

Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness

I

'Wiping the slate clean', or with respect to some wrong, ceasing to 'hold it against' the perpetrator, are metaphors associated with forgiveness. Can we make philosophical sense of them? Specifically, my concern in this article is to make sense of the idea that these metaphors capture a core part of forgiveness, in a way that is compatible with seeing that forgiveness must be granted without changing judgments concerning the wrongness of the offense and the perpetrator's culpability for it. The first difficulty is simply to *make sense* of what is involved in ceasing to hold an action against someone while continuing to regard it as wrong and as attributed to the perpetrator in the way which is necessary for there to be something to forgive.¹ Forgiving seems to mean ceasing to blame, but if blaming means holding the perpetrator responsible, then forgiveness requires *not* ceasing to blame, or else there will be nothing to forgive. The second problem concerns the *point* or *justification* of 'wiping the slate clean'. It might be thought that where the perpetrator

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1. One is forgiven for a *wrong*; here, a wrong is understood, as is standard, as a complex function of the harm caused and the culpability of the agent, where the harm includes not just such things as loss or damage suffered, but also the disrespect or ill will shown to the victim. Thus, the 'culpable' in 'culpable wrongdoing' is redundant, but I will use it sometimes for emphasis.

has made appropriate and proportional atonement, there is nothing left for forgiveness to do but to acknowledge this, and that where this has not happened, 'wiping the slate clean' would amount to condonation, a failure to condemn wrongdoing properly.²

Seeing the apparent tension in the requirements forgiveness involves might lead us to suspect that the term is frequently used in a confused way. When popular culture extols the virtue of forgiveness, this is often based on the idea that being consumed with resentment is not good for the well-being of the victim.³ But there are ways of avoiding being consumed with resentment that are compatible with not forgiving: one may simply choose to put the offender out of one's thoughts. In addition, there are a number of ways of ceasing to blame an ostensible wrongdoer that do not require both wiping the slate clean and maintaining the judgment that the perpetrator did wrong and is responsible for having done so. Excusing and justifying undermine grounds for resentment by undermining the belief in culpable wrongdoing: roughly, excusing involves showing that the agent was not really

2. See Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 34; Aurel Kolnai, "Forgiveness," in his *Ethics, Value, and Reality* (London: The Athlone Press, 1977), p. 217; Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 41.

3. There are two problems with this. First, the victim's (reasonable) concern with her own mental hygiene does not amount to forgiving, since it need not involve a change in her view of the perpetrator—or any thought about the perpetrator at all. Second, many philosophers question whether overcoming resentment is always a good thing for the victim. For example, Murphy argues that resentment defends and asserts the victim's self-respect (Murphy and Hampton, pp. 16–18; see also, in the same book, pp. 56, 59–60; and Joseph Butler, "Upon Resentment," in *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Cathedral* [London: Macmillan and Co., 1913]). Similarly, some philosophers suggest that forgiving too easily or quickly may reveal a lack of self-respect or lack of concerns about one's own well-being. For example, Schimmell says that "to demand of a victim that she forgive the unrepentant sinner who has harmed her is considered by many non-Christians to be morally wrong. It can also be emotionally damaging to her." Solomon Schimmell, *Wounds Not Healed by Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 70; Cheshire Calhoun, "Changing One's Heart," *Ethics* 103 (1992): 76–96, p. 78; Margaret R. Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1993): 341–52, at p. 341; Howard McGary, "Forgiveness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1989): 343–51, at p. 346; David Novitz, "Forgiveness and Self-Respect," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1988): 299–315, at p. 299. In this context, Aristotle is often quoted approvingly: "A person is praised who is angry for the right reasons, with the right people, and also in the right way, at the right time and for the right length of time. . . . it is a slavish nature that will submit to being insulted or let a friend be insulted unresistingly" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. William David Ross [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980], 4.2).

or fully responsible, and justifying involves showing that an apparently wrong act was actually reasonable or right in the circumstances. Here, resentment is overcome by changing the judgments that support it. Other ways of undermining the beliefs that support the resentment are accepting and minimizing, which involve not thinking of the act as seriously objectionable and not requiring of the wrongdoer that she act differently or account for her action.

All these strategies have an important role to play when we think someone has wronged us, not least because we may exaggerate the extent to which others offend against us, but all involve kinds of cases in which, by reevaluating our judgment about the wrongdoing, we come to think that there is nothing to forgive. None involve ceasing to hold the wrongdoing against the perpetrator at the same time as maintaining belief in the culpability and wrongness of the offense. Since we can rid ourselves of consuming resentment without forgiving, and we can justifiably undermine the grounds for resentment where there are reasons to excuse, justify and/or accept, it needs to be shown that there remains a coherent and justifiable role for forgiveness. It might be thought that unexcused, unjustified, unacceptable wrongdoing is precisely what cannot be 'wiped away', and that the idea that it can be is a mysterious religious, possibly specifically Christian, anachronism that makes no sense in a secular context. Against this thought, my aim here is to argue that we can make sense of a distinct secular notion of forgiveness that centrally involves wiping the slate clean without changing beliefs about the culpable wrongdoing.

It may be that in ordinary discourse forgiveness is not always sharply separated from excusing, justifying, and accepting;⁴ I do not argue the many different ways in which the term is used are wrong, but my concern is with a core notion of forgiveness that operates in a context in which people do unexcused, unjustified wrong that warrants retributive censure,⁵ including retributive reactive

4. This is argued by William R. Neblett, "Forgiveness and Ideals," *Mind* 83 (1974): 269–75, at p. 271.

5. See Thaddeus Metz, "Judging Because Understanding: A Defence of Retributive Censure," in *Judging and Understanding: Essays Exploring the Alleged Tension Between Judging Persons and Understanding the Circumstances Leading to Moral Failings*, ed. Pedro Tabensky (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006): 221–40, and John Tasioulas, "Punishment and Repentance," *Philosophy* 81 (2006): 279–322.

attitudes.⁶ Suppose you lie to your partner. Perhaps she is jealous of your previous partner, so you lie about meeting up with your previous partner. Suppose that the lie is not motivated by wanting to get away with doing something wrong (you are not cheating on her), but you are wronging her, and when she finds out, she will be hurt and angry. In response, you might want her to understand how your character and personal history drive you to avoid certain kinds of conflict, and therefore *excuse* the lie. You might want her to see that her unreasonable jealousy *justifies* the lie. Or you might want her just to accept that you are the kind of person who prefers to tell people what you think will make them happy. The core notion of forgiveness comes into play when you *do not* think the lie was excusable, you *do not* think that her jealousy justifies the lie, and you *do not* want to be accepted as someone who lies.⁷ It is this core notion that comes under philosophical pressure from the thought that either the victim remains fully aware of the wrongness and the culpability of the wrong, in which case the slate just is not wiped clean, or the victim has forgotten the act, or come to regard it as excused or justified, in which case there is nothing to forgive. My account is an ambitious account of forgiveness, in that it aims to show that we can make sense of wiping the slate clean while continuing to recognize unexcused, unjustified, unacceptable wrongdoing.

In addition to making sense of wiping the slate clean without changing beliefs concerning the offense, there are a number of features of the way we ordinarily think and talk about forgiveness that my account aims to accommodate. One, forgiveness is normally (but not necessarily always) thought of as a good thing. Two, forgiveness is essentially per-

6. The idea that this is at the core of forgiveness is expressed by a number of writers; see for example Paul M. Hughes, "What Is Involved in Forgiving?" *Philosophia* 25 (1997): 33–49, p. 49n; Berel Lang, "Forgiveness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 31 (1994): 105–117, at p. 108. For the notion of reactive attitudes, see Peter Frederick Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," reprinted in *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 72–93.

7. *Pace* Derrida *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, to say that an act is unjustifiable and inexcusable does not mean that it is a monstrous evil of the sort that might be regarded as unforgivable—small wrongs can be unjustifiable and inexcusable. This means that to say that forgiveness comes into play in relation to unjustified, unexcused wrongdoing does not mean, as Derrida suggests, that it comes into play only in relation to the unforgivable, which would make it essentially paradoxical (as it is in his view).

sonal: it is granted to the perpetrator by the victim (and perhaps can also be granted by those closely identified with the victim). Three, having forgiven is not compatible with continuing to have hostile feelings towards the perpetrator with respect to the wrongdoing. Four, repentance, reparations, and atonement, as ways in which the wrongdoer distances herself from and condemns the offense, constitute standard grounds for forgiving. However, five, forgiveness is elective in the sense that it can be given without repentance on the part of the wrongdoer, without the forgiver necessarily making a moral mistake, and repentance need not oblige the victim to forgive; another way of putting this point is that forgiveness is often thought of as a gift. Six, closely related to the previous point, unconditional or unilateral forgiveness is possible and we can forgive the dead.

Given that there is some controversy as to whether and in what sense forgiveness is elective, it might be thought that it is unnecessarily complicated and ambitious to try to defend an account of forgiveness that involves both in some sense wiping the slate clean while maintaining judgments about culpable wrongdoing, and also seeing forgiveness as elective in the above sense. It seems to me to be an unavoidable part of, as Sussman puts it, the ordinary logic of forgiveness, that “a great deal of discretion seems to rest in the hands of the forgiver” and “there seems to be something morally offensive in a supplicant’s making a demand for such forgiveness, even after sincere repentance and apology.”⁸ If this is right, then we cannot first try to come up with an account of nonelective forgiveness, and then extend it to allow forgiveness to be elective in special cases. However, I do not argue here for the claim that forgiveness *must* always be elective; rather, I present an account of elective forgiveness. My aim is for my account to make sense of the fact that, in ordinary usage, the same notion is at play in everyday cases of forgiving minor offenses in response to an apology as in cases in which an unrepentant offender is forgiven a serious wrong.

Allowing that forgiveness is elective makes the problem of characterizing and justifying forgiveness harder, because it seems to rule out one

8. David Sussman, “Kantian Forgiveness,” *Kant-Studien* 96 (2005): 85–107, at p. 87. He argues that forgiveness is elective in the very strong sense that out of two people who have both been victims of the same wrong, one may choose to forgive and one not to forgive, without either having relevantly different beliefs, and without either opening themselves up to moral reproach (*ibid.*, p. 104).

apparently appealing strategy. Above, I distinguished forgiving from accepting, excusing, and justifying, which involve altering the judgment that there is something to forgive. Another strategy would be to see the judgments that support resentment as justifiably revisable, not as a result of an alteration in the judgment about the wrongness or culpability of the offense, but rather where the perpetrator has undone the harm, through apology, repentance, penance, and restitution. It might be thought that forgiveness can be located here: where the perpetrator has undone the damage she caused, enabling us rationally to give up resentment without changing our belief that she did wrong. This kind of approach is presented by Schimmel, who argues that within Jewish thought it is generally regarded as *wrong* to forgive unrepentant sinners, and that for some wrongs forgiveness is (conceptually) impossible (murder, for example, is regarded as unforgivable because the only person who could be in a position to forgive is no longer around to do it, and because the harm cannot be undone), but that if perpetrators are truly repentant and have made appropriate and proportional restitution, forgiveness is *obligatory*.⁹ Here, forgiveness is not elective: it is either obligatory, wrong, or confused. The idea is that, where the wrong has been properly ‘annulled’ by an exacting and thorough process of repentance, restitution, and demonstration of change in the wrongdoer,¹⁰ we ought to recognize this; if the wrong has not been annulled, wiping the slate clean would be a failure to condemn wrongdoing; and where the harm *cannot* be undone, forgiveness is impossible (you cannot wipe away something that cannot be wiped away). On this account, justified forgiveness involves overcoming resentment at the point at which it is no longer appropriate to have it, because it is appropriate to recognize the fact that the wrongdoer has done what she needed to do to annul the wrong; it involves overcoming resentment that you ought no longer to have.¹¹

9. Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time*, chaps. 2–3.

10. See *ibid.*, chap. 7.

11. A related strategy is Hieronymi’s view that what justifies resentment is not just the beliefs concerning the wrongness and culpability of the offense, but the additional belief that the wrong represents a continuing threat. She argues that repentance and apology undermine the additional belief and therefore justify abandoning the resentment; forgiveness is justified when having resentment is no longer appropriate, because the harm no longer threatens. Pamela Hieronymi, “Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXII (2002): 529–55.

This approach gives us a coherent account according to which forgiveness is justified, but it is unsatisfyingly weak. It does not capture the common idea of seeing forgiveness as a generous gift, and leaves unclear what forgiveness adds, since we ought anyway not to have unjustified or inappropriate resentment. In addition to not allowing that forgiveness is elective, it does not allow for unconditional or unilateral forgiveness,¹² and cannot make sense of forgiving the dead, or of deathbed requests for forgiveness. Although I do not argue here that any account of forgiveness *must* be able to deal with these, I aim to present an account that can. A stronger idea of forgiveness sees it as overcoming resentment that is justified, or to which the forgiver is entitled: as Novitz puts it, "Forgiveness is called for in precisely those situations where the emotions that we have are appropriate to the wrong and the harm that we believe to have been done."¹³ Similarly, Benn says "forgiveness depends, for its very intelligibility, upon the *prima facie* legitimacy of certain reactive attitudes towards another."¹⁴ My aim is to present an account that allows for this stronger notion of forgiveness.¹⁵

To illustrate the scope of my account of forgiveness, I take two examples from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).¹⁶ The first case is taken from the testimony to the TRC of Babalwa Mhlauli, about the murder of her father, Sicelo Mhlauli, one of the

12. Hieronymi suggests that while her account foregrounds the kind of forgiveness in which the wrongdoer has apologized (thereby, she argues, undermining the grounds for resentment), unilateral forgiveness could be possible in cases in which the victim receives strong community support because the community support enables her to not be threatened by the wrongdoing (*Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness*, p. 553). However, although such support might make it easier for the victim to recover, and perhaps to put the perpetrator out of her thoughts, it is hard to see how it would justify her feeling differently towards the specific perpetrator.

13. "Forgiveness and Self-Respect," p. 30.

14. Piers Benn, "Forgiveness and Loyalty," *Philosophy* 71 (1996): 369–83, at p. 369.

15. In the absence of a stronger account, the weaker notion of forgiveness would still have an important role to play, since it may well be that we frequently do not overcome resentment at the point at which it is appropriate to do so.

16. It is important to note that the TRC was not officially concerned with forgiveness, but rather with amnesty (for perpetrators) and an opportunity to be heard, and, supposedly, reparations (for victims). Forgiveness is essentially interpersonal, and, unlike amnesty and mercy, is not something that can be offered to perpetrators by an independent authority. However, much of Archbishop Tutu's discourse about the TRC, in his capacity as its chair, explicitly linked it to forgiveness, and it seems to have facilitated some remarkable processes of forgiving.

famous Cradock four, who had been working against injustice and deprivation in a rural community in one of the poorest parts of the country. The police had been harassing, detaining, torturing, and threatening the four men for some time, when they were abducted and murdered. Sicelo Mhlauli was stabbed sixty-eight times with different weapons, had acid poured on his face, and had his hand chopped off and preserved in alcohol at police headquarters in Port Elizabeth, where police referred to it as “the baboon’s hand” and used it to intimidate detainees.¹⁷ Archbishop Tutu describes Mhlauli’s daughter’s testimony to the TRC: “When she had finished telling her story she said she wanted to know who had killed her father. . . . You could have heard a pin drop in the hushed city hall when she said, ‘We do want to forgive, but we don’t know whom to forgive.’ ”¹⁸ This might seem a prime example of being faced with unforgivable evil; further, not even knowing who the perpetrator was, she had no reason to think of him as repentant. Some philosophers think we cannot even *make sense* of what forgiving could involve in this kind of case; others say that although it is not logically incoherent, it is morally mistaken, because it involves a failure to condemn wrongdoing adequately. A second example from the TRC comes from a book by the psychologist Gobodo-Madikizela, who served on the TRC, about a series of interviews with Eugene de Kock, a man widely considered to be the most brutal of apartheid’s covert police killers, nicknamed “Prime Evil” for the number and manner of his killings. Gobodo-Madikizela describes a meeting between de Kock and two widows, Pearl Faku and Doreen Mgoduka, whose husbands were murdered by de Kock. The meeting was requested by de Kock in his first appearance before the TRC: he testified about his role in the murders, and said he wished to meet the widows in private, to apologize to them. In the meeting, both widows said that they forgave him. After the meeting Faku said: “I couldn’t control my tears. I could hear him, but I was overwhelmed by emotion, and I was just nodding, as a way of saying yes, I forgive you. I hope that when he sees our tears, he knows that they are not only tears for our husbands, but tears for him as well . . . I would like to hold him by the hand, and show him that there is a future, and that

17. Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (London and Johannesburg: Random House, 1999), p. 114.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

he can still change.”¹⁹ My account of forgiveness aims to enable us to make sense of what these women say they are doing, and to do so in a way that does not lead to seeing them as making a moral mistake. I will come back to these cases.

II

Dominant accounts of forgiveness in the (secular) philosophical literature see it as involving the voluntary overcoming of negative or retributive emotions towards the perpetrator and her action. For example, in Murphy’s well-known and influential account, forgiveness involves the resolute overcoming, on moral grounds, of the retributive emotions that are naturally directed towards a person who has done one an unjustified and non-excused moral injury.²⁰ Retributive emotions include resentment, anger, hatred, and indignation, which are thought to be fitting or appropriate responses to culpable wrongdoing. I argue that the overcoming retributive emotions account is almost, but not quite, right, and that what we require is a more specific account of the relevant change in feeling.

Clearly, how we understand the emotions will be crucial for any such account,²¹ but I cannot argue here for an account of the emotions. In what follows, I will assume the following: emotions have intentional content; emotions involve ways of seeing the world or evaluative presentations; emotions can enter into rational relations with other mental states; emotions cannot be reduced to combinations of other mental states (such as beliefs and desires). This is a cognitive account of emotion to the extent that the term refers to accounts that see emotions as having intentional content, as entering into rational relations

19. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), pp. 14–15.

20. *Forgiveness and Mercy*, pp. 15, 16, 24. See also Trudy Govier, “Forgiveness and the Unforgivable,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 36 (1999): 59–75, at p. 60; Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, p. 83; Holmgren, “Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons,” p. 341; Hughes, “What Is Involved in Forgiving,” pp. 33, 35; McGary, “Forgiveness,” p. 345; Norvin Richards, “Forgiveness,” *Ethics* 99 (1988): 77–79, at p. 80; Robert C. Roberts, “Forgiveness,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1995): 289–306, at p. 302.

21. See, for example, Newberry, who argues that contemporary commentators misrepresent Bishop Butler’s position as a result of wrongly attributing to him the cognitive account of emotion prevalent today. Paul A. Newberry, “Joseph Butler on Forgiveness: A Presupposed Theory of Emotions,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001): 233–44.

with other mental states, and as evaluable for appropriateness or fit;²² it is not a cognitive account if the term means giving a constitutive role to belief, or characterizing the intentional content of emotions in terms of beliefs.²³

The problems with explaining and justifying forgiveness arise for the overcoming retributive emotions account because elective forgiving seems to involve overcoming resentment and anger without changing the judgments that make them appropriate. In "Freedom and Resentment" Strawson famously argues that seeing people as free moral agents is essentially connected to having reactive attitudes in response to their wrong (and right) doing. He considers two ways of dissolving retributive reactive attitudes such as resentment for an offense: one in which you stop seeing the person as an agent with respect to the action in question, and one in which, while still seeing her as an agent, you change your

22. For an account of how feelings can be fitting, see Michelle Mason, "Contempt as a Moral Attitude," *Ethics* 113 (2003): 234–72, and Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61 (2000): 65–90. D'Arms and Jacobson argue that we must not confuse the idea that an emotion is fitting in the sense of evidentially appropriate, or a correct evaluative presentation, with the idea that one ought to have it, because, for example, a fitting emotion could be self-destructive, and therefore imprudent. Most writers on forgiveness assume both that resentment can be fitting and that it is often morally and prudentially appropriate (see n. 3 above).

23. We do not need to deny that the cognitive and the affective are intertwined in numerous respects, nor to see emotions as unintentional feelings, in order to see them as distinct from straightforwardly cognitive states like beliefs. One reason for this given by a number of writers is that emotions are at least sometimes cognitively impenetrable, in the sense that we may sometimes disbelieve the proposition corresponding to the intentional content of the emotion. See Robert C. Roberts, "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," *The Philosophical Review* 97 (1988): 183–209, at p. 195; Peter Goldie, *The Emotions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 72–78. Goldie argues further that emotions are distinct in their phenomenology, are sometimes subject to the will, and have a different relation to evidence than belief (*ibid.*, p. 78). He introduces the notion of *feeling towards* as "an essentially intentional psychological phenomenon . . . which essentially involves feelings" (*ibid.* p. 4, pp. 51–83). Similarly, a number of those who defend accounts of emotions as ways of seeing or construing the world see these as distinct from articulated judgments. Jones says, "Emotions are thus not primarily beliefs, although they do tend to give rise to beliefs; instead, they are distinctive ways of seeing a situation" (Karen Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," *Ethics* 107 [1996]: 4–25, at p. 11). Similarly, de Sousa says that "paying attention to certain things is a source of reasons, but comes before them" (Ronald de Sousa, "The Rationality of Emotions," in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amélie Rorty [Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1979], pp. 138–39). See also Amélie Rorty, "Explaining Emotions," in *Explaining Emotions*, and Roberts, "What an Emotion Is."

judgment about her culpability or the wrongness of the action. Both ways involve changing views of the appropriateness of resentment, so on this account, if you see the wrongdoer as a responsible moral agent (as opposed to a mere bit of the causal order), and you continue to see her act as culpable wrongdoing, resentment (and other reactive attitudes) is appropriate. He says: "To ask for forgiveness is in part to acknowledge that the attitude displayed in our actions was such as might properly be resented."²⁴ If we allow that anger and resentment are justified/appropriate/fitting responses to wrongdoing, then it seems that what we ought to overcome is only *excessive* anger and resentment. But excessive resentment is something we should not have in the first place and ought to overcome. Our problem is this: what is involved in overcoming hostile feelings while continuing to hold on to the judgments that make them appropriate; why should this be thought to be a good thing; and can we explain the metaphor of wiping the slate clean in these terms?

In addition to the possible problems raised by these questions, the overcoming of retributive emotions account seems to be incomplete; most of those who regard it as a condition of forgiveness add further conditions. The account is incomplete both because the overcoming of retributive emotions is not always enough for forgiveness, and because not all overcomings of retributive emotions constitute forgiveness.²⁵ For the first point, think of someone who says, 'I'm no longer *angry* with you, but I'll never see you in the same way again'. Where the wrongdoing continues to inform a negative way in which the victim feels towards the wrongdoer, the slate has not been wiped clean, even if resentment has faded. The second point is that not just any giving up of or overcoming retributive emotions counts: we should exclude the elimination of negative emotions through forgetting the wrong, or through therapeutic²⁶

24. "Freedom and Resentment," p. 76.

25. There might also be problems with the necessity of the condition. Some think that forgiveness should be an open possibility where there is no resentment to start out with, for example, for the 'cold fish' who does not feel angry. I do not argue here that forgiveness *must* allow for this kind of case, but I present an account that does.

26. Of course, therapy could be aimed at helping the victim to be forgiving. Further, my point is not to deny that one could embark on a course of attitude-changing for reasons other than thought of the wrongdoer, and using a variety of techniques, but nevertheless end up with the changed attitude towards the wrongdoer that constitutes forgiveness. Rather, my aim is to exclude therapeutic dispelling of retributive emotions where this is understood as processes that the victim undergoes to get rid of negative emotions for her

dispelling of the emotions that is done for the sake of the victim, regardless of any thought of the wrongdoer. To complete the overcoming retributive emotions account, many commentators add a further condition; I will assess four strategies for doing this. Then I will suggest that rather than adding an extra condition to the idea of a change in feeling towards the perpetrator and her action, we need to be more precise about what the change of feeling involves.

Strategy 1 attempts to exclude overcoming resentment in ways that do not seem appropriately to involve thought of the perpetrator (such as through forgetting, or my being hypnotized out of my resentment because it is bad for my blood pressure), by giving an account of the *kind of reasons* that must be involved in the overcoming of retributive emotions for this to count as forgiveness. For example, Murphy considers the idea that forgiveness is overcoming resentment for *moral* reasons.²⁷ However, as Hampton argues, this still does not get us sufficiency: there may be moral reasons for the overcoming of justified negative emotions that do not involve forgiveness, such as learning to be accepting for the sake of family peace.²⁸ Further, some think that we can make sense of inappropriate forgiving, which this account might rule out. Other possible proposals as to the kinds of reasons that would make an overcoming of resentment an act of forgiveness would need to be assessed individually,²⁹ but the varieties of reasons for which people forgive suggests skepticism as to whether forgiving could be explained in terms of the overcoming of resentment for a certain kind of reason. However, what Strategy 1 brings out is that we need a way of excluding the kinds of

own sake, and that do not involve a changed view of the wrongdoer. For example, she may want to learn to not dwell on the wrongdoing, and to put him out of her thoughts, for the sake of her own peace of mind, although her view of the wrongdoer and his action remains unchanged. She may learn to cease feeling resentment by focusing on thinking of him as beneath contempt, or not worthy of her response.

27. *Forgiveness and Mercy*, p. 24.

28. *Forgiveness and Mercy*, pp. 39–40.

29. Other examples of this kind of strategy would be to say that forgiveness involves overcoming resentment on grounds of compassion, or on grounds of solidarity—the thought that ‘there but for the grace of God go I’ (see Eve Garrard and David McNaughton, “In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* CIII [2003]: 39–60, for a defense of the latter). It is not clear to me that I need think of someone’s offense as something I too might have done in relevantly similar circumstances in order to forgive her, and this seems to introduce a sharp disconnect between human forgiveness and God’s forgiveness.

getting rid of anger and resentment that do not seem to count because they do not have the right kind of focus on the wrongdoer.

Strategy 2 keeps the wrongdoer in focus, by adding to the overcoming of retributive emotions a general condition about the attitude the for-giver forms to the perpetrator: coming to see the perpetrator as an overall valuable person, or recognizing the fundamental goodness in her.³⁰ Hampton says that forgiveness involves, in addition to overcoming retributive emotions for moral reasons, coming to see the perpetrator “as still *decent*, *not* rotten as a person.”³¹ Similarly, Holmgren argues that “[t]he person who reaches a state of genuine forgiveness determines that regardless of whether she repents, the wrongdoer is a valuable human being who has made a mistake and done wrong.”³² I will argue that there is something right about the idea that forgiveness involves a change in attitude towards the wrongdoer as a person, but these accounts do not get what this involves quite right. The first problem is that the judgments that they make about the wrongdoer’s character are too general, and do not tell us what it is to forgive someone for a specific offense. Second, these are judgments that, in many cases, we ought to, and often do, make anyway, regardless of whether or not we forgive. In everyday, mundane cases of hurting each other we may find it difficult to forgive a particular offense without ever having ceased to view the perpetrator as a basically decent, valuable human being;³³ I may agree that your wrong act does not characterize all of you, but still regard it as a blemish. Third, the Kantian respect appealed to by Holmgren—the idea that we ought to respect the perpetrator’s humanity and recognize her intrinsic value—is by no means incompatible with judging that she has done culpable wrong and holding this against her. On the contrary, it is only if we have this kind of respect for individuals as moral agents that we can judge them to be responsible for culpable wrongdoing in the first place.³⁴ The same applies to seeing forgiveness as a belief in the *possibility* that the

30. See Govier, “Forgiveness and the Unforgivable,” p. 64.

31. *Forgiveness and Mercy*, pp. 83–85.

32. “Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons,” p. 348.

33. A similar objection could be made to the idea that forgiveness involves coming to have goodwill towards the wrongdoer, since we may fail to forgive a loved one for a specific offense, without ever having ceased to have goodwill towards her.

34. This is argued by Garrard and McNaughton, “In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness,” pp. 41, 47.

wrongdoer will change: the mere possibility of change is a requirement for holding people responsible for their characters in the first place.

Strategy 3 adds to the overcoming of retributive emotions the idea of understanding the point of view of the perpetrator, seeing the act from her perspective.³⁵ But this comes too close to accepting, excusing, or justifying:³⁶ sometimes we want to be forgiven without thinking that when the person we have hurt sees things from our point of view she will cease to blame us, because we do not think that an understanding of our motives and temptations makes the act look any better.³⁷ A similar account, which also seems to reduce forgiveness to accepting, is Calhoun's, which is that forgiveness involves "seeing that, although the agent's wrongdoing fails to make moral sense, it does make biographical sense." She says that what this amounts to is that "one stops demanding that the person be different from what she is. . . . Aspirational forgiveness is the choice not to demand that she improve. It is the choice to place another's way of making sense of her life before resentfully enforcing moral standards."³⁸ In addition to the fact that this seems to be a way of accepting, not a way of forgiving, the problem with this is that the forgiveness we aspire to get is often for acts that indicate a kind of person we want *not* to be. It is, in general, true that we aspire to be understood and accepted, but when we aspire to be forgiven, what we want is not just for the person we have hurt to come to see that there is a way of making sense of our choices. Accounts on which a sympathetic understanding of the wrongdoer leads us to cease blaming her are in danger of not being able to explain a key kind of forgiveness that we want: we want to be forgiven for acts with respect to which we do not think that the closest understanding of our choices

35. See Novitz, "Forgiveness and Self-Respect."

36. This seems to me to be a possible problem with Adams's account, according to which forgiveness involves, miraculously, adopting a God's-eye perspective of the wrongdoer and understanding what led her to perform her action (Marilyn Adams, "Forgiveness: A Christian Model," in *Faith and Philosophy* 8 [1991]: 277–304).

37. As Hieronymi puts it, appeal to the point of view of the offensive action is illicit, because "the 'other side of the story' is, by hypothesis, a story of wrongdoing" ("Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness," p. 536).

38. "Changing One's Heart," p. 95. On this account forgiveness will be permissible only in relation to acts for which it is morally permissible not to require the wrongdoer to account for her action, which means that forgiveness will not be possible for seriously wrong acts.

and motivations makes our action look any better. Seeing things from the other person's point of view may lead us to be more careful in allocating blame (to excusing, justifying, or accepting), or it may lead to a compassionate appreciation of the difficulties under which the perpetrator was acting, which makes us less inclined to punish her (i.e., to show mercy); in neither case does it explain how we can continue to view the wrong as unexcused, unjustified, and unacceptable, and yet somehow cease to hold it against the perpetrator.

Strategy 4 adds to the idea of changing your *feelings* towards the perpetrator a condition concerning how you *act* towards her, usually, the waiving of a requirement that is owed under justice: waiving the demand for punishment, compensation, or atonement.³⁹ For example, Twambly explicitly invokes the metaphor of the civil court, presenting forgiveness as the waiving of the right to compensation, which is a debt owed to the victim,⁴⁰ contrasting this with accounts that explain forgiveness in terms of the metaphor of the criminal court—the waiving of punishment. Garrard and McNaughton explain “the wiping clean of the slate” in terms of not insisting on full atonement,⁴¹ and in a related account, Watkins sees forgiveness as allowing the wrongdoer to exclude from her practical deliberations reasons for atonement that were previously in place.⁴² These kinds of accounts are able to give a straightforward account of the metaphor of wiping the slate clean: you wipe the slate clean by ceasing to demand punishment, compensation, or atonement. It is not that you, incorrectly, fail to regard the perpetrator as being in moral debt when she is, but rather, you choose not to extract the debt.

A possible objection to these accounts is that they confuse forgiveness with mercy;⁴³ the strength of this objection will (partly) depend on there

39. This could also be presented as a self-standing account of forgiveness; here I consider it as a way of completing the retributive emotion account. The objections I present here would also count against the self-standing account.

40. P. Twambly, “Mercy and Forgiveness,” *Analysis* 36 (1976): 84–90.

41. “In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness,” pp. 41, 47. Note that their explanation of wiping the slate clean is only a small part of their complex account of forgiveness, which I do not argue against here.

42. Jeremy Watkins, “Forgiveness and Its Place in Ethics,” *Theoria* 71 (2005), p. 44.

43. Roughly, mercy involves imposing less than what justice requires, or less than what you are entitled to, on the grounds of compassion. This objection applies more clearly to those who see wiping the slate clean as the waiving of punishment or compensation than those who see it as not insisting on atonement, which is less obviously a requirement under

being reasons for thinking that forgiveness and mercy are distinct. One reason for thinking that they are distinct is the idea that punishment and mercy are granted by a person in a position of relevant authority, and not by the victim of the wrongdoing. However, we can make sense of punishing (and therefore of leniency in punishing on the grounds of compassion—mercy), in an ordinary interpersonal context: we punish those who hurt us with anger, withdrawal of affection, sulking, and the like.⁴⁴ A better reason for thinking that mercy and forgiveness are distinct is that the logic of mercy is different from the logic of forgiveness in the following regard: once punishment has been enacted (or compensation paid), there can be no further question about whether mercy can be granted. However, even if we think that you *ought* to forgive a wrongdoer who has been punished, it is open to you to choose to do so or not. Similarly, an offender might ask for mercy without asking for forgiveness. If there is a proportional way of compensating or being punished for a particular offense, then once it has been paid, the wrong is undone, so far as punishment and mercy are concerned, but this is not the case with forgiveness. And unlike with the granting of mercy, you can think you have forgiven, and find out that you have not.⁴⁵ Punishment and mercy are exclusive alternatives: we can either punish fully or show mercy; once we have punished fully, the possibility of mercy is no longer in play. However, forgiving and not forgiving are still both possibilities, which indicates that forgiving does not have the straightforward relationship of being an alternative to punishing that mercy has.

justice. However, I group these accounts together in the sense that they all understand wiping the slate clean in terms of not insisting on what is, in some sense, *owed*, or that to which one is entitled.

44. It is less clear that waiving the requirement for atonement could be appropriately situated in this personal context, at least with respect to some of its aspects: penance is not typically understood as something owed to the *victim*, and therefore it is not clear that the victim could have the authority to waive it. Closely related to the metaphor of 'wiping the slate clean' is the idea of, with respect to some wrong, ceasing to 'hold it against' the wrongdoer. If, as Strategy 4 suggests, 'holding against' is understood in terms of something the wrongdoer owes, it must be something that is *owed to the victim*, which calls into question the idea that waiving the requirement for penance could be part of forgiveness.

45. Similarly, if we understand forgiveness with respect to waiving the demand for what is owed in terms of apology and penance, we will rule out the possibility that you could think you have succeeded in wiping the slate clean, but find that you have not. This supports seeing wiping the slate clean in terms of a way of feeling towards the wrongdoer, rather than a way of acting towards her.

A further problem with seeing forgiveness as the waiving of a requirement of justice is that we should not, ordinarily, waive the requirements of justice. A response to this might be to point out that there is a similar problem with respect to mercy, since mercy involves imposing or requiring less than justice alone requires.⁴⁶ However, here again we can see clear differences between forgiveness and mercy, by looking at the *reasons* for which they are granted. The standard grounds for mercy are compassion for features of the wrongdoer's circumstances or past that make us feel that the full punishment deserved on the basis of her wrongdoing would be hard.⁴⁷ In other words, mercy is granted when the demands of compassion are taken to outweigh at least some of the demands of justice, and give us reason to act differently towards the perpetrator than we would on the grounds of justice alone. However, the standard ground for forgiveness is not compassion for features of the wrongdoer's plight, but rather, as Murphy argues, things that enable us to draw a line between the immoral act and the agent in the way we think and feel about her.⁴⁸ We do not need to think that the wrongdoer has had much undeserved suffering, or was in particularly difficult circumstances, and therefore that imposing the punishment she deserves would be harsh, in order to forgive. This gives us two central ways in which forgiveness differs from mercy. First, the logic of forgiveness is different from that of mercy, in the sense that mercy and punishment exclude each other, but this is not true of forgiveness. Second, the standard *grounds* for forgiveness and mercy are different, and the difference between these brings out the fact that mercy centrally concerns reasons for *acting* differently to a wrongdoer (not imposing the full deserved punishment, on grounds of compassion), whereas forgiveness centrally concerns how you *feel* about the wrongdoer as a person.

46. However, on the face of it, the problem looks harder for forgiveness than for mercy: with mercy we need to justify *treating* people in ways that are more lenient than justice requires, but with forgiveness it seems that we need to justify *thinking of them differently* at the same time as *not* thinking differently about their wrongdoing.

47. Tasioulas, "Mercy," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* CIII (2003): 101–32, at pp. 116–18.

48. Murphy discusses the following as standard grounds for forgiveness: (1) He repented or had a change of heart; (2) He meant well; (3) He has suffered enough; (4) He has undergone humiliation, e.g., the apology ritual; (4) For old time's sake (*Forgiveness and Mercy*, pp. 24–25).

I will briefly mention four further reasons for thinking that forgiveness cannot be explained in terms of the waiving of a requirement under justice, or something the wrongdoer owes. One, while, as in the case of mercy, it may sometimes be justifiable to punish more leniently than justice requires, this will usually not be the case, which will shrink the space in which forgiveness is permissible, and therefore may not accommodate the elective nature of forgiveness. Two, being let off punishment, compensation, or atonement may not be something that the truly repentant wrongdoer who wants to be forgiven wants. Three, although I have suggested that we can make sense of punishing in an interpersonal context, the most central notion of punishing is that it is granted by an authority, and in many cases in which forgiveness is open to the victim, she is not in a position to punish. Four, these kinds of accounts cannot explain forgiving the dead, or deathbed requests for forgiveness, since no condition that involves a way of acting towards the perpetrator can be implemented in these cases.

As well as questioning the idea that forgiveness involves waiving a requirement of justice, the discussion of Strategy 4 brings out the fact that forgiveness does not have a straightforward relationship with punishment. An influential view of punishment is that it expresses censure for wrongdoing,⁴⁹ and if this is its purpose, then punishment is not an expression of resentment, but rather a defense of the moral order. Seeing punishment as an expression of resentment would make it incompatible with forgiveness, but seeing it as a public expression of condemnation for wrongdoing does not. This suggests that forgiving could be compatible with punishing.

III

A

We have looked at four strategies for adding an extra condition to the overcoming of retributive emotion. I agree with the dominant account that forgiveness involves a change in the way you *feel* towards the perpetrator, with Strategy 1 above that this change in feeling must have the right kind of focus on the wrongdoer, and with Strategy 2 that it involves

49. See references in n. 5 above.

a changed view of the wrongdoer as a person. However, I will argue that rather than explaining this by adding an additional condition, we should give a more precise account of the change in feeling that forgiveness involves. Specifically, we do not just want a change in the emotions you feel with respect to the wrongdoing, which could fade without a changed view of the wrongdoer, but a change in the way you feel *about her*—in the way you affectively see her. I suggest that what we need to make sense of the idea of wiping the slate clean is something like the idea that while the victim does not cease to believe in the wrongness and culpability of your offense, she ceases to regard the wrong as centrally attaching to your character, but we need to understand this in terms of a change in *affective attitude* (a kind of feeling) rather than a belief. Murphy argues that standard grounds for forgiveness are things that enable us to draw a line between the immoral act and the agent of the act. He says that “to the extent that the agent is separated from his evil act, forgiveness of *him* is possible without a tacit approval of his evil act.”⁵⁰ Murphy sees the possibility of drawing a separation of the agent from his evil act in the way you think about him as the grounds *justifying* forgiveness (which he sees as the overcoming of retributive emotions, for moral reasons), but I want to argue that this separation is in fact partly constitutive of what forgiveness *is*: forgiveness constitutively involves the victim making some kind of separation between the wrongdoer and his wrong act in the way she feels about him, such that the wrong act does not play a role in the way the victim affectively sees the wrongdoer.⁵¹ The rest of this article will be taken up with trying to spell this out.

The central point that needs to be developed is to explain the notion of affective attitudes, and what the relevant change in attitude is. I use the word ‘attitude’ because the kind of state I want to appeal to can best be understood in terms of Strawson’s notion of reactive attitudes.⁵² There are five features of reactive attitudes that are relevant here.

50. *Forgiveness and Mercy*, pp. 24–25.

51. Clearly, there are many respects in which the agent and his act *cannot* be separated; it is only with respect to the way the victim thinks and feels about the wrongdoer as a person that I am suggesting a separation can be made.

52. “Freedom and Resentment,” pp. 75–80. Strawson gives as examples of reactive attitudes resentment, gratitude, forgiveness, and some sorts of love (*ibid.*, p. 79).

- (1) In Strawson's account, reactive attitudes are *feelings*, and this is essential to the account I present here: the change in attitude towards the wrongdoer to which my account appeals to explain wiping the slate clean should be understood in terms of a change in feelings or affective stance, rather than beliefs. As noted above, any account that sees forgiveness as involving some kind of change in emotions will need a view of what emotions are. I have assumed an account that sees emotions as feelings that have intentional content, which include ways of affectively seeing or construing, which can be evaluated as fitting or not fitting, which play a role in the determination of belief, but which are distinct from straightforwardly cognitive states like beliefs. Affective attitudes are thus distinguished from a broader class of attitudes by the fact that they are essentially ways of feeling towards.
- (2) Affective attitudes can be distinguished from the broader class of emotions or intentional feelings. Although some commentators talk interchangeably of reactive attitudes and reactive *emotions*, I suggest that there is a point to Strawson's use of the word 'attitude', because it picks out a specific group of emotional responses that have a complexity that simple or singular emotions lack, and it captures the idea of a form of regard.⁵³ Emotions like disgust, anger, or joy primarily involve a singular way of feeling towards or seeing their objects, whereas having an affective attitude towards someone is more complex, in that it need not involve any one specific feeling, but rather involves being disposed to have a range of feelings in a range of circumstances. Affective attitudes to a person are ways of feeling towards, affectively regarding, or affectively seeing her which involve being disposed to have a range of feelings towards her, and being disposed to have characteristic patterns of attention, expectation, and interpretation with respect to her actions.⁵⁴

53. See Mason for a development of this idea with respect to a single affective attitude ("Contempt as a Moral Attitude," p. 239). Note that although I do not exclude other ways of cashing out 'form of regard', here it is understood as affective.

54. Like the broader topic of emotions, characterizing and understanding such attitudes is a large task on its own. I simply assume that there are such attitudes, and that they are distinct from beliefs. Optimism and pessimism are examples of affective attitudes: they essentially involve ways of affectively seeing the world. Some see trust as an example of an

- (3) Out of the broader class of affective attitudes, the *reactive* attitudes have specific conditions of fitting application, and a specific kind of content. For Strawson, reactive attitudes are feelings that we have towards other *persons*, which make sense only from the point of view of participation in relationships (the point of view from which we see persons *as persons*, free agents to be got along with, and not mere bits of the causal order), which presuppose a demand we make on other people to manifest goodwill in their actions, and which are essentially a response to the way in which people manifest good or ill will in their actions.⁵⁵ Because they involve recognizing others as ones who have the standing to make claims on us, and to whom we have the standing to make claims, Darwall argues that reactive attitudes embody a kind of respect, which he calls ‘recognition respect’.⁵⁶ He distinguishes *recognition respect* from *esteem respect*, where the point of the former is that it is not earned, but rather is what we owe to all rational/moral agents, in virtue of their being agents, regardless of how well they act. In contrast, esteem respect involves an evaluation of the person’s worthiness to be admired in some way, moral or otherwise. He argues that reactive attitudes both presuppose and express recognition respect: they are fitting ways of feeling towards rational agents, with respect to the actions for which they are responsible, and when you have a reactive attitude to a person you regard her as responsible for her action. This is what makes them the appropriate feelings to relate to forgiveness, since forgiveness is given for culpable wrongdoing, as opposed to being a change in the anger one might feel towards animals, machines, or the weather.⁵⁷

affective attitude, in that it is not just a calculated risk, but involves taking an optimistic attitude towards the trusted, and being disposed to have a range of feelings towards her. See Jones, “Trust as an Affective Attitude,” and Lawrence C. Becker, “Trust as Noncognitive Security about Motives,” *Ethics* 107 (1966): 43–61. Contempt is another example (see Mason, “Contempt as a Moral Attitude”). Note that it can involve a range of feelings: my contempt for you might currently manifest itself in my disgust for your actions or my rejoicing at your setbacks.

55. “Freedom and Resentment,” pp. 75–80.

56. Stephen Darwall, “Presidential Address to the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association,” 2004, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdarwall/>.

57. Strawson in fact calls forgiveness a reactive attitude (“Freedom and Resentment,” p. 75).

- (4) According to Strawson's notion, in our reactive attitudes we not only regard persons as free agents, in control of their actions; further, we regard them as legitimately subject to a demand to demonstrate goodwill to us and other persons (and as having the standing to make such a demand to us), and reactive attitudes are *responses* to the ways persons manifest good or ill will towards us. Crucially, reactive attitudes are responses to actions, but the intentional object of the attitude is not just the action, but the *person*; reactive attitudes affectively regard a person in a certain way in the light of how her actions manifest the quality of her will. Thus, while I agree with Darwall that reactive attitudes both presuppose and express *recognition respect*, I suggest that they essentially involve *esteem respect* as well, and that this is key to understanding the way they feature in forgiveness. They involve affectively seeing a person in a certain way, in the light of her actions, and more specifically, in the light of the good or ill will expressed in her actions. Wrongdoing may lead to emotional responses to the harm or damage caused (which need not be feelings towards the wrongdoer, for example, shock, or unhappiness about loss or damage), to feelings such as anger (which express the view that the act should not have been done), but also to a change in the way you feel about the wrongdoer, a changed affective view of the perpetrator as a person. Suppose, for example, that my anger and resentment towards you fade, but I now no longer trust you;⁵⁸ or that I overcome anger by putting you out of my mind, and thinking of you as 'not worth getting worked up about'; or that I do not feel resentment towards you, but rather contempt; or that I stop resenting you, and do not have ill will towards you, but now (affectively) see you as inconsiderate, unkind, or nasty. In all these cases, the way I feel about you as a person has changed, as a result of your wrongdoing, even though I no longer have retributive emotions towards you.

58. I do not argue that forgiveness must always involve the re-establishment of trust, but rather that ceasing to trust is a clear indicator of a changed way of affectively regarding the wrongdoer. Whether and when forgiveness involves trust is a complicated issue that goes beyond my present scope.

We can call these attitudes that are responses to wrongdoing *retributive* reactive attitudes. Retributivism is sometimes thought of as the idea that it is intrinsically fitting that wrongdoers should suffer,⁵⁹ in which case retributive emotions would be emotions that include a desire that the offender suffer and retributive reactive attitudes would involve an affective view of the wrongdoer as someone for whom suffering would be fitting. I appeal here to the more sophisticated retributivist idea that it is intrinsically appropriate that wrongdoing is proportionately censured.⁶⁰ In this case, retributive reactive attitudes will be ones that affectively see the wrongdoer as 'to-be-censured'; thus, they involve something like an evaluation of character, in the sense of affectively seeing a person in a particular 'lowered' or more negative way, in response to her wrongdoing. The victim censures the wrongdoer through the changed way she affectively regards him. Reactive attitudes in general depend on seeing a person as a responsible agent and as legitimately subject to various demands and expectations; retributive reactive attitudes see her as having failed in some respect in the light of these demands, and are forms of regard that affectively see the wrongdoer in a specific worse or 'lowered' way, corresponding to this failure.

- (5) The final point I take from Strawson's account is to draw on his distinction between first, the *personal* reactive attitudes, such as resentment, which are responses to wrongs done to *me*; second, what he calls their 'vicarious analogues,' such as indignation (which, Strawson suggests, is a response to wrongs other people do to other people); and third, the self-reactive attitudes, such as guilt (which are my responses to my wrongdoing). Forgiveness is given to the wrongdoer by the victim of the wrongdoing, and this means that the reactive attitudes we are concerned with are the *personal* retributive reactive attitudes.⁶¹

59. See, for example, R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 59–61.

60. See references in n. 5 above.

61. Penrose discusses what he calls 'understanding', which he sees as a dissolving of the vicarious retributive reactive attitudes. On his account, understanding involves a dissolution of retributive reactive attitudes, without elimination of the judgment that the wrongdoer ought not to have acted as she did, as a result of sympathetic identification with the wrongdoer that enables us to see her wrongdoing as something we ourselves might have done (Brian Penrose, "Understanding 'Understanding' in *The Reader*," in *Judging and*

B

Having spelled out the nature of the personal retributive reactive attitudes, and assuming that they are attitudes that are appropriate ways for a victim to feel towards a wrongdoer, we are now in a position to see how forgiving involves ceasing to have these attitudes. The first point is that this account is able to give a clear sense of what is involved in my holding your wrongdoing against you: your act plays a role in determining the way I feel about you as a person. An alternative way of making sense of the idea of holding an action against someone is that this involves thinking of her as owing you something: the recording on the slate could be understood in terms of the reckoning of debts, punishment, or compensation owed. On my account, holding something against someone involves lowering the way you affectively esteem or regard her as a result of her action: your attitude towards her as a person is more negative than it would be if you did not see the action as counting in the evaluation of her as a person. Here, we can think of the recording on the slate in terms of the reckoning of a judgment as to a person's character: noting down the reasons given by her actions for and against your esteeming her, or seeing her in a certain way (allowing that we can cash this out in terms less or other than full-blown cognitive judgment: in affective attitudes). When you hold an action against someone, the action plays a part in your attitude towards her as a person. In the case where anger fades without good relations being restored, or trust established, your ceasing to trust the perpetrator, or your regarding her as not worth thinking about, involves a change in the way you affectively see her as a person—seeing her differently, as 'lowered', as a result of her wrongdoing. So long as this change is in place, the act is held against her.

From giving an explanation of what is meant by holding an act against someone, we can give a clear sense of what it would be to *cease* holding wrongdoing against the perpetrator, and to wipe the slate clean. My suggestion is that when you forgive the perpetrator your attitude towards her as a person is no longer the negative one that her wrongdoing supports; in other words, the act is disregarded in your ways of regarding and

Understanding: Essays Exploring the Alleged Tension between Judging Persons and Understanding the Circumstances Leading to Moral Failings, ed. Pedro Tabensky [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006]). Thus, what he calls understanding seems to be the 'vicarious' (in Strawson's sense) equivalent of forgiving.

esteeming her, and in this sense, the slate is wiped clean, and the act is not held against her. Your ceasing to trust her, or feeling contempt towards her, or (affectively) seeing her as inconsiderate or unreliable, is supported by her wrongdoing, but when you forgive her, you dissociate her wrongdoing from the way you feel about her, and cease to have this attitude towards her. I submit that this change is a central part of what the person who wants to be forgiven wants: when you want the wrongdoing to be ‘put behind us’, you want it no longer to play a role in the way the victim feels about you as a person.⁶² If the victim can make this change, there is a clear and significant sense in which the slate has been wiped clean. Forgiving a wrong results in a changed view of the wrongdoer as a person in which you cease to have towards her the personal retributive reactive attitudes that her wrongdoing supports, without a change in judgment about her responsibility for the wrong.

It is important to see that the change in your attitude to the wrongdoer as a person can be extremely specific. The suggestion is *not* that forgiving involves coming to a *general* view about the perpetrator’s *overall* character and moral worth; rather, it involves not having specific attitudes towards her as a person that her wrongdoing supports. This specificity means that my account is different from those discussed under Strategy 2, which see the change in the way you see the wrongdoer as general, such as coming to see her as overall decent, or as capable of change, or as worthy of respect in having intrinsic value as a person. These accounts capture something important in seeing that forgiveness involves the way you feel towards the wrongdoer as a person, but capture this in too general a way. What is central to forgiveness is the victim’s ceasing to have towards the perpetrator the specific personal retributive reactive attitudes that her wrongdoing supports (without ceasing to believe that the perpetrator did culpable wrong), and this means that you can forgive someone for a wrong without seeing her as nice or decent overall, and can fail to forgive a loved one for a specific offense while never ceasing to see her as decent overall, and while having goodwill towards her.

As well as being specific in this way, the change in feelings to which I am appealing keeps the perpetrator in the right kind of focus. Overcoming retributive emotions such as anger and resentment can be

62. This is something it makes sense for the wrongdoer to want even after punishment has been fully implemented.

done without thought of the perpetrator, because resentment can be got rid of in a number of ways that do not involve a change in your view of the wrongdoer as a person: through forgetting the wrong, through putting the wrongdoer out of your mind, through regarding her as beneath your concern. In contrast, the change in feeling my account invokes essentially involves a view of the perpetrator: the change *is* a change in view of the perpetrator, since it is a change in the way you affectively regard *her*, a changed affective view of her as a person. Thus, by bringing out the way in which reactive attitudes are esteem evaluations of persons, we can deal with the problem that the simple overcoming resentment account has with excluding ways of getting rid of resentment that do not seem to count.

Since I have suggested that, rather than adding extra conditions to the overcoming retributive emotions account, what we need is a more precise account of the relevant change in feelings, it might be thought that what I have presented so far is simply an unpacking of the overcoming retributive emotions account. If we replace 'retributive emotions' with 'retributive reactive attitudes', I do not object to my account being seen in this way, since a large part of what I want to show is that we can understand forgiveness better once we are clearer about the details of what is involved in the retributive feelings that are relevant to forgiveness;⁶³ however, my account does differ from the idea that forgiveness is the overcoming of anger and resentment. The retributive attitudes that are at issue in forgiveness are broader than anger and resentment, since there are retributive esteem evaluations in response to wrongdoing other than resentment.⁶⁴ Because these attitudes are more complex than straightforward single emotions, we can explain how it can be that resentment can fade but yet you fail to forgive, and can explain the role of the other negative emotions and attitudes to which wrongdoing gives

63. The relationship between retributive reactive attitudes and retributive emotions is an issue that requires further development. It seems to me difficult to see how a person could cease letting her affective view of you as a person be affected by your wrongdoing but still feel angry about it, in which case overcoming of retributive reactive attitudes would involve overcoming retributive emotions, although the reverse does not always hold.

64. Ordinary usage indicates that resentment need not always involve esteem evaluations in response to wrongdoing, for example, the resentment people feel towards city-dwellers whose second homes push up property prices in their villages. Also, resentment can be felt towards people whom you see as having what they are not entitled to, without seeing them as having wronged you.

rise; in ordinary relationships the feelings relevant to forgiveness may be disappointment and hurt⁶⁵ as often as anger and resentment. My account enables us to give a clear explanation of what distinguishes the negative attitudes, the overcoming of which is central to forgiveness: they concern (justifiably) having an attitude towards the wrongdoer as a person who sees her as 'lowered', or in a more negative way, corresponding to her specific wrongdoing.

C

Although this account is able to give a clear explanation of wiping the slate clean, we have not yet shown how this deals with the worries about forgiveness being irrational or unjustified, with which my article started. It seems that, on my account, when you forgive someone you come to have an affective attitude towards her that sees her as better than her wrong action indicates her to be; showing why this is not epistemically reprehensible will further clarify the kind of change my account sees forgiveness as involving. My starting point was that the core notion of forgiveness involves holding beliefs about the culpability and wrongness of the act unchanged, and the first point to note in response to the worry about irrationality is that, on my account, the belief we hold on to and the attitude we change have different objects: the belief concerns the wrongness and culpability of the *offense*; the attitude concerns the way you feel about the offender as a *person* as a result of the offense. Thus, we do not have a direct conflict between the belief in wrongdoing and the change in feeling. However, more needs to be said, because the feelings we have towards other people's characters are related to beliefs about their characters. Arguably, trusting is not just a belief, but you cannot trust someone you firmly believe is untrustworthy; similarly, you cannot have a relevantly positive attitude that involves seeing the wrongdoer as better than her offense indicates her to be, at the same time as believing that the act is deeply indicative of her character (at least you cannot

65. Hurt can be seen as a reactive attitude: it is not appropriately felt other than as a response to the actions of *persons* (it is not appropriate to feel hurt by machines or the weather), and it is a response to the way in which another manifests lack of goodwill towards you which it involves affectively seeing the other as valuing you less than you want her to. Thus it involves seeing her as a person who fails you in some respect in the way she values you. When she wants you to stop feeling hurt, part of what she wants is you to cease seeing her as someone who fails to value you as you would like.

rationally or appropriately do so). However, here we must note an important feature of judgments concerning people's characters: they are judgments that we are never perfectly placed to make, and that are always underdetermined by the evidence.⁶⁶ Kant famously argued that empirical evidence *never* puts us in a position to judge other people's characters,⁶⁷ but even without taking this strong line we can argue that we are never perfectly positioned to judge people's characters, we are seldom well positioned, and of course, characters are not fixed, and can change.⁶⁸ This means that beliefs about a person's culpable wrongdoing, which we hold firm, do not epistemically mandate judgments about her as a person.

The next point to notice is that, despite the fact that feelings can be fitting or appropriate, intentional feelings have different relations to the evidence than beliefs have, which is one of the reasons philosophers give for rejecting straightforwardly cognitive accounts of emotions, and not characterizing the intentional content of emotions in terms of beliefs.⁶⁹ Among these differences are, first, the fact that attitudes frequently come before beliefs; second, that we can come to change our beliefs about a person by changing our feelings towards her; third, that we have more control over assenting to the ways emotions present the world than we do with beliefs; and fourth, the grounds for changing attitudes can be different from the grounds for changing beliefs. This is not to say that emotions do not have conditions that make them appropriate or warranted—they do. But, while the reasons for which you should believe are epistemic, there may be reasons for forming attitudes, such as trust, which are not epistemic, so long as they are not *contradicted* by what is epistemically justified. The *point* of trust, resentment, and gratitude is not to align your mental states with the way the world is, and the inten-

66. The problem here might be more than just our epistemic limitations: it might be that there is not something determinate to be known, if being free means that there is a sense in which we are all equally capable of great good and great evil.

67. He says that "we cannot observe maxims, we cannot do so unproblematically even within ourselves; hence the judgment that an agent is an evil human being cannot be reliably based on experience" (Immanuel Kant, "Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reasons," trans. George di Giovanni, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], pp. 57–215 6: 21, p. 70).

68. As Goldie puts it, a character trait is not a fixed disposition, but a set of dispositions that are continuously shaped by the emerging narrative of a life (*The Emotions*, p. 210).

69. See n. 23 above.

tional content of feelings is partly a matter of focus (what you pay attention to or seeing something in a certain way). Focus or attention is epistemically optional, and this means that to say that an attitude is appropriate is more like saying that you are entitled to feel it than that you ought (epistemically or morally) to feel it. Thus, we have more rational options with respect to feelings than beliefs.

The point here is not that our lack of certain knowledge should lead to epistemic humility about the wrongdoer's *culpability*, and saying that judgments about people's characters are less than certain is not to say that we cannot and should not make them. The subjects of character, and the relations between action and character, are large and difficult, as is the subject of the relation between emotions and belief. All that is needed here is that we take people's actions to express their selves, and that forming our reactive attitudes to persons (including the way we esteem them, the expectations we have of their future actions, and the feelings we are disposed to have in relation to their triumphs and setbacks) on the basis of their actions is reasonable.⁷⁰ Arguably, if the way you see a person is *never* affected by her actions, this calls into question whether you are regarding her actions as flowing from her choices, and therefore whether you are seeing her as a person, as an agent, at all; part of what it is to be an agent is to express yourself in your actions.⁷¹ However, it does not follow from this that particular reactive attitudes are epistemically mandated; attitudes such as contempt, admiration, disappointment, or hurt may be evidentially justified, without it being unjustifiable not to feel them. When you forgive, although you do not come to see the person as not responsible for the action, you choose not to let your view of her be affected by it. The point is not that we weigh the evidence and come to an all-things-considered judgment about the wrongdoer: rather, we choose to make a shift in our (affective) view of her as a person, where this shift in view is neither epistemically mandated nor epistemically forbidden.

70. As Hume says, we "consider the action as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind and temper . . . We must look within to find the moral quality. This we cannot do directly; and therefore fix our attention on actions, as on external signs" (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968], III: II, i, p. 477).

71. This suggests not only that it is reasonable to form esteem respect attitudes that express evaluations of persons in response to their actions, but further, that not doing so might undermine recognition respect.

On the one hand, we need the way we see people to be linked to their actions; arguably, forming reactive attitudes in response to people's actions is part of what it is to see them as persons. On the other hand, we can, sometimes, choose to form attitudes to those who have wronged us that do not see them in the way their wrongdoing supports, and therefore do not tie the way we affectively regard them to the particular action. We are obliged to condemn wrongdoing, but we are not obliged to evaluate people's characters; it is reasonable to form attitudes to people on the basis of their actions, but it is (often) epistemically permissible to forbear from doing so. The importance of this possibility is that it enables us to get away from seeing each other as defined by our worst actions: it enables a renewal of relationships in which the way we see each other is not fixed by our wrongdoings.

The starting point of this article was that we need to make sense of what is involved in overcoming hostile feelings to the perpetrator of an offense against us without giving up the beliefs that seem to warrant the hostile feelings. On my account, the forgiver does not change her belief in the culpable wrongdoing, but overcomes hostile feelings in the sense that she ceases to feel towards the wrongdoer as she would if she allowed the offense to count in her feelings towards the wrongdoer as a person.⁷² There is no conflict between meeting these two conditions, and the second condition enables us to give a clear explanation of the metaphors of wiping the slate clean, and ceasing to hold the act against the agent. Forgiving is not just any forgoing of resentment; it is a forgoing of personal retributive reactive attitudes in which, while maintaining her belief in the perpetrator's culpable wrongdoing, the victim ceases to let the

72. Some people think that you can forgive someone for something at the same time as confidently judging that she will do the same thing again. I do not think that this is a standard case, but on my account, the sense we can make of it is that you do not feel towards her as you would if your attitude towards her as a person, and the manner and extent to which you esteem her, were determined by your judgment that she is likely to act in this way again. Despite your judgments that she is likely to act in this way again, your feelings towards her as a person, the ways you regard or esteem her, are not correspondingly more negative. Another nonstandard case is that of someone who does some wrong that is highly out of character. It might be said that in this case the wrong action does not seem to support seeing the wrongdoer's character differently. However, my account is not that retributive reactive attitudes necessarily involve a view of the person as a character of a specific type, but that they involve seeing the wrongdoer more negatively, as 'lowered' in a way that corresponds to her wrongdoing. For example, you could continue to think of someone as generally honest while thinking worse of her for this one act of dishonesty.

wrongdoing count in her feelings towards the perpetrator as a person, and thus ceases to have towards the wrongdoer the personal retributive reactive attitudes that her wrongdoing supports.

D

It seems to me to be an advantage of this account that it does not give a straightforward account of whether and when forgiving is a good thing in particular cases, and it allows that there may be different views on this. There are different possible views about our attitudes towards people's characters in general: some may think that no one is ever entitled to be judged on anything other than her actions, while others may have, for example, religious reasons for thinking that we should always refrain from judging others' characters, and that it is always a good thing to feel towards people in ways that are better than they deserve on the basis of their wrongdoing. The difficult questions about whether it can ever be good to forgive apparently evil people, or the differences that some commentators say exist between Judaism and Christianity as to whether forgiveness is always a good thing,⁷³ are not mere verbal disputes to be resolved by an account of what forgiveness is.

However, as noted at the start, a key feature of the ordinary logic of forgiveness is that repentance, reparations, and atonement, as ways in which the wrongdoer distances herself from the offense, constitute standard grounds for forgiving. If forgiveness constitutively involves making a separation between the wrongdoer and her action in the way you feel about her, it is easy to see why this should be the case: these are ways in which the perpetrator overtly distances herself from her action, which supports making the separation in the way you think and feel about her. Her action has given us evidence for seeing her in one way; repentance gives us evidence that undermines this.⁷⁴

73. See Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time*, pp. 61–88.

74. A further issue, which I do not discuss here, is whether repentance sometimes makes forgiveness obligatory, for example, in a case in which the perpetrator makes reparations that really do undo the harm, and has plausibly demonstrated that she has done what she can to condemn the wrong and distance herself from it, and to show that she has changed. I make three comments about this. One, whether you ought to forgive is a separate issue from whether she is entitled to demand forgiveness. Two, certainly, it can be appropriate to resent someone for holding something against you, but this might be because they are not really entitled to holding it against you in the first place, or that it is out

On the other hand, my account also accommodates the idea that forgiveness can be given without repentance on the part of the wrongdoer, without this making the forgiveness morally mistaken. To illustrate this, I return to the TRC examples. My purpose here is not psychological speculation about what these women might actually have meant, their grounds for forgiving, or the context that made it possible, but rather simply to show that there is a way of understanding what they say they are doing as coherent, and as not involving any failure to condemn wrongdoing. In the first case, Babalwa Mhlauli said: "We do want to forgive, but we don't know whom to forgive." On some accounts, what she says cannot even be made sense of, and on others, her expressed desire is morally wrong. Any account that, like Schimmell's, holds that the wrong must be annulled before forgiveness can be in order, would see forgiving as wrong here: she does not even know who the perpetrators are, never mind whether they are repentant, and the harm is such that it cannot be undone.⁷⁵

The fact that repentance is part of the way in which the perpetrator retracts the disrespect expressed in her offense, distances herself from and condemns it, explains the fact that repentance is a standard ground for forgiveness. However, this does not mean that it is impermissible to forgive while the disrespect and the harm are still extant. The core of my account is that the harm caused need not be undone or counteracted before forgiveness can be in order; because of the different ways in which attitudes and beliefs relate to the evidence, the evidence that justifies resentment need not be undone or counteracted before ceasing to resent can be epistemically permissible. This means that there is nothing irrational in Mhlauli's undertaking: seeing that a person has done something that warrants resenting her does not mean that resenting her is epistemically mandatory.

As we have seen, forgiveness does not have a straightforward, exclusionary relationship to punishment, as mercy does, and this means that

of proportion to what was done. Three, calling someone 'unforgiving' can be a rebuke, and it seems plausible that someone who never forgives will miss out on much that is of value in relationships, but this need not make forgiveness obligatory in any particular case.

75. Schimmell holds, in addition, that forgiveness for murder is impossible, because the only person who could be in a position to do the forgiving is no longer around to do it. However, we do not need to say that Mhlauli forgives on her father's behalf to say that she can forgive the wrong done to *her*.

forgiving can be separated from the question of how the wrong should be condemned, and the latter need not be the concern of the forgiver. Rather than seeing Mhauri as expressing an insufficiently condemnatory view about how and whether the wrongdoing should be censured, we can see her as saying something about her feelings towards the perpetrators as persons. Cultivating an attitude towards the perpetrators of atrocities that does not see them as the evil men their actions suggest them to be need not mean denying that they deserve punishment, because it is compatible with continuing to insist that they deserve proportionate censure because of their culpable wrongdoing.⁷⁶ Thus, the retributive intuition that wrongdoers deserve punishment because of what they culpably do need not be in tension with forgiving, and forgiving does not involve a failure to condemn wrongdoing. It is not an alternative to censure, or a recognition that the moral order has been balanced or restored through censure and atonement, but a choice to affectively see the wrongdoer as better than her action indicates her to be, whether or not she has done anything to deserve this.

The final issue with this case is whether we can make sense of expressing a willingness to forgive an unknown perpetrator. There does not seem to be anything problematic about feeling, for example, that 'whoever did this is hateful', or 'whoever it is, I will kill him when I find out', which suggests that one could have negative reactive attitudes towards an unknown offender.⁷⁷ If this is right, she could also cease to have these reactive attitudes without knowing who the perpetrator is, which suggests that forgiveness is possible without knowing who the perpetrator is. However, this is not Mhauri's expressed aim, since she seems to make her willingness to forgive conditional on one thing: discovering the truth about the perpetrators' identities. Mhauri can be seen as expressing a willingness, compatible with the spirit of the TRC, to put the past behind her, on the condition of finding out the truth about who

76. This assumes an act rather than character-retributivist justification of punishment; it might be harder for a character-retributivist to see forgiveness and punishment as compatible. Of course, in the case of the TRC the wrongdoers were *not* censured through punishment; whether this involved a failure to condemn wrongdoing adequately is a moral question about the justification of the TRC. On my account, this further question need not be resolved in order for us to see those who were willing to forgive as not guilty of any moral compromises or condonation.

77. You could resent whoever it is that regularly parks his car such that you cannot get out of yours, without knowing who it is.

was responsible. Being prepared to forgive such an atrocity conditional on so minimal a demand may be something that most of us cannot imagine doing, but on my account we can explain how her expressed desire is coherent: we can see her as saying that she wants to come to have an attitude towards the perpetrators of evil actions that is not the negative attitude their deeds warrant.

In the second TRC case, there was an apology, but, in response to murder, this is a long way from full repentance and atonement, and again, restitution is impossible. Pearl Faku said of de Kock: "I hope that when he sees our tears, he knows that they are not only tears for our husbands, but tears for him as well. . . . I would like to hold him by the hand, and show him that there is a future, and that he can still change."⁷⁸ Her forgiving him does not involve a belief that he has changed; it does not involve coming to understand his point of view, or what motivated him to act as he did. Again, her forgiving him seems to be entirely separate from the question of whether and how he should be punished; his punishment is simply not something she is concerned with. It would be extremely strange to see her as saying that she is waiving a claim that he owes her: that she is letting him off compensation, or atonement; rather, she can be seen to be saying something about the way she feels about him as a person. Although he has acted in a way that many would take to justify writing him off as a person, she is able to not write him off as a person; she is able to affectively see him as having a value that his actions indicate him not to have. The text does not tell us much about what her reasons for forgiving are, and it seems to me that both cases bring out the fact that forgiveness can be given for a variety of reasons. On my account, in explaining what forgiveness is, what is central is not the reason for the change in feeling, but rather the fact that the change essentially involves a view of the wrongdoer as a person: it is a change in the way you affectively see her.

Following from this, we can see how the account allows that we can forgive the dead. This would be impossible if forgiveness involved ceasing to require the payment of a debt, or if it required that something be done by the perpetrator to nullify the harm caused or disrespect shown. Of course, there are a number of ways of changing retributive feelings towards the dead that need not involve forgiveness: as with a

78. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night*, pp. 14–15.

living perpetrator, one can choose to put the dead offender out of one's thoughts, or can look with understanding at her circumstances, in ways that may lead to excusing, justifying, or accepting. However, without seeing an offense as justified, excused, or acceptable, one can choose to cultivate a way of affectively seeing the offender in which particular offenses no longer play a role. Closely related, this gives a plausible account of what those who ask for deathbed forgiveness want: rather than seeing the offender on his deathbed as asking to be treated differently in the time that remains, we can see him as wanting the victim not to let the offense play a role in her estimation of him, in the way she feels about him.

Punishment, apology, repentance, and atonement attempt to rectify the balance of the moral order by condemning wrongdoing; reparations and compensation attempt to rectify the moral order by undoing the harmful effects of wrongdoing. On my account, forgiveness is not one of the balancing factors in this calculus. Philosophers have appealed variously to the idea of being out of alignment with the objective moral order,⁷⁹ of having a stained character,⁸⁰ to an analogy with criminal courts (the wrongdoer deserves punishment),⁸¹ or to civil courts (the wrongdoer owes compensation).⁸² If someone is genuinely in moral debt, it cannot be rational and virtuous to regard her as not being so. If she has repaid her moral debt (or put herself back into alignment with the moral order and so forth), however, there is nothing left for us to do but to acknowledge this. One of the aims of this article is to show that we should not situate forgiveness in a context in which the harm done by the wrong must be somehow undone before forgiveness is in order; this confuses the role for which we need forgiveness. We need punishment to defend the moral order by condemning wrongdoing. We need mercy because human frailty and the undeserved suffering that is often a result of the difficulty of the human condition can make the imposition of deserved punishment harsh. We often ought to pay attention to the other person's point of view, and to reasons for excusing, justifying, and accepting, since we may tend to exaggerate offenses against us.

79. Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*.

80. Watkins, "Forgiveness and Its Place in Ethics."

81. Both Twambly, "Mercy and Forgiveness," and Adams, "Forgiveness: A Christian Model," find the criminal court analogy in Kolnai, "Forgiveness."

82. Twambly, "Mercy and Forgiveness."

However, we all do unjustifiable, inexcusable wrong, for which we do not simply want to be understood; we want to move forward in relationships in which we are not defined by this wrongdoing; yet we cannot prove that we are worthy of this. In forgiving us, the victim of our wrongdoing gives us a chance to do this. Forgiveness enables us to not fix our attitudes towards each other on the basis of our worst acts, without condoning wrongdoing, but without having to *prove* that we are worthy of this change in attitude. Without changing our beliefs in the culpability and wrongness of another's actions, we can come to have an attitude towards her that sees her as better than her wrong actions indicate her to be, and thus can move forward in a relationship that is not bound by past wrongdoing. Appropriate and proportional punishment enables us to reassert and defend the values the wrongdoer has trampled on, but completing this need have nothing to do with changing the way we feel about the wrongdoer. Forgiveness offers something that punishing cannot give: in forgiving, we allow the wrongdoer to make a genuinely fresh start; the slate is wiped clean.