferiority. Instead,

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Ben-Ze'ev notes that some people classify the latter as a case of nonmalicious envy, *ibid.*, 289.

emulation's primary focus in the subject's willingness to work to overcome his own inferiority in order to become like the object of his emulation. Since emulation's comparison is not between people but is between standards of goodness and oneself, and since the efforts to correct the disparity only include making oneself better while not prohibiting the improvement of the other, emulation may be compatible with *Forgiveness* but is not required by it.

Malicious envy, on the contrary, is incompatible with *Forgiveness*. It is not only selfish, or overly self-centered—thus being counteracted by self-forgetfulness—but it also desires harm or destruction, which is incompatible with good will. Good will, which is necessarily characteristic of *Forgiveness*, prevents the virtuously forgiving victim from desiring or doing harm to another. The preoccupation with comparing oneself to another—a necessary characteristic of envy—is at odds with the element of self-forgetfulness that permeates moral love. Therefore, envy is incompatible with *Forgiveness*.

People who forgive virtuously are not perfect, of course, and a person who forgives in accordance with the virtue many times may occasionally find that her grasp of the virtue is deficient. While a victim with *Forgiveness* typically possesses a strong and widely-encompassing moral love, she may also experience times of weakness, find that some facets of her *Forgiveness* are not as developed as she would like, and discover that the opportunity to forgive provides her with information about her own blind spots and failures.

Envy is not an emotion that occurs in every victim as a response to offense and it can occur, even in a virtuously forgiving person, in areas of her life that are unrelated to forgiveness. While a person with a fully developed *Forgiveness* will be much less likely to be envious of another person than those without the virtue, it is still possible (because of a failure to completely integrate the characteristics of the virtue into other parts of her life) that she might struggle with envy or be unconsciously envious of another. If at some point the person who is the object of preexisting envy also becomes the envious person's offender, it will be impossible for the victim to forgive virtuously unless she quickly rids herself of envy so that she can have genuine good will towards the offender and develop a higher level of self-forgetfulness towards him so that she can

desire to (and act to) advance his ultimate good. She must also foreswear her envy because envy is a catalyst for anger. While not all anger is incompatible with *Forgiveness*, anger that lingers too long or is malicious is incompatible. To the extent that envy provokes the victim to continue in his anger, creating resentment, envy is obviously a practical hindrance to forgiveness.

It is interesting to note that an offense may be beneficial for the victim's personal, moral growth, and can serve to help her virtue grow in maturity. An offense provides a victim with a new opportunity to reassess her feelings and attitudes towards the offender. In the case of envy, the forgiveness process may help the victim recognize and foreswear previously undetected envy, integrating the facets of *Forgiveness* and her actions and thoughts more comprehensively than before the offense occurred.

A virtuously forgiving victim who has a strong grasp of *Forgiveness*, nonetheless, usually does not experience envy concerning the benefits the offender accrued as a result of the wrongdoing. Since a person with *Forgiveness* fundamentally values goodness and wants to stand against wrongdoing, he is keenly aware that the offender who gained an advantage through the offense did not behave morally in his attainment of that benefit. In the eyes of this victim, the offender (especially one whose offense was more significant than trite) has suffered a significant moral loss as a result of committing the offense. Since one who possesses the virtue greatly values goodness, the offender is less likely to be envious of the person who has further harmed his own moral character, despite the allure of the tangible benefits that were gained. This outlook—when working conjointly with self-forgetfulness, good will, and a desire for the offender's ultimate good to be advanced—helps the virtuously forgiving victim to counteract envy.

Another facet of *Forgiveness* that is homologous and ancillary to self-forgetfulness is what Rosalind Hursthouse calls “magnanimity,” which is a quality one has when one is “well-disposed in respect of judgements of one's own worth, neither over- nor under-estimating it.”<sup>66</sup> Its emphasis is on not having too low of an estimation

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<sup>66</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, “A False Doctrine of the Mean” in *Aristotle's Ethics: Critical Essays*, ed. Nancy Sherman (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 106. She is somewhat altering the Aristotelian virtue of *megalopsuchia* (magnanimity) from its original context, but I will use the term in this way for lack of a better one.

of one's personal worth, rather than guarding against too high of an estimation.<sup>67</sup> Some people with *Forgiveness* have developed magnanimity in such a way that it transfers into the forgiveness context. Although magnanimity may not be a facet of *Forgiveness* that is obvious in every instance of virtuously-given forgiveness, it always provides structural support to the virtue.

*Forgiveness* does not require that the victim always hit the mean between over-estimating and under-estimating his strengths, weaknesses, value within certain context, *et cetera*. He may be confused about his worth as a step-father, or his skill as a plumber. In the way I am using the term, however, magnanimity reflects a fundamental understanding of one's overall equality with others and value as a human being. In this way it is a lot like an aspect of self-forgetfulness. A difference is that whereas self-forgetfulness causes its possessor to think about himself less, magnanimity causes its possessor, when he thinks of himself, to apply considerations of his worth as a human being to the situation at hand. This quality is especially operative in the cognitive part of the forgiveness process which manifests as deliberation about the best course of action to take in response to the offense in order to encourage the ultimate good of the offender while still respecting one's own safety, commitments, and character.

A victim could not forgive virtuously if she over-estimated her worth to such an extent that she considered the inconvenience she was caused by the offense to be or more value than the ultimate good of the offender. If she over-estimated her worth to such a degree that she thought she was above being offended by others, she would also lack the ability to forgive. On the other end of the continuum, a victim could not forgive virtuously if she severely under-estimated her worth as a person. She would either feel that she was obligated by the high level of the offender's value relative to her to forgive him<sup>68</sup> (indicating that she is very confused about moral standards and thus only capable of minimal forgiveness) or would act as if he did no wrong to her (and thus did not need forgiveness). Another likelihood would be that, because she under-estimates her human value, she would be unable to make sound judgments about how to advance the

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<sup>67</sup> Magnanimity, as used here, guards against a flaw on the opposite end of the continuum from what humility prevents. Humility will be discussed more in the section on anger.

<sup>68</sup> This situation does not create an actual obligation, even though moral demands might create the obligation.

offender's moral progress. If she has not made enough moral progress to recognize her own value, she would not be able to even know what moral desires she might have for the offender. Without this potentially active element and the relatively reliable deliberations that must precede the action, the victim is missing over half of the components that the virtue requires.<sup>69</sup>

Magnanimity, then, is a necessary, structural, and ancillary facet of *Forgiveness*. Along with self-forgetfulness, it helps combat envy by preventing the victim from comparing his worth with his offender's. Envy "is related to the importance we attach to the comparison with others in assessing [our own situation]."<sup>70</sup> Immanuel Kant explains that, "Envy is a propensity (*livor*) to view the well-being of others with distress, even though it does not detract from one's own. . . . Yet envy is only an indirectly malevolent disposition, namely a reluctance to see our own well-being overshadowed by another's because the standard we use to see how well off we are is not the intrinsic worth of our own well-being but how it compares with that of others."<sup>71</sup> Magnanimity works to counteract envy when the victim is emotionally and cognitively affected by her beliefs that she and her offender have worth by virtue of their human existence and that moral goodness is more valuable than the type of social or material goodness that was compromised by the offense.

Sometimes a victim might feel as if she is viewed by other people as worth less than her offender. When the offender has significantly and publically benefitted from the wrongdoing, and the victim has been unfairly vilified, it could be easy for the victim to feel other people's poor evaluation of her more strongly. Although magnanimity and the self-forgetful component of moral love usually prevent the victim from comparing herself with others, some unfair situations caused by wrongdoing seem to force comparison upon the victim.

Although a person might be able to forgive minimally without eradicating envy,

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<sup>69</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, *Forgiveness* has cognitive, affective, motivational, and active components.

<sup>70</sup> Ben-Ze'ev, 281.

<sup>71</sup> Immanuel Kant, "The Metaphysics of Morals," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 576.

this is not true for someone who wants to forgive virtuously. Envy at least compromises the victim's good will for the offender, and good will is a necessary facet of *Forgiveness*. Fortunately, when moral love is a trait of a victim's character, it (along with the cognitive aspects of the virtue) helps transform impermissible envy into something akin to emulation. It reinforces the victim's view that she does not need to diminish others because, when concerning what ultimately matters, she is not in competition with them. If her social or material situation has been seriously compromised by them, she can still wish them well while actively working to have the unfairness rectified. The action component of *Forgiveness* allows the victim to work towards improving her situation while still wanting what is good for the offender. Like the person who wishes to develop certain qualities possessed by her hero without wishing that her hero be harmed, the virtuously forgiving victim can have an active desire for an unjust situation to become more equitable without wishing to maliciously harm the opponent. She can act for the purpose of correcting these situations with moral love rather than envy. There may even be cases when cognitive deliberation results in the belief that an aspect of the offender's material or psychological state should be demoted for the sake of his ultimate good. If this is thought to be necessary, a person with *Forgiveness* will act with moral love rather than malicious envy, thereby preserving her good will towards him, exercising magnanimity, and hopefully, simultaneously advancing her own interests and the offender's ultimate good.

*Resentment, Moral Love, Compassion, Gratitude.* In addition to anger, resentment has traditionally been discussed as the emotion that should be foresworn through forgiveness. This is not surprising because resentment and anger are some of the strongest, potentially problematic emotions that forgiveness modifies because they have the ability to motivate the person experiencing them to physical action. They have other dangers as well. Lingering resentment and other negative feelings harbored toward a wrongdoer may be morally and psychologically bad as they distress the victim, prevent him from developing certain close relationships, or as they overwhelm or consume his

thoughts. These emotions may also contribute to negative physical repercussions.<sup>72</sup>

But Norvin Richards argues that anger and resentment are not always bad. The reasons mentioned above are not necessarily true or always applicable. Just because someone may resent his offender, for instance, this does not mean that his resentment consumes him. Assuming that resentment must be all-consuming ignores the fact that it comes in varying intensities and lengths and that even some forms of resentment towards an offender, according to Richards, are compatible with having good will for him.<sup>73</sup> Richards explains that if we “hate the sinner, as well as the sin, we are not indulging some isolated quirk but are implementing a broad feature of human psychology.”<sup>74</sup> When taking into account the complexities of human psychology and the symbolism involved in resenting wrongdoing, then, resentment may not be an emotion that is as inherently vicious or flawed as some forgiveness advocates believe that it is.

In order to determine the moral (im)permissibility of resentment, it must first be defined. The amoral and colloquial meaning of resentment is indicated by phrases including, “I resent that!” Some forms of this phrase can be said almost as a joking reply to something that someone knows is at least partially true. The person is not deeply offended, but she furrows her brow and responds with this exclamation anyway. For example, a father jokingly but lovingly tells his teenage daughter that *she* should temporarily be in charge of keeping up with the car keys since Mom has a habit of losing them. The mother is meant to overhear that remark, and she may exclaim that she resents it, but in the face of its partial truth and the father’s good nature, she is not offended. Or if she is, she holds on to the protesting sentiment no longer than it takes to utter the sentence, “Hey...I resent that!” This type of colloquial use of “to resent” is not a form that concerns the present discussion.

One popular view among scholars, presented famously by Joseph Butler, defines resentment as settled or deliberate anger.<sup>75</sup> His account classifies resentment within the

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<sup>72</sup> E.J. Mezick, K.A. Matthews, M. Hall, T.W. Kamarck, P.J. Strollo, D.J. Buysse, and S.E. Reise, “Low Life Purpose and High Hostility are Related to an Attenuated Decline in Nocturnal Blood Pressure,” *Health Psychology* 29 (2010): 196-204.

<sup>73</sup> Richards, 83.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>75</sup> Griswold, 22, for example.



anger strand of emotions and associates it with hate. Charles Griswold explains that—in his own view as well as Butler’s—resentment is a “species of moral hatred that is ‘deliberate’ rather than sudden...embodies a judgment about the fairness of an action...is aimed at the action’s author, and is a reactive as well as retributive passion that instinctively seeks to exact a due measure of punishment.”<sup>76</sup> Settled anger/moral hatred/resentment is a negative attitude that is directed toward a person considered to be blameworthy or towards an action that is considered to be offensive<sup>77</sup> and it includes a desire to protest the offense. It is the type of mental rumination that occurs and reoccurs long after what Butler calls “initial anger” has past. Whereas initial anger is the emotion that naturally and quickly arises once a victim recognizes that he has been done wrong, resentment is the term that signifies the ruminating anger that endures longer than is expected or is customary in proportion to the offense.

Ben-Ze’ev describes resentment similarly: it is a long-term, negative attitude towards a perceived injustice caused by a person thought to be blameworthy. Its motivational component is the desire to protest, it wishes to make that protest public, and it perceives few reasons to be controlled, he says. It has a high level of intention, and so, cannot be attributed to infants and those whose compromised mental function impairs this ability significantly.<sup>78</sup> Griswold explains that “to resent is to feel a sentiment again . . . considerably past the event that occasioned it.”<sup>79</sup> Resentment “requires not just memory of that event, but a memory that continues to provoke.”<sup>80</sup> It does not provoke one to do the kind or loving acts that are characteristic of moral love and good will, or even to feel

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 39. According to Griswold, Butler uses “deliberate” to mean that it is sustained over time, rather than being entered into willfully. See Griswold, 23

<sup>77</sup> Ben-Ze’ev suggests that resentment is toward an action rather than the person, but he has overlooked the fact that we often say “I resent you for that” just as often as we say “I resent that.” Jean Hampton also suggests that “whereas the object of hatred can be and frequently is a person, the object of resentment is an *action*.” Charles Griswold is right to suggest, contrariwise, that “it is misleading to say that ‘the object of resentment is an *action*’” because resentment occurs when the person who is resented seems to have a tight “tie-in” to the action or possible action of offense. In such cases, the author of the offensive action is the object of resentment. See Jean Hampton, “Forgiveness, Resentment, and Hatred,” in Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 60. Also see Griswold, 25.

<sup>78</sup> Ben-Ze’ev, 57.

<sup>79</sup> Griswold, 23.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

neutral towards an offender; it continuously places the victim in an opposing and hostile stance towards the offender. Resentment does not simply stand against the offense, as a healthy form of anger may do, but it stands with hostile and hating opposition, against the offender as an offender and as person.

Ben-Ze'ev also characterizes resentment as a form of anger but he notes its close association with envy as well.<sup>81</sup> Resentment, he suggests, is more general than anger because it does not limit itself to a blameworthy action but also expresses a negative attitude toward the fortunes of the offender.<sup>82</sup> Resentment's scope, then, is more like that of hatred than mere anger. Like envy, resentment is an emotion that not only expresses a negative attitude toward the offense and the interests of the offender, but also tends to act in ways that seek to destroy or deflate the object's perceived superiority. In the case of a victim who interprets an offense as having given the offender some type of superiority over him, the envious victim may act to deflate the equality difference or, if the superiority comes from an offender's trait or long-term situation rather than a single offense, he may act to destroy the offender. This is especially the case if the offense is thought to have lowered the victim's fundamental social position. Ben-Ze'ev suggests that "people hate those who make them feel their own inferiority."<sup>83</sup>

I follow these influential views of resentment and treat the emotion as a persistent, lingering, negative reaction to perceived injustice that is a species of anger mixed with hate and envy. Because of the decreased intensity and irrationality that may have been present in initial anger, and because resentment lingers for a relatively long time, resentment tends to have a more complex, cognitive dimension than initial anger, but it is anger because it initially began as anger. Resentment is mixed with hate because its object widens from the offense to the offender. Because resentment is also concerned with comparisons between the fortunes of the victim and the offender, its envious

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<sup>81</sup> Envy and jealousy are distinct, but separating them is not necessary here. They have been defined differently by different scholars. Ben-Ze'ev suggests that envy is associated more with the other's good fortune and jealousy with the other's current or future behavior. He also suggests that fear is the primary attitude toward the future when one is jealous. See Ben-Ze'ev, 301. For current purposes, I will allow them to be conflated, as they often are in everyday language.

<sup>82</sup> Ben-Ze'ev, 396.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 395.

elements are often evident.

If a victim resents his offender, he must at least forswear his resentment in order to have forgiven minimally. In order to forgive virtuously, however, the victim must not experience resentment. One with *Forgiveness* never experiences resentment because it seems as if someone who has to struggle to forgive, and therefore takes a long time to do it, does not forgive characteristically, as one with a virtue would. Additionally, *Forgiveness* contains countertendencies that help prevent the envious comparisons and hatred that are often involved with resentment. Hatred of the offender, as was explained earlier, is unable to exist in the context of moral love and good will. The envious elements of resentment are avoided by the virtuously forgiving victim's self-forgetful tendency. Those who lack the virtue may believe they have entered into a competition with or striving against the offender. The virtuously forgiving victim does not enter this competition and strives for the offender rather than against him.

While some offenses may give the offender the upper-hand or may unfairly result in his good fortune, a virtuously-forgiving victim does not define himself or the relationship by this fortune differential. Although it is normal and reasonable for a victim to want any unfair fortune differential to be remedied, an agent who forgives virtuously is motivated to seek goodness because it is good, not because he desires to create equality with the offender for the purposes of depriving the offender of goodness. Self-forgetfulness combats envy because it allows the victim to put the offender's moral needs in a prominent place of concern in their emotional experience and in their cognitive deliberations.

In some virtuously forgiving victims, compassion acts as an ally of self-forgetfulness to prevent envious resentment. Compassion makes a person "willing to help and perceive [himself] as more obliged and able to do so."<sup>84</sup> A compassionate person is not envious of his offender because he interprets the offender and himself as people who suffer (from moral depravity and the human condition, if not other things). As Ben-Ze'ev explains, "compassion requires us to transcend different types of disparity and assume equality with regard to common humanity. . . . Our evaluative perspective in

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 330.

compassion stems from basic similarity with the other.”<sup>85</sup>

Another countertendency that exists in some displays of *Forgiveness* and prevents resentment from occurring is gratitude. As Pamela Hieronymi suggests, “Some emotions are deeply incompatible and do ‘drive out’ one another. . . . *Gratitude* would ‘drive out’ resentment . . . because gratitude toward a person arises when you believe that person has done you a good turn. Resentment arises when you believe someone has paid you disrespect.”<sup>86</sup> She continues, “A change in view . . . that leads one to be grateful to a particular person for a particular deed will, at the same time, undermine any resentment toward that person about it.”<sup>87</sup> I recently heard of a man whose unfriendly coworkers forced him to resign from a relatively low-paying position that he enjoyed doing. After his resignation, he got a much better paying job that he also enjoyed and that gave him more potential to impact others. On a social media site, this man expressed gratitude (sincerely, not sarcastically) for the original co-workers who forced his resignation since they stimulated him to achieve what he would not have otherwise. In the Biblical story of Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery because of their jealousy against him, Joseph suffered many things as a result of their actions. He was betrayed, left for dead, enslaved, mistreated, lied about, enslaved again, *et cetera*. After many years, his situation improved and he became an influential ruler who saved many lives and was well-esteemed. Through a surprising turn of events, he was faced with the decision of whether or not to forgive his brothers for the evil they had committed against him. He chose to forgive them. An often-cited line from the Biblical account of Joseph reflects the outlook of gratitude that influenced his decision to forgive: “Even though you meant harm to me, God meant it for good, to achieve this present end.”<sup>88</sup> Whether or not outside observers approve of gratitude being displayed by a victim, it does not change the fact that gratitude and resentment at least partially “drive out” each other.

Nevertheless, it almost seems nonsensical to suggest that a victim should be thankful that he was abused or mistreated. It is especially unrealistic to expect a victim to

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Pamela Hieronymi, “Articulating and Uncompromising Forgiveness,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62 (May 2001): 543.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Gen 50:20, NASB.

thank the offender—rather than God, karma, or some perceived force outside of the offender—for the personal growth or new opportunities stimulated by the offense. Causing harm is not the same as causing a good, even when the result of a harm is a good. As with those African women who are beaten regularly by their husbands but have been (wrongly) taught to interpret the beatings as a sign of their husbands' love, it is obvious that gratitude, like most other emotions, can be misplaced or misapplied. Despite the potential problems associated with gratitude, Hieronymi's point is not moot. In some cases, a victim may say that she is thankful that she survived the offense because it reassures her of her ability to persevere, or has made her stronger, or has given her the ability to practice forgiving virtuously. If a victim takes a generally appreciative outlook for the character-building insights she learned as a result of going through and surviving the offense and its repercussions, this would affect her overall outlook towards the offender and the offense.

Every instance of virtuous forgiveness is not expected to display gratitude; in other words, gratitude is not a necessary facet of *Forgiveness*. Gratitude sometimes does not arise because it is unnecessary to thwart resentment and it is not a response that is morally required by other facets of the situation. When gratitude does arise in a virtuously forgiving victim as a part of the forgiveness process, it may mitigate anger in different ways, depending on its object. If its object is the offender (for the offender has done something—even if it is unrelated to the offense—for which the victim can be thankful), this will directly help anger towards the offender subside. If the object of gratitude is related to the forgiveness process but is an entity other than the offender (e.g., God, or oneself), then the victim's anger against the offender may subside, but may do so to a lesser degree or in a different way since the offender is not the object of the gratitude. Whether or not gratitude should be experienced for a particular object is irrelevant to the change that it creates in the victim. A victim's ability to appreciate good things that have resulted from an offender's actions is a means to preventing resentment and assuaging certain forms of anger.

*Anger, Moral Love, Patience, Humility.* Can a victim forgive someone yet still be angry with him? Many laypersons and scholars think that the answer is no: if one has

truly forgiven, one can no longer harbor anger or resentment towards the offender. Is this belief true? If it is, then it is not surprising that some ethicists claim that forgiving offenders with obviously corrupt characters, or forgiving for particularly heinous offenses, or forgiving too quickly, are immoral ways for a victim to behave and feel. Anger, it is commonly believed, indicates the recognition of offense and is a protest taken against that offense. If one does not experience anger when confronted with significant wrongdoing, or if a victim gets rid of his anger too soon (i.e., he forgives too quickly in proportion to the severity of the offense or does not require that the offender repent first), then the victim is servile (i.e., lacks a certain type of self-respect) or condones of the offense, some claim.<sup>89</sup> Since servility and condonation are both morally problematic, then, some scholars argue that quickly-given or unconditional forgiveness is ethically wrong.

The importance of the role of anger in forgiveness arises in the context of a larger debate—that is, whether ideal forgiveness should be given conditionally or unconditionally. Conditionalists claim that morally acceptable forgiveness must be conditional on the offender meeting certain conditions that make him eligible for forgiveness and may include reparation, apology, and repentance. The fulfillment of these conditions allegedly gives the victim a legitimate reason to get rid of his anger. A victim who holds a grudge until these conditions are met avoids being slavish, or servile, and obviously does not condone the offense because he consistently stands against the wrongdoing and its author until its author changes. On the other hand, unconditionalists maintain that morally ideal forgivers are not morally required to have a particular, proportionate relationship with anger, based on and determined by the actions and attitudes of the offender. The unconditional offender can rid herself of anger as soon as she wishes to do so and, in many cases, she can choose not to become angry at all, all the while, condemning the offense and maintaining her self-respect.

I am not suggesting that being an unconditional forgiver makes someone immune to servility or causes him to realize that he has a right to not be mistreated. Some people forgive because they condone the offense, either by making illegitimate excuses for the offender or by not recognizing the offense as immoral. In other words, some instances of

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<sup>89</sup> See Griswold, 47 for his adoption of this view.

unconditional forgiveness can be immoral. (Forgiveness given by a conditional forgiver can also be the result of immorality as well, but I will not elaborate on that here.) But an unconditional forgiver is not guilty of immorality merely because he forgives unconditionally.<sup>90</sup> He would not be behaving immorally if he could get rid of his anger unconditionally, but for morally-praiseworthy reasons—reasons that would exemplify the strength of his moral character rather than being the result of condonation or servility. He would not be forgiving immorally if he let go of some aspects of his anger that would prevent him from forgiving, while still experiencing some form of anger that was compatible with forgiveness. When either of these two possibilities materialize in an unconditional forgiver, his forgiveness is praiseworthy.

Consider the first option—that is, a victim decides, for morally praiseworthy reasons, to not experience anger at all even though she recognizes that an offense has occurred. A victim might believe, categorically, that harboring resentment against other people is immoral and may decide to not be angry so as not to experience “immoral” emotions. Another victim may not experience anger because she has the religious belief that God expects inter-personal forgiveness of those who also wish to be forgiven. Someone else may not experience anger because she believes that forgiveness is a way to cultivate harmony between people. Another may remember doing the same thing that was just done to her when she was near the age of the offender and, remembering wishing that she would have been forgiven then, she applies the Golden Rule. In these cases, the victim cannot be blamed for not being angry because she possesses morally acceptable assumptions that support her absence of anger. To these victims, their moral beliefs—which are reasonable, unselfish, and shared with others—trump any supposed requirement they might have to become angry every time they are personally offended. These beliefs do not reflect servility or condonation, but a dedication and success for integrating moral beliefs and praxis.

What reasons might a scholar give in defense of the claim that a victim is morally obligated to become angry when she or he is offended? One reason is that when anger arises, showing that the agent has detected injustice or immorality, its presence also reveals that the agent cares that immorality was done. In other words, anger adds a

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<sup>90</sup> This will be argued further in chapter four.

“heartfelt” dimension to the mental recognition that an offense has occurred. Martha Nussbaum recounts a story told by Eli Wiesel:

Wiesel was a child in one of the Nazi death camps. On the day the Allied forces arrived, the first member of the liberating army he saw a very large black officer. Walking into the camp and seeing what was there to be seen, this man began to curse, shouting at the top of his voice. As the child Wiesel watched, he went on shouting and cursing for a very long time. And the child Wiesel thought, watching him, now humanity has come back. Now with that anger, humanity has come back.<sup>91</sup>

Nussbaum says, “not to get angry when horrible things take place seems itself to be a diminution of one’s humanity. In circumstances where evil prevails, anger is an assertion of concern for human well-being . . . and the failure to become angry seems . . . a collaboration with evil.”<sup>92</sup>

A second reason one might claim that a victim is morally obligated to be angry at personal offense is that anger motivates the victim to act against the offense. This, in turn, may demonstrate to the offender and to others that bad behavior has negative consequences. A third reason is that anger allows the victim to show others and remind himself that he considers himself worth standing up for and defending. In other words, his anger represents his self-respect.

Scholars are right to point out some of the value that anger can have for a well-lived life. Despite the benefits that anger may sometimes bring when it arises, however, the reasons that cite these benefits do not prove that the absence of anger is immoral or morally deficient. While anger may be quick to detect the transgression of moral and personal boundaries that should not be crossed,<sup>93</sup> anger is not the only means for detecting immorality and injustice. Neither is it sufficient for detecting immorality. Anger, whose stimulus is a moral transgression, is not merely a feeling. The angry person has to have beliefs about the scope and details of morality (i.e., a cognitive part) in order for them to become angry. If anger lacked its cognitive component it would be highly unsophisticated and would have no mechanism to distinguish among those things

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<sup>91</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 403.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>93</sup> Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 171.



that rightfully produce anger and those that do not. Similarly, an agent can recognize wrongdoing when it occurs even when the influence of anger is absent. Since an agent's understanding of right and wrong is based on cognitive content, and since anger is not necessary in the detection of wrongdoing, the emotional role that anger plays in the detection of immorality should not be overestimated.

The presence of anger is one way to experience a "heartfelt" dimension to the immorality-detecting process. In the case of the officer who became angry about what had occurred at the Nazi death camps, his anger showed his alignment with whatever aspects of Goodness that oppose the atrocity that took place there. But his anger was not the only way that he could have had a heartfelt reaction. If he would have knelt, broken, crying in utter sadness, it is likely that Wiesel would have still thought that "humanity had returned." But human responses to outlandish evil may vary to include much more than sadness or anger. I can imagine an account of another Allied Forces soldier who, because of shock and disbelief in the face of such horror, could not feel anything for some time because he could not emotionally process the severity of what he encountered. Surely he would not be condemned as someone who condoned the atrocity simply because he did not experience anger.

Not all cases of being done wrong are like those experienced in Nazi death camps and other encampments of evil; many offenses are insignificant compared to this. Even if the soldier's angry response was the right one for his circumstance, this does not mean that a victim who does not respond to a lesser offense with an outburst of anger condones the offense or loses part of his humanity or his self-respect. A person may stand morally against a particular offense yet still consider an angry response to be exaggerated or unnecessary. Another consideration is that there is probably a difference in how one should act on behalf of victims who cannot defend themselves and how one acts on behalf of oneself when one is confronted by an offense but does not feel helpless because of it.

Anger usually motivates people to action; sometimes it motivates in a more powerful way than many other emotions. But sometimes, anger causes avoidance behaviors and results in people withdrawing from the stimuli. So anger's role as a motivation to stand against an offense must not be overestimated. Additionally, it is not

the only emotion with motivation capacity. Love and other emotions—for example, compassion—are also able to motivate in the absence of anger. As already discussed, a person who has *Forgiveness* will experience moral love for others, including the offender. Although this love is not the same as a romantic love that might result in incredible attempts to possess the beloved, it is an active motivator that desires that the offender become a better person. The virtuously forgiving victim characteristically acts from this motivation, and sometimes other emotions, in order to do what he can to encourage the offender to not offend in this way anymore. The action may include working so that the offender will experience unpleasant consequences that are intended to encourage his reform, or some action intended to bring reform but less unpleasant consequences. Thus, the active stance that anger sometimes provokes may be unnecessary when other emotions, including moral love, are operative in the victim.

While becoming angry when being offended may sometimes be a sign of self-respect, it may also be unnecessary. A victim can respect herself through the protest that may occur because of moral love, as her actions remind others and herself that she considers the way that she has been treated to be inappropriate. But even when this message is not expressed or conveyed to others—just as sometimes anger’s message is also not expressed or conveyed—the virtuously forgiving victim’s self-respect is not necessarily diminished. Self-respect does not necessarily rise or fall based on whether or not one wages an open protest against an offense since there are many legitimate and morally acceptable reasons that a person may not choose to protest a personal offense.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, just because a victim wages an angry protest as a defense of his self-respect, this does not mean that the protest will be within morally laudable bounds, will be successful at defending the victim’s self-respect, or is not the result of a morally-problematic insecurity or hypersensitivity to offense that has tainted the anger from its inception.

Anger is prone to having several moral problems. Most of the common problems

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<sup>94</sup> Chapter Four discusses the issue of servility and self-respect and argues that those victims who do not, for moral reasons, experience anger or openly protest an offense are not servile. The presence of humility and magnanimity, which are necessary elements of *Forgiveness*, helps explain why the person with the virtue is not servile. Also supporting their self-respect is the action they wish to take in response to the offense.

associated with anger were articulated by Joseph Butler.<sup>95</sup> When anger is directed at the wrong object or it results from prejudice, it is morally problematic. When someone considers something to be offensive that should not be considered as offensive,<sup>96</sup> allows itself to mix with immoral attitudes and emotions, or when it desires or seeks revenge, anger is morally problematic. Anger is also morally problematic when, as Nussbaum cautions, it promotes brutality or causes the victim to ignore the value of the offender's humanity. She cautions that "anger is closely connected to brutality and a delight in vengeance for its own sake. Seeing others as anger sees them—as people who ought to suffer—is a way of distancing oneself from their humanity; it can make it possible to do terrible things to them."<sup>97</sup> When anger is too intense or it lingers too long, it is also problematic. Finally, anger may also be problematic if it comes from inordinate desires. For example, a pit bull owner is angrier that his dog will be euthanized for maiming a child than he is upset that the child's life is altered forever.

Usually, having anger as a result of inordinate desires and affections does not make a person unable to forgive. The person may let go of his anger for various reasons without first having to correct the order of his affections. Having inordinate desires and preferences, however, will frequently cause the person to experience other problems of anger, including becoming angry over things that should not be interpreted as offensive and becoming excessively angry when compared with the severity of the offense. Inordinate desires and preferences may hinder a victim's forgiveness, especially when the

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<sup>95</sup> Joseph Butler, "'Sermon IX' of *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*," in *The Works of Joseph Butler*, vol. 2, ed. W.E. Gladstone (New York: MacMillan & Company, 1896), 162.

<sup>96</sup> Here is an example: On August 26, 2015, a former employee of news station, WDBJ7, in Roanoke, Virginia, shot—on a live broadcast—Chamber of Commerce director Vicki Gardner, reporter Alison Parker, and cameraman Adam Ward, leaving Gardner as the only survivor. The gunman, Vester Flanagan, reportedly created friction with his colleagues and anyone he was around. For example, he wrote letters to a restaurant manager, expressing the disrespect he felt when the staff would say, "have a nice day" instead of "thank you for your patronage." A former FBI profiler labeled Flanagan as "an injustice collector." Profiler quoted in Michael Martinez, "Gunman Vester Flanagan's Personnel Files Reveal Disturbing WDBJ Tenure," accessed 17 September 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/27/us/virginia-shooting-vester-flanagan-bryce-williams-wdbj-firing>; Internet. An injustice collector is someone who blames others for his problems and considers most everything to be offensive and insulting even though it is not true. One of Flanagan's moral flaws, then, was his willingness to interpret too many things as an offense.

<sup>97</sup> Nussbaum, 403.

mistakes in preference are great, but it does not necessarily preclude it. Inordinate desires that are significant, however, may cause the victim to be unable to develop *Forgiveness* or to forgive according with the virtue. Those with *Forgiveness* have certain beliefs that are required in order for them to maintain the virtue. Those beliefs prioritize moral goodness and, in some sense, place the moral goodness of other people above their own non-essential needs. If someone values petty things more than the ultimate welfare of human beings, for instance, his inordinate affections would prevent him from developing the virtue. Hence, inordinate desires and preferences, for the most part, are not characteristic of virtuous forgiveness.

The problems that can arise with and through anger indicate that anger should not be categorically praised as conditionalists do. Anger may be useful and morally neutral. It may sometimes be morally praiseworthy. It may be sincere, heart-felt, and empowering. Nevertheless, it is not immune to potential problems and conditionalists have not shown that it is a morally necessary response to personal offense. Other emotions may make a victim's reaction have the heart-felt dimension and may have a similar power to evoke an outward, active response. Further, the victim's sense of morality and mechanisms of detecting injustice are highly cognitive and do not need the aid of anger. It can be surmised, therefore, that a victim's experience of anger is not morally necessary, and is potentially not as praiseworthy, as some conditionalists claim that it is.

Most people—even those who have the virtue of *Forgiveness*—do, however, experience anger. When anger is present, many of the conditionalists' concerns about unconditional forgiveness dissipate. While a person with the virtue could not also be an excessively angry person, getting angry easier than most people or staying angry longer than expected, the virtuously forgiving victim is not required to avoid all forms of anger. Anger is a natural and morally neutral emotion, so as long as it avoids the problems and abuses to which it is prone, it is morally acceptable. Some forms of anger are even compatible with *Forgiveness*. *Forgiveness*-compatible anger, although it does not have to be a perfect form of anger, will be very different from abusive or highly-problematic anger because it will be free of those abuses that are prevented by the characteristics of the person with *Forgiveness*. Some of the facets of my account of

*Forgivingness*—a multi-faceted virtue that rests on moral love and results in morally-praiseworthy, unconditional forgiveness—directly counteract or eliminate the potential problems with anger. I will now explain how this is true.

As has been argued in Chapter 2, a person with *Forgivingness* necessarily has moral love for other people and it is especially evident in his attitude toward a person who offends him significantly. Moral love not only allows the victim to appreciate the offender as a fellow human being and as a moral agent, but it allows him to be altruistically motivated from a source within himself rather than from the merits of the offender. Instead of existing as a persistent feeling, moral love is primarily an active form of approaching and viewing people. It is accompanied by general good will for others and it appreciates or enjoys others rather than thinking of them as a source of competition.

Because moral love includes good will and the appreciation for others as human beings, imperfect as we are, it usually generates some degree of patience in its possessor. Patience is homologous to moral love, and radiates from it because both are forms of rejecting selfishness. Whereas a selfish or impatient person wants circumstances and others to serve him, the loving person who is patient does not first seek his own, private interests. Patience gets extended from a virtuously forgiving victim to a potential offender as the victim's willingness to suspend judgment about a person's responsibility for the offense, when possible, until sufficient information is gathered about him and his circumstances. Because of this, the virtuously forgiving victim will be less likely to jump to conclusions about the author of an offense and will be more likely to be angry only at the true offender rather than at an innocent person. The patience that usually accompanies moral love therefore usually helps the person with *Forgivingness* avoid becoming angry at the wrong object.

Because *Forgivingness* does not equip its possessor with moral infallibility, however, the virtuously forgiving victim may mistakenly direct her anger towards someone other than the wrongdoer. This could be because of mistaken information or because of her own moral imperfection. If the virtue possessor realizes that she is at fault in this way, however, moral love and humility—inherent facets of *Forgivingness*—will cause her to want to readjust her view and correct her mistake rather than persisting in the

mistake for the sake of “saving face” or maintaining her pride.

Patience is the manifestation of a combination of self-forgetfulness and humility. The humble person accepts that she does not know everything, including the mental or situational particulars that gave rise to the offense; this makes her more patient with the offender. Humility also affects a victim’s patience as she recognizes that part of the human condition that all humans share is to be morally flawed. Although our flaws are not to be ignored, they are sometimes to be overlooked when they are slight. Flaws are to be expected but overcome, with patience. Further, humility prevents its possessor from acting as if she is immune to flaws.

Because someone with *Forgiveness* is imperfect, a virtuously forgiving person might also be unfairly angry with someone she views as an offender because she is prejudiced against him and does not realize that she is prejudiced or that her prejudice contributes to her anger. When a virtuously forgiving victim is tainted by prejudice, those prejudicial attitudes exist along with the victim’s humility. As was explained in Chapter Two’s section on the self-forgetful characteristic of moral love, humility is a necessary feature of *Forgiveness*. Humility, as C.S. Lewis suggests, does not cause a person to think poorly of herself but it helps her be sufficiently interested in others. Some scholars consider humility (or what some refer to as ‘modesty’), as the opposite of pride; others view them as opposing shame. Understanding humility as both the opposite of pride and as a realistic view of one’s worth and abilities helps to illuminate the parts of humility that are important for current discussion. It is an unexaggerated evaluation of oneself balanced with the realistic evaluation of the worth of others.<sup>98</sup> As Ben-Ze’ev explains, humble “people believe that (a) with regard to the fundamental aspects of human life, their worth as a human being is similar to that of other human beings, and (b) all human beings have a positive worth which should be respected.”<sup>99</sup> Humility is an attitude that takes one’s personal worth to be similar to that of all other persons’ worth, but it differs from magnanimity in the sense that magnanimity guards against one having too low of an estimation of one’s worth and humility guards against a too elevated view. Humility prevents the virtuously forgiving victim from assuming that he has more worth

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<sup>98</sup> Ben-Ze’ev, 518-519.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 520.

or that he is superior (with regards to each person's humanity) to his offender. Or at least it does this in many aspects of the person's life.

Sometimes a victim's prevailing tendency to be humble is not completely synthesized into every area of his life. Deeply rooted prejudice, likely formed before his humility began to develop, may exist in areas of his mental life, preventing humility from naturally spreading there. Unlike many other people, however, the prejudicial attitudes of the person with *Forgiveness* will not exist without the possibility of being affected by the humility he already possesses. The presence of humility—which is necessarily present to some degree in one with *Forgiveness* (since humility is homologous with moral love)—increases the likelihood that he will, through the process of forgiveness, recognize the prejudice that was previously a moral blind spot, and work to correct it so that his forgiveness is not prevented by it. In order to forgive virtuously, the victim would have to make his prejudicial attitudes dissolve in the face of his humble attitudes. If he already had other, strong aspects of moral love, his humility would be more likely to weaken his prejudice. Although it might not be able to correct prejudice completely, his humility would at least help counteract his prejudice regarding the offender. If it did not, and the prejudice prevented forgiveness from occurring, this would reveal that the victim did not possess *Forgiveness* even though he had been able to forgive in accordance with the virtue in the past.

Glen Pettigrove explains that “someone who has an exaggerated opinion of herself is more likely to find herself in conditions where people around her do not accord her the respect or deference she believes she is due. She will ‘see’ causes of provocation that would not confront a humbler person in the same circumstances.”<sup>100</sup> Because of the humility and self-forgetful characteristic of moral love, those with *Forgiveness* will not be as easily or frequently angered as many other people. A self-forgetful and humble person sees his own preferences as being ontologically the same as others, and so, has the ability to more easily accept other people's ways of doing things when it clashes with his own. Humility makes one charitable towards the ideas and preferences of others since it makes him recognize that his are not necessarily better than theirs. Because of self-forgetfulness, when he disagrees with others, he does so while

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<sup>100</sup> Glen Pettigrove, “Meekness and Moral Anger,” *Ethics* 122 (January 2012): 351.

still treating them as people who are worth valuing. Because of magnanimity, he is more inclined to approach people who disagree with him with understanding, charity, and patience because he does not take their abrasiveness as a threat. Thus, the person with *Forgivingness* is more likely to not become angry about petty issues and small personal slights. He will likely, however, still be angered by things that are morally significant, that are especially offensive, or that are on-going. Although the virtuously forgiving person will become angry, the anger will not occur without having been run through his “filters” of kindness, humility, patience, and self-forgetfulness. Hence, a person with *Forgivingness* will probably avoid the flaw of being too easily angered or taking offense when he should not.

Another potential flaw of anger that a person with *Forgivingness* usually avoids is anger’s proclivity to mix with immoral emotions or attitudes. As explained earlier, the qualities that are essential to *Forgivingness* or are closely related to it counteract many of the immoral emotions or attitudes that would prevent virtuous forgiveness from occurring. For example, contempt is prevented by good will, humility, compassion, and occasionally, sadness. The immoral forms of hatred are prevented by moral love, compassion, and hope. Malicious envy is prevented by moral love and magnanimity. *Schadenfreude* is counteracted by compassion, sadness, or good will. Resentment is prevented by moral love, compassion, and sometimes, gratitude.

A desire for revenge (although not a loving desire for the offender to be properly disciplined) will also be prevented by the three components of moral love. Having good will for someone, having a sincere concern for his ultimate good, and having self-forgetfulness are fundamentally incommensurable with the desire for revenge. Revenge desires harm and destruction while moral love desires good things. While a virtuously forgiving victim may desire, because she believes it best, for the offender to experience the repercussions of his immorality or be disciplined in a morally permissible way, she will do this in order to advance his ideal self rather than as an attempt to reclaim what is hers or to express vindictiveness.<sup>101</sup>

A person whose character is formed around the attitudes of moral love is unlikely

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<sup>101</sup> This will be discussed later in the present chapter in the section titled *Punishment and Discipline*.



to be brutal. Treating someone as sub-human is almost impossible for someone who firmly believes that one's own moral goodness is supremely valuable, that everyone should be treated with equal respect. It is further prevented because the person with *Forgiveness* also experiences moral love that is self-generated rather than motivated by the merits of others.

When one has *Forgiveness*, one also avoids anger that endures too long. Excessively lingering anger is a problem because it likely harms the victim, resulting in compromised relational and moral capacities, and it may result in the offender being viewed or treated with hostility for too long. This concern is irrelevant to the form of anger that is characteristic of those with *Forgiveness*. This form will be explained near the end of this section. It may legitimately persist for as long as the victim thinks it is relevant, because it, unlike other forms of anger, has regulating mechanisms within itself that do not permit the victim to become overwhelmed by his anger, to treat the offender unfairly, or to diminish his moral character. The victim is able to recognize and feel concern for the fact that an offense occurred against him, but this feeling is not an intense, negative, offender oppositional anger (i.e., resentment) that he would do well to avoid. Instead, it is the simultaneous disapproval of wrongdoing and affirmation of goodness.

*Forgiveness* does not require one's experience of anger to be perfectly ideal. This is especially true concerning one's initial experience of anger; it is not impossible for a virtuously forgiving person to initially experience anger that is somewhat too intense, for example. If intense anger caused the victim to seek revenge or to be unable to forgive with relative ease, then his possession of the virtue would be in question. If a victim experiences a degree of anger that is somewhat excessive in proportion to the offense, however, this does not mean that he cannot quickly, unconditionally, and virtuously forgive. There is no facet of *Forgiveness* that completely eradicates the possibility that a virtue possessor will experience initial anger too intensely. Nonetheless, the traits and tendencies of virtuous forgivers, who have developed the necessary countertendencies to modify the attitudes and emotions that are incompatible with the virtue, are likely to have also had some effect of the intensity of their anger. When one is humble, patient, self-forgetful, and concerned about an offender's ideal self, as a person

with *Forgivingness* is, these qualities have already shaped the person's character so that he will be less likely to experience offender-oppositional anger with too much intensity and will not treat the offender as sub-human.

*Double-Concern/Double-Construal Anger.* The anger that is compatible with *Forgivingness* generally avoids most of the moral problems that can arise in one's anger, as was just explained. What this means for *Forgivingness*-compatible anger is that it must arise within the context of moral love, humility, magnanimity, patience, and hope for the improvement of the offender and the circumstances associated with the offense. At first glance, it may be difficult to understand how anger, which is not generally thought of as being associated with altruism towards its object, can be reconciled with *Forgivingness*, which is highly altruistic. There may be several ways to describe how this reconciliation might occur, but I think it is particularly helpful to understand the anger that is compatible with *Forgivingness* as double-concern/double-construal anger. The beliefs, attitudes, and emotions that a virtuously forgiving victim has been developing prior to being offended affect her initial experience of anger and the way her anger exists once she has become conscious of it.

In many cases where the identity of the offender and the nature of the offense are not clearly evident, the person with *Forgivingness* may become interested in gathering information in a heightened but controlled state of "readiness" while she prevents herself from experiencing a more complete outward and inward experience of anger. If she decides (based on discovered evidence) that there is reason to experience her anger more fully, she will become less guarded at controlling the "readiness" already latent within her experience. Becoming less guarded does not mean that she seeks revenge, gets overwhelmed by her anger, allows herself to hate the offender, or viciously lashes out against him. Instead, it means that she allows herself to enter the process of forgiveness, which begins by recognizing the offense as a wrongdoing, and by feeling, if she is so inclined, the magnitude of her disapproval of the offense and the offender for committing it. She will be motivated to adjust her anger to a virtuous level and to modify the quality of the anger (if need be) so that her anger does not hinder her forgiveness. This process will utilize some of the cognitive aspects of *Forgivingness*—specifically, her moral

beliefs—in order to adjust and modify her feelings and thoughts so that they will be aligned with her pre-established beliefs. This is usually the part of the forgiveness process that occurs more quickly for the virtuously forgiving victim than one who does not have *Forgivingness*. This aspect of the forgiveness process may precede or occur conjointly with the deliberation aspect. The victim deliberates about the effects of the offense on the victim, offender, and society and how to nullify the negative effects in order to advance goodness in all parties, especially in the offender. In some cases, the forgiveness process concludes at this point. In other cases, it is able to act on the fruits of the deliberation. Depending on the magnitude of the offense, the scope of the effects, the victim's abilities, and many other factors, the deliberating and action parts of the forgivingness process may linger until the victim decides that the majority of his active efforts are no longer wise or profitable.

Sometimes a virtuously forgiving victim's moral love (particularly its self-forgetfulness and good will), humility, patience, *et cetera* prevent him from becoming angry, especially when the offense is insignificant or accidental. Without the experience of anger, the virtuously forgiving victim can still forgive. Instead of modifying or adjusting angry feelings, he will be inwardly reflective, making sure that other feelings and thoughts he might have toward the offender and the offense correspond to those principles and beliefs that *Forgivingness* embodies. He will also consider what he might need to do, if anything, in order to lessen the negative effects of the offense and to encourage the offender towards moral improvement. In cases where the virtuously forgiving victim—perhaps a sage—does not experience anger even though the offense is morally significant, he will still have recognized the reprehensibility of the offense and disapproved of it. Further, he will still consider how he should respond to the offender in order to advance the offender's ideal self, advance his own interests, and preserve his own character.

If a virtuously forgiving victim is provoked to anger by an offense, her anger will relatively quickly transform to double-concern/double-construal anger, if it did not begin as such. This form of anger avoids most of the potential problems with and abuses of anger that were mentioned above and it is always compatible with the necessary facets of *Forgivingness*. Double-concern/double-construal anger utilizes the cognitive aspects of

anger and *Forgiveness*, integrating the strictly emotional parts of each with the relevant, prior, moral beliefs and commitments made by the virtuously forgiving victim. Some beliefs to which a person with *Forgiveness* is likely to be committed include: ultimately, I am not in competition with others; I want other people to do well in life and to become moral agents for their own sake; I value other people's opinion and will treat them well even if I do not agree with them; other people have desires that are as important to them as my own desires are to me; others have needs that should be fulfilled, just as mine should; when someone comes (figuratively) in my path, I will treat him as valuable. As these types of beliefs and commitments are superimposed on one's initial, angry feelings and attitudes towards an offender, the result is an anger that is more rational, reasonable, and compatible with forgiveness than it otherwise might be. The actions that result are less impulsive and more altruistic.

Aaron Ben-Ze'ev claims that "the greatest remedy for anger is to take a broader perspective."<sup>102</sup> Double-concern/double-construal anger takes a broader perspective by construing the offender as an offender and as more than an offender. Viewing an offender as a blameworthy wrongdoer who needs to make reparations is a natural construal that almost any victim can make once she recognizes that she has been wronged. Double-concern/double-construal anger, however, is the result of an enlarged perspective. It perceives the offender as an offender and, as a consequence of this recognition of and concern for the offender's ideal moral self—a concern that is necessarily embedded in *Forgiveness*—the victim is also able to construe the offender as a person to whom love should be shown, as a person who has worth rather than as an object or a monster.

The term "double-concern/double-construal anger" is inspired by Robert Roberts' work.<sup>103</sup> There, Roberts offers a theory of emotions as concern-based construals. The construal element of an emotion is easy to relate to a gestalt figure, which will serve here as an analogy for the two ways in which an offender will be viewed by a virtuously-forgiving victim.

Recall the well-known gestalt figure of the old woman in the hood/young woman

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<sup>102</sup> Ben-Ze'ev, 381.

<sup>103</sup> See Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay*.

in a fancy hat. As Ludwig Wittgenstein noticed, people have the ability to visually experience an object in one way, but then visually experience it in a different way even though the new way of viewing the object is unrelated to the experience of a new visual sensation.<sup>104</sup> In this type of occurrence, the object being viewed does not change even though the perceiver can experience or “construe” it in different ways. An observer can learn to view both construals even when one construal is not initially apparent to her.

Roberts suggests that it is useful to describe the construal of an emotion using the language of salience. Salience can be affected by relatively long-term and more immediate factors. In the long-term, what a moral agent trains herself to think about and see in others will provide her with a particular construal. Similarly, a victim’s personality and character will affect how she interprets events and people. Recent experiences are among those more short-term factors that might predispose her to view certain features of an offense and offender as more salient than others. Most people who are angry will view an offense or an offensive quality in an offender as the most salient aspect of that offender and the situation created by the offense.<sup>105</sup> *Forgiveness*, on the other hand, inclines a person to view additional features of the offense and offender as salient.

Roberts’ account of emotions, including anger, is that they are not merely construals but that they are also entities embedded with concern.<sup>106</sup> Most people who are angry experience that emotion because they are concerned for themselves, another victim, or for their property or interests. They care about themselves and their property or about another person and do not want what or whom they care about to be diminished. It is easy to see why anger is thought to represent concern; this connection of concern and anger is why conditionalists think that quick or unconditional forgiveness (occurring as the absence of anger) exposes the forgiver’s condonation of the offense or his servility. The anger that is compatible with my portrayal of *Forgiveness*, however, is also laden with concern.

Double-concern/double-construal anger takes a broader perspective, expresses a broader scope of concern, and repairs some problematic aspects of other forms of anger

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<sup>104</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953) 193.

<sup>105</sup> Roberts, 79.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

that need to be remedied. It does this by construing the offender as more than an offender and by being concerned about each part of the construal. Additionally, it construes the offense as more than an offense. The virtuously forgiving victim construes the offender, not only as a blameworthy wrongdoer who has not behaved in a morally acceptable way, but also as a person with an intrinsically good, ideal moral self that should be advanced. To a lesser degree, such a victim construes the offense as a moral transgression or significant harm as well as an opportunity to reclaim what is bad for goodness. The “double” nature of the virtuously forgiving victim’s concern exists as he cares about common issues (including how the moral transgression might affect himself and others, the actions he might need to take in order to protect himself in the future), as well as less conventional issues (including that morality was transgressed, how the offender’s ultimate good might be advanced, and how to demonstrate good will towards the offender, if necessary.) His anger can express concern because his moral love expresses concern.

The breadth of the virtuously forgiving victim’s scope of concern for the offender—her “double” construal of him—makes the double-concern/double-construal form of anger qualitatively better than the forms that might be characteristic of unforgiveness or conditional forgiveness. Its comprehensive scope also gives it a better chance to produce good actions through which to address the wrongdoer than is possible through the guidance of an anger form that cannot see or does not care about both construals of the offender. Unforgiveness and any anger associated with it demonstrates unloving unconcern for the construal that other forms of anger do not naturally see or consider to be important—that is, for the offender’s ideal moral self. Thus, other forms of anger are plagued by a general tendency toward myopia. They also have no intrinsic characteristic (e.g., moral love) preventing them from committing the problems with anger that were discussed above.

Untrained anger has a default construal and concern. The construal is offender *qua* offender and the concern is for one’s own interests. If a victim does not have the virtue, this one construal is what she is most likely to see. Even if the victim does recognize the second construal (i.e., the offender as an ideal self who is worth advancing), she is highly unlikely to care about it. If a person has *Forgiveness*,

however, she has trained herself to view both construals of her offender with ease. She cares about both of them because the qualities that she developed in order to acquire *Forgiveness* necessarily resulted in her having concern for other people, herself, and moral principles, even when responding to offense.

Although a person with *Forgiveness* has developed the ability to see both construals and can choose to see one or the other on command, she must choose which construal she will consider to be more salient. Just as one will leave a gestalt figure having last seen one picture or the other, the victim possessing *Forgiveness* will have one view upon which she dwells more than the other. Both views depict the same offender. They both express truth. Both views are correct to observe. But a virtuously forgiving victim's forgiveness process is not complete if she does not continue with the deliberation and action aspects. In order to deliberate about how, within the constraints of the context, to advance goodness in each of the parties involved, she must give priority to the view of offender as a person with an ideal self that is worth advancing. She must view the situation created by the offense as one which should be reclaimed for the sake of Goodness. Her actions, if they are possible and necessary, will reflect the fact that she considers those construals to be most salient.

Double-concern/double-construal anger thus allows a virtuously forgiving victim to forgive while being angry. This anger is a natural and morally-permissible response of protest against a wrongdoing, but it has been transformed—by moral love, magnanimity, humility, and the other facets involved in *Forgiveness*—in order to take the “broader perspective.” Like other forms of anger, double-concern/double-construal anger recognizes and responds to offense and it motivates the victim to action. Instead of acting maliciously, vindictively, or self-servingly, however, the angry yet virtuously forgiving victim tries to find effective ways to address the offense while lovingly promoting the moral advancement of the offender.

It has been argued that experiencing anger is not necessary for the detection of offense or injustice. This is so because the feeling of anger relies on its cognitive component, particularly its moral content, in order to detect transgressions of morality. As long as its cognitive component is active, the feeling aspect of anger is unnecessary for detecting offense. While experiencing anger may signify one's heartfelt concern for

oneself as a victim or that morality was transgressed, there are some instances in which experiencing heartfelt concern is morally unnecessary. Additionally, anger is not the only emotion that expresses heartfelt concern. When it is appropriate, a victim can experience sadness, for example, that she was victimized or that morality was transgressed. While anger may be an effective motivator, stirring the victim to act in response to an offense, this feature of anger should not be overemphasized since some victims withdraw when they are angry, since action from initial or lingering anger is often irrational and dangerous, and since several other emotions also have power to motivate a person to more reasonable action.

The action component of *Forgiveness* will be discussed more in the next section. For now, however, let it suffice to say that a virtuously forgiving victim holds the offender responsible for his actions, disciplining him in morally permissible ways when necessary and possible, while also sincerely desiring that the consequences the wrongdoer will experience will cause him to become a morally better person for his own sake. Since the virtuously forgiving victim detects an offense, experiences cognitive disapproval and some emotions in response to it, and whenever it is possible and necessary, acts in response to the offense, the victim cannot be said to be servile because he forgives unconditionally. Neither can he be said to condone the offense.

When a virtuously forgiving victim does experience anger, she will experience double-concern/double-construal anger, which operates within the framework of the facets of *Forgiveness*. Some scholars, taking inspiration from Butler and the recommendation, “Hate the sin; love the sinner,” speak of the anger that is appropriate for forgivers by saying that a virtuous person’s anger towards the offender-*qua*-personal-offender disappears or fails to be evoked but that the victim can experience anger-that-such-offenses-occur. In other words, they suggest that a victim can have morally acceptable anger if it can be detached from her own experience and concerns.

This suggestion seems amiss. It seems impossible, and perhaps insincere, for a victim to detach herself from her concern that the offense took place within the context of her own interests and only be abstractly concerned that the offense occurred at all. The double-concern/double-construal theory of anger is able to help the victim “hate the sin; love the sinner” and still remain connected to the fact that the wrongdoing was committed



*against her*. It does this because, rather than detaching her concern from herself, it broadens it to also encompass the offender's ideal self. Her anger has dual objects: the offender as a wrongdoer and the offender as an ideal self that needs to be advanced but has currently fallen short. When this perspective is mixed with already existing character traits that are required by *Forgiveness*, double-concern/double-construal anger allows the victim to extend moral love to the offender and to encourage the offender to seek his ultimate good.

### **The Action Component<sup>107</sup>**

**Problems with Vindictiveness and Revenge.** When one is done wrong, how must one act in response to the offense? Vindictiveness—a strong desire and/or corresponding action of a victim to hurt or injure someone who has wronged her—may seem to be a proper and morally acceptable response to wrongdoing, especially to those who are angry about the offense. Most scholars who want to give “two cheers for vindictiveness,”<sup>108</sup> however, also see the importance of limiting it. Jeffrie Murphy argues that vindictiveness, in a limited form, is a legitimate response to wrongdoing since it is a way to maintain the victim's “self-respect, self-defense, and respect for the moral order.”<sup>109</sup> His examples of addressing minor wrongdoings with a few harmful words or revoking invitations to lunch are attempts to illustrate what proper, proportional retribution is supposed to look like.<sup>110</sup>

But vindictiveness is problematic. Revenge that is kept proportionate to the original offense still makes the avenger guilty of as severe of an offense as the original one.<sup>111</sup> When the offense is severe, proportionate retaliation threatens valuable parts of

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<sup>107</sup> The action component includes tasks that are undertaken and performed by an intentional agent as well as other, less conspicuous, bodily manifestations of attitudes (e.g., one's facial expressions, one's tone or volume of voice, etc.).

<sup>108</sup> This is a reference to the title of the second chapter in Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>109</sup> Jeffrie G. Murphy, “Forgiveness, Self-Respect and the Value of Resentment” in *Handbook of Forgiveness*, ed. Everett L. Worthington, Jr. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 35.

<sup>110</sup> Murphy, *Getting Even*, 24, 33.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Nozick offers five ways that revenge and retributive punishment might differ. One is that revenge does not have an internal limit on the punishment it wants to inflict although retributivist punishment does. With this in mind, one might suggest that if personal revenge is

the avenger's sense of his humanity. There is a good chance that murdering, for example, diminishes the moral conscience of the murderer. If it does not, then it causes the murderer to see himself as one who took the life of a member of his species. This creates an almost irreparable psychological barrier between him and other human beings. This is true whether the murder is an original offense or whether it is one committed in retaliation. Proportionate retaliation for severe offense, even if it is only desired but not carried out, is a large leap away from standing for Goodness. Large leaps away from Goodness harm the vindictive person's character severely, even when the offense has no external repercussions.

Even when an offense is insignificant, proportionate retaliation still threatens the goodness of the avenger's character and hinders her moral growth. It allows her to make concessions in the moral standards that she claims to uphold. The desire to retaliate puts the avenger in a mindset that is contrary to moral goodness. It prioritizes the self over what is good. It encourages her to make exceptions for victims like herself in following what should be universal rules. Additionally, as Anthony Bash rightly remarks, it is "not morally virtuous in most circumstances to hurt or harm people, even if it is in recompense for wrongdoing."<sup>112</sup>

Proportionate vindictiveness—even when the victim claims he is vindictive for the sake of justice<sup>113</sup> —is an unsatisfactory response to significant wrongdoing also

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temperate, the victim's actions can legitimately be construed as the administration of justice. This suggestion is flawed, however, because of the reasons mentioned above, because (arguably) a victim does not have the authority to punish the offender simply because he is his victim, and because temperate revenge is still revenge if it is motivated by the solely self-interested motives of revenge. Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 366-68.

<sup>112</sup> Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 53.

<sup>113</sup> Nozick suggests that a revenge-seeker does not require that offenses that are similar to the one being avenged must also be punished, whereas a retributivist does. As Nigel Walker explains, "avengers are not committed to similar retaliations for all similar resentments, whereas retributivists are upholding a principle of similar punishments in similar circumstances." Nigel Walker, "Nozick's Revenge" in *Philosophy* 70 (October 1995): 581. This point gives warrant to the assumption that a revenge-seeking victim, even one who disguises herself as someone seeking justice, is mostly motivated by self-interest so that her concern will not extend into a concern for others in similar situations. Nozick also suggests that revenge is enjoyed by the victim whereas inflicting punishment may not be enjoyable to the true desert agent. M. S. Moore suggests that this entails that even if no one wanted to punish the offender, there may be retributive reasons to punish him. In other words, vengeful punishment and retributive punishment done by a desert

because it is unlikely to be proportionate; a vengeful person tends to be excessive. When an offense is less severe and its repercussions are primarily between an offender and an offended person, the offended person may go further in his retaliation than the proportionate response allows. Many people who are used to retaliating against others do not mind “one-upping” their offenders or “showing them who is boss.” The natural desire to do something a little more severe to the other, coupled with the thought that something more severe is deserved since “they started it,” and reinforced by the idea that “they need to learn that they cannot do things like this,” easily results in an excessive reaction.

When the offense is very severe and its repercussions affect many people, revenge is also unlikely to be proportionate because the retaliation will likely lack the scope and intensity of the original offense. Internal and external constraints would hopefully limit a victim’s actions so that he would avoid committing the same, serious offense as the original offender. If the victim did perform a proportionate response, this response would likely lack the right scope since he would not be able to avenge for secondary and tertiary victims in a proportionate way. Bash makes this point by asking, “If a daughter is murdered, should not the murderer’s own daughter be murdered in like manner—and what is to happen if the murderer does not have such a daughter? Why stop at retaliation by one person in such a scenario, since there are likely to be many people affected by the murder?”<sup>114</sup> Even if one can avenge for the person who was murdered, it would be difficult or impossible to create similar ramifications for other parties involved as those which were experienced by all the people associated with the original victim.

In revenge, insufficient retaliation seems unjust for the victim. Excessive retaliation seems unjust for the offender. Slightly excessive retaliation seems almost fair since the excess might make up for some of the trouble originally caused by the offender and would compensate for secondary and tertiary victims. But even if slightly excessive retaliation might be as close to fairness as one could get, this does not detract from the

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agent are not equivalent. Further, the satisfaction that is derived from revenge is not a reason to have the offender punished. M.S. Moore, *Placing Blame: A Theory of Criminal Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 89.

<sup>114</sup> Bash, 52.

fact that the victim harms his character by doing wrong, and that preserving the integrity and goodness of one's character should be a top priority of anyone who wishes to be virtuous. Additionally, it should not distract us from remembering the fact that becoming a victim does not automatically grant one the authority to be an administrator of justice.

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke suggest that in a state of nature, a victim has the right to punish his offender. When a social contract is adopted, however, the victim transfers that right to the State.<sup>115</sup> If the State does not function justly (for instance, it knowingly convicts the innocent, systematically overly punishes the guilty, overcriminalizes, if its concern for justice is severely skewed because of its biases for oppressive and corrupt regimes, or if it is a tool of those regimes, etc.), then there may be a role for vigilantes, since the victims might legitimately transfer their right to the vigilante in this context. In the absence of such governmental abuses, however, the State has the right to punish offenders; the victim has no such right.<sup>116</sup>

One might object to the idea that a victim does not have a right to revenge by arguing that the State only has the right to punish those offenders who have broken the State's laws. This, therefore, grants individuals the right to punish interpersonal wrongdoers who have broken no laws. This argument, although attractive, does not represent how things should be. When an interpersonal dispute is significant, it is often a potential case for tort law, at least in our culture. In other contexts, interpersonal wrongdoing may be addressed by organizational, school, or church policy, a parent-child relationship, or something similar. When interpersonal wrongdoing does not get addressed in these contexts, however, this does not indicate that a right to punish has been created as a result of a wrongdoing.

In private relationships, considerations of justice are obviously present. An adult sibling may want his mother to cut his piece of cake as large as the piece that she cuts for

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<sup>115</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (New York: Macmillan, 1962), chapters 14 and 18. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), chapter 9.

<sup>116</sup> Communitarians also see the State as the proper desert agent. Hegel offers a strong view supporting this position in G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1942), section 102. Other contemporary theorists, including Anthony Duff, still support this popular belief. See Anthony Duff, "Retrieving Retributivism," in *Essays on Theory and Policy*, ed. M.D. White (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–24.

his brother. A cashier who is willing to use a coupon for one customer and not for another, other things being equal, may be behaving unjustly. Justice (especially in the sense of fairness) does not vanish from the realm of interpersonal relationships, but it would be inappropriate for the sibling to punish the mother for unequally dividing the cake or for the customer to attempt to personally punish the cashier. People have many different ways of punishing their offenders, however, often by withholding some good from them. The son might give his mother a meager Christmas present to ‘make up for’ the cake incident. The customer might ‘teach that cashier a lesson’ by pulling many items of clothing off their hangers so that the cashier will have to re-hang them. Just because these vengeful responses attempt to fix an “unjust” situation and just because they are typical reactions, however, this does not indicate that they promote goodness or are virtuous.

There may be justifiable cause for protest or other outward expressions of disapproval for being treated unfairly, but revenge does not maximize goodness in this type of situation. Tit-for-tat responses, which are what vengefulness is often thought to be, perpetuate a similar mindset in the victim as the offender originally had. This is not admirable in any way, and in some cases, it perpetuates a cycle of violence.<sup>117</sup> Outside of the social, justice-seeking means of criminal or tort law or of the policies of a company or professional code, it is unlikely that personally-administered punishment can legitimately be given to one competent adult by another. As morally equal, adult human beings, no one person has legitimate authority over another outside of the laws and structures that create or sustain a hierarchy of legitimate authority. Without that authority, there is a weak right to punish, at best. If punishment of this nature were morally acceptable, offended people would often be guilty of the abuses that are characteristic of revenge, including disproportionality, blaming the wrong offender, punishing for offenses that do not deserve punishment or that deserve mercy, *et cetera*.

Punishment operating outside of the bounds of relationships that confer the right to punish, or outside of socially accepted laws, codes, and rules, risks being unguided and

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<sup>117</sup> The Hatfield and McCoy feud in West Virginia is a relatively recent example. See Otis K. Rice, *The Hatfields and the McCoys* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1982).

unjust because it lacks external restraints that can curtail emotionally-charged and extreme reactionary behavior. A particular reaction may not be unjust, but its uncodifiable nature and lack of checks-and-balances causes all cases of interpersonal punishment (i.e., revenge), collectively, to be a prime suspect for abuse. Further, when revenge is taken in cases where the State could appropriately punish, revenge robs it of its power to be used as a tool for upholding morality. The vengeful person is wrong to usurp the State's authority and to deprive it of its proper moral function.

Sometimes people try to defend revenge by presenting it as a public way for someone to communicate to others, especially to the original offender, that all members of the moral community must accept a particular moral principle (i.e., one that was broken by the offender); the moral community does not tolerate the sort of offense that began the quest for vengeance...*or else*. Griswold explains, however, that when revenge tries to send this message, it actually obscures the universality of the moral principle that is being asserted since another private individual is committing a similar offense.<sup>118</sup>

For these reasons one should agree, along with Bash, that one “therefore cannot offer any cheers for vindictive behavior.”<sup>119</sup> Hence, when answering the question of how one should act when one has been wronged, the answer does not involve taking revenge or “getting even.”

**Forgivingness, Vindictiveness, and Revenge.** So far, I have argued that vindictiveness and revenge are morally problematic and should be avoided. Even if those arguments fail to convince each reader that all cases of revenge-taking are morally impermissible, however, it is less difficult to show that vindictiveness is incompatible with *Forgivingness*. Having a desire to harm someone is contrary to having good will towards him, and good will is a necessary characteristic of moral love that supports *Forgivingness*. Vindictiveness is also contrary to self-forgetfulness, which is also a

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<sup>118</sup> Laws do not always mandate moral behavior and prohibit immoral behavior. When legality does not overlap with morality, a victim may often find ways of expressing his disapproval, without vindictiveness, of immoral actions done against him. These may include using social media, being supported by others, *et cetera*. Although response is not always possible, a section below will address the differences between the action of a vindictive victim and one who seeks discipline for the offender.

<sup>119</sup> Bash, 53.

quality of moral love.

How, then, ought a virtuously forgiving victim—i.e., a person with moral love—act when wronged? Theoretically, there are two possible answers. The first is that the victim should behave neutrally towards the offender, doing nothing for or against him. The second is that the victim should act in accordance with moral love. I will briefly comment on why the first option is not characteristic of the person with *Forgiveness* and why acting in accordance with moral love is his characteristic response.

In his book, *Resentment's Virtue*, Thomas Brudholm records the following partial account of a victim hearing in South Africa in 1996:

Commissioner: Now, when you say, ever since this incident took place and you have this problematic relationship with white people, did you ever try to get any treatment or some counseling with regard to that?

Mr. Morake: No, I've never thought of getting any treatment because I feel that where they are, they are the ones who should be getting the treatment.<sup>120</sup>

Brudholm's point, illustrated in this dialogue, is that victims do not have the responsibility to try to change their attitudes (or actions) towards their perpetrators since it was the wrongdoers who are wrong, not the victims. Whether or not Brudholm's claim is accurate, the virtuously forgiving victim does not view the situation as being about his responsibility to change. Instead, he views it as a chance to interact with an offender in a way that is compatible with the attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and actions that he, in the past, has understood as valuable and has been working to develop. By choosing to develop the virtue, the virtuously forgiving victim had already made a fundamental change towards the offender even before the offense occurred. He did this by acquiring the facets of *Forgiveness*, which has affected his potential interaction with everyone.

A victim who does not have the virtue might be able to replace his negative feelings towards a significant offender with neutral emotions, resolving not to think or care about the offender in the future. Whereas a minimal forgiver might be able to do this, the virtuously forgiving victim is unlikely to be satisfied with this response.

*Forgiveness* has moral love built in to its structure. Moral love affects the forgiver's

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<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Thomas Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue: Jean Amery and the Refusal to Forgive* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 33.

thoughts, emotions, motivations, and thus, his actions. Virtuous forgiveness, with its action component that is situated on the bedrock of moral love, does not result in mere neutrality toward the offender or resolutions to not give him another thought. The virtue compels more than mere neutrality.

In order to show why a virtuously forgiving person desires to act with love instead of neutrality, it is helpful to read some of Norvin Richards' thoughts on compassion. Richards speaks of compassion, not moral love, as the operative emotion in forgiveness. He believes that in some cases, there is nothing wrong with the victim not showing compassion towards his victim. This is even true, he claims, when it would be easy for the victim to forgive and would relieve the offender of great mental suffering. Richards claims that the salient fact is that the wrongdoer is a wrongdoer, not that he might be an object of compassion.<sup>121</sup>

Feelings of compassion cannot overrule the consideration that the offender was a wrongdoer, he explains, because, for one reason, hard feelings that are directed towards an offender by his victim are less like penalties and more like natural consequences. Richards gives an example of a mugger who experiences some of the natural consequences of his actions. If a thug mugs someone and gets sore muscles and scratches in the process, these seem to be occupational hazards. The scratches and sore muscles are not part of the penalties of justice but are the natural consequences of his actions that do not deserve compassion. "We treat these as extra misfortunes which we are not sorry the mugger suffers."<sup>122</sup> Richards claims that a victim's negative feelings for his perpetrator should be thought of in the same way: harsh, uncompassionate feelings are natural consequences that the offender deserves. If compassion dispels these natural consequences, Richards suggests, compassion may be inappropriate. "His having wronged me is a reason not to go to his aid,"<sup>123</sup> he claims.

While any form of forgiveness, if it is to occur, begins with the recognition that wrongdoing has occurred, and while typical forms of anger may legitimately arise in response to the offense, Richards' view is flawed. Even if hard feelings are akin to an

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<sup>121</sup> Richards, 91.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 91.



occupational hazard or natural consequence of the wrongdoing, this speaks more to what the offender should anticipate as a consequence of his action rather than to what is good for the victim himself to choose to feel or want for the offender.

Richards is also mistaken about the offender merely being a wrongdoer rather than an object of compassion, for certainly, he has more than one aspect to observe, as double-concern/double-construal anger illustrates. How could one who sincerely cares about morality not have compassion on those who do not? To revisit the analogy of the gestalt figure, one might observe that Richards, along with many conditionalists, fail to recognize and show at least equal concern for the less common way of viewing the offender—i.e., the person whose ideal self needs and deserves to be encouraged. It is because the offender is a wrongdoer that he needs to further actualize his ideal self; because he is an offender, he is in need of reform.

A victim's neutrality towards an offender indicates that the victim is unconcerned about a person who desperately needs to improve his moral state. Whereas Richards claims that "depending on how badly [the offender] acted and how recently, it might be a flaw of character if [the victim] were moved [to have compassion/to forgive],"<sup>124</sup> I argue, on the contrary, that for an agent to be unconcerned about the moral improvement of someone who desperately needs improvement and with whom the agent has had direct interaction is a moral flaw on the part of that agent.<sup>125</sup> A lack of moral love indicates a moral flaw. It is obviously a deficiency for one who wishes to possess *Forgiveness*.

Richards contends that a victim does not have a responsibility to be compassionate (or by analogy, to show moral love) to wrongdoers. To someone who possesses *Forgiveness*, however, experiencing a desire for an offender to do better, to become better, and to fare better is natural. The victim who has *Forgiveness* does not feel an obligation to experience moral love; rather, he just experiences it. If it is weak, he does things to kindle it because he has committed to believing that moral love is valuable. If it is strong, it enables him to act boldly within the constraints of the situation.

Someone like Richards may object to my position by asking what makes a victim

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Whether that moral flaw came about because of psychological distress, honest oversight, or other understandable reasons, this does not mean that the lack of concern is not a moral flaw that should be avoided when possible.

responsible for trying to put the offender on the right moral path. Providing an answer that will convince someone who does not understand the synthesis of the facets of *Forgivingness* with its possessor's fundamental character is difficult. In practice, different people who possess *Forgivingness* might feel compelled to forgive virtuously because of many different reasons.<sup>126</sup> In theory, the responsibility may emerge simply because of the ability that emerges in the forgiver as he develops the virtue. Once a person develops his beliefs and emotions so that he has a basic moral concern for other people, especially those who affect his life, if he withholds that concern for someone who offends him, it does not seem that he has even achieved neutrality towards the offender. If his base-line attitude towards people is one of moral concern and good will, forgiveness would have to restore the offender to at least the base-line attitude. What is at the crux of this issue is that *Forgivingness* just is the sort of thing that makes its possessor feel compelled to show concern for his offender and to advance the offender's ultimate interests. By wronging the person with *Forgivingness*, the offender has placed himself in the spotlight of that person's moral love. The virtuously forgiving victim will see no reason based on the offense itself to turn off that spotlight.

Pettigrove suggests that when we consider what we want from someone who forgives us, we not only want him to not hold the offense against us, but we wish he would actually promote us. At least, he says, this is characteristic of forgiveness in its highest manifestation. He writes,

Asking 'How would I like to be treated?' serves to identify what we take to be an ideal for action that will influence others. It does so in part because our commitment to our own interests prompts us to desire not merely passable treatment from others, but excellent treatment from them. The forgiveness for which we hope includes the current absence of hostile

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<sup>126</sup> There are many reasons that might encourage someone to develop moral love and believe that she should love her offender and try to put him on the right path. It may be for any number of ethical beliefs. Some victims may believe that helping those who come into their paths will result in a better society for everyone. Some may think that it maximizes goodness to help offenders improve their moral understanding. Some might believe that it helps their own character to exercise that type of love for other people. Some people follow the Golden Rule, in that they would want their victims to encourage their moral improvement through moral love. Some may have religious reasons. The Muslim may show love to an offender in order to show love to Allah. The Christian may be following Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself." The Buddhist may believe in showing kindness to all sentient beings—including one's offenders—so that one might experience peace and oneness with everything.

reactive attitudes and the presence of positive regard. . . . and a commitment to the kinds of actions that generally issue from such regard.<sup>127</sup>

Virtuous forgiveness—the best kind of forgiveness; the kind one most desires when one recognizes one’s deep failures and sincerely wishes to be forgive; the form that is compatible with *Forgiveness*—is likely to include the active extension of good will to the offender and a sincere desire for his moral improvement.

**Promotion, Not Neutrality.** If the forgiveness that I would desire and that would be most ideal is the kind that does something rather than nothing for my benefit, it is reasonable to conclude think that virtuous forgiveness does not result in neutrality or passivity. There are several reasons that give warrant to the conclusion that moral love motivates an agent who has *Forgiveness* to actively promote the offender’s ultimate good. One is that once moral love is acquired, it is deeply entrenched in a person’s character, affecting his judgments, desires, values, and emotions. These forces cause changes in actions. The emotional and belief characteristics of *Forgiveness* naturally cause the person to want to support other people rather than tearing them down or harming them. When other forces do not prevent it, the person naturally acts according to these desires. A second reason is that moral love is strong and pervasive. Not only is moral love present in every instance of virtuous forgiveness, but it has the power to alter other emotions that a victim might experience due to offense so that they are compatible with the virtue. For instance, it alters one’s experience of natural anger and it counteracts hate. A third reason is that people who forgive in accordance with the virtue frequently show evidence of their moral love through their attitudes as well as their actions.<sup>128</sup> Marietta Jaeger, the priest in *Les Miserables*, Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, The Tibetan monk Lopon-la who was a political prisoner of the Chinese for eighteen years, Nelson

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<sup>127</sup> Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love*, 18-19.

<sup>128</sup> Someone might object to this reason by saying that it is not moral love, but *agapē* that is displayed. While this may be true, the action component of these two forms of love is found in their similarities rather than their differences.

Mandella, Ghandi, and a host of other moral exemplars who are thought to possess this form of love indicate it through their actions. For example, Jaeger worked with law enforcement to help arrest her daughter's killer while showing kindness to him over a phone conversation and by writing an account for others to read about her concern for his good.

Most instances of virtuous forgiveness result in the performance of an action or series of actions that attempt to promote the ideal good of the offender. These actions usually occur near the conclusion of the forgiveness process, not from mere duty, but as an expression of the cognitive, motivational, and affective parts of the virtue. Unless extenuating circumstances make it impossible to do so, these of forgiveness produce morally good inaction (i.e., refraining from revenge) and make morally good, other-regarding actions (i.e., actions that will encourage good for the offender's ideal self) seem attractive to the forgiver. When she judges that it is wise to do so, the virtuously forgiving victim will follow through with these actions.

There are some moral advantages that accompany the action tendency that naturally occurs in those with *Forgiveness*. One of these advantages is that it helps the victim to avoid condoning the offense in the eyes of outside observers. A second is that it also helps these victims to not appear servile. Further, the type of actions that it causes will do several of the following:

1. take into account the specifics of the situation surrounding the offense
2. take advantage of the resources of the State's legitimate ways of punishing wrongdoers when possible,
3. refrain from revenge,
4. avoid the perpetuation of wrongdoing that can result from a tit-for-tat exchange,
5. display and further develop the goodness and integrity of the victim,
6. seek to encourage the offender to become a morally better person.

A virtuously forgiving victim will act in a way that satisfies as many of those criteria as the situation allows, and she will experience moral love without vindictiveness. As such, her actions will begin to maximize goodness within the context of wrongdoing. This is something that is highly uncharacteristic of revenge or neutrality.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "Human love constructs its own image of the

other person, of what he is and what he should become. It takes the life of the other person into its own hands.”<sup>129</sup> Because moral love is the bedrock of *Forgiveness*, it will not fail to desire that goodness enhance the offender and to act on this desire whenever possible. It does not fail to desire and promote the other’s good because it is not the sort of thing that fails in this respect. As such, it is neither neutral, passive, complacent, nor inert.

**Punishment and Discipline.** The comments made so far about the actions of a virtuously forgiving victim have, admittedly, been vague. I have not listed any particular actions that are required of a virtuously forgiving victim. One reason this is so, as already stated, is because a virtuously forgiving victim will follow moral love and practical wisdom as a guideline for the specifics of her actions within the particular context created by the offense. Because these actions can vary so greatly, I am going to limit the remainder of this discussion of the action component of *Forgiveness* to the issue of how forgiveness can be compatible with seeking an offender’s punishment. Although pursuing disciplinary actions against an offender is not the only action possibly performed by a victim, it is the one that will be discussed here because: 1) it is one action that conditionalists seem to think is incompatible with unconditional forgiveness, or at least, it is scarcely attributed to unconditional forgivers by conditionalists, and 2) it is important to show how seeking that one’s offender be disciplined can be compatible with a loving and forgiving attitude.

Since moral love is foundational to the virtue and is characteristically manifested through its action component, some people might wonder whether the virtue is compatible with punishing the deserving offender or having him punished by others. Their misguided worry may come from a belief that forgiveness and love naturally entail mercy and leniency. If forgiveness is loving, how can it punish, they wonder. It might not seem that one has forgiven if one still makes the offender suffer for the offense or still treats the forgiven offender as if she is a wrongdoer. The belief that forgiveness must

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<sup>129</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper, 1954), 36. Bonhoeffer goes on to say that the true image of the other person is the stamp of the image of Jesus Christ which is on all people. Whether one believes he is right about this does not have to affect one’s view about whether there is an ideal self.

entail leniency assumes that it is not loving to hold people responsible for their actions when doing so requires less-than-pleasurable consequences. It may also contribute to the misconception that unconditional forgivers are servile and that they let offenders “get away” with too much. This assumption is incorrect, however, because those with *Forgiveness* understand that it is not loving for someone to allow another person to acquiesce in moral misery when he could do something to encourage this person to do otherwise. Sometimes, seeking that an offender be punished is an example of moral love and is an indispensable part of the forgiveness process. This point is one that many scholars have overlooked.

Thomas Brudholm, who discusses the punishment of offenders and who values the role that he believes resentment plays in a moral life, notes that possible responses to wrongdoing are often presented as a stark dichotomy between “either forgiveness or vengeance-hatred-bitterness” and he claims that this “does not do justice to the actual spectrum of possible attitudinal responses between those two emotional poles.”<sup>130</sup> He says “the rhetorical evocation of vengeance as forgiveness’s demonic other does not appropriately capture the position of victims who seek just legal prosecution and punishment of the wrongdoers. . . . To talk as if a desire for punishment or retribution, on the one hand, and revenge, on the other hand, were one of a kind, fails to acknowledge a difference of moral significance to many survivors.”<sup>131</sup> We must not equate desire for criminal prosecution with a lust for revenge, he argues, especially since “criminal justice is definitely about more than giving the criminals what they deserve.”<sup>132</sup> A victim’s anger, as Brudholm suggests, can be correlated with a passion for justice.<sup>133</sup> He thinks that anger that is aligned with a passion for justice and the punishment of the offender is a viable alternative to forgiveness. Anger and the quest to have the offender punished correspond well with the victim’s and survivors’ wishes, which are often more broad than their own therapeutic benefits.

Brudholm makes an excellent point. Well-intentioned victims who want the offender to be punished can have this desire without falling into the realm of revenge.

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<sup>130</sup> Brudholm, 28.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 36.

Although Brudholm's point is to uphold the value of resentment that seeks punishment and to separate it from morally problematic acts of revenge, his words also unintentionally point to the opposite reality: it is possible for a victim to desire that his offender be punished yet still be forgiving towards him. Whereas Brudholm argues that resentment-motivated punishment is not equivalent to revenge, it should also be argued that love-motivated punishment is not equivalent to revenge.

Using but altering Brudholm's words, as recorded above, it can be said that "the rhetorical evocation of [supreme mercy-showing as forgiveness's foundational and cherubic ego] does not appropriately capture the position of [virtuously forgiving] victims who seek just legal prosecution and punishment of the wrongdoers. . . . To talk as if a desire for punishment . . . on the one hand, and [forgiveness], on the other hand, [are on two opposite poles of the spectrum], fails to acknowledge a difference of moral significance to many [virtuous forgivers]," especially since "criminal justice is definitely about more than giving the criminals what they deserve."<sup>134</sup> Response options to offense include much more than treating the offender, on the one hand, as if he did nothing wrong, and on the other hand, taking revenge. Just as some of the survivors to whom Brudholm refers may not be vengeful but simply want criminals to be prosecuted, there are virtuous forgivers who are not vengeful but who lovingly desire that the wrongdoers be held accountable for their actions, oftentimes through prosecution. Holding people responsible for their actions can benefit them, their society, and relevant victims; it can be an act of moral love.

To show that a forgiver can be loving while holding wrongdoers responsible for their actions, it is helpful to make a distinction and an analogy. The distinction is between two categories of underlying attitudes and intents that may be had by a victim who wishes for his offender to be punished. For the sake of expediency, those attitudes and intents that are incompatible with virtuous forgiveness will, from this point, be referred to as punishment. The attitudes and intents that desire for the offender to be held accountable for his action but that are compatible with virtuous forgiveness will be called discipline.

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<sup>134</sup> Words obviously borrowed from Brudholm and tailored to make an equally important but opposite point. Brudholm, 36.

When someone seeks to punish, his attitudes and actions are frequently arising alongside of harsh, offender-opposing emotions and desires that may seem as if they exist to protect the victim's self-image or the image that he wants other people to have of him. Lingering resentment or hatred may easily fuel his desire to seek justice. Punishment is like retributive justice, which usually includes the idea that it is intrinsically good for wrongdoers to suffer a proportionate punishment to their offense. Punishment can impose penalties or loss of privileges on the offender. It may be in the form of alerting the police to someone's crime and testifying against him in court, or it may be a decision not to loan one's car to one's reckless friend in the future, requiring him to make restitution for the damages he has already caused. Any form of punishment will be motivated primarily by considerations of backward-looking demands for justice. The victim wants the offender "to pay" for what he did, to suffer because he made the victim suffer. People who want someone to be punished want to make a bad situation more just, even if no other good comes from it.

What is being referred to here as "discipline" may, in some cases, result in the same actions as punishment. A person who disciplines another may work toward being reimbursed for damages to his car. He may call the police and testify against a criminal. He may want his offender to go to jail and may do whatever is in his power to help place him there. He may deprive his misbehaving daughter of her privilege to go to a friend's house. But a person who desires for another to be disciplined does these things with different intentions from the one who desires punishment. Unlike the punisher, the main purpose of the one who desires discipline is not to uphold a sense of justice, not to make the offender "pay" for his crimes, and not merely to make a bad, past situation more equitable. The one who disciplines wishes to promote the development of the long-term, moral interests of the offender. The victim does not wish to hinder the offender's legitimate immediate interests for the victim's own sake or because he has a right to do so. The one who disciplines deprives the offender (or has the offender deprived) of certain privileges, or he imposes penalties (or has them imposed) primarily because he wants these repercussions to promote the offender's future goodness. Discipline is motivated primarily by a forward-looking concern for the goodness of the offender rather than by backward-looking justice. If punishment is like retributive justice and the *lex*



*talionis*, discipline is more akin to restorative justice. Restorative justice, when possible, seeks to restore the relationship between the victim and the offender and wishes to help both parties see the ramifications of the wrongdoing. It hopes to make the offender repent and wants the offender to become a better moral entity.

A person who has the virtue of *Forgiveness* has purposes that resonate with discipline rather than punishment. While seeking justice for the sake of justice is not at odds with *Forgiveness*, this pursuit is secondary to the concerns the virtuous forgiver has for the ultimate moral goodness of the offender. A virtuously forgiving victim can desire that the offender be made to endure reasonable consequences of his actions so that his character may be formed in a morally better way and, at the same time, desire that the unjust situation be made fairer.<sup>135</sup>

Discipline, unlike punishment, is accompanied by the self-forgetfulness that is also characteristic of moral love. Whereas a punisher first wants to protect his self-concept or his self-esteem, or is focused on “making things right” in order to fix his own situation, the one who disciplines places the good of the other in the foreground of his desires and considerations. While he does not reject his own good, he is able to correct any potential self-biased or egocentric attitudes that he may have by doing what Aristotle suggests should be done to straighten bent wood—i.e., going a little further in the opposite direction from the customary, human tendency, in order to hit the right mean.

Discipline, therefore, is conceptually compatible with the moral love that is part of *Forgiveness* because the forgiver has the same, morally praiseworthy goals, intentions, motivations, attitudes, and modes of operation in the disciplinary actions as is present in the virtue. But being compatible with something is not the same as being required by it. The next issue, then, is whether *Forgiveness* requires disciplinary actions.

The answer is predominantly affirmative, but the strength of the obligation depends on the situation. *Forgiveness* always requires the forgiver to consider the merits of disciplinary action for that offender in that situation. It always requires that the forgiver have an appropriate enthusiasm for discipline rather than punishment. But there

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<sup>135</sup> The virtuously forgiving victim is not going to interpret an offender-opposing attitude that he could have as a naturally occurring consequence that the offender should endure.

are a few cases where discipline is unnecessary, and a few other cases where the appropriate response would be so positive that it would not seem like discipline even though it would be a reaction to the offense performed with the intention of encouraging the offender to reform. An example of this would be a smile, an embrace, or an uplifting word. It might also include an action like that performed by the priest in *Les Misérables* when he gives Val Jean the rest of his silverware after Val Jean had already stolen most of it. Although certain disciplinary responses of a virtuously forgiving victim may sometimes seem unusual or excessively merciful, others may seem harsh. Their “rightness” depends on the particulars of the situation and the best judgment of the victim. Discipline of some sort is always attempted or sought when the virtuously forgiving victim wisely considers the available and morally appropriate methods of discipline that are available, judges them to be useful and advantageous in advancing the offender’s ideal self, and is not prevented from seeking it by particulars of the circumstances or by external forces.

An analogy may be helpful at this point. Consider discipline and punishment in the context of a parent-child relationship and think of the necessary value that discipline from a loving parent adds to a child’s life and future. Parents who love their children properly want their children to live well and to develop into as morally mature individuals as possible. Good and loving parents realize that discipline is part of shaping their child into the person he is supposed to be. If a parent does not attempt to encourage good future behavior and character traits in his child, the parent would likely be accused of not doing enough for his child in this regard. Some would rightly claim that he has failed as a parent. Without guiding the child, teaching him how he should be by instructing him, imposing penalties for disobedience, depriving him of privileges, and allowing him to suffer some natural consequences of his actions, the child will not flourish as an adult because he will not learn to discipline himself and transcend his base desires and inclinations. Rightly loving a child means that the parent lovingly disciplines the child for the child’s future good. While the child may come to properly respect the parent in the process, the goal is to train the child for his own good rather than for the good of the parent, even though these goals can go hand-in-hand.

If a parent disciplines rather than punishes his child, what occurs is importantly

different from punishing him. Punishment enacts a penalty for an offense and thus is backward-looking, focusing on what cannot be undone. It originates out of personal frustration and seeks the punisher's own interests—perhaps to get a disrespectful child to respect him. Discipline, on the other hand, is forward-looking in the sense that it inflicts a penalty for the sake of trying to retrain and mature the offender and to help create a better moral future for him. Instead of the motivation coming from the parent protecting his own interests, the motivation for discipline comes from the parent's concern for the good of the offender and his (and his society's) future.

Not only is the motivation of discipline and punishment different, but so are the repercussions. Punishing a child can easily lead to a child being fearful, bitter, self-pitying, and the like, because the child recognizes that the punishment is not aimed at helping him but may simply be the result of an angry parent's outburst. Discipline, on the other hand, is done altruistically rather than just from anger (although these are not mutually exclusive). It is more thoughtful than reactive. It seeks creative ways to address the offender. Those ways may even include the parent requiring that the child spend more time doing fun things with him. Through whatever means, the child who is disciplined will hopefully come to see that he experiences repercussions for his actions and that people expect him to behave differently in the future. However, he will not be threatened and will not feel that he is shunned by those whose encouragement he desperately needs. The rightly disciplined child is more likely to form healthy attachments to his parents, experience security in their relationship and in other relationships, develop a solid conception of goodness and rightness, and learn to develop positive boundaries.

Of course, parents are not perfect and do not love their children perfectly. They have blind spots and character flaws themselves. But if it seems that a parent lovingly tries to encourage good future traits and behavior but is unsuccessful, for no obvious reason, then no one would accuse him of not doing enough for his child. Onlookers would say that they had been good parents even though the good parenting “didn't take.”

The analogy of a loving parent and a virtuously-forgiving victim may seem slightly distasteful since one may think that the victim's role should not include the paternalism that is naturally present in a parent's role. Nevertheless, the distinction

between punishment and discipline in the context of a parent/child relationship is analogous to virtuously-forgiving victims and their offenders for several reasons. First, both relationships operate within the limits of an interpersonal context.<sup>136</sup> Second, the distinction between punishment and discipline acknowledges that one can be loving while seeking reparations or trying to hold an offender otherwise responsible for his wrongdoing. Third, the analogy gestures to some of the problems that a lack of love in forgiveness or punishment can cause. Fourth, it acknowledges that some forgivers (particularly those whose forgiveness lacks many qualities of the virtue), like some parents, do not respond properly to inappropriate behavior, and thus, negatively affect the offender's ultimate well-being. Fifth, the analogy and the distinction help to draw attention to the difference between responses that are intended for the offender's good and those that are not. Sixth, it harkens to what John Locke teaches about the rights that parents have to be paternalistic in overriding their children's bad choices. The parent or victim can assume hypothetical consent to discipline, believing that a child or wrongdoer would give consent to have his future moral good advanced if his faculties/moral goodness were sufficiently developed.<sup>137</sup> Seventh, it acknowledges that, despite a parent's or victim's best efforts and intentions, a child or offender may not benefit from discipline in the way that the parent/victim hopes. If this is the case, the praiseworthiness of the desire and character of the person having the desire that the child or offender become better people is not diminished.

Even though the disciplinary actions of virtuous forgiveness may act to establish justice and to encourage the offender to change, its success or failure at producing change in the offender is not part of its own success or failure. The measure of the action component of *Forgiveness* is more closely connected with the moral quality of the motivation of the action and with the altruistic concern for the offender's ideal self than it is with the forgiver's success as producing a change in the offender. Although a forgiver may not be significantly confused about how to encourage moral goodness in others and still be thought to be virtuous, the ultimate responsibility to improve

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<sup>136</sup> I am not making claims about the disciplinary and punishment responses within an organized group, the penal systems for nations, or international policy.

<sup>137</sup> John Locke, "The Second Treatise of Government," in John Locke, *Political Writings*, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis, IN, 2003), 286-99.

ultimately lies with the offender. In most cases, however, a virtuous forgiver's methods are as likely (or more likely) to have as much of a chance to be effective as methods of punishment would.

The virtuously forgiving victim who disciplines rather than punishes may desire to have his interests restored and his trouble or grief acknowledged by his peers in an official or unofficial capacity. This desire is never without corresponding desires for the offender's ultimate good to be advanced as well. The virtuously forgiving victim is never concerned only with himself. He deliberates about how to protect or advance the offender's ultimate good and his own self-interests; he calculates, either consciously or subconsciously, the possibilities of his actions and the potential benefits and consequences of those actions with regards to himself and the offender. He is able, if need be, to treat his own desires as secondary to the advancement of the needs of the offender, especially when he believes that doing so will result in significant improvement in the offender.

The virtuous forgiver comes from a position of moral strength, so he is able to place his decision to be altruistic ahead of his desire for his feelings or his property to be restored, should a choice need to be made between them. Often, this is not necessary, as disciplinary actions that may advance the offender's interests (e.g., requiring that he repay, make amends, confess his misdeeds to another, *et cetera*) work directly in favor of the victim's own interests. In other cases, when the forgiver sacrifices more for the sake of the offender than seems fair (e.g., when the priest gives Valjean the rest of his silver and a speech about how he needs to reform), the actions of forgiveness indirectly work in favor of the victim's own interests. It gives the victim the chance to reinforce the beliefs and tendencies of *Forgiveness* within his own character, and it serves as an example of how to demonstrate goodness in one's disapproval rather than a vengeful response that obscures goodness.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a sketch of *Forgiveness* as a multifaceted virtue analogous to a well-cut gemstone. While some forms of forgiveness are less than praiseworthy, a well-shaped instance of the virtue reflects beauty, is highly valuable, and

is relatively polished and free from major flaws. Not every instance of the highly polished and well-formed instances of *Forgiveness* will have the same observable appearance or reveal the same facets. For example: various instances of virtuous forgiveness may require that a victim use humility or hope in different ways; some cases of virtuous forgiveness may result in the offender being incarcerated while others may result in the victim giving the offender a costly gift; some instances may require the forgiver to remind himself that the offender's ultimate interests are valuable whereas this reminder may be unnecessary in other cases. Despite these sorts of differences, the underlying cognitive, affective, motivational, and action components of every instance of *Forgiveness* are the same. Additionally, every action component of the virtue shares the same motivation and basic structure, allowing each instance of *Forgiveness* to coincide with principles of moral love.

Virtuous manifestations of *Forgiveness* exhibit the virtue's characteristics best because they have been crafted by the virtuously forgiving person over time and with significant moral effort to be well-formed and polished. Forgiveness that emerges from the virtue is not something that the virtue possessor can choose to give or withhold as he or she encounters various offenses and offenders. Instead, it naturally and reliably emerges as a coherent synthesis of the virtue possessor's attitudes, actions, beliefs, and emotions, which predispose him to feel and behave towards all offenders, no matter the circumstance, in a way that is characteristic of a forgiving person.

## CHAPTER 4 ADDRESSING OBJECTIONS

### Introduction

The preceding chapter attempted to describe *Forgivingness* as a virtue producing consistent and unconditional forgiveness while explicating the qualities and components that cause it to be this way. One aim of this chapter is to articulate the main ethical arguments against consistent, unconditional forgiveness. Specifically, I will discuss the following criticisms: that unconditional forgiveness is equivalent to unjust pardoning, that it condones wrongdoing, and that it comes from or reinforces servility in the victim. I will then explain how unilateral, unconditional forgiveness that is given from *Forgivingness* avoids these objections.

### Objections to UUF

#### **Forgiveness as an Unjust Pardon**

One criticism against unconditional forgiveness is that it unjustly pardons. This criticism assumes, wrongly, that a forgiver necessarily waives an offender's punishment when he forgives. In what follows, I will present arguments for the idea that offenders should, in the majority of cases, be punished or disciplined for their immoral actions.<sup>1</sup> While these arguments lend support to the conditionalists' view that punishment should not be unjustly waived, this conclusion is not contrary to the principles of unilateral, unconditional *Forgivingness*. I will also offer some comments about the types of cases in which punishment may not be morally required and will introduce a theory of punishment that supports the unconditional forgiver's occasional decision to omit an offender's punishment.

In the relevant, scholarly literature, it is not uncommon for a distinction to be made between pardons and forgiveness. Those who make this distinction claim that one must be acting in an official capacity in order to pardon but in an interpersonal one in

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<sup>1</sup> For present purposes, I will use punishment and discipline interchangeably because the distinction made between them in the last chapter illustrates the attitude necessary for the virtuous forgiver who disciplines or seeks for the offender to be discipline by others.

order to forgive.<sup>2</sup> Although I agree with these theorists, I also see why others might think that the distinction is merely a definitional happenstance. This concern is augmented when one's role as forgiver is crossed with one's role as official pardoner. For example, when a Human Resource Director has the official capacity to pardon someone who broke company policy and had, as a result, caused the director to become her victim, the line demarcating pardoning from forgiving can become blurry.

What makes this concern more potent is that it is not uncommon for this distinction to be ignored outside the context of scholarly literature. In common parlance, "Pardon me" is often interchanged with "Forgive me," for instance, and this equivocation occurs in less colloquial situations as well. In referring to the official, presidential power to pardon, Chris Watney, from the U.S. Justice Department, told the Los Angeles Times that "[i]t is basically an act of forgiveness."<sup>3</sup> As Paul Hughes explains, to many people, "to pardon a wrongdoer often seems indistinguishable from forgiveness, perhaps especially in cases of minor wrong."<sup>4</sup> This is true even in the case of serious wrongdoing. For example, in Croatia in 1992, a "law of forgiveness" was passed that gave pardons to "all those who committed criminal acts during the course of armed conflict in Croatia."<sup>5</sup> In one instance, records of reports show that four soldiers who were tried by a civilian court for the murder of a man, Damjan Zilic in Zagreb, were not punished for their offenses because of the "law of forgiveness."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, H. J. N. Horsbrugh, "Forgiveness," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1974): 269-89. Also see Geoffrey Scarre, *After Evil: Responding to Wrongdoing* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Watney, quoted in Peter E. Digeser, *Political Forgiveness* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University, 2001), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Hughes, Paul M., "Forgiveness," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, winter 2011 ed. [online]. Accessed 6 August 2014. Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/forgiveness>; Internet.

<sup>5</sup> Croatia's law register, *Narodne Novine* 58 (September 1992): 1305-06. Cited in Ivana Nizich, Željka Markić, Jeri Laber, *Civil and Political Rights in Croatia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-81. This example assumes that they were guilty. It is worth noting that instances of pardoning like this one in Zagreb can be problematic. When severe evildoers are pardoned and, thus, are not held accountable for their actions, the message that is sent to their victims is that the wrongdoers are more valuable or well-respected than they are. Additionally, the integrity and worth of the legal and penal systems that offer such pardons are unclear. My aim is neither to criticize nor defend official, state related pardons, however. Instead, I will show that official pardons are distinct from personal forgiveness.



It seems that the main concern of those who notice that forgiveness and pardons are easy to confuse is that unconditional forgivers may mistakenly or unknowingly pardon an offender in an unofficial capacity. Without occupying a special position, people can still withhold punishment or help prevent someone from being punished, even when punishment is justly due to that individual. It is the unofficial sense of pardoning—essentially the waiving of punishment—that troubles the criticizer of unconditional forgiveness most and makes definitional distinctions between officials who pardon and the individuals who forgive seem unsatisfactory. Accompanied by this sentiment, Sharon Lamb asks, “When an offender begs for forgiveness, what exactly is he asking of the victim? What is the act of ‘begging for forgiveness’ really except a plea for pardon?”<sup>7</sup> Forgiveness advocates traditionally claim that a victim should show compassion on the offender and forgive him, but should not pardon him. Lamb, however, is skeptical that forgiveness can be more than a pardon. She concludes that forgiveness is neither morally nor therapeutically required of a victim.

One reason that forgivers are warned to not pardon offenders is that pardoning offends principles of justice because it treats the offender as if he is not an offender. Although the legitimacy of some pardons cannot be questioned, pardons cannot be given lightly because to do so treats laws and the punishment for breaking those laws as if they do not matter. If a criminal is pardoned, he is not punished or disciplined. This potentially sends a message to his victims that they do not matter. To the extent that punishing a wrongdoer makes things “right,” pardoning him might make things “wrong.” If forgiveness is like a pardon in the sense that it waives the punishment of the offender, it runs the same risk of disregarding a principle of fairness and equity that should be upheld. Thus, people who equate forgiveness with the waiving of discipline or punishment, but who still forgive without requiring that the offender change or make reparations, seem to be doing something immoral.

Historically, the concern that forgiveness unjustly pardons has been a reoccurring

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<sup>7</sup> Sharon Lamb, “Women Abuse, and Forgiveness: A Special Case,” in *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*, ed. Sharon Lamb and Jeffrie G. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166-67.

topic.<sup>8</sup> People value justice, longing for wrongdoers to get the punishment that they have merited as they have behaved without regard for the constraints of morality. This topic is addressed in ancient and medieval literature, classic children's stories, and in contemporary media. People want evildoers to suffer and they usually relish in satisfaction when this aim is achieved. The *lex talionis* seems delightful when used on others whom we deem to deserve it.

In addition to our natural desire to see justice served and our concern to make victims feel supported, there are many arguments in favor of the idea that punishment should usually not be waived. Some of these arguments use retributive themes as justification. There are two main types of retributivism. Positive retributivism,<sup>9</sup> which has exerted a strong influence in penal theorizing since the last three decades of the twentieth century, pushes for the guilty to be punished because they are thought to deserve punishment. Antony Duff explains, "penal desert constitutes not just a necessary, but an in principle sufficient reason for punishment (only in principle, however, since there are very good reasons—to do with the costs, both material and moral, of punishment—why we should not even try to punish all the guilty)."<sup>10</sup> Negative retributivism, on the other hand, focuses less on an offender's positive desert of punishment and more on the right that people generally have to not be punished. Desert is not a sufficient reason to punish, and punishment should never exceed what the offenses warrant. Duff explains that the assumptions of a negative retributivist "[do] not imply that we *ought* to punish the guilty; it implies only that we *may* punish the guilty, if we have other good (presumably consequentialist) reasons to do so."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Anselm asks how divine forgiveness can occur when humans merit punishment. Anselm, *Proslogium, Monologium, An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon, and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago, Open Court, 1903), 14-18. Griswold mentions that in many variations of Stoicism, sages were not prone to forgiving, partly because they thought it mitigated punishment. See Charles L. Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 13 n.17.

<sup>9</sup> Antony Duff defines positive retributivism as "the idea that the positive justification of punishment is to be found in its intrinsic character as a deserved response to crime." See Anthony Duff, "Legal Punishment," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, summer 2013 ed. [online]. Accessed 6 August 2014. Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/legal-punishment>; Internet

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Duff also explains that some theorists have justified punishment of wrongdoers with the claim that punishment takes away the unfair advantage the wrongdoer has gained in doing wrong. “[The wrongdoer] deserves that [punishment] because it is unfair that she should get away with taking the benefits of the law without accepting the burdens on which those benefits depend.”<sup>12</sup> Yet another justification for the punishment of wrongdoers is that punishment has the ability to convey strong messages to the wrongdoer. When the censure is expressed via the criminal justice system, it communicates to the offender that the political community’s code is authoritative and that he should be constrained by it. Punishing wrongdoers has undeniable value, as these arguments and theories claim.

### **Response to the “Unjust Pardon” Criticism**

A form of forgiveness that regularly pardons offenders would need exceedingly strong justification. Fortunately for UUF, it does not regularly pardon offenders. As was explained in the last chapter, waiving punishment for a forgiven offender is not a requirement of virtuous forgiveness and is often not permitted by it. Moral love requires a virtuously forgiving person to use, whenever it is reasonable to do so, disciplinary actions or other forms of encouragement in order to help advance the offender’s ideal self or enhance the overall goodness within the situation associated with the wrongdoing.

Alice MacLachlan suggests that “most objections to forgiveness revolve around the failure to distinguish among genuine forgiveness, pseudoforgiveness, and related but distinct constructs.”<sup>13</sup> In my terminology, conditionalists and many other people have failed to discern the distinction between minimal and virtuous forgiveness. As was previously explained, minimal forgiveness (when it does not overlap with virtuous forgiveness) does not necessarily have moral love as a component. It can be wrongly given, resulting in several moral problems. One of those problems can be clearly seen when the forgiver unjustly pardons the offender in an unofficial sense. If someone mistakenly equates wrongly-given minimal forgiveness with unconditional forgiveness,

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Alice MacLachlan, “Practicing Imperfect Forgiveness,” in *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal*, ed. Lisa Tessman (London and New York: Springer, 2009), 195.

he might deduce that forgiveness is equivalent to wiping the offender's slate clean, to forgetting the offense, to not making the offender pay any ensuing penalties, to treating the offender as if he was not the author of the offense, or to pretending as if the offense did not happen. But virtuous forgiveness does not do these things. Because one of the main components of *Forgiveness* is moral love, and because the forgiver is compelled to be active in trying to actualize the offender's ideal self, moral love does not waive disciplinary measures when they are useful or necessary. Therefore, theorists must not categorically criticize unilateral, unconditional forgiveness. The criticism potentially applies only to wrongly-given minimal forgiveness.

Even though moral love usually causes the virtuously forgiving victim to utilize disciplinary measures in its efforts to love and transform the offender, there may be cases in which she will waive the offender's discipline. These cases usually fall into one of four circumstances: 1) punishment of the offender is not morally required but is morally permissible—e.g., the offense is very slight and does not indicate a moral flaw of character; 2) extenuating circumstances prevent the victim from punishing and would do so even if she was not forgiving her offender; 3) the victim does not have the authority to punish the offender and cannot pursue punishment through another channel; 4) if the victim thinks that mercy-showing would create more good in the situation than seeking punishment would. Virtuous forgiveness cannot be blamed for unjustly pardoning in these cases. In 1) through 3), the situations that caused the punishment to be waived do not cast blame on the forgiver since she either has justifying reasons to waive the punishment or is prevented by means outside of her control from having the offender punished.

The accuracy of the claim that UUF does not unjustly pardon is, perhaps, least obvious in number four. This exception includes situations like the following: The victim, who is trying to become a virtuous forgiver, thinks that she is incapable of disciplining the offender without malice even though the offense was not severe. She decides to waive her right to punish him because it will reinforce her ability to refrain from doing malicious things, hopefully decreasing her malicious desires. A second example is a father who decides not to discipline his child for scratching and denting his car. Even though the seven-year-old son had been warned before, he decides to take his

father's big bicycle and ride it in the driveway. He excitedly calls over his shoulder to his dad, "Look at me! I'm like you!" as he scrapes the side of the car with the bike's spokes. In the context of the joy that the child had for being like his father, the father decides to withhold punishment from the child, hoping that he will not taint his son's desire to be like him. A third example is seen in the following scenario: Garrison's young fiancé, Addie, wants to be helpful to Garrison's family. When Garrison's dad, who is in a hurry to go to work, states that he is going to back his wife's truck out of the driveway before he can leave, Addie volunteers for the task. Garrison's dad tells her that the driveway is tricky and that the car is parked oddly with respect to the truck and Garrison's vehicle. Addie insists that she can move it safely, however, so he gives her the keys. But Addie does not realize that the car's back wheels are parked on a speed hump. As she gently gives the car some fuel, it rolls excessively and hits Garrison's mom's truck, causing a surprisingly significant amount of damage to both vehicles. Garrison's dad has the right to make Addie reimburse him for the damage. He has the right to be angry. But, through keen observation of her behavior, some knowledge of her past, his own empathy, and her contrition, Garrison's dad does not believe that disciplining her in any way would help her become a better person. He pardons her as an attempt to show his future daughter-in-law that he accepts her and her mistakes.

When a virtuously forgiving person believes that it is for the collective good or in the offender's ultimate interests to not punish him or to not seek that he be punished through external means, why is this not an unjust pardon? Similarly, why should the judgment of a person with *Forgiveness* be trusted enough to go against the weight of the arguments that support punishing wrongdoers?

The first part of the answer is that usually, virtuously forgiving victims do not forego disciplinary actions because it is unloving (in the full sense of moral love) to do so. Moral love creates a desire in the victim to further the offender's actualization of his ideal self and practical wisdom helps him see that disciplinary actions are often an excellent way to achieve this goal. Whenever discipline is a viable option and is thought to be helpful to advance the goal, the virtuously forgiving victim disciplines. One disclaimer must be made, however: it is almost impossible for someone to always accurately anticipate the consequences that could result from a full display of mercy

instead of the administration of punishment. An error could occur because of a deficiency in the victim's wisdom or merely because the future is impossible to predict with certainty. All the virtuously forgiving victim has to inform him is a good guess based on his prior experience, current knowledge, and context clues. Sometimes he may be wrong, just as anyone in his situation might be. The virtuously forgiving victim is prone to sometimes showing mercy when it would be better to punish. Critics, however, should not interpret this as merely a criticism of UUF. They must not ignore the truth of this observation as it also relates to conditional forgivers: people who refuse to waive punishment may sometimes be guilty of not showing enough mercy and of causing more damage by inflicting punishment.

Even though a virtuously forgiving victim is susceptible to this kind of error, he is, perhaps, less likely to err than many people who lack *Forgiveness* or who have not given much thought to the ways people can make moral progress. Because he has developed many good traits, beliefs, and emotions that help form the facets of *Forgiveness*, the virtuously forgiving victim is not merely guessing about whether to show mercy or to discipline. During his forgiveness process, moral love and a desire to act wisely prompt the victim to quickly consider a breadth of possible consequences that could result from not having the offender punished. The forgiver has a sense of himself, the offender's immediate situation, his conception of moral goodness, and other people who may be affected by his decision as he deliberates. Then he acts in accordance with his best judgment to maximize goodness, as best he can, especially in the offender, but also in himself and in the others involved. Thus, when the virtuously forgiving victim considers how to respond, he does not do so flippantly or without some degree of moral intelligence.

Deliberation may result in the virtuously forgiving victim withholding punishment altogether. At other times, it may result in leniency, whereby the discipline is less proportionate to the offense. An offended boss, for example, might warn her employee about being late instead of submitting official documentation to the company if she has reason to believe that giving the employee a second chance will inspire his loyalty to the company and help remind him that being punctual is a part of respecting others. The parent, knowing that the daughter has been depressed recently, might refrain

from grounding her but may insist that she see a counselor. In cases like these, positive, retributive justice may not be fulfilled. Be that as it may, there may be no moral requirement that retributive justice always be satisfied. Some other theory of justice might provide enough support for occasional leniency or the withholding of punishment that these mercy-showing exceptions to proportionate punishment may not be considered unjust pardons.

One hybrid theory comes in the form of a consequentialist, moral education-restorative justice argument. In this argument, consequentialism contributes the idea that leniency and mercy-showing may serve to promote some goal. The moral education aspect of the theory serves to suggest that the method for pursuing this goal is that of teaching the offender “that (and why) her behavior was morally wrong, so that she will reform herself.”<sup>14</sup> The central theme of the restorative justice aspect of the argument is “that what crime makes necessary is a process of reparation or restoration between offender, victim and other interested parties; and that this is achieved not through a criminal process of trial and punishment, but through mediation or reconciliation programmes that bring together the victim, offender and other interested parties to discuss what was done and how to deal with it.”<sup>15</sup> While *Forgiveness* does not always include reconciliation as a goal, many instances wherein a virtuously forgiving victim pardons includes relationship-building or preservation as a goal. Even when it does not, the concept of restoration acknowledges that good-maximization can be sought through means other than punishment—means that seek to restore an unequal balance created by an offense. While many theorists use restorative justice to emphasize the importance of having the offender restore the damages done to the victim, another way to interpret the goals of restoration is that it helps the offender become restored to a state closer to his morally ideal self. The means for this restoration is moral education, loosely interpreted, sometimes including leniency and pardon. Its success is measured consequentially, including, among other things, the offender’s transformation and the results on the

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<sup>14</sup>Zachary Hoskins, “The Moral Permissibility of Punishment,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Accessed 13 September 2015. Available from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/m-p-puni/#SH5d>; Internet. See the section on “Moral Education.”

<sup>15</sup>Duff, “Legal Punishment.” He mentions that there are a plethora of interpretations of restorative justice.

victim's character.

Although a virtuous forgiver often uses discipline as a valuable tool through which to encourage the offender's moral advancement, when that tool is not chosen by the forgiver because another one seems more useful, there is nothing immoral about that. While other people who are interested in the case have the right to advocate that the offender be punished in a traditional way, despite what the primary victim does, the victim has a right to interact with justice in the best way he believes is appropriate, while being guided by moral love and practical wisdom. Sometimes this might mean that he believes that this goal is easier or more effective to achieve with mercy rather than with retributive justice. If restorative justice is used for the sake of moral education in these cases, then it is not enough for a critic to claim that the forgiver has unjustly pardoned merely because retributive justice was not satisfied.

Virtuous forgivers, although they may waive punishment under some conditions, do not unjustly pardon in these instances. These forgivers, as opposed to minimal forgivers and everyone else who lacks *Forgivingness*, do not pardon without considering the best way to maximize goodness (including the offender's ideal self). The offense and offender are not ignored. Rather, the desire for retribution is set aside for the sake of some form of restoration. This brand of moral education mixed with restorative justice is further supported by the tenets of negative retributive justice, which reminds that punishment does not have to occur even when an offender deserves it if there are other good reasons not to punish.

Before discussing the next criticism, one thing should be added here. Some people who want to withhold forgiveness until the offender has repented and made reparations think that those who forgive before this point unjustly pardon the offender through their forgiveness. They have this belief because they think that unforgiveness, and the accompanying feelings of wanting the offender to suffer, are punishment.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Richards seems to assume this in Norvin Richards, "Forgiveness," *Ethics* 99 (1988). Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton also seem to assume the same when they suggest that justification for the idea that the offender should suffer comes from the fact that we legitimately desire for them to suffer, as expressed in our natural, emotional response. See Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).



Perhaps sometime it is, as when a small child does not want to disappoint his parents but feels that he has done so. As I will discuss in a later section, however, it is unlikely that this form of punishment is effective in the majority of cases. Even if it were effective, it is unwise to say that a person's negative feelings should be thought of as punishment, which is primarily a tool for the administration of justice. One reason this is so is because people who have interpersonal relationships should desire for each other to flourish. When people want others to flourish, and they are acting in the morally best way, they will discipline rather than punish. A second, and more comprehensive reason, is that while an administrator of justice should not be an automaton, devoid of feeling, justice is usually administered more fairly and impartially when the administrator's offender-opposing feelings remain separate from the punishment. A judge, for instance, must recuse herself if her feelings or interests in a case involve her too personally. Thus, the criticism levied against unconditional forgivers that suggests that the unforgiving feelings of the victim should persist as a way of punishing an unrepentant offender is probably unfounded.

### **Forgiveness as Condonation**

Critics of unconditional forgiveness have also claimed that it condones the wrongdoing. If unconditional forgiveness condones wrongdoing, this seems to be a very severe offense that cannot be made permissible by referencing other valuable moral concepts (e.g., restorative justice, strategies for encouraging another's ideal self, *et cetera*) or by any other strategy. Condoning wrongdoing is clearly at odds with clear, moral principles. For example, condoning contradicts a foundational moral principle that evil should be avoided and shunned while goodness should be pursued and enjoyed. It seems to ignore the moral intuition that good is good and bad is bad. Condonation must not be taken lightly because it is antithetical to morality and is indicative of moral confusion, apathy, or corruption in the person who condones. If forgiveness condones, it is immoral to forgive. Critics of unconditional forgiveness say that unconditional forgiveness condones since it allows the victim to treat the offender as someone who has not done wrong, thus treating the morally wrong action as something that is morally permissible. Proponents of conditional forgiveness suggest that their form of forgiveness

does not condone because it requires that the offender do something to identify himself as someone who has done wrong and then forces him to alter who he is before he can be forgiven. The question addressed here is whether virtuous unconditional forgiveness condones the offense that it forgives.

In order to evaluate the concern that unconditional forgiveness condones wrongdoing, one must have a working definition of condonation. Contemporary forgiveness literature supports varying definitions, but there are three especially worth noting. To Aurel Kolnai, who was among the first to discuss the topic, “Condonation means that [the forgiver] is clearly aware of [the offender’s] wrongdoing, insult, offence or viciousness and *per se* disapproves of it but deliberately refrains from any retributive response to it.”<sup>17</sup> Condonation does not simply overlook the wrong, but it “acquiesces” in or tacitly agrees with the offense, he explains.<sup>18</sup> The uniqueness of Kolnai’s definition comes from its inclusion of the term “retributive response” as he claims that condonation occurs when a retributive response is deliberately withheld. As has been suggested above, retribution can come in the form of revenge or as the victim seeks to punish or have the offender punished with goals that are backward-looking and likely self-focused. If Kolnai thinks that a forgiving victim who does not act out of revenge and does not personally try to punish the offender condones the wrongdoing, then every instance of forgiveness (even virtuous forgiveness) condones the offense it forgives. But it is doubtful that this is what Kolnai means. Not taking revenge is a valuable and morally-praiseworthy omission of action. One would be hard-pressed to argue successfully that taking revenge would be good for the purpose of counteracting an appearance of condonation. Thus, Kolnai probably uses “retributive response” to refer to morally-sanctioned punishment and believes that when a victim does not seek to have an offender legitimately punished, that victim condones.

Similarly, Charles Griswold says that to condone means “to collaborate in the lack of censure of an action, and perhaps to enable further wrong-doing by the offender.”<sup>19</sup> The first part of this statement seems to resonate with Kolnai’s basic

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<sup>17</sup> Aurel Kolnai, “Forgiveness,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 74 (1973-74): 95.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Griswold, 47.

definition of condonation (i.e., the condoner refrains from a retributive response). Despite the agreement of both conceptions and the fact that both capture some elements of some cases of condonation, this condition is too broad. While failing to censure or refraining from a retributive response may be a characteristic of some types of condonation, not every instance when a victim does not censure is an instance of condonation. The lack of censure of an action can occur for many reasons other than condonation. People can be vehemently against a wrongdoing and claim to not condone the action but have very compelling and morally permissible reasons for not outwardly censuring the offense. For example, small or even moderate slights may not morally require an outward response. Serious offenses may not be censured by a victim because the victim is in no social position to censure the offender or because the victim or her family would receive terrible consequences if she outwardly censured the offense. Of course it can be argued that a victim *must* censure the offense in order to behave morally, but such arguments are unconvincing to the person who must suffer the consequences and to many who are outside observers. A young woman who believes it is wrong for the “safety officers” of her village to physically abuse her for no good reason does not condone the wrong even though she may believe she has to put up with it in order to survive. Thus, withholding censure is not sufficient in itself to constitute condonation.

The second part of Griswold’s definition suggests that condonation occurs when the lack of censure possibly enables “further wrong-doing by the offender.” Although this part of the definition points out something that may be a characteristic of many instances of condonation, it also seems to describe something that may not have to qualify as condonation. This definition does not take into account those people who are not in a position to censure the particular offender or prevent him from behaving in certain ways in the future. If one does not prevent others’ future wrongdoing because one does not have the power or authority or social position to do so, one is not guilty of condoning.

For example, if another person’s twelve-year-old child is using profanity in the context of a normal conversation with his friend in a shopping mall, no one should claim that another parent condones the use of profanity by twelve-year-olds even though she does not censure him or follow him around the mall, lecturing him if he says something

with which she disagrees. Even though she does not go to extreme measures to prevent him from continuing to use profanity in his future conversations, she is not guilty of condoning even though she is tacitly enabling him to do the unwanted behavior of which she disapproves. Suppose that it is, in fact, wrong for the twelve-year-old to use profane language. It seems that the only way that another parent condones this use of profanity is if she believes that it is permissible and acceptable for him to use such language, if the twelve-year old honestly asks her opinion on the topic and she declines to give it, or if she actively encourages him to continue to speak in this manner. Condonation occurs for this parent, not when it is not her place to correct him, and not when she indirectly allows him to continue using the profanity, but when she accepts it as being permissible or does not express disapproval of it when there is an appropriate outlet for such expression. Therefore, not censuring and not preventing future wrongdoing in others does not necessarily qualify a victim as a condoner.<sup>20</sup>

Griswold's understanding of condonation can be phrased another way. He says, following the distinctions between approving and disapproving permissiveness that were originally distinguished by P. M. Hughes, "One may condone in the sense of accepting while not disapproving (by not holding the wrong-doing against its author), or in the sense of tolerating while disapproving (a sort of "look the other way" or "putting up with it" strategy)."<sup>21</sup> For the same reasons that one does not necessarily condone even though one does not censure or prevent future wrongdoing, the last part of this definition (i.e., tolerating while disapproving) is also flawed. The first part of this definition is helpful, however, and it provides an explanation for why offering illegitimate excuses for wrongdoing is morally problematic. In Chapter Two's section on forgiveness and excusing, it was suggested that when minimal forgivers fail to judge that wrongdoing is wrong or that a wrongdoer has done bad, and instead, make illegitimate excuses<sup>22</sup> to

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<sup>20</sup> This discussion is only to show that Griswold's definition is too wide. It is to defend certain people from being charged with condonation. I do not mean to speak against those people who may feel that they can go beyond normal social roles in order to stand for what is good and speak out against what is evil. These people play a vital social role, but they are not the topic here. All victims do not need to play such a role in order to not be guilty of condonation.

<sup>21</sup> P. M. Hughes, "Moral Anger, Forgiving, and Condoning," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 26 (1995): 114, quoted in Griswold, 46.

<sup>22</sup> An illegitimate excuse may include a sentiment like "boys will be boys" when applied to a teenager who is found guilty of driving while intoxicated. An example of a legitimate excuse

lighten or absolve the wrongness of the offense, they are morally wrong for doing so. The part of Griswold's definition that explains condonation as "accepting while not disapproving" explains why illegitimate excuse-makers condone. They accept the offense and explain away its wrongness or the offender's culpability, thus, not disapproving. Hence, when someone does not disapprove of a wrongdoing, he condones it.

Although someone can also condone in each of the ways that Griswold suggests, it is not necessarily the case that a person condones just because he does something like tolerating while disapproving. A definition of condonation provided by Jean Hampton helps to reveal why this is so. Hampton emphasizes the possible condoner's feelings and beliefs and their association with the way he or she stands for or against the transgression. Hampton defines condonation as "the acceptance, without moral protest (either inward or outward), of an action which ought to warrant such protest, made possible, first, by ridding oneself of the judgment that the action is wrong, so that its performer cannot be a wrongdoer, and, second, by ridding oneself of any attendant feelings (such as those which are involved in resentment) which signify one's protest of the action."<sup>23</sup>

Hampton's definition of condonation helps show how Griswold and Hughes' view of condonation has over-extended the descriptive power it deserves. In order to condone, a victim not only has to rid herself of "any attendant feelings (such as those which are involved in resentment) which signify one's protest of the action," but, as Hampton suggests, she must rid herself of the judgment that the action is wrong. It is possible that both of these conditions are not always necessary. Hampton's definition captures the truth, however, that a victim does not always have to outwardly protest in order to not condone. When an inward protest occurs, this may be enough to indicate that one does not condone the offense even if an outward protest does not occur. When the judgment remains that the offense is wrong and that the offender is a wrongdoer, this may be enough to indicate that one does not condone the offense. The young woman who suffers physical abuse at the hands of the "safety officers" in her village does not

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is that the offender, who shot and wounded your friend, was a police officer who was firing at a gunman when your friend got in the way.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Hampton, "Forgiveness, Resentment, and Hatred," in Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 40.

condone, even though she survives by putting up with the offense, as long as she inwardly protests the offense or recognizes that the attacks are wrong.<sup>24</sup>

Hampton's definition is compatible with the notion that a person being in a state of victimization by a particular offender does not necessarily give that person the authority, power, or social clout to censure the offender. Becoming a victim bestows a victim with an obligation to behave as well as possible in the context of the wrongdoing. It also may allow the victim to occupy a position of a creditor (whether actually or symbolically) in the context of certain damages that the offender needs to repair, apologies that should be made, or explanations that should be given.<sup>25</sup> But being a creditor in this sense does not automatically mean that the victim can place the offender under arrest, can personally punish him, or can dictate his future behavior and attitudes, nor does it make him morally responsible to do these things. Thus, a victim's context and situational particulars affect whether or not his response condones.

In order to show the type of conduct and attitudes that always condone, here is a list of several ways that a victim can be guilty of condoning an offense: First, a victim condones the offense done against him if he fails to censure it even though he has the power to censure it and has no good, overriding reasons to refrain from censuring it.

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<sup>24</sup> Someone might object to my view by saying that if I consider an inward protest to be enough to prevent condonation, I should also consider it to be enough for a victim to forgive inwardly (according to the precepts of the virtue) without him doing something to outwardly advance the ideal self of the offender. *Forgiveness* automatically motivates a victim to want to perform actions, provided that they seem wise after some deliberation has occurred. If actions would be ineffective, would put the victim or someone else in significant danger, would inhibit the goal of promoting goodness, *et cetera*, then the victim would not perform such actions. Nevertheless, just as a victim becomes guilty of condoning if he does nothing in the absence of these or similar conditions, a person does not forgive virtuously if he does not act when there are no overriding considerations to prevent him from acting. If a virtuously forgiving victim is prevented from acting by external forces, he will still wish that he could have done something to advance the offender's ideal self.

Another consideration is that, other things being equal, *being* virtuous usually requires more effort than refraining from doing something immoral. Thus, one may have to work harder to forgive virtuously than to not condone. Perhaps this is why a person who forgives virtuously is required to *do* something with fewer exceptions than a person who merely wishes to avoid condoning.

<sup>25</sup> Exline and Baumeister think of forgiveness as a cancellation of a debt owed to the victim by the wrongdoer. See Julie Juola Exline and Roy F. Baumeister, "Expressing Forgiveness and repentance: Benefits and Barriers" in *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoresen (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 1-14.

People who are willing to leave wrongdoers uncorrected for the sake of convenience, or those who do not levy some sort of protest against the wrongdoing even though they have the authority and responsibility to correct it (and no other moral reason not to correct it) are guilty of condoning. This is true even if the victim disapproves or inwardly protests the offense. Second, the victim condones the offense when there becomes a morally acceptable means of fixing the situation that creates the offense but the victim fails to pursue it without having a compelling, morally permissible reason to not accept it. For example, the young village woman eventually condones the abuse done to her if she becomes aware and convinced that the village now has effective and compassionate people in authority and who desire to punish those who take advantage of the weak, but she refuses to seek out their help and allows herself to continue to be victimized. Third, the victim condones the offense if she already accepts the alleged moral permissibility of the wrongdoing committed against her. For example, the slave thinks that it is morally permissible for her master to enslave her since she is the type of person who deserves to be enslaved. Fourth, the victim comes to condone the offense if she deceives herself into thinking that the offense that she once knew to be wrong is morally acceptable. Think of a woman who once hated getting beaten by her husband but who is now grateful for her husband's physical "correction" because she has come to believe that women who do not get beaten by their husbands are unloved. Fifth, the victim condones if she decides to perpetuate the form of wrongdoing that once offended her. This is what occurs when an abused child grows up to be a remorseless child abuser.

The crux of condonation seems to be about whether or not a person assumes a realistically strong enough internal and/or external stance in favor of morality and Goodness and against immorality and Evil, given their circumstances. This observation coincides with Griswold's belief that one condones as one accepts an offense while not disapproving of it. It shows why some people actually condone when they do not censure, or when they enable future wrongdoing, or when they tolerate the wrongdoing while disagreeing with it. It helps show why others in these situations do not condone.

### **Response to the "Condonation" Criticism**

The nature of condonation has been addressed here because some opponents of

unconditional forgiveness claim that unconditional forgivers condone the offense because the offender is not required to change, apologize, or make reparations before he is forgiven. These critics think that unconditional forgivers get rid of anger and resentment too quickly, fail to put a stop to the offender behaving immorally again in the future, and do not openly protest against the offense. If definitions like several of those discussed above are used to justify these conclusions, and scholars overlook the situations that make these definitions too broad, then many people wrongly believe that unconditional forgiveness condones. The problem caused by applying excessively wide definitions of condonation to forgiveness is exacerbated when scholars misunderstand the nature of virtuous forgiveness.

Before providing details about why virtuous forgiveness does not condone, one preliminary remark should be made about those who have *Forgivingness* or are intending to forgive virtuously. Since condonation is ultimately about whether a person takes a strong enough internal and external stance towards Goodness and against Evil and immorality, the person with *Forgivingness* is very likely to not want to condone wrongdoing. In many respects, the person with *Forgivingness* cares greatly about morality and about standing against what is wrong and for what is good because this is what she believes she has been doing in her attempts to develop the virtue. Because of this, the virtuously forgiving victim is very unlikely to condone in the ways that someone who is apathetic about morality is likely to condone and she will try not to condone in other ways since she intends for her actions and attitudes to stand for goodness and against immorality. Whether her actions and attitudes actually condone in a way that she does not realize is something that critics might think is debatable, although I will argue that they do not.

In the last section, it was noted that someone can condone an offense in many ways, but not necessarily in every way that satisfies some of the broad definitions mentioned. Conditionalists and unconditionalists may agree that someone condones an offense if:

1. he does not censure the offender, even though the offense is not insignificant and the victim has the power and authority to censure;
2. if he enables the offender to continue to offend in the future even though he



has the ability and position to prevent it and does not neglect to prevent him for a greater good,<sup>26</sup> or

3. if he tolerates while disapproving yet has nothing external stopping him from making a stronger stance against the offense and has no reason to think he should uphold goodness in a potentially more effective way than preventing the wrongdoing.

With a different emphasis, Jean Hampton's definition shows that condonation can occur

4. when someone accepts an offense without inward or outward protest because he has eliminated his judgment that the offense was wrong or the offender is a wrongdoer and has gotten rid of the feelings that protest the action.

If an opponent of unconditional forgiveness grants these definitions of condonation, two things can be said from his perspective. First, a forgiver must inwardly or outwardly protest the offense unless his reason for not doing so falls into one of the acceptable exception categories that were determined in the previous section. (For example, the victim lacks the power or authority to protest or censure, the offense is relatively insignificant and does not warrant censure or inward protest, or the victim has a morally permissible and goodness-honoring reason to not inwardly or outwardly protest.) For the victim who supposedly forgives virtuously, this means: 1a) If he fails to discipline the offender or have him disciplined by an appropriate third party, and the lack of discipline is not the result of a legitimate exception, then he condones. 1b) If a forgiver does not outwardly discipline because of a legitimate exception, then he must maintain an inward protest, usually of anger or resentment, so he does not condone. Second, if a forgiver wrongly rids himself of the judgment that the wrongdoer is a wrongdoer, he condones.<sup>27</sup>

A defender of virtuous, unconditional forgiveness can address these concerns in several ways. Concerning the second statement—i.e., if a forgiver wrongly rids himself

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<sup>26</sup> Not preventing a future offense yet not condoning might occur when a policeman allows certain illegal and immoral behavior to continue until he can have access to people who are in charge of ordering the offenses rather than those who simply follow orders.

<sup>27</sup> "Wrongly" ridding oneself of the judgment that an offender is a wrongdoer means that there are no legitimate excuses that lessen or completely absolve the offender's responsibility for the offense, but one makes illegitimate excuses for him or redefines what is immoral so as to see the offender as someone who does not do wrong.

of the judgment that the offender is a wrongdoer, he condones—it is important to notice that a person who is inclined to develop a multi-faceted and altruistic virtue like *Forgiveness* is also going to be inclined to attempt to value morality when possible. Most of the facets of *Forgiveness* do not come naturally and must be developed with intent, presumably because the person believes they are morally good facets to have as character traits. Once he begins to purposely develop the virtue, ignoring significant wrongdoing or considering wrongdoing to be good will be against the virtuously forgiving victim's transformed inclination. Another thing that a critic should bear in mind is that for forgiveness of any kind to occur, the victim must recognize that the offense has occurred and that it is wrong. This recognition is a prerequisite for forgiveness. If the victim thought the offender was not wrong in performing the action or if he thought the offender was not responsible for the offense, then the victim (barring some significant harm) would not have to forgive the offender since he would not think there was anything to forgive. The fact that a victim is concerned about the offender's need to make moral improvements to such an extent that he thinks the offender warrants forgiveness shows that forgiveness does not permit the victim to think the offense was permissible or the offender was right to commit it. Hence, no form of virtuous forgiveness condones a wrongdoing by allowing the victim to judge the offense as permissible.

Now consider the first statement (i.e., that the victim must outwardly or inwardly protest in the absence of morally permissible exceptions) and the two inferences about discipline that can be derived from it. The defender of virtuous unconditional forgiveness can remind her opponents that the person with *Forgiveness* naturally has an inclination to outwardly protest through his desire to discipline. Because of the multifaceted nature of the virtue, which affects the thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and actions of its possessor, the virtuously forgiving victim truly desires to help the offender advance towards his ideal self. Many of the facets of *Forgiveness* usually make a virtuously forgiving victim protest outwardly with the same vigor as a conditional forgiver would, although with differing motivations. This victim may use any reasonable and morally permissible means to advance the offender's ultimate good, including personally-administered discipline and third party punishment.

It should be relatively uncontroversial that a victim's acceptance of (perhaps as tacit agreement with) the third party's punishment of the offender on behalf of the State or the moral community counts as just as good of a way to not condone the offense as a morally and socially permissible personal protest is. While personal protest is more directly personal, it is also more limited. When an offense is severe enough to concern a third party's punishment, it is likely to be too severe to be addressed proportionately with the victim's actions. So third party punishment may even be a better (although vicarious) means to protest the offense. As long as the victim affirms the third party's correction of the offender—correction that is already established as reasonably proportionate—then she has also protested the offense vicariously through the third party and so, does not condone. Since those who possess *Forgiveness* necessarily consider the offenders they are forgiving to be wrongdoers and these victims discipline or use outside punishment unless their situation calls for an exception, the virtuously forgiving victims do not condone in this way.

Again, it is highly unlikely that a person with *Forgiveness* will condone because of passivity or a failure to outwardly stand against the offense when she should. Despite the active tendencies of *Forgiveness*, however, the virtuously forgiving victim may sometimes determine that the best course of action to help the offender become his ideal self is to not levy an outward protest. If the forgiver is motivated towards inaction for sound moral reasons or for insurmountable practical considerations, the forgiver still is not necessarily guilty of condonation because her inaction falls into one of the exception categories and is still accompanied by inward disapproval of the offense. As Hampton's definition of condonation shows, such a non-active forgiver—since her outward inaction qualifies as a reasonable exception—would only be guilty of condonation if she also lacked an appropriate inward protest to the offense. But since her inaction exists for the sake of addressing the offender as a wrongdoer and for trying to help him arise from the wrongdoing which he authored, or else exists because of external constraints, she necessarily has raised an inward protest of the offense in the form of disapproval of and deliberation about how to respond. Thus, the outwardly inactive forgiver who undertakes the virtuous forgiveness process does not condone.

The other main problem that conditionalists claim is true of unconditional

forgivers is that they lack an adequate inward protest against the offense. Many conditionalists say that unconditional forgivers do not stay angry long enough; their inward protest is too brief because they forgive too soon or too easily. It is reasonable for the critic to make such an accusation since virtuously forgiving victims typically do begin the forgiveness process more easily and quickly than is customary, and they do so without making the offender earn it. The supporter of virtuous, unconditional forgiveness, however, can respond in at least three ways in defense of the position. These responses explain why the virtuously forgiving victim who does not outwardly protest (due to an exception) and supposedly lacks sufficient anger, does not condone.

First, as Chapter 2 argued, the time that conditionalists think a victim is required to feel angry is established by what people in a given culture normally seem to do rather than an ontological feature of reality. It makes little sense to claim that forgivers are immoral for not holding to a somewhat arbitrary standard that has been established merely by custom. It may appear to some who place a great deal of value on the customary anger time frame that a forgiver condones when he does not remain angry for as long as they think he should, but the forgiver may not, in fact, be condoning. To condone, he would have to relinquish his mental protest (whether it be in the form of anger or something else) for morally problematic reasons. While some minimal forgivers give up their anger quickly for immoral reasons, causing them to condone, the virtuously forgiving victim always maintains the judgment that the offense was wrong and that the wrongdoer should not have done it. His forgiveness is not the reflection of confusion about the impermissibility of the offense. Instead, his forgiveness—with its view of the offender as someone needing to be more like his ideal self and his actions designed to help encourage this goal—reflects his disapproval, and ongoing disapproval, of the offense. To those people who misunderstand the nature of virtuous forgiveness, it may still appear as if some unconditional forgivers condone. Nonetheless, it is not the purpose or responsibility of virtuous forgiveness to inform critics of its nature; its purpose and responsibility is to cause the forgiver to feel, think, and act virtuously. This may mean that the virtuously forgiving victim may inform the offender that his forgiveness does not entail his approval of the offense. Perhaps that rejection will be obvious through his disciplinary actions. Whether or not the virtue applied in a particular situation requires

the victim to inform the offender that he does not accept the offense as permissible, this does not mean that the virtue itself must have an observable mechanism for proclaiming its resistance to condonation to all outside observers.

The second thing to notice is that the typical, virtuously forgiving victim will experience an internal protest in the form of initial anger and an ongoing but modified form of anger that does not resent or hate. As described in the last chapter, double-concern/double-construal anger usually occurs in a virtuously forgiving victim and it is compatible with *Forgiveness* because ultimately it is not offender-oppositional. While this form of anger is not accompanied by hate, malice, or similar emotions, it does not ignore the fact that the offender is a wrongdoer, nor does the forgiver experience gladness towards the offender because he is a wrongdoer. Double-concern/double-construal anger almost equally mixes two concerns—i.e., that the wrongdoer is morally flawed and the offense is morally wrong with the belief that the wrongdoer has an intrinsically good, ideal self that needs to be actualized so that the wrongdoing will be less likely to occur in the future. It stands against the offense and the character traits that caused it, while it stands for the offender in another sense that prevents the victim from resenting the offender. Although it is not an offender-oppositional form of anger, it is an inward protest against immorality. It may linger, or reoccur when memory provokes it, for an indefinite amount of time. A virtuously forgiving victim might always remain angry that a significant immoral offense occurred even though it may appear to others as if his anger has dissolved. This is because people typically think only of the anger that lashes out or forcefully opposes what it does not like. They are less likely to interpret a more loving form of anger as anger. Nevertheless, the virtuously forgiving victim has the ability to feel disapproval of an offense and stand against it while simultaneously standing for the offender's ultimate interests.

A third thing that should be recognized is that anger, no matter its form, does not have a monopoly on the way people may permissibly, internally, protest wrongdoing. Although they are rare and few, it is conceivable that some moral saints or sages may have completely transcended their anger. Other virtuously forgiving victims who are not saints or sages, but who interpret some offenses done against them as less important than many of us would interpret them, may not get angry and still may not condone.

Experiencing an emotion, or experiencing it continually, is not the only way to inwardly protest.<sup>28</sup> Feeling anger is not necessarily better than having the disapproving knowledge that an offense is wrong. Just as a person may not feel at any given time that he loves his spouse, but he may have the knowledge that he loves his spouse. Given the right stimuli, his feelings of love can emerge even though those feelings cannot be ever-present. There are too many other things that have to be thought about and too many other people to interact with to expect the husband to have tender feelings of love for his wife at every moment. Similarly, it would be unrealistic to suggest that the only way for a person who does not externally protest to avoid condoning the offense is to actively and continuously feel anger or resentment. Feeling an emotion may not be a necessary method of inwardly “protesting” wrongdoing even though it may be a common method. A person can have the judgment that the offense is morally wrong and disagree with or dislike it, and, when taken in the context of the overall moral stance (at least in the sphere of moral life related to forgiving) he has towards Goodness, this can be enough to warrant the judgment that he does not condone the wrongdoing that he forgives but did not become angry about.

Therefore, the criticism levied against virtuous, unconditional forgiveness suggesting that it is likely to condone the offense, is impotent. Virtuous forgiveness does not usually entail that the offender is left undisciplined or that the forgiver is passive. Virtuous forgiveness is not equivalent to a lack of inward protest. When a virtuously forgiving victim who does not (for morally permissible reasons) outwardly protest and does not persist in feeling a particular type of offender-oppositional anger against his offender, this does not indicate that he condones the wrongdoing. Such a forgiver still recognizes the immorality of the offense and continues to disagree with it. But in showing a concern for morality in this form of rejection of the offense, the forgiver also demonstrates his positive stance towards those principles that he believes are good. In doing so, he does not condone.

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<sup>28</sup> I am using as an example the continual consciousness of a felt emotion. I do not think that the critics of UF expect anger and resentment to be continually consciousness. I am speaking of this in this way here for two reasons. The first is to draw attention to the ambiguity in their criticism. The second is to show the unreasonableness of some of their expectations for the one who resents. The third is to show the potential similarities in the frequency of anger that a person who forgives and a person who does not forgive may have, provided that the latter is not completely irrational.

## Forgiveness, Servility, and Self-Disrespect

Another major objection to unconditional forgiveness is the idea that it arises from or causes character flaws. Recent scholarship has been most concerned with preventing the character flaw of servility. In an often-referenced article from 1988, Norvin Richards writes that forgiveness that overrules a trait or feelings that any decent character must possess “fosters bad character, no less than being satisfied with bad traits one already has. Enacting such an inclination is enacting a flaw in one’s character.”<sup>29</sup> In *Before Forgiving*, Jeffrie Murphy states his version of the view that a lack of resentment or a “too-ready willingness to forgive” can be a sign of servility.<sup>30</sup> He says,

victims may be harmed symbolically as well as physically by those who wrong them. Wrongdoing is in part a communicative act, an act that gives out a degrading or insulting message to the victim—the 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; in this way resentment may be tied to the virtue of self-respect. (A person who forgives immediately, on the other hand, may lack proper self-respect and be exhibiting the vice of servility.) 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>31</sup>

He clarifies further,

I am not concerned to argue that one is *obligated* to feel resentment or to retain it, only that feeling and retaining such a feeling is not always wrong and is sometimes, for some people, a mark of self-respect. What I am concerned to stress is that, while a failure to resent can be consistent with proper self-respect, it sometimes is not. There are, I think, cases that should be troubling to the uncritical boosters for universal forgiveness—cases where the victim does not “see” his or her 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

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<sup>29</sup> Richards, 82.

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrie Murphy, “Forgiveness in Counseling: A Philosophical Perspective,” in *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*, ed. Sharon Lamb and Jeffrie G. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 44.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

his or her moral status and dignity in the first place.<sup>32</sup>

Murphy's statements bring up the issue of the communicative power of wrongdoing and the fact that resentment can be a particularly responsive emotion to help the victim reject the message that accompanies the wrongdoing. It links the feeling of resentment with the victim's self-respect. But the truth of these statements is limited, as he explains.

Murphy is right to suggest that it is not a moral requirement to feel resentment and that feeling resentment is not necessarily a mark of self-respect. He is also right to suggest that victims may fail to resent being mistreated because they lack self-respect. Many theorists, however, over-emphasize the potency of the expressive power of wrongdoing and too closely connect self-respect, resentment, and moral obligation. Charles Griswold, for example, has created a theory of *Forgiveness* maintaining that people who do not forgive conditionally are either hard-hearted because they do not forgive when they should, or servile because they forgive when they should not. Unconditional forgivers are servile, according to Griswold's explanation of the virtue. Servility is a severe form of self-disrespect.

The theme of the legitimacy of anger and resentment runs deep in the criticisms of unconditional forgiveness. Many scholars assume that if a reasonable onlooker would be legitimately angry over the offense that has been done to a particular victim, then the victim not only has a right to be angry about it, but must continue to be angry or resentful as long as the offender has not repented. They argue that those who let go of their anger before this point disrespect themselves. They do not show, to themselves and others, that they are members of humanity who deserve better treatment. An omission of resentment, then, is potentially a sign of a character flaw—of slavishness; of servility. Servility is a lack of some important form of self-respect.

Self-respect is on the horizon as one of the most celebrated values. Robin Dillon heralds its great value as undeniable. Self-respect allows people to recognize and respond to themselves as moral equals and as equal bearers of rights. But self-respect is not just about one's sense of personal importance. It bears on public discussions, too, as seen in studies that show that those persons who have a good understanding of their own

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



worth usually do not contribute to violent crime.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, self-respect not only has personal and social ramifications, but it has come to be treated as a moral standard. For instance, Boxhill suggests that what makes some actions or attitudes wrong is that they negatively affect self-respect.<sup>34</sup> Operating with a similar sentiment, Shelby Weitzel claims that condonation (overlooking wrongdoing) is *prima facie* wrong because it belies a lack of self-respect.<sup>35</sup> It is not surprising that some philosophers who theorize about forgiveness have suggested that it is morally wrong to forgive if that act of forgiveness harms the forgiver's self-respect or makes him servile. Although he did not use the term, servility is a likely candidate for the character flaw against which Richards cautions those who are considering whether or not to forgive.

Servility, broadly described, is that which is characteristic of slavish behavior and attitudes. According to Thomas Hill, and as general consensus has it, servility is a lack of self-respect that involves a tendency of not knowing, understanding, or appreciating one's basic rights as a human person.<sup>36</sup> Servility is an offense against morality. Hill explains, "To the extent that a person gives tacit consent to humiliations incompatible with this respect, he will be acting as if he waives a right which he cannot in fact give up. To do this, barring special explanations, would mark one as servile."<sup>37</sup> Avoiding servility is a duty to oneself and to others and by virtue of this, some argue, it may lead to a duty to be unforgiving. I will discuss the nature of self-respect, as well as self-disrespect and servility, in greater detail later in this chapter.

Now, I will show why many conditionalists emphasize the connection between self-respect and conditional forgiving, and conversely, servility and unconditional forgiveness. I will first present the critics' argument that unconditional forgivers are

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<sup>33</sup> Robin S. Dillon, "Introduction," in *Dignity, Character, and Self-Respect* ed. Robin S. Dillon (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-49.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard R. Boxill, "Self Respect and Protest," in *Dignity, Character, and Self-Respect* ed. Robin S. Dillon (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> Shelby Weitzel, "Forgiving the Unrepentant: Self-Respect and the Role of Third Parties," in *Truth, Reconciliation, and Evil*, ed. Margaret Sönser Breen (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi B.V., 2004), 224.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas E. Hill, Jr., *Autonomy and Self-Respect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas E. Hill, "Servility and Self-Respect," in *Dignity, Character, and Self-Respect*, ed. Robin S. Dillon (New York: Routledge, 1995), 89.

servile or self-disrespecting when they fail to experience enough anger. Then, I will discuss the related criticism that victims are servile if they ignore or fail to use the communicative power that outward protest has against the offense. Responses will be given to both of these criticisms, and ultimately, they will be shown as inadequate criticisms of UUF. Finally, using Robin Dillon's conception of self-respect, I will provide an analysis of how the aspects of a virtuously forgiving victim's self-respect is affected if the victim were to forgive or be unforgiving. The conclusion is that a person who is capable of forgiving virtuously should always forgive and is not self-disrespecting or servile when doing so.

**The Servility in Deficient Anger.** Servility and other forms of self-disrespect are related to forgiveness in the sense that servility may improperly limit or prevent lingering anger or resentment. According to Robin Dillon, those persons who do not resent probably lack proper recognition self-respect; that is, they do not recognize and respect their dignity, which involves appreciating themselves as moral equals to others, as moral agents, and as individuals.<sup>38</sup> Jean Hampton explains that “[r]esentment is a kind of anger which protests the demeaning treatment” and she claims that we “criticize people for *not* feeling resentment...if we believe this shows they have too low an evaluation of themselves.”<sup>39</sup> Since, as Murphy notes, morality should be cared about and not just believed in, anger and resentment are appropriate and even necessary for the moral life.<sup>40</sup> Resenting wrongs done to me can show that I respect my inherent worth as a person, just as my anger or indignation shows my respect for other people's inherent worth when injustice befalls them.<sup>41</sup> Charles Griswold asserts, “because you also do respect and esteem yourself, your indignant resentment is personal as well; for you stand not just on

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<sup>38</sup> Robin S. Dillon, “Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political,” *Ethics* 107 (Jan 1997): 230.

<sup>39</sup> Jean Hampton, “Forgiveness, Resentment, and Hatred,” 55.

<sup>40</sup> Bishop Joseph Butler, in his seminal analysis of forgiveness and resentment, also views resentment as expected, appropriate, and morally required; it is implanted in us by God. Joseph Butler, “Sermon IX,” in *The Works of Bishop Butler*, ed. David E. White (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 96-102.

<sup>41</sup> Murphy reasons that if it is “proper” for me to experience moral indignation over wrongs done to others because others have inherent worth, then it is proper for me, because I have also inherent worth, to be resentful when wrongs are done to me.

the ground that “it is not to be done,” but that it is not to be done *to you*.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, these scholars conclude that if I fail to resent wrongdoing done to me, then there is a good chance that I lack recognition respect for myself or I am servile. Other contemporary theorists extend this conclusion to their belief that if I do not resent long enough (that is, if I forgive too soon), then my servility has been indicated. David Novitz writes, “People who forgive too readily...do not manifest that right degree of self-respect; they underestimate their own worth and fail to take their projects and entitlements seriously enough.”<sup>43</sup> In Dillon’s terms, these people lack some form of recognition self-respect, a concept that will be explained in detail later.

Initial anger is usually a default position of human psychology. Initial anger does not occur, or is short-lived, when one of four things happen. First, a victim is not aroused to anger because he does not yet recognize that a wrongdoing has occurred. Second, initial anger does not occur when one has trained oneself, for moral reasons, to be less emotionally affected by certain wrongdoings committed against oneself than one normally would be. Third, it is absent when someone finds it unreasonable or unnecessary to be angry for a particular offense (e.g., a cat burglar has something that she originally stole from a third party stolen from her; instead of being angry, she resigns to a “what goes around comes around” mentality.) Fourth, it fails to occur when someone is servile completely or is severely self-disrespecting in the area concerning the offense.<sup>44</sup>

In the first two cases there may be no moral wrongdoing on the part of the victim,<sup>45</sup> especially if the victim who fails to recognize the offense does so because of a lack of knowledge of the situation rather than an inadequate understanding of morality.

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<sup>42</sup> Griswold, 45.

<sup>43</sup> David Novitz, “Forgiveness and Self-Respect,” in *In Defense of Sin*, ed. John Portmann (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 141.

<sup>44</sup> One sign of servility falls under the first possibility mentioned here as to why anger might not arise in a victim: he does not recognize that he has been wronged. For the sake of simplicity, the first possibility does not include these cases but refers to a lack of knowledge (not moral knowledge) of the offense. The fourth possibility—i.e., that the victim is servile—includes those cases in which a person is aware of the offense but does not believe he should be offended by it even though other people might be, since he considers himself to be of lesser value than the offender.

<sup>45</sup> Not yet recognizing a wrongdoing is only morally wrong if the person should have already recognized the offense. If they refuse to see the offense, are self-deceived about its wrongness, etc., then they are at fault. However, there is nothing that necessarily embeds these types of epistemic flaws in *Forgiveness*.

Having an inadequate understanding of morality only results in servility when the person recognizes the offense as bad when done to others but not herself, and the actual difference between herself and others does not actually reflect a moral distinction. In the third case, there is nothing servile about the victim not being angry as long as it results from views about the situation rather than about one's worth. The case of the cat burglar shows that there are some victims who recognize that they have been the victim of wrongdoing but do not believe they have the right to be angry, and yet, are not servile in any relevant way. Servility, mentioned in the fourth scenario, is a condition that arises when someone systematically believes untrue things about the relative disvalue of his or her personhood as compared with that of other people. It is a moral flaw.

Some people have the moral flaw of servility. One does not have it merely because one finds it unnecessary to be angry over a particular offense, because he has morally permissible motivations to rid himself of anger quickly, or because he wants to be in control of his emotional life rather than making his emotions dependent on his offender. The person whose forgiveness is aligned with or comes from *Forgiveness* either declines to be resentful because he has morally permissible reasons for not being resentful or his initial anger is swiftly modified because his character has already been transformed by such reasons and the motivations and affects that accompany them. Although some critics suggest that such people are servile, the burden of proof is on them. It is far from obvious that people with a reasonable but unusually intense moral commitment to interacting with others as peacefully, stoically, or as virtuously as possible are servile.

It is also doubtful that those who have moral love for even their enemies are manifesting servility or any form of diminished self-respect merely because they have moral love or allow it to motivate them to action. Being loving towards others does not automatically qualify someone as self-disrespecting or servile. Servility must include the misbelief that one's fundamental worth (or one's status) as a human being is not equivalent to that of others, or it must manifest an inappropriate regard for the particular human being one is. While individual manifestations of *Forgiveness's* action component may produce various responses that could be evaluated as self-disrespecting or not, they are not the result of servility and will not categorically show self-disrespect.

Virtuous forgiveness is incompatible with the misbeliefs that a servile person must hold and since the forgiver's actions are largely the consequence of his beliefs and emotions, this leaves little room for his actions to manifest self-disrespect. As discussed in the last chapter's section of envy, *Forgiveness* is supported by the structural virtue, magnanimity, which is homologous and ancillary to moral love's characteristic of self-forgetfulness. As Rosalind Hursthouse defines it, "magnanimity" is the quality one has when one is "well-disposed in respect of judgements of one's own worth, neither over- nor under-estimating it."<sup>46</sup> It prevents the virtue possessor from having too low of an estimation of her personal worth.

Without magnanimity, a victim would be unable to forgive virtuously because she would likely become envious of her offender for the unfair advantage that his wrongdoing may have given him. But envy is logically incompatible with ideal and virtuous forgiveness. Similarly, ideally virtuous forgiveness would not be of the type that allows the victim to forgive in a severely impoverished way. Since magnanimity is necessarily present in *Forgiveness*, it prevents the victim from being servile. The necessarily-occurring, underlying presence of magnanimity acts to prevent the virtuously forgiving victim from seeing herself as less morally valuable than other people and to an overwhelming degree, it prevents her responses to her offender from manifesting self-disrespect. *Forgiveness* logically prevents impoverished forgiving; magnanimity—a facet of *Forgiveness*—logically excludes servility and self-disrespecting forgiving.

Jean Hampton claims that we criticize those people who do not experience anger in the face of mistreatment, viewing them as servile. But Hampton does not seem to be right about this. Glen Pettigrove provides counterexamples:

One such case is that of Thomas Bilney, a priest who was condemned to be burned at the stake for preaching Protestant doctrines. "When brought to the stake" his "patience, fortitude . . . devotion . . . [and] meekness" gained him the sympathy and admiration both of the crowd and of a number of Catholic clergy who were present. Another case, which Hume discusses at length, is that of King Charles I, whose meekness was displayed in his "equitability of temper" both with respect to his change in fortune after he had been placed under house arrest and also toward his political enemies in the lead up to his execution. It was manifested in the charge he gave to

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<sup>46</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, "A False Doctrine of the Mean," in *Aristotle's Ethics: Critical Essays*, ed. Nancy Sherman (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 106.

Bishop Juxon “to inculcate on his son the forgiveness of his murderers,” which Charles reiterated as he stood before the executioner’s block.<sup>47</sup>

As opposed to Hampton’s suggestion, it seems that some people praise others for experiencing less or no (or a different type of) anger towards their personal offenders. Their uniqueness or lack of anger does not necessarily suggest that they are servile. This is the case for those who forgive according to the virtue of *Forgiveness*.

Another reason that it is wrong to think that a victim who does not experience anger when being mistreated, or who does not experience it in the customary way, is servile is because of the mistaken assumption that many critics use to support this belief. The mistaken assumption is that the intensity of a victim’s concern for himself is a direct reflection of his concern for moral principles. Critics of unconditional forgiveness seem to believe that if one does not show concern for his own interests, he must not be concerned for others in his situation and this is likely due to his servile belief that he, and others like him, are not deserving of the same, basic treatment as other people deserve. John B. Howell explains the flaw in this assumption as he discusses some of Jeffrie Murphy’s comments on the subject. Howell states:

While I understand Murphy’s point, that one without a personal moral sensibility may lack a moral sensibility altogether, I do not think one point entails the other. Certainly there can be individuals like Murphy describes (he mentions the Nietzschean superman in the next paragraph), but I think there can also be individuals whose lack of personal concern is accompanied by a more refined or developed concern for morality. . . . Jesus, Socrates, and Gandhi all seem basically unconcerned with the injustice done to them personally. But their lack of personal concern seems to be in the service of an almost superhuman concern for what is right in general. These men sacrifice themselves for their fellow humans, and while one cannot be sure that they feel *no* resentment or anger of any sort, they certainly do not seem to *care* about the injustices perpetrated upon them for their own sakes in the way Murphy describes. They seem to care more about the damage injustice itself does to *those who perpetrate it*.<sup>48</sup>

These examples provide a strong case against the belief that, in order to not be servile or self-disrespecting, a victim must resent offenses committed against him with the same fervency as he desires that people refrain from behaving immorally and treat others well.

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<sup>47</sup> Glen Pettigrove, “Meekness and Moral Anger,” *Ethics* 122 (January 2012): 346.

<sup>48</sup> John G. Howell III, “Forgiveness in Kierkegaard’s Ethic of Neighbor Love” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2009), 21 n.33. Emphasis in original.

In order to strengthen this point, it will help to consider Jesus's actions and beliefs in more detail. When Jesus was on the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>49</sup> Jesus' attitude of forgiveness and concern for others during a horrifying offense is evident, but so was his self-respect. He continued to live by principles that he upheld as valuable, strived to fulfill the task that he believed he had been given by God, understood (even better than his offenders) that he was being treated unfairly, and felt no shame for his actions or attitudes. In other words, he was self-respecting while he exhibited an attitude of moral love.

Although Jesus often sacrificed himself for other people's benefit, the fact that he was not suffering from servility is clear in other actions that he did and in the way he represented himself. He defended those things that he believed were important to God's kingdom on earth, through physical actions that may have seemed harsh (e.g., overturning the money-changers' tables in the temples) and through the rebuke of his own friends (e.g., he forcefully says, "Get thee behind me, Satan" to Peter).<sup>50</sup> He allowed people to worship him as deity, spoke of his own glory that he shared with God, and referenced his future reign as king. These things strongly suggest that Jesus was not servile, despite his altruism, extreme self-sacrifice, and extraordinary desire and ability to forgive his offenders. He is a good example of someone who did not experience anger in a customary way but who was neither servile nor self-disrespecting.

**The Servility in Insufficient Protest.** In addition to the claim that unconditional forgivers are servile because they do not experience sufficient anger, some critics maintain that unconditional forgivers behave with servility as they fail to vigorously reject the message sent by the offender through the offense. Another way to frame this criticism is to say that unconditional forgiveness leads to an inadequate protest of the degrading message that was sent by the offender to the victim through the offense, so it reflects or leads to the victim accepting the message that he is not worth as much as the offender. Undergirding this theory is the assumption that wrongdoing and forgiveness both have strong symbolic and communicative power. An offense sends a message to the

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<sup>49</sup> Luke 23:34 (KJV).

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 16:23 (KJV).

victim that he is not worth as much as the offender, but unforgiveness (or some other form of protest) supposedly communicates to the offender that the victim rejects that message. Critics of unconditional forgiveness claim that rejecting that message is necessary for maintaining self-respect and combatting servility.

Jean Hampton exemplifies this concept that protest (perhaps as unforgiveness) has communicative power in her discussion of a victim's desire for her offender to be punished. In order to explain how the goal of inflicting harm that is involved in retribution is not equivalent to malicious vengefulness, which she believes is morally suspect, Hampton speaks of a desire for retribution as "the victim's value 'striking back'."<sup>51</sup> She provides the example of a child who desires to beat up a bully. That desire, she claims, is neither spiteful nor malicious; it causes the child to act in order to assert his own value—his own human worth—and to diminish the wrongdoer's own inflated (and therefore false) sense of his own value compared to his victim's.<sup>52</sup> The *telos* of retributive punishment, she suggests, is "to establish goodness."<sup>53</sup> She explains that "[i]f I have value equal to that of my assailant, then that must be made manifest after I have been victimized. By victimizing me, the wrongdoer has declared himself elevated with respect to me, acting as a superior who is permitted to use me for his purposes. A false moral claim has been made. Moral reality has been denied."<sup>54</sup>

Hampton's idea about the symbolic power of asserting the equal worth of a victim and an offender through an open response to wrongdoing is revolutionary and vastly influential. In fact, it undergirds many scholars' claims that forgiveness must be conditional. They suggest that if forgiveness is not predicated on the offender either fixing the symbolic misbalance of worth or having others fix the misbalance through punishing the offender, then forgiveness shows acceptance of the misbalance. It allows the message—that the victim is not worth as much as the offender—to stand as true. This is why Bernard R. Boxill argues that a person is morally required to protest when he has

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<sup>51</sup> Jean Hampton, "The Retributive Idea," in Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 123.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.



been mistreated in order to show self-respect and to try to stop injustice.<sup>55</sup>

The communicative power of the wrongdoing should not be over-emphasized, nevertheless. The message sent by the offender (i.e., that the victim is worth less than he is) can be inwardly rejected as untrue by a victim. This is likely to be standard practice, and therefore usually easy, for a victim who possesses *Forgiveness*. A virtuously forgiving victim rarely, if ever, bases her sense of self-worth on what a wrongdoer communicates to her about his perspective of her. The self-forgetful tendency that a person with the moral love that is present in *Forgiveness* has makes her somewhat immune to the evaluations of others about her own worth or their worth, especially since it arises with magnanimity.<sup>56</sup> While the virtuously forgiving victim is human and therefore subject to human weaknesses and emotions, the victim who values the offender enough to want to promote his ideal self also will value her own ideal self to a proper degree because she will be convinced of the intrinsic value of all human beings. Her own value and worth, like that of others, will not be based on current performance or instrumental value or estimations given by other people.

Not only is the communicative power of the wrongdoing rather irrelevant to the victim with a well-developed *Forgiveness* (when she is on the receiving end of the message), but its power over victims who have a less strong grasp of the virtue should not be exaggerated either. As Alice MacLachlan states, “in many cases, the forgiver’s self-respect is not what has been damaged, but her trust and good-will for another.”<sup>57</sup> MacLachlan explains that if self-respect has not been damaged, the victim is not defending her self-respect if she responds by withholding forgiveness.

Additionally, a victim who possesses or lacks *Forgiveness* may recognize a different interpretative option. Instead of the message from the offender being interpreted as, “I’m not worth much,” a victim can take the event to mean, “Only

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<sup>55</sup> Boxill, 94.

<sup>56</sup> There are people whose self-worth has been malformed by repeated and long-term disvaluation by others. These people may be servile. Unless there is some way for them to transcend this and recover their sense of worth, apart from other people’s evaluations of it, they will not be able to develop the virtue of Forgiveness.

<sup>57</sup> MacLachlan, 195.

seriously flawed people treat others like that; *he* is a rotten person!”<sup>58</sup> If the victim takes the offense to be more indicative of the moral flaws in the character of the offender than of anything about himself, then he cannot be said to be servile even though he does not actively oppose the offender and does not “stand up for himself” in a way that would please those who prefer unforgiveness or its counterpart, conditional forgiveness.

Even though a virtuously forgiving victim is likely to easily ignore or reject the offensive message that may be attached to the offense, and even though many offenses do not carry effectively such a message with them,<sup>59</sup> the ‘lack of protest’ includes another assumption that should be addressed. It is the claim that a victim who forgives sends a very different message to the offender than one who withholds forgiveness. Forgiveness sends the message that the victim does not respect herself; unforgiveness proclaims the opposite. Once an offender earns the right to be forgiven, then the victim can remove the conditional unforgiveness in a self-respecting way.

One problem with this form of criticism is that it “defines the forgiveness in terms of the offender’s response to it.”<sup>60</sup> Virtuously given forgiveness should not be defined in this way because its primary purposes do not include ensuring that what is communicated about the worth of the victim to the offender or other people is received accurately. Virtuous forgivers use unconditional forgiveness to reclaim goodness in the context of bad. The forgiver wishes to encourage (whether or not others are cognizant of it) goodness to grow in himself and in others. While virtuous forgiveness may indirectly express something to the offender and other people, it does not exist as means of ensuring that the communication is received well. People may infer one thing or another from the

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<sup>58</sup> In other words, the message sent by the offender will be irrelevant to a virtuously forgiving victim. To those who have only a fledgling virtue, the victim may need to be reinforced by others in order to de-emphasize the effects that the message of the offender has on them. People who cannot disregard or transcend the offender’s message will not be able to virtuously forgive.

<sup>59</sup> Accidental harms and offenses that occur as a result of an offender’s negligence may be examples of offenses that do not carry such a message. Jerome Neu observes that “so far as the sinner does not understand the appeal of the sin, the usual insulting message may be detached.” Jerome Neu, “To Understand All is to Forgive All—Or is It?” in *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*, ed. Sharon Lamb and Jeffrie G. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 28. In those cases, a victim cannot be charged with servility for not combating the nonexistent or unintentionally expressed “message” carried by the offense.

<sup>60</sup> MacLachlan, 195.

offer or withholding of forgiveness, but that is only a concern for the virtuously forgiving victim insofar as he contemplates how best to encourage the offender's ideal self through his expression of or silence concerning his forgiveness and, if he decides to express it, the effects of the means by which it is expressed.

A virtuously forgiving victim can communicate his own worth to the offender just as well through utilizing disciplinary methods as he can through withholding forgiveness, even though this expression is not his purpose. On a practical note, if an offender already does not value the victim enough to abstain from harming him, then the offender is unlikely to think of the victim much differently whether or not he withholds forgiveness. Part of the beauty of *Forgiveness* is that it does not permit the victim to conceive of forgiveness merely within the confines of self-respect or other people's views. UUF recognizes that self-respect, while important, is only one thing that should be valued. UUF operates on a foundation of the person's own self-respect and places one's responses to offenses on a theoretical level of standing for the Good rather than standing to affirm oneself, which may not be done effectively through forgiveness or unforgiveness.

Another point in favor of UUF is that people are not always morally required to protest everyone's moral failures and false beliefs about other people and moral issues, even though they are almost always expected to take responsibility for what they personally believe. One is not morally required to protest when one finds that one's neighbor has used more water for one's lawn than the homeowners' association allows. One is not morally required to protest when a divorced acquaintance remarries one's brother.<sup>61</sup> One is not morally required to protest when one finds out that a child who attends a local daycare has been bullied by other kids there. One may choose to respond to the things that one believes to be immoral, but one is not always morally required to do so. While a person's general respect for human beings may operate as a foundational element in his grasp of morality, his respect for humans does not always necessitate that he protest, or even get angry, when hearing of wrongdoing done to them.

Similarly, when an immoral offense is committed against a particular victim, this

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<sup>61</sup> This example assumes that the person who fails to protest believes that remarriage after divorce is morally wrong.

does not mean that the victim is morally obligated to protest. While he should care about himself and respect himself, and while he should be interested in his own well-being because it is his own, he may have morally permissible reasons to not protest. Self-respect is very important and is foundational in many ways, and one should try to maintain it by making oneself as good a person as one can be, but defending one's self-respect against others' disrespect is not always necessary. Having respect for oneself does not always necessitate that one protest when he recognizes offense. In other words, a self-respecting person may have morally permissible reasons for not responding to a wrongdoing in protest even though his self-respect may still remain intact.

I have been arguing throughout this dissertation that the virtue of *Forgiveness* always results in unconditional, unilateral forgiveness. In this chapter, I have defended UUF against some of the main criticisms that scholars raise against unconditional forgiveness. These criticisms include that unconditional forgiveness unjustly pardons, that it condones, and that it comes from or is the result of servility. Before concluding, I intend to show why it is more self-respecting, for a victim with *Forgiveness* or anyone who autonomously believes that forgiveness is the morally praiseworthy response to being wronged, to forgive in accordance with the virtue than to withhold forgiveness indefinitely or to make forgiveness conditional. After providing a more detailed account of the nature of self-respect, synchronically showing how self-disrespect occurs when one does not act in accordance with self-respecting principles, I will provide a brief analysis of the effects on a virtuously forgiving person's self-respect when she chooses to forgive and to be unforgiving.

In perhaps the best definition to date, Dillon represents self-respect as “a complex of multiply layered and interpenetrating phenomena that compose a certain way of being in the world, a way of being whose core is a deep appreciation of one's morally significant worth.”<sup>62</sup> Since respect is recognition and response to worth, self-respect is one's recognition of and response to one's own worth. Self-respect occurs in at least two types, based on the type of worth that is being regarded, and the first has subcategories important to current purposes.

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<sup>62</sup> Robin S. Dillon, “Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political,” *Ethics*, 107 (Jan 1997): 228.

1.) Recognition self-respect recognizes one's membership in a category; relevant to our topic is recognition respect's appreciation for one's worth as a member of humanity. To respect our humanity, in ourselves and others, we realize that human beings have intrinsic worth and we understand some about what constitutes that worth. We respect the fact that being a person involves being a moral equal with others who also have equal dignity and moral standing in the moral community. The respect given for this fact about our worth is "interpersonal recognition self-respect"<sup>63</sup> (Ip-RSR) and it places constraints and requirements on how we interact with people and the types of relationships we should have since we not only have rights as moral equals but also responsibilities.<sup>64</sup> To have Ip-RSR, we must understand and value our basic rights. Further, to have recognition self-respect, we must have "agentic recognition self-respect"<sup>65</sup> (A-RSR), which includes striving to be autonomous, fulfilling our responsibilities, exercising and protecting our agency by committing to worthy values, giving due consideration to morality, and respecting our imperfections.<sup>66</sup> This self-respect corresponds with our responsibility to manifest dignity in ourselves, abstaining from acts that are not fitting for persons and from acts which degrade others. The final subcategory of recognition self-respect is "personal recognition self-respect"<sup>67</sup> (P-RSR). Through this respect, we recognize that we are distinct individuals by striving to live a life that we believe befits us as a particular person (i.e., by achieving a self-ideal). As Dillon says, "The self-respecting commit themselves to a conception of a worthwhile and appropriate life and of themselves as living that life; they embrace and endeavor to live in accord with the principles and standards of conduct and attitude that define and guide that form of life; they value and try to cultivate the excellences of character that accompany and sustain it."<sup>68</sup>

2.) The second main type of self-respect is evaluative self-respect (ESR). It is based on the worth we have earned. Whereas people who develop recognition self-

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<sup>63</sup> Robin S. Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect," *Ethics* 112 (Oct 2001): 66.

<sup>64</sup> Robin S. Dillon, "How to Lose Your Self-Respect," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (April 1992): 133, 135.

<sup>65</sup> Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness," 66.

<sup>66</sup> Dillon, "How to Lose," 133-34.

<sup>67</sup> Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness," 66.

<sup>68</sup> Dillon, "How to Lose," 135.

respect foster and assess a proper self-ideal for themselves, people who have evaluative self-respect believe they have done that well. ESR is “a positive appraisal of one’s quality as a person in light of the standards given in one’s self-ideal.”<sup>69</sup> In other words, “evaluative self-respect is the judgment that one is living congruently with one’s values and thus is or is becoming a kind of person it is worth being.”<sup>70</sup> The self-evaluation inherent in ESR encourages one to shape oneself in the way one wants to be and this promotes self-regulation and self-development—qualities all people should have.

There are many ways that a person can lose their self-respect. What each way has in common is that it fails to show some aspect of self-respect in the way that it should. For example, according to Dillon, someone can lose his ESR when he experiences shame. This is because this emotion alerts the agent to the likelihood that he is not living up to the standards and expectations he has for himself. A loss of ESR and the experience of shame often motivate an agent to do something to protect his worth and his values, bringing them back in line with the agent’s standards.

Those people who are shameless, claims Dillon, do not have ESR. The shameless may lack the ideals and standards that are part and parcel to ESR, they may not hold themselves accountable to these ideals and standards in any self-defining way, or they may not recognize when they have not upheld them. Some other types of people who have little ESR are those who refuse to forgive themselves for their human frailties or who are perfectionists,<sup>71</sup> those who are complacent in that their moral standards are too low although they are satisfied as the person they are, and those who persistently doubt whether they can live up to their own standards. Also included in this group, suggests Dillon, are those people who believe they are striving to be good but confuse what is bad with what is good, those who do not “envision [themselves] as living toward the morally good,” those who “[do] not care about the moral status” of what they are to do,<sup>72</sup> those who have embraced wickedness, or those corrupt people who mistakenly believe that

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Dillon suggests that a perfectionist’s standards are held, not as an ideal, but as a bottom-line requirement for self-acceptance. He can never live up to the standard of perfection and to the extent that he realizes this but does not accept his own frailty, he will lack ESR.

<sup>72</sup> Dillon, “How to Lose,” 132. She calls these people “The Amoral.”

nothing is wrong with them.<sup>73</sup>

In the context of these categories and sub-categories of self-respect, imagine a woman with the virtue of *Forgiveness* who is seriously and purposefully harmed. According to opponents of UUF, forgiving before requiring that the offender apologize and repent is wrong because intentional wrongdoings communicate symbolically and forgiveness supposedly agrees to the message. The wrongdoer's actions proclaim: 'I count but you do not.'<sup>74</sup> Unconditional forgiveness runs the risk of openly or tacitly assenting to this untrue message. Through this assent, the victim implicitly fails to stand up for her moral rights and equality, or at least does not uphold them strongly and openly enough.<sup>75</sup> Forgiveness, claim the critics, diminishes her Ip-RSR. But if the victim refuses to forgive, she is thought to metaphorically proclaim back to the offender, 'I did not deserve that. I hold you accountable for not respecting my worth. I am your moral equal.' This response revives her previously damaged Ip-RSR.

As stated above, not all offenses are intended to carry this message and even if they are, a victim has the opportunity to reinterpret or ignore them. Holding a grudge often does nothing to make the offender care about the victim's self-asserting message, but even when unforgiveness is an effective Ip-RSR-bolstering communication against the evildoing, it is unclear why Ip-RSR should be valued at the expense of other forms of self-respect. For many reasons (for the sake of a healthy mind, religious reasons, recognition of one's own fallibility, epistemic humility, *et cetera.*), a victim may value forgiveness and think it is a necessary part of an ideally good life.<sup>76</sup> This is the case for someone with *Forgiveness*, who will be especially unconcerned about the message that might accompany the offense. If the virtuously forgiving victim forgives, even at the

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<sup>73</sup> This last group, as Dillon explains, has deformed ESR because they are misusing their agency. *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>74</sup> Jeffrie G. Murphy, "Forgiveness and Resentment," in *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 25.

<sup>75</sup> This claim follows the lead of many of the arguments which suggest that unconditional forgiveness sometimes condones wrongdoing.

<sup>76</sup> The victim who values forgiveness is the one about which the opponents of unconditional forgiveness are most concerned and will, hence, be the focus of the case study. As controversial as this worldview might be in the eyes of the critics, however, she is justified in holding the belief that forgiveness is an important part of the good life. I think this view is likely to be true as well.

possible expense of her Ip-RSR (which is unlikely to be affected anyway), then she will enhance her A-RSR. A-RSR comes as she strives to be autonomous, fulfills her view of her moral responsibilities, protects her agency by being committed to worthy values, gives due consideration to morality, and acknowledges her own imperfections. Because of the self-forgetful quality that a person with *Forgiveness* already possesses, Ip-RSR is an insignificant portion of her overall self-respect but forgiving will greatly increase her A-RSR. Although it probably took positive relationships and reinforcement to bolster her Ip-RSR before she developed the virtue, her character has formed in such a way that the role of Ip-RSR has little bearing on her overall sense of self-worth.

For the victim who values forgiveness as a moral ideal, as the possessor of *Forgiveness* does, forgiveness also manifests P-RSR as the victim achieves her self-ideal of being a forgiving person. Further, forgiving bolsters her ESR as she reassesses her attitudes about forgiveness in view of her victimization and as she evaluates the moral progress she made in further assimilating the facets of *Forgiveness* into her character. Additionally, during the forgiveness process, she will feel a morally healthy form of pride as she reaffirms that she is not the kind of person who responds poorly in the context of adversity.<sup>77</sup>

If the virtuously forgiving victim were to be unforgiving, however, she would likely feel shame over not being able to live up to her own standards. Unforgiveness would diminish her ESR. The shame might also transfer to her Ip-RSR.<sup>78</sup> Although she would usually be almost immune to negative, interpersonal diminishment from offenders, her weakened ESR could also diminish her sense that she has a solid sense of moral grounding upon which to interact with others. If this occurred, she would lose part of the moral confidence and interpersonal strength she normally has when she fails to forgive.

When the virtuously forgiving victim forgives, however, her confidence remains intact. Since forgiveness prevents her from repaying evil with what she believes to be a bad response (i.e., unforgiveness), it also helps her uphold her own moral responsibility

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<sup>77</sup> I realize that if I want to prove that always and unconditionally forgiving is self-respecting for everyone, I need to argue that not forgiving actually is responding poorly to an offense. That is not my aim here. In this paper, I am considering a person who already values unconditional forgiveness. This view is already built in to her notion of self-respect.

<sup>78</sup> Dillon, "How to Lose," 126. She points out that shame is a loss of ESR.



to treat her offender with dignity, thus further promoting her Ip-RSR. Interestingly, Ip-RSR is the type of self-respect critics claim that forgiveness is most likely to harm. In the case of the virtuously forgiving victim, nonetheless, any unlikely, negative effects to her Ip-RSR that result from the offense will be counteracted by the subsequent boost in Ip-RSR that she would get from constraining her actions in light of her belief that her offender is her equal. Thus, it is more self-respecting to forgive than to not forgive if the victim has adopted forgiveness as a morally ideal principle for which to strive.

**Final Thoughts about Servility.** Unfortunately, there are people whose self-respect is diminished to the point that they are unlikely to be able to virtuously forgive. Suppose a victim has a diminished self-respect in the sense that she does not recognize, for instance, that her desire to not be raped and beaten is as worthwhile as (is actually, better than) her attacker's desire to rape and beat her. She may feel this way because she has always been taught that women have to put up with treatment like this from men. As Anthony Bash states, "The effect of forgiving unconditionally can be an expression of powerlessness, a sentence of injustice for the victim and an escape route for the wrongdoer from moral accountability and responsibility."<sup>79</sup>

Thomas Hill writes about the "Uncle Tom" character as an example of one form of servility. Uncle Tom is "an extremely deferential black" person who "displays the symbols of deference to whites, and of contempt towards blacks." Uncle Tom "accepts without question the idea that, as a black, he is owed less than whites," and he believes what he "values, aspires for, and can demand is of less importance than that whites value, aspire for, and can demand." Although he is not happy, he "does not feel that he has a right to expect anything better."<sup>80</sup> Arguably, a person like this disrespects himself and will probably behave with servility as he consistently "forgives"<sup>81</sup> his offenders who oppress him and who abuse his deference. I do not assume that a person who is servile

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<sup>79</sup> Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

<sup>80</sup> Hill, Jr., 5.

<sup>81</sup> Scare quotes are placed around this instance of the term "forgives" because it is not possible for someone to forgive an offender when he does not recognize that he has been wronged; whatever acceptance of the wrongdoing that Uncle Tom does, it is not an instance of true forgiveness.

this comprehensively has the ability to forgive before he transcends his servility and recognizes the wrongdoing done against him.

While there may be a group of victimized people who accept that their being beaten is morally right, or are like “Uncle Tom,” their compromised Ip-RSR is not due to the fact that they or other victims have forgiven their oppressors. There are deeply-rooted societal problems that need to be resolved when society’s members accept the untruths associated with this form of inequality and abuse. I am not saying that these people, who would probably be capable only of forgiving minimally, should forgive at all. Rather, I am claiming that forgiveness does not make them servile and that scenarios like these do not taint the unconditional nature or goodness of virtuous forgiveness. If someone is servile like those persons in these examples, it may be the case that they should not (or cannot) forgive, unless they have a strong and knowledgeable guide to help them through the process, helping them learn to be self-respecting in relevant ways. When giving minimal forgiveness reinforces one’s servility, it is possible that the person is morally better off to not forgive, assuming that the offense in question actually threatens his compromised sense of self-worth.<sup>82</sup> But self-respect is not gained or lost through one instance of forgiveness.

When a group of people do not recognize their humanity or they believe that it is morally acceptable for their oppressors to oppress them, forgiveness is logically impossible because the recognition of wrongdoing, one of the conditions for the possibility of forgiveness, is nonexistent. Sometimes the case is not this severe, however, and the victim may recognize the offense but still be confused about her value. An example is those women in third world countries whose autonomy and desires are not completely deformed by their culture, even though their desires and self-conceptions have been compromised in such a way that they lack clear understanding of their worth.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> We should not ignore the fact that one also acts contrary to one’s moral interests if one asserts one’s value when it does not need to be asserted. This practice is as bad as minimally forgiving for severe offenses.

<sup>83</sup> See Uma Narayan, “Minds of Their Own: Choices, Autonomy, Cultural Practices, and Other Women,” in *A Mind of One’s Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Louise M. Anthony and Charlotte E. Witt (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002), 418-30. She contrasts the stereotypical “prisoners of patriarchy” who are thought to be constrained against their will to suffer the burdens of patriarchy that are imposed by their culture, and the “dupes of patriarchy,” who have lost their capacity for independent, critical evaluation of their culture, with “bargainers

For victims in this situation, forgiveness is still possible for personal offenses as long as the victim recognizes and disagrees with the offense. While some victims in this situation will not be able to forgive in accordance with the virtue of *Forgivingness*, some will. What makes the difference is whether other, counter-cultural forces have helped her preserve the aspects of her self-respect that are relevant to the formation of the facets of *Forgivingness*, including her ability to recognize wrongdoing. If virtuous forgiveness is an option for this victim, it is preferable to unforgiveness. Unforgiveness would likely do nothing for the alleviation of her oppression that forgiveness could not also do. A forgiving victim can still join with others to work for liberation and equality, for instance. But if the virtuously forgiving victim also forgives, she can more easily respect aspects of her and her offender's humanity, enhance her Ip-RSR, maintain her self-ideal, and support her ESR, A-RSR, and P-RSR.

Many things differently characterize minimal forgivers who are servile and virtuous forgivers. Minimal forgiveness can occur for any reason and it is immoral if it occurs for an immoral reason. If a victim does not appreciate her own, basic human worth, then the forgiveness that arises because of this misunderstanding about herself is given for an immoral reason. The servile victim is unable to make the choice to virtuously forgive because, not only is it possible that she is unable to act autonomously enough to recognize that not forgiving is an option, but she lacks many of the positively valenced emotions and cognitive elements that occur in a virtuous forgiver. Magnanimity is conspicuously absent, as well as the ability to have some of the elements of moral love. Her ability to hope for the ultimate moral good of another is seriously compromised since her lack of understanding of her own worth causes her to lack the ability to hope this for her own self in a mature sense.

A virtuous forgiver, on the contrary, has become a more peace-loving, self-mastered, and altruistic person in the ways that are relevant to virtuous forgiveness. This

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with patriarchy” who choose to subscribe to patriarchal norms and restrictive practices of their culture because it serves their own financial or emotional interests. Narayan also suggests that even when someone makes a choice between alternatives that are both morally unacceptable, this does not indicate that her choice is not autonomous or worthy of respect. Of course, it is debatable whether she is right since autonomous decision-making may require a certain amount of freedom in which an agent can make choices that are free from the deceptive manipulation from outside sources

forgiver understands her value in such a way that she does not have to strive to maintain it when she faces an offense. Self-forgetfulness, patience, humility, magnanimity, are a well-assimilated part of her responses to offenders because she has developed them during the process of developing the virtue. She recognizes that although she believes forgiveness is something that people should always do, she chooses to forgive because she had adopted the belief that it is good and choice-worthy. She is not morally required, by social constructs or other people's expectations, to forgive her offenders. She has chosen, in deciding to develop *Forgivingness*, to value morality (at least her understanding of it). Forgiveness for the virtuously forgiving victim, is one way that she takes a stand for the Good. This is not the case for a servile person, however. Instead of choosing to be forgiving, the servile forgiver has been partly forced, partly enticed, to be apathetic about morality and herself.

### **Conclusion**

To reiterate, I have not intended to praise minimal forgiveness, the compromised form of pseudo-forgiveness that might be given by a person who lacks an understanding of her moral worth, or the vice of servility. On the contrary, I have attempted to defend the moral value of the unilateral, unconditional forgiveness that is given by a victim who has *Forgivingness* or who forgives in accordance with that virtue. I consider this virtue, although possessed by relatively few people, to be a real and astonishing phenomenon. It is astonishing, not only because of its counter-cultural way of standing against evil and immorality, but because of its multi-faceted nature. As Dillon observes, self-respect is a complex phenomenon with multiple layers. Self-respect, as I have tried to show, is one facet of the even more complex and beautiful virtue of *Forgivingness*.

I have provided a view of *Forgivingness* that describes it, in its mature form, as a complex set of emotions, desires, views, beliefs, virtues, and action-tendencies that is steeped in moral love and wisdom. It is multifaceted but instance-specific in the facets that compose it. It always requires a judgment that harm or wrongdoing has occurred and this judgment is accompanied by a concern for upholding goodness that is at least latent within the virtuously forgiving victim. This is one aspect that prevents the virtuously forgiving victim from condoning the offense or unjustly pardoning.

Even though anger has a place in a moral life, critics of unconditional forgiveness make an unwarranted intellectual leap when they assert that a virtuous person must be angry or harbor resentment in order to not behave with self-disrespect. It is an even further stretch to suggest that a virtuous person who does not harbor resentment or that forgives easily necessarily has the character flaw of servility. In this dissertation, I have presented virtuous forgiveness as an active, complex, and morally strong phenomenon that avoids the criticisms that have been levied against unconditional forgiveness, including the claim that it unjustly pardons, that it condones wrongdoing, and that it is a conduit for passivity. Hopefully, I have presented it as a multifaceted gem, reflecting its true nature.

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M.A., Humanities, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, 2006.  
B.S., Philosophy and Religious Studies, Radford University, Radford, Virginia, 2003.  
B.A., Economics, Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia, 2001.

**HONORS AND AWARDS**

Graduate School Academic Fellowship, University of Kentucky, Fall 2010.  
Honors Program, Roanoke College, 1997-2001.  
Outstanding Health Care Economist Award, Roanoke College, 2000 & 2001.  
Henry Fowler Award for Outstanding Paper in Public Policy, Scholarship Recipient, Roanoke College, 2001.

**ACADEMIC POSITIONS**

Adjunct Instructor, Philosophy, Ferrum College, Ferrum, Virginia, 2013-15.  
Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 2006-12.  
Adjunct Instructor, Asbury University, Wilmore, Kentucky, 2012.  
Adjunct Instructor, Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky, 2011-12.

**PUBLICATIONS**

“In Defense of the Self-Respecting Nature of Unconditional Forgiveness.” In *Forgiveness: Philosophy, Psychology, and the Arts*. Edited by Timothy McKenry and Charlotte Bruun Thingholm. Interdisciplinary Press, 2013. Ebook.