

The Challenges of Forgiveness in Context

Introduction to The Moral Psychology of Forgiveness

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Of enduring interest to me over the years have been questions about moral agents' responses in the aftermath of wrongdoing. The project of articulating the responsibilities of offenders, victims of harm, and witnesses to wrongs inevitably involves description of our moral and emotional capacities. When it comes to the moral psychology of forgiveness, questions as to what we can control and what is out of our control are important. Can we overcome inward feelings of anger, resentment, guilt, self-righteousness, indignation, schadenfreude, and defensiveness? How do moral choices to forgive affect the jumble of unexpected feelings after a wrongdoing? Further, the expectations of others, for example, the cultural expectation that women may be more forgiving than men, present external sources of the uncontrollable, complicating the possibilities for ethical recommendations to forgive or not.¹

Such preoccupations have informed my scholarship. Yet like many philosophers drawn to the topic of forgiveness, I have routinely encountered the following objection to a presentation or paper. Especially at those times when I'm most gripped by moral issues arising from difficult experiences with serious harm or traumatic memories recurring long after a wrong, I net the following response from some philosophers: "But that's psychology." The implication is that where there is psychology, one is not doing philosophy. Complications for ethical theory that stem from the limitations of human minds and bodies or the multiplicities of human experiences are seen by such objectors as, while unfortunate or painful, largely irrelevant to abstract idealizations of morality. At those times when philosophers have suggested that philosophical questions should not occur in an admixture with psychology, I have found that the interdisciplinary scholarship of forgiveness affirms me in my course. As psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela says in the first chapter of this volume, "Philosophical questions such as the moral inappro-

priateness of forgiveness can and should give way and be subsumed to human questions, for in the end we are a society of people and not of ideas, a fragile web of interdependent human beings, not of stances.”² It is a recommendation consistent with what some philosophers call *naturalistic ethics*, the commitments of which include “the belief that moral philosophy should not employ a distinctive a priori method of yielding substantive, self-evident and foundational truths from pure conceptual analysis. . . . Indeed, the naturalist is committed to there being no sharp distinction between her investigation and those of relevant other disciplines.”³

I was intrigued, as one such naturalist, when I was informed by series editor Mark Alfano that he invited proposals for anthologies in moral psychology including forgiveness. Given what Susan Dwyer has called “the relative newness—at least among philosophers—of thinking seriously about morality as involving a set of capacities that are amenable to empirical investigation,”⁴ I was drawn to Alfano’s description of the possibilities of volumes on particular moral emotions; he suggested that a volume could serve not as an encyclopedia or a handbook, but rather as a collection of perspectives, building a mosaic for each emotion and evaluating both its nature and its moral properties. The result of contributors’ efforts before you is not a compendium of all possible treatments of moral psychology and forgiveness; instead it is a collection of distinctive perspectives on empirically informed understandings of forgiveness. Selections appear in order from the more psychological or philosophically applied to the more philosophically abstract, but I hope readers will find, as I do, that they ultimately inform and enhance each other. The authors assembled here offer views that sometimes harmonize and at other times disagree with each other; I solicited their participation partly because I believe the juxtaposition of approaches is productive of new and better thinking about forgiveness. For the sake of proceeding with a rough understanding of the subject, I offer the following amalgam of authors’ accounts of the meaning of the term: they tend to converge on elements of forgiveness as a moral and therefore at least partly voluntary response to a wrongdoer that reflects commitment to or expresses a change in feelings about the wrong done and that (re)accepts the offender as a member of a moral community.

Granting that the second chapter presents a more scientific study, it is largely the case in this volume that, without sacrificing necessary methodological descriptions and terminologies, the contributions of psychologists and philosophers are written in accessible terms for interdisciplinary audiences and for newcomers to the subject with interest in forgiveness but no prior background. Although contributors write invitationally and accessibly, it is also the case that they do not start at the beginning of the interdisciplinary conversation about forgiveness. Forgiveness is a subject that has enjoyed an

intensity of interest in the past thirty years in both psychology and philosophy. Instead of introducing the literature, contributors often raise challenges to understandings of forgiveness or to recommending forgiveness in concrete contexts.

Given the impressive scope of forgiveness studies today, it is difficult for a collection of works on it to comprehensively convey the many approaches useful to understanding its meaning, worth, and practice. To contextualize the conversations joined by my contributors, I offer a brief survey of thematic elements in contemporary literature on forgiveness and then an overview of the responses to that literature comprising the contents of this volume. To exercise some selectivity, I concentrate on discussing themes in psychology and philosophy that come closest to addressing the moral psychology of forgiveness, rather than canvassing the rich, but more discipline-specific, work in either field. Because I am a philosopher, my interest is chiefly in the extent to which work in moral psychology provides a needed corrective to some excesses in philosophical aversion to empirically informed theorizing. Therefore my overview is primarily one of the state of philosophical literature, with the eventual aim of complicating what has been referred to at times as the standard or classic view, by which philosophers often mean the predominant view of forgiveness in the first half of the thirty-year boom in contemporary philosophy of forgiveness. I conclude with my own perspective on forgiveness as a further challenge to consider psychological contexts in which forgiveness may be seen primarily as a commitment rather than primarily as an emotional state.

First, some overview of the expansion in the literature on moral psychology of forgiveness is in order. In the surge of publications on the subject in the late 1980s and 1990s, psychologists argued for the potential functions of forgiveness in therapeutic counseling. Authors such as Robert D. Enright (a contributor to this volume) expressed interest in the well-being of victims of wrongdoing who experienced levels of resentment and anger that interfered with living well and emotionally recovering from harm.⁵ Psychologists including Everett Worthington and Michael McCullough attended to the desire to repair relationships and to the psychological needs of victims and transgressors.⁶ Forms of anger, grudge-holding, or resentment that clients of psychologists reported a desire to diminish received attention from psychologists as possible barriers to individual well-being and to relationships, and forgiveness emerged as a possible response of intense interest.

Later expansion of literature in the social sciences on forgiveness was also due in part to the activities of post-conflict social projects such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), on which contributor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela served as a member and coordinator of public

hearings. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who first headed the TRC when it was established in 1996, has famously argued that “without forgiveness, there really is no future,” and psychologists including Gobodo-Madikizela have worked to articulate the different senses in which victims and offenders understand the meanings of forgiveness, the embodied experiences of feeling the attendant emotions incurred by the activities of the TRC, and the potentials, but also the *limits*, of forgiveness as a moral and psychological response.⁷ As the literature in psychology expanded, further critical voices appeared, including early attention to feminist concerns that positive psychology may disadvantage already oppressed and vulnerable groups. Sharon Lamb, for example, became a leading voice in raising concerns both about whether different sorts of victims are equally benefited by the results of forgiveness in therapy and whether forgiveness in counseling was morally and socially problematic to the extent that it may leave social problems unaddressed.⁸ Psychologists’ attention to gender was just one of many cultural dimensions along which forgiveness was studied; a rich example of the results is *Women’s Reflections on the Complexities of Forgiveness*, edited by Wanda Malcolm, Nancy DeCourville, and Kathryn Belicki. Their analyses regularly focus on the effects of forgiveness and the views that clients express toward the role of forgiveness in their attitudes toward their own past actions, their personal relationships, and their moral lives.

The main interests in forgiveness notably differ in philosophy. Early works in the 1980s and 1990s include Joram Haber’s *Forgiveness* and, most influentially, Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton’s *Forgiveness and Mercy*. Although the latter far outstrips the former in citation rates and influence, they are consistent with each other and notably different from much work in psychology at the time. While psychologists advocating forgiveness wrote regarding the value of reducing the pain, anger, and suffering of victims and even transgressors, and psychologist-critics attended to differential benefits and effects on societies, philosophers expressed much more interest in the moral rights of victims and the extent to which forgiveness was (in)compatible with retributive justice and self-respect. Further, philosophers expressed skepticism of the value of anger management or pain reduction as morally relevant in any way at all. Joram Haber and Jeffrie Murphy, in particular, argued forcefully against accounts of outcomes like the health of oneself or the community as instructive of the moral appropriateness of forgiveness. Murphy contended that the question as to what forgiveness is “cannot after all be sharply distinguished from the question ‘How is forgiveness justified?’”⁹ In other words, forgiveness was represented in its most basic conception in an idealized way that answered to nonconsequentialist forms of justification. Representative of this view, Haber said the beneficial results to forgivers “are largely irrelevant

from a moral point of view”; rather than argue that positive results do not occur (although he suggested that they sometimes don’t), Haber objected that “consequentialist reasons . . . are essentially practical, rather than moral.”¹⁰

More often than not, philosophers at the time generally argued that forgiveness is essentially an internal state, a change of heart rather than a behavior, a belief, a commitment, or a speech act, and that it was only genuine forgiveness when justified. Most notably, Murphy held that “forgiveness is primarily a matter of changing how one feels with respect to a person who has done one an injury,” specifically overcoming resentment in a way that is compatible with self-respect; he added “[Jean] Hampton sees this as a prelude to forgiveness; I see it as the very thing.”¹¹ Murphy based his conception of forgiveness as the overcoming of resentment on the conceptual analysis of Bishop Joseph Butler, whose 1796 sermons argue for the value of sudden resentment against injury as a mark of moral concern for oneself and for others and for the value of forgiveness as a remedy to settled anger. (Butler maintained that “we should not indulge in a passion, which, if generally indulged, would propagate itself so as almost to lay waste the world.”¹²) Interestingly, Butler argued that injuries against either oneself or others are reason for resentment and forgiveness; Murphy and Haber maintained that resentment applied only to injuries one suffers oneself and not to witnessing the injuries of others. Consideration of social contexts were not central to philosophical treatments in this period; authors more often articulated conceptual analyses abstracted from empirical information, developing distinctions between forgiveness and excuse, mercy, pardon, and forgetting.¹³

The early influence of accounts oriented firmly around the self-respect of individual victims and against consequentialism or self-care as morally salient led to two related tendencies in philosophy in the 2000s and 2010s. First, Murphy’s account, and thereby Butler’s, came to be referred to as the classic, standard, or paradigm view, which readers will find reflected in contributions in this volume (this is why you’ll see references to Butlerian resentment). At the same time, a proliferation of new publications came to challenge that view and prioritize different considerations, including those of naturalistic ethics, relational ethics, social philosophy, and feminist philosophy. The departures from the predominant view have been many and varied. For example, philosopher Glen Pettigrove has prominently argued for seeing forgiveness as a speech act that sets moral machinery in motion and affects the psychology of wrongdoers in important ways, an insight consistent with the findings of the psychologists who contribute the second chapter of this volume. Pettigrove suggests that the predominant account of forgiveness as the emotional state of a reduction in resentment is just one possible “lowest common denominator” view of the nature of forgiveness, and not always the best one if we wish

to consider functions of forgiveness in the absence of a requisite emotion.¹⁴ Trudy Govier argues for group forgiveness and third-party forgiveness in ways that loosen the sole focus on victims' internal senses of self-respect; her relational work serves as one of the supports in Alice MacLachlan's feminist contribution in the last chapter of this volume.¹⁵ Robin Dillon, Charles Griswold, and I argue in different ways for self-forgiveness as a form of third-party forgiveness, and Griswold and I develop differing conceptions of forgiveness as a virtue.¹⁶ Philosophers including Dillon, Jeremy Watkins, and Margaret Holmgren argue for "forward-looking" reasons to forgive that do not depend on perpetrator acknowledgment for evidence of a victim's justified forgiveness and do not necessarily overcome every trace of negative feeling.¹⁷ Increasingly, philosophers base their accounts of the nature of forgiveness on the testimony often provided in psychological accounts. MacLachlan agrees with Margaret Walker that, given the available empirical information regarding the many meanings and practices of forgiveness for different peoples, efforts "to articulate the perfect paradigm of moral forgiveness [are] a doomed enterprise," and rejects "a single correct idea of forgiveness, in the way that there is a correct theory of the structure of DNA."¹⁸

Perhaps we can now, at last, concur that what has been called classic or paradigmatic forgiveness is ultimately an idealized picture that rarely actually obtains. I say this knowing that two of the contributions to this volume defend a more traditional, internalist, and emotional account: "Forgiveness and Reconciliation," by Barrett Emerick, and "Once More with Feeling: Defending the Goodwill Account of Forgiveness," by David McNaughton and Eve Garrard. Yet in the course of defending their unilateral and more internal accounts of forgiveness, these contributors also expand the sets of emotions, utterances, and actors involved in forgiveness beyond the standard account centering resentment.

I have come to think that philosophers can and should attend, better than we always have, to the point of appealing to a paradigm at all. As I've said elsewhere, appealing to a paradigm may perform one of three functions. The first is the entirely neutral job of identifying a pattern in contemporary theorizing without endorsing it as correct or even as very widely shared; rather, a paradigm view is a dominant, organizing account that tends to affect the way discourse proceeds. In that sense, Murphy's conception of forgiveness is certainly paradigmatic. We also often appeal to a paradigm to indicate an area of general agreement among theorists, a point of convergence, as when we say that paradigm forgiveness does not condone or excuse the wrong, a common feature among otherwise disparate accounts of forgiveness. This second sense of "paradigm" is often used to connote an ideal and is not merely a neutral report of a pattern. It identifies desirable definitional elements. Clear cases

and central features are appealing, allowing us to feel we have arrived at some consensus about the nature of forgiveness. Yet Robin May Schott's criticism of this approach correlates with my arguments: "The risk of this strategy . . . is that the conceptual analysis of forgiveness becomes a lens that directs the lines of inquiry, instead of creating an opening for other moral lenses."¹⁹ This should give anyone in pursuit of a paradigm pause.

Third, we occasionally argue for new paradigms, by which we mean models that many may not share, but that serve as more accurate and reflective examples of occasions for moral behavior and promote certain priorities. It is my hope that as attention to forgiveness enters its maturity, new paradigms of forgiveness will better reflect the sentiment MacLachlan expresses in her contribution in this volume: "A philosophical account should distill those features and functions that are central to the concept as it emerges from everyday practices and develop a rational or regulative ideal that best reflects them. If these cannot be unified into a single, universal paradigm, it is better to sit with complexity than to deny the phenomenology of moral experience."

The first contribution is a model of sitting with complexity. Psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's piece, "Intersubjectivity and Embodiment: Exploring the Role of the Maternal in the Language of Forgiveness and Reconciliation," is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand why it is important to naturalize ethics and sets the tone for the volume. In it she discusses her experiences with South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in order to advance appreciation for dialogical contexts in which dealing with the past permits "discovering and nurturing the conditions that make forgiveness first conceivable, then ultimately possible." Gobodo-Madikizela provides readers with reason to hold that the moral powers of individuals and groups to assert the meaningfulness of forgiving or refusing forgiveness should be the starting point for any theorizing about forgiveness. As she argues regarding her work in South African communities, to say that even horrific deeds "are simply unforgivable does not capture the complexity and richness of all the social contexts within which gross human rights abuses are committed." In the social contexts she considers in the selection in this volume, Gobodo-Madikizela explicitly sets aside her previous explorations of the meaning of the term "forgiveness" in order to attend to the felt and embodied experiences of black South African women. Her focus includes women who express motivations for forgiving, including senses of responsibility to the community as well as empathy, expressed with the Xhosa word *inimba*, which refers to the umbilical cord and "can be interpreted to mean the feeling of motherhood." The complexities of the embodied, culturally located, and emotional motivations of these women suggest that no single account of forgiveness captures the reasons for different victims to forgive.

As many readers know, a contentious aspect of forgiveness, especially in such contexts as truth and reconciliation commissions, is the danger of an expectation that wrongdoers will be provided with reconciliation and forgiveness that they do not deserve, without ever expressing remorse or apology. Therefore the next chapter will be of interest to those who wonder what the effects of forgiveness are upon wrongdoers. In “What Victims Say and How They Say It Matters: Effects of Victims’ Post-Transgression Responses and Form of Communication on Transgressors’ Apologies,” psychologist Ward Struthers and colleagues explore victims’ post-transgression responses in some detail, with an eye to discerning whether forgiveness or its refusal motivated apologies on the part of offenders. They find that forgiving responses generated greater motivation for wrongdoers to apologize when they were communicated using an indirect form rather than the more direct statement “I forgive you.” Intriguingly, they also find that *unforgiving* responses generated greater motivation to apologize when they were communicated using a more direct form. In other words, their results further disrupt simplistic understandings of forgiveness as necessarily functional or unforgiveness as necessarily dysfunctional in promoting the repair of relationships. Moreover, like Gobodo-Madikizela, Struthers et al. suggest that victims’ consideration of forgiveness is a part of the circumstances making some reconciliation possible: “Victims can play an active role in the reconciliation process by facilitating apologies in transgressors and making them feel accepted back into the moral community.” This original contribution is distinctive in offering evidence that direct expressions of unforgiving can serve that accepting function in addition to indirect expressions of forgiving.

Whether victims can develop the capacities to forgive even in childhood is the focus of psychologists Robert D. Enright and Mary Jacqueline Song in the next chapter, “An Aristotelian Perspective on Forgiveness Education in Contentious World Regions.” Enright and Song argue for a conception of a virtue of forgiveness based in part on their experiences with developing forgiveness education in elementary school settings in Belfast and Milwaukee. In building their case for a virtue of forgiveness, they pause to parse distinctions between the uses of the term “resentment” in psychology and in philosophy. They suggest that psychologists tend to describe resentment in terms of longstanding and excessive anger and that philosophers tend to describe resentment in terms of immediate moral responses to injury; the former, they argue, is to be overcome and not fostered. Their contribution reduces the sense one can take from some forgiveness literature that psychologists and philosophers disagree as sharply as we sometimes seem to do, and instead Enright and Song direct attention to achieving manageable, nonclinical levels of anger. It is a further disruption of accounts of forgiveness as the eradication

of negative feelings about a wrongdoer or harm, promoting instead a view of forgiveness compatible with living well with appropriate or reduced but still present negative feelings. Enright and Song further distinguish between the propositional thoughts accompanying resentment and the emotions accompanying the thoughts, encouraging efforts at modeling different thoughts rather than recommending different feelings. Their results indicate that children in first-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade classes decreased statistically significantly in anger compared to control groups and did so in part with practice in *inherent worth thinking* as informed by stories and pictures, appeals to concrete examples and exemplars.

Of course, adults are also regularly presented with exemplars of forgiveness, as philosopher Myisha Cherry discusses in the subsequent chapter. In “Forgiveness, Exemplars, and the Oppressed,” Cherry’s concern is focused on those occasions when oppressed people are presented with exemplars, and she argues that, when used as instructions rather than as illustrative examples of larger principles, exemplars are a form of fallacious appeal that undermine the autonomy of victims, encouraging imitation rather than reflection. Cherry considers the Kantian perspective that moral exemplars are useful for moral education. She clarifies the distinction between imitation and emulation as a difference in unthinking versus reflective action. While contributions like Struthers’s explore victims’ post-transgression reactions, including expressions that are forgiving, Cherry explores the expressions of others *to* victims that they ought to forgive as exemplars have forgiven. What effects do the endorsements of exemplars have on victims of serious harm? In a literal sense, how are victims to think? Cherry notes that the forgiveness exemplar is held up to persuade the victim motivationally, not just to illustrate a principle. As she says, in some cases the exemplars themselves become the reason to forgive. She concludes, with Kant, that reason and emotion have or should have a relationship in morality and that attempts to appeal to exemplars may commit fallacies of reasoning. She appreciates the value of forgiveness exemplars that “can represent morality, inspire and give hope to others, be something to emulate, and aid in moral education.” However, she cautions against public appeals by powerful individuals to forgiveness exemplars: “When those in positions of power attempt to persuade the powerless to forgive by using exemplars, we have reasons to view their arguments as extremely dubious.”

Like Cherry, philosopher Jonathan Jacobs is similarly concerned with attitudes and sentiments in the public sphere, especially in the criminal justice context with which he is centrally concerned. In “Resentment, Punitiveness, and Forgiveness: Criminal Sanction and Civil Society,” Jacobs argues that it is public attitudes and perspectives that shape the civic culture. Like Enright and Song, he also addresses moral education, as he notes that for Adam Smith,

“actually having apt and fit sentiments is not automatic. One *learns* to have them, and such learning is a crucial element of moral education.” Jacobs explores Adam Smith’s conception of resentment in some detail, especially to the extent that resentment can erode relations and undermine the values crucial to maintaining the civility of society. Yet he is in strong sympathy with Smith’s view that resentment has its purposes as a crucial moral sentiment. Jacobs attends to the multifold dimensions on which criminal justice in America in particular is ultimately shaped for the worse by public resentments, hostilities, and indifference, but he concludes that forgiveness is not usually apt as a response in this constrained context. As he says, there are considerable difficulties concerning the right spirit in which we are to forgive, and the right conditions, and the difficulties are multiplied in the context of criminal justice.

Contributors David McNaughton and Eve Garrard resolve the conflict between negative attitudes and the right spirit of forgiveness with arguments that forgiveness of even unrepentant offenders can be morally admirable, but forgiveness is compatible with indignation, outrage, and denunciation of an offense. In “Once More with Feeling: Defending the Goodwill Account of Forgiveness,” they argue that not all negative attitudes are hostile attitudes; how moral emotions *feel* may be quite similarly negative, but some have judgments and objects compatible with forgiving while others do not. They further distinguish between feeling ill-willed and bearing ill will toward another, suggesting the first is psychologically involuntary while the second is at least partially voluntary, a cultivated disposition that includes some decisional component to carry forward. In a move related to the arguments of Struthers et al., McNaughton and Garrard argue that there are moral reasons to apologize *after* being forgiven. Although they argue, against predominant conceptions, that there is more to forgiving than merely overcoming resentment, they also build a case for holding a more traditional conception of forgiveness, that forgiving is something you do in your heart, rather than an explicit performative utterance that can be taken at face value by a listener. They consider in some detail arguments to the contrary, but they conclude that forgiveness consists in holding a certain belief and not in expressing that belief to another.

They have good company with philosopher Barrett Emerick, whose contribution follows. In “Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” Emerick argues for an expansion of the traditional view that forgiveness is concerned with resentment, and like McNaughton and Garrard, Emerick further argues for a unilateral and thoroughly internal account of forgiveness rather than, for example, a speech act. In disagreement with McNaughton and Garrard, however, Emerick holds that one’s own welfare as a victim is a moral reason to forgive (dismissed by McNaughton and Garrard as merely therapeutic). He

is also the only contributor to explicitly advance the view that forgiveness comes in degrees; addressing the psychological obstacle that complete or perfect forgiveness is often impossible, Emerick sensibly advocates for the worth of partial forgiveness. On his view, forgiveness is a term that refers to both a practice and sometimes an achievement. He explains why reconciliation requires forgiveness and argues for epistemic requirements to be met on the part of both victims and wrongdoers in reconciliation processes, saying they need to know, at least to some extent, how the other feels, understanding enough about the inner lives of others for reconciliation to be genuine.

That understanding is not limited to victims and wrongdoers, according to our final contribution, “In Defense of Third-Party Forgiveness.” Philosopher Alice MacLachlan explores the capacity to forgive a wrong and its grounds beyond that of victimization. A personal connection to a wrongdoer or victim can be indirect, she notes, and the personal quality of some connections possesses “a kind of limited transitivity.” Forgiveness on the part of someone other than the victim, or *third-party forgiveness*, relies on personal but indirect relationships to wrongdoers and victims. She further discusses when we can trust in the appearance of that transitivity, that is, when third parties are well-placed to sensitively and sincerely give or refuse forgiveness to wrongdoers. She concludes that third-party forgiveness has a double grounding in imaginative sympathy and transitive personal relations of identification and care. She argues for conceptual clarity in our moral psychology in order to make better recommendations in our ethical prescriptions, a fitting end to a volume collecting the perspectives of psychologists and philosophers.

I find MacLachlan’s views most akin to my own. Elsewhere I argue that the fragmented nature of the self, especially the traumatized self, is one that supports and enables the possibilities of self-inflicted evil and self-forgiveness, and it is difficult to account for self-forgiveness either for harms to oneself or harms to others unless we can sensibly say that third-party forgiveness is possible; that is, in self-forgiving, we forgive the wrongdoer although someone else (a past self, another person) is the victim.²⁰ Perhaps not surprisingly, the fragmented self is also the source of obstacles to self-forgiveness, as is the unpredictability of memory. Although I came to a view of forgiveness as a commitment through writing about self-forgiveness, I conclude that forgiveness of others may also be sensibly referred to as primarily a commitment, a promise to oneself that one may need to repeatedly renew with the passage of time. I rest my reasons for holding its commitment-like nature on the view that we can have relationships with our past, present, and future selves, and on views of beliefs as, rather than true or false propositions, more like modes of conduct, enacting attitudes in the way that we choose to live.

So I conclude this introduction with my own challenge to my contributors. I outline the account of belief upon which I rely and argue for forgiveness as a commitment in light of the practices that believing and holding attitudes based on those beliefs may require. I then proceed to my account of self-forgiveness as one form of such a commitment, which one has to one's current and future selves.

In saying that forgiveness is a commitment, I do not mean to imply that we cannot overcome certain feelings or maintain substantial changes in our attitudes. I agree with Trudy Govier's account of personhood as entailing some capability for moral transformation.²¹ Because persons are so capable, Govier further argues that victims should never give up on another human being, never commit to being unforgiving, because wrongdoers with personhood are capable of moral transformation.²² She indicates that if victims know that wrongdoers are persons, then it is a failure of the moral respect due all persons to disbelieve that a wrongdoer can change and become worthy of forgiveness. I agree that victims can know that a person is capable of future moral transformation, but I disagree with Govier's statement in the same work that victims should never give up on another human being; I would not go so far as to say that victims fail morally when they adopt pessimistic or hopeless attitudes about the prospects of their wrongdoer's moral change. One may have knowledge without belief, one may have correct and true beliefs that are not the basis of a particular attitude, and one may have attitudes that are predicated on attitudinal content in conflict with those true beliefs. To defend the distinction between a victim's knowledge of a proposition, a victim's belief in a proposition, and a victim's attitude toward a person, I rely on Blake Myers-Schultz's and Eric Schwitzgebel's co-authored account of knowledge without belief.²³ I then turn to Schwitzgebel's account of dispositional attitudes "outside the belief box."²⁴

Myers-Schultz and Schwitzgebel cite Gilbert Ryle's account of *know* and *believe* as "dispositional verbs of quite disparate types. 'Know' is a capacity verb, and a capacity verb of that special sort that is used for signifying that the person described can bring things off, or get things right. 'Believe,' on the other hand, is a tendency verb and one which does not connote that anything is brought off or got right."²⁵ Myers-Schultz and Schwitzgebel provide empirical evidence that respondents to thought experiments consistently distinguish between the same agent knowing P and yet not believing P. They conclude, "It is not *prima facie* obvious that all instances of knowledge are also instances of belief"; instead "it is as though knowledge requires only having the information stored somewhere and available to be deployed to guide action, while belief requires some consistency in deploying the information (at least dispositionally or counterfactually)."²⁶ Knowledge of a true proposition

can be on or off. The proposition is true or it is false. It does not appear that belief follows propositional knowledge so inevitably that one can be held responsible for failing at belief, however. If knowledge does not entail belief, then at times the knowledge-switch will be set to “on” while the belief falters.

Belief in the moral transformative powers of wrongdoers starts to sound more like a virtue or an imperfect duty. As I said, I agree with Govier’s view of personhood, the proposition that moral transformation is possible for individual human beings with moral agency; moral agents are capable of at least some moral transformation. Yet even as I know that, I am inclined to agree with Myers-Schultz and Schwitzgebel that knowledge does not entail belief, that the former may be a propositional bit of information while the latter reflects “a tendency to succeed.”²⁷ To believe is to carry one’s knowledge forward into situations; it is to bring it off, to get its application right in the presence of competing information. If so, then a failure to *believe* what I *know* is not necessarily a moral failure (although it can be). A prescription regarding what victims ought to believe amounts to a recommendation to carry forward a practice, the success conditions of which are not entirely up to victims; more importantly, it is not a moral failure in one’s respect for personhood, which one can *know* that one ought to bear, regardless of what one *believes* over time.

For related reasons, attitudes that rely on our beliefs are difficult to contain in inner landscapes; as Schwitzgebel says, “To have an attitude is, at root, to live a certain way. . . . It is to have, in general though probably only imperfectly, a certain profile of outward behavior and inner experience, . . . to embody a certain broad-ranging actual and counterfactual pattern of activity and reactivity.”²⁸ Attitudes are not internal representations written in a “Belief Box,” Schwitzgebel says, but come with postures and patterns of behavior in the world, and he argues this account for both propositional attitudes (in the set of which he includes believing and hoping) and reactive attitudes (in the set of which he includes resenting, forgiving, and being angry).²⁹ If knowledge does not entail belief, then belief does not entail appropriate attitudes, and Schwitzgebel rejects as “misleading” the view that an attitude is “a matter of possessing some particular internally stored representational content, a content perhaps poised to play some specific set of cognitive roles depending on the attitude type.”³⁰ Instead of holding that to have an attitude is to have a relationship to a belief, Schwitzgebel argues that to have an attitude is to have, “though probably only imperfectly, a certain profile of outward behavior and inner experience . . . to embody a certain broad-ranging actual and counterfactual pattern of activity and reactivity.”³¹

I suggest that forgiveness can be just such an attitude, a pattern of activity and reactivity, neither essentially an inward feeling nor essentially an utterance or behavior. Because it is not entirely up to us when and how well we

are embodying the attitude, the moral and motivated, decisional component of such an attitude is best accounted for as a *commitment* to enact the attitude in the world. To borrow Schwitzgebel's language, I see a commitment to forgiveness as one aspiring to the practice, over time, of embodying that broad-ranging pattern he describes, and therefore forgiveness can be a speech act prior to having all of the expected, attendant emotions one might describe as forgiving. A view of forgiveness as a belief requiring continual recommitment is compatible with forgiveness sometimes consisting in a speech act, because as Cheshire Calhoun says, "Reflection on the content of the social practice of morality is what normative moral theorizing should be about. The theorist is not to begin by ignoring actual social practices of morality, including those that shape the theorist's own thought, in order to construct an ideal normative standard to then be applied in evaluating actual practices."³² Morality refers to how we engage others as much as it refers to how we develop and shape principles and theories, and moral social practices are not anterior applications of theories; "the social practice of morality *really is* morality."³³ I agree with Calhoun that these two conceptions of morality, the theoretical one aiming to get it right and the social one aiming to live with others, work together and sometimes in tension due to the plurality of our moral aims.

For these reasons, I tend to oppose arguments, like those by Emerick and by McNaughton and Garrard in this volume, that later wishing to tell someone "I didn't really forgive you when I said I did" somehow reveals that forgiveness is essentially internal. Instead it seems to me that moral agents have a plurality of moral aims, including the aim of forgiveness as an expression of acceptance of a wrongdoer and the aim of overcoming one's own hostile feelings regarding a wrong. They're both forgiveness in different functioning forms, accomplishing different moral aims, referred to by the same word. Words admit ambiguity, and that is why it is coherent for a wrongdoer to take someone who communicated forgiveness before feeling it to have actually forgiven the wrongdoer. One moral aim was accomplished, while another with the same referent was not. Our plural moral aims reveal precisely why moral life is so difficult and moral psychology so important to articulate.

I have argued elsewhere that forgiveness is centrally relational, and the nature of the relationship, especially the power relationship, that it is employed to repair provides important information as to the content of the normative role of forgiveness. Some relationships, especially between caregivers and those cared for, are (among other things) fiduciary relationships, "marked by the expectation that one party will use his or her judgment to act in the best interests of the other,"³⁴ and other relationships between more equal parties (for example, married adults) are structured in part by their explicit,

expressed commitments. In short, not all relationships are entirely chosen and not all relationships leave trust-building and wellness-maintaining activities to chance. Therefore, again unlike some of my contributors to this volume, I take it to be erroneous to hold that forgiveness is always necessarily elective because it is insufficiently responsive to the contexts that endow commitment to forgiveness with its appropriate moral import.

I realize that some philosophers may hold that one cannot be *required* to make a promise or a commitment. But the position that commitments cannot be required seems, like necessarily elective forgiveness, an acontextual and nonrelational treatment of the nature of forgiveness. Surely, in certain relationships, one can absolutely be confronted with normative expectations to make commitments and promises. For example, when one takes on the responsibilities involved in caring for children or vulnerable adults, it is easy to imagine moral demands or requirements to make promises. I'm under some pressure to design a syllabus because even my adult and elective university students expect me to make commitments and promises that, given my obligations as structural of the relationship, are required of me, reasonable to demand. Wedding vows are regularly arranged between couples with respect to what promises are expected, not just for the sake of the ceremony itself but as a reflection of particular values that couple believes structural to the marital relationship. And my upcoming citizenship application to Canada includes the requirement that I make certain promises (in the form of an oath), an expectation with which I am keen to comply. Forgiveness can function similarly, as Linda Ross Meyer suggests with her example of saying to her child "I am still angry, but I forgive you anyway."³⁵ As children, we need to believe our parents won't eternally resent us for our minor offenses and even for culpably wronging them in order to develop basic senses of trust; especially in response to the more trivial harms, then, parents may bear special obligations to their children to express forgiveness.

I hope it is clear why I do not hold that the expression of a commitment to forgive is something less than actually forgiving while the overcoming of emotional states is actual; I understand that philosophical views that diverge with mine are predicated on a shared view that *forgiveness* must be a term referring to the emotional changes involved in overcoming resentment. Mine is a more multidimensional view. Forgiveness is ambiguous and multiply realizable in the same way that betting is multiply realizable, sometimes in the class of performative illocutions and sometimes not. In other words, it is my conviction that when we discuss forgiveness, we may be discussing many instantiations of it, including and not limited to the emotional transformation that is interior to the forgiving agent. I am advocating a more relational and externalist account than do all of my contributors equally.

I am happy to offer this collection of interdisciplinary thinkers who occasionally disagree with each other and with me. I encourage readers to take the differing insights in these contributions as helpful in understanding the nature and worth of forgiveness. It is a pleasure to be a part of a multivolume series contributing to advancing a multiplicity of perspectives in morality and moral psychology.

NOTES

1. Kathryn Norlock, *Forgiveness from a Feminist Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 7–9.
2. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, “Intersubjectivity and Embodiment: Exploring the Role of the Maternal in the Language of Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” originally published in *Signs* 36, no. 3 (2011): 541–51, and reprinted as the first chapter in this volume with the permission of the author and of the University of Chicago Press.
3. Owen Flanagan, Hagop Sarkissian, and David Wong, “Naturalizing Ethics,” in *Moral Psychology, Volume 1: The Evolution of Morality: Adaptations and Innateness*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 5.
4. Susan Dwyer, “How Not to Argue that Morality Isn’t Innate: Comments on Prinz,” in *Moral Psychology, Volume 1: The Evolution of Morality: Adaptations and Innateness*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 417.
5. See especially Robert D. Enright and Joanna North, eds., *Exploring Forgiveness* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), and Robert D. Enright, *Forgiveness Is a Choice* (Washington, DC: APA LifeTools, 2001).
6. Michael E. McCullough and Everett Worthington Jr., “Promoting Forgiveness: A Comparison of Two Brief Psychoeducational Group Interventions with a Waiting-List Control,” *Counseling and Values* 40, no. 1 (1995): 55–68.
7. Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 255; Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Woman Confronts the Legacy of Apartheid* (Boston and New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2003).
8. Sharon Lamb, “Forgiveness Therapy: The Context and Conflict,” *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 25, no. 1 (2005): 61–80.
9. Murphy, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 23.
10. Joram Haber, *Forgiveness* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1991), 108.
11. Murphy, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 167.
12. Bishop Joseph Butler, “Sermon IX: Upon Forgiveness of Injuries,” in *Fifteen Sermons and Other Writings on Ethics*, ed. David McNaughton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
13. There were notable exceptions, although they certainly constituted a minority. Cheshire Calhoun provided a more narrative-centered account of aspirational forgiveness for unrepentant wrongdoers, as a “choice to place respecting another’s way of

making sense of her life before resentfully enforcing moral standards”; see “Changing One’s Heart,” *Ethics* 103 (1992): 95. Judith Boss averred that “discussions of forgiveness in our culture . . . cannot be separated from gender politics” in “Throwing Pearls to the Swine: Women, Forgiveness, and the Unrepentant Abuser,” in *Philosophical Perspectives on Power and Domination*, ed. Laura Duhan Kaplan and Lawrence F. Bove (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi Press, 1997), 235; of course, these were separated by most philosophers during the period when the morality and psychology of forgiveness were described to be more at odds than is now the case.

14. Glen Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

15. Trudy Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

16. Robin Dillon, “Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect,” *Ethics* 112 (2001): 53–83; Charles Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Norlock, *Forgiveness from a Feminist Perspective*.

17. Jeremy Watkins, “Unilateral Forgiveness and the Task of Reconciliation,” *Res Publica: A Journal of Legal and Social Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (2015): 19–42; Margaret Holmgren, *Forgiveness and Retribution: Responding to Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

18. The selections quoted are from, respectively, Alice MacLachlan, “Practicing Imperfect Forgiveness,” in *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal*, ed. Lisa Tessman (Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2009), 188, and Margaret Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 152 (quoted in MacLachlan, “Practicing Imperfect Forgiveness,” 188).

19. Robin May Schott, “The Atrocity Paradigm and the Concept of Forgiveness,” *Hypatia* 19, no. 4 (2004): 206.

20. See Chapter 6, “Self-Forgiveness,” in Norlock, *Forgiveness from a Feminist Perspective*.

21. Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge*, 137.

22. *Ibid.*, 140.

23. Blake Myers-Schulz and Eric Schwitzgebel, “Knowing that P without Believing that P,” *Noûs* 47, no. 2 (2013): 371–84.

24. Eric Schwitzgebel, “A Dispositional Approach to Attitudes: Thinking Outside of the Belief Box,” in *New Essays on Belief: Constitution, Content and Structure*, ed. Nikolaj Nottelmann (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2013).

25. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), 133–34; quoted in Myers-Schulz and Eric Schwitzgebel, “Knowing that P without Believing that P,” 381.

26. Myers-Schulz and Eric Schwitzgebel, “Knowing that P without Believing that P,” 381.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Schwitzgebel, “A Dispositional Approach to Attitudes: Thinking Outside of the Belief Box,” 76.

29. Ibid., 75.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 76.
32. Cheshire Calhoun, *Moral Aims: Essays on the Importance of Getting It Right and Practicing Morality with Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 14.
33. Ibid., 26.
34. Alice MacLachlan, "Fiduciary Duties and the Ethics of Public Apology," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33, no. 4 (2016), doi:10.1111/japp.12214.
35. Linda Ross Meyer, "Forgiveness and Public Trust," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 27, no. 5 (2000): 1523.

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