

Blame and Forgiveness

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2016

Abstract

This thesis discusses the nature of two interrelated moral phenomena, blame and forgiveness. The two main questions this thesis addresses are: What is it to blame someone? What is involved in forgiveness?

I begin by offering an account of blame which fits well with the attitudes of apology and forgiveness, as responses to wrongdoing. I introduce the idea that we blame wrongdoers for the disrespect and lack of consideration expressed in their actions and behaviour. I use the broad Kantian idea that whenever people wrong each other there is a failure of respect involved. Following this idea, I propose to understand wrongdoing as expressing disrespect for the victim and therefore creating *a deficit of respect*. I argue that there is something corrective about the expression of blame. Wrongdoers create a deficit of respect when they wrong us and blame expressively makes good that disrespect.

I then develop an account of *earned* forgiveness through apology. I argue that apologies have reason-giving powers: they make forgiveness rational. Apologies work in relation to forgiveness because in apologizing the wrongdoer recognizes that how she treated the victim was wrong and that the victim deserves to be treated better. Apology restores at an expressive level the moral balance of respect between the victim and the wrongdoer, so that forgiveness can be forthcoming.

In cases of elective forgiveness, where there is no apology, I argue that forgiveness is justified by non-desert type reasons such as generosity and strong community support. These reasons both enable and justify the victim to forgive.

I further ask the question of what sort of a thing forgiveness is emotionally. I argue that forgiveness involves the overcoming of retributive emotions towards the wrongdoer, as a result of *deciding to trust* the wrongdoer.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Chris Bennett and Miranda Fricker for their support, encouragement and advice. They both read many drafts of the thesis and helped me develop as a philosopher. I also thank Jennifer Saul, who supervised the beginning of my thesis. Jenny has always been an inspiration to me as a philosopher and as a person. I also thank her for giving me the opportunity to teach the Feminism module.

Many people have kindly read chapters of the thesis and provided me with very helpful comments. I thank my friend Kathy Puddifoot who read various chapters of the thesis and with whom I had the most interesting and challenging discussions on blame.

I have also benefitted from the comments of many of my friends, among them, Adriana Clavel, Isela Gonzales, Cesar Palacios, Armin Khameh, Bernardo Pino, Gonzalo Nunez, Simon Barker, Bernardo Aguilera, Sergi Oms, Elianna Fetterolf, Robin Zheng and Laura Towers. In addition, I thank Tracy Isaacs for first introducing me to the topic of moral responsibility. Tracy has been a great friend and mentor during my stay at Western University.

I thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Sheffield for funding this research.

I thank my husband for his continuous love and encouragement.

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Introduction

This thesis examines two important responses to wrongdoing: blame and forgiveness. In the first two chapters I discuss the phenomenon of moral blame and in the last three chapters I explore the phenomenon of forgiveness. Blame and forgiveness are interrelated. I will argue that, although forgiveness presupposes a judgment of blameworthiness, it involves the overcoming of blame. However, I also argue that the cancellation of blame is not sufficient for forgiveness. Forgiveness further involves the overcoming of retributive emotions towards the wrongdoer, as a result of undertaking a change of heart towards the wrongdoer.

Blame is a common reaction to being wronged and we engage in very different forms of blame. We engage in interpersonal forms of blame in our everyday interactions, when we blame our spouses, friends or colleagues. We often blame each other when we feel we have been wronged and we sometimes communicate our blame to the wrongdoer. We also blame for wrongs done to others (as third-parties). We can easily imagine a scenario where we say things like: ‘John shouldn’t have treated Paul that way’. But there are also many common forms of impersonal blame, when we blame people with whom we have had little or no interaction. This is a very common form of blame especially when we think of the many occasions when we blame, for example, a train driver for driving negligently and causing a serious accident. Another type of distant blame is blame of the dead.¹ This is an important form of blame. Think of the many occasions when we have blamed Eichmann or Hitler for their atrocities committed during the Second World War. Finally, we sometimes blame agents privately, in ‘our head’ when we do not dare or maybe we simply do not find it appropriate to discuss our blame with another person.

Many recent accounts on the nature of blame (T. M. Scanlon, Miranda Fricker, Jay Wallace, Susan Wolf, Angela Smith, Gary Watson)

¹ Some of these categories can overlap. Blame of the dead can be either third-party (as when we blame Hitler for wrongs done to others) or distant (as when we blame a stranger for having wronged us). Distant blame can also be third-party blame (as in my train driver example). Third-party cases may be proximal or distant.

have prioritized second-personal forms of blame at the expense of less interpersonal forms such as blame of distant agents and third-personal blame. I argue that the impersonal form of blame is just as important for understanding blame as the interpersonal form. My aim will be to find some unifying element of blame, which will be able to bring cases of distant and third party blame into the arena of central cases of blame. I develop an account that is well placed to explain the value of less interpersonal forms of blame, as well as interpersonal forms.

My proposal is that expressed blame *is a corrective affirmation of respect for the wronged party*. I shall defend this view by first looking at what really troubles us about being wronged. Drawing on the work of Strawson, Darwall, Gaita and Smith, I defend the view that *when someone wrongs another, their action expresses moral disrespect, and to that extent the wronged party is left with a deficit of respect. When blame is expressed, either by the wronged party or a third party, that deficit is expressively made good through a corrective affirmation of respect for the victim*.

In this thesis I work with the assumption that all wrongs are a matter of disrespect. I want to use ‘respect’ in this familiar Kantian way to cover all cases of wrongdoing. Thus I defend the view that whenever there is wrongdoing, whether my friend has betrayed me or my partner has been unfaithful, all these wrongs do in fact involve a failure of respect of some kind. Blame, in my account, is directed towards an action of disrespect.

I argue that we can draw a distinction between judgments of blameworthiness and blame proper. To judge blameworthy is to believe that the other person has wronged us or others, by manifesting disrespect. To blame is more than merely believing the other person has shown disrespect. Blame, I argue, involves affirming the victim’s standing and it expressively makes good the existing deficit of respect. In this way, the victim or a third-party can stick up and defend the victim of wrongdoing.

So how does the account of blame I propose here fit with the theory of forgiveness I discuss in the next three chapters? Let me briefly say that I examine and defend two types of forgiveness, *elective forgiveness* (forgiveness which is offered as a ‘gift’ to the wrongdoer) and *earned*

forgiveness, which is earned by the wrongdoer through apology and remorse. Both accounts fit well with the picture of blame I present here. Forgiveness presupposes that the offender has wronged me by disrespecting me, and this judgment is preserved even after I have forgiven. When I forgive I continue to believe that the other person is blameworthy for what she did, but I now have reasons to withhold blame. First, earned forgiveness through apology involves a recognition that the affirmation of the need for the deficit of respect to be made good is no longer necessary, as apology makes good the existing deficit of respect.

Second, I argue that elective forgiveness also preserves the judgment of blameworthiness and overcomes blame. However, what gives the victim reasons to overcome blame and to forgive is not apology or remorse on the part of the wrongdoer. I argue that we can have non-desert-based reasons which can justify the victim to forgive, even when the balance of respect hasn't been made good by the wrongdoer. I also argue that in elective forgiveness sometimes the moral support of the community for the victim can serve as an analogue reason to apology as they achieve similar things: they correct for the moral balance of respect and they make it safe for the victim to forgive.

I claim there is a division of labour among the members of the moral community: different members differently positioned could make up for the disrespect in different ways. One obvious way to redress the balance of respect is for the wrongdoer to apologize to the victim. But another way to redress the balance of respect is to blame the wrongdoer. When we are the person wronged we can affirm that we deserve to be treated better by blaming the wrongdoer. But we can also do this for others. In this way, the community is important because people who are wronged are often not in a position to affirm a corrective respect for themselves. So it will often depend on third parties to re-affirm the respect for the victim.

Further, in the last chapter of the thesis, we shall see that the community can become even more important than the wrongdoer in order to counteract the wrongdoing and stick up for the victim. I shall discuss the case of Jean Améry, a survivor of the Holocaust, who cannot bring himself to forgive precisely because the community has not done enough

to counteract the wrongdoing. I argue that sometimes reasons of social context may have to be in place in order to support someone in their forgiving, or in making it possible. The community blaming the wrongdoer by sticking up for the victim of injustice will play an important role in forgiveness. I will argue that it is a condition, especially in cases of wrongs against humanity, that it is this socially disseminated affirmation of respect which allows for forgiveness of the unrepentant to be possible and even desirable.

The Structure of the Thesis

Let me provide a general outline of the thesis.

In **Chapter 1** I start by evaluating different views on blame, which try to explain what blame is and what exactly, if anything, it adds to the mere judgment of blameworthiness. The views I present agree that blame of persons has a special force; it tends to involve us in an intimate way with the wrongdoer and thus it amounts to more than merely grading or appraising negatively our wrongdoer's behaviour. They also argue that blame should not be equated with punitive behaviour. In this chapter, I evaluate two important accounts of the nature of moral blame, which try to find a middle ground between these two unsatisfactory accounts of blame, 'the assessment view' and 'the punitive view'. However, I shall argue that these proposals fail to provide a satisfactory account of blame and thus they fail to account for its special force.

The aim of **Chapter 2** is to defend my own account of blame, which I believe can explain what blame adds to the mere judgment of blameworthiness and thus the distinctive force of moral blame. In order to defend my account, I shall look at two things. First, I develop an insight from Scanlon's account. He argues that we can be open to moral criticism for blaming someone unfairly but also for failing to blame an offender when we should blame them. Scanlon call this phenomenon 'the ethics of blame', where we are concerned with the norms which govern our blame-practices. The second thing I focus on is the fact that many of the accounts discussed in the first chapter are account of second-personal forms of blame. They all focus on blame in the context of interpersonal

relationships. However, I argue that we can understand better the nature of blame if we analyse cases of distant blame or third-party blame. Further, we need an account that can explain what is important about blame in all contexts, and not only in interpersonal context. In this chapter I reject two accounts of blame that give priority to its interpersonal form: one that gives it explanatory priority (Fricker 2016), and another that gives it conceptual priority (Scanlon 2008). I argue that both accounts fail to fully appreciate the point of distant blame and third-party blame. I develop an account that is well placed to explain the value of less interpersonal forms of blame, as well as interpersonal forms. My proposal is that blame *is a corrective affirmation of respect for the wronged party*.

In Chapters 3,4 and 5 I discuss the phenomenon of forgiveness.

The main aim of **Chapter 3** is to propose an account of *earned* forgiveness that tries to meet the following three desiderata:

1. It must solve the puzzle of forgiveness: it must explain how it is possible to forgive and overcome hostile feelings toward the wrongdoer while continuing to regard her as culpable.
2. It must articulate the moral reasons that justify forgiveness without, again, denying that what the wrongdoer did was an unexcused moral offence.
3. It must explain the reason-giving power of apology.

Before I put forward my view, I consider and reject two similar and influential accounts in the literature on forgiveness (Pamela Hieronymi 2001 and Jeffrie Murphy 1988), which seem to meet the three desiderata. They aim to solve the puzzle of forgiveness; they try to represent forgiveness as grounded in moral reasons and they attempt to explain the connection between apology and merited forgiveness. I argue their accounts should be rejected because they do not successfully explain the justificatory role of apology in forgiveness: it therefore fails to represent forgiveness as adequately grounded in moral reasons.

In this chapter I propose and defend the following account of earned forgiveness through apology

The Balance of Respect Account of Earned Forgiveness: Earned forgiveness involves two central elements: 1. The acknowledgement that the wrongdoer has done enough to make good the disrespect shown toward the wronged party; 2. Holding an attitude (or committing to hold an attitude) toward the wrongdoer that this acknowledgment makes appropriate, and on the basis of this acknowledgment.

In **Chapter 4** I address the question of what sort of a thing forgiveness is emotionally. It is common in the literature on forgiveness to assume that forgiveness involves a change of heart towards the wrongdoer. In this chapter I try to articulate what exactly this change of heart involves and what attitudes the forgiving victim must have or commit to in order to count as forgiving. I shall argue for the claim that forgiveness involves overcoming retributive emotions or negative attitudes toward the wrongdoer, as a result of having had a change of heart towards the wrongdoer. I propose to understand this change of heart as ‘deciding to trust’ that the wrongdoer will not repeat the moral offence. In forgiving we give the other person a chance not to do that same thing again, not to repeat the bad behaviour. Before I propose my account, I look first at other accounts in the literature which have tried to make sense of the ‘change of heart’ metaphor, in particular to Butler 1896, Allais 2008, Hampton 1988 and Bennett 2001. I argue that all these accounts must be rejected because they do not satisfactorily explain what the change of heart consists in.

In **Chapter 5** I go back to the question already asked in Chapter 3, which is, what sorts of reasons warrant forgiveness? In Chapter 3 I argue that there is a type of forgiveness which is deserved and which responds to desert-type reasons. I proposed that forgiveness is made rational by the wrongdoer apologizing. But this account creates a puzzle because it seems to make cases of *elective forgiveness* (where there is no apology or repentance) unjustified. My aim in this chapter is to argue for the claim that elective forgiveness can be justified. I defend this claim by first challenging the common assumption that the only reasons for forgiveness are reasons that come from apology or remorse on the part of the

wrongdoer. I argue instead that there are all kinds of reasons for elective forgiveness, which justify the victim to forgive in the absence of an apology. Such reasons, I argue, although they have a justifying force, do not have a requiring force. Thus, they are not the type of reasons which automatically generate moral obligations. The victim, I argue, is both justified to forgive and also to withhold her forgiveness. I will describe three types of reasons which can perform this justificatory role: a) broadly ethical reasons related to a certain view of the world the victim has; b) reasons related to the victim's character and c) community-based reasons.

Chapter – 1 What is Blame?

1.1 Introduction

Blame is a fundamental part of our moral life, yet it is a highly problematic phenomenon. We often blame each other when we think the other person has wronged others or us. But it is difficult to say what blame consists in and what it adds (if anything) to the mere judgment that the wrongdoer is at fault. Moral blame of persons seems to have a certain ‘depth’ or ‘force’, which goes beyond merely noticing that the other person is at fault. Many recent writers on the nature of blame have tried to distinguish between blaming and judging blameworthy, and argue that blame goes beyond a judgment of blameworthiness. One way of explaining what blame adds to the mere judgment of blameworthiness is to say that blame involves a form of grading, ranking or evaluating negatively the other person’s character or conduct. Following Angela Smith (2013), let us call the view that blame is a negative moral evaluation of a person for her character, ‘the assessment view’.

Another way is to argue that blame should be equated with punitive behaviour. To blame is to explicitly sanction or punish the wrongdoer in some way. Let us call this the ‘moral sanction’ view. Many recent accounts of blame have been dissatisfied with both the ‘moral assessment’ and the ‘moral sanction’ account of moral blame. They have argued, against the ‘assessment view’, that blame is more than an ‘assignment of moral grades’, because, often, blaming someone goes beyond arriving at a negative assessment of her character (Scanlon 2008: 127-128). Scanlon, for example, argues that the ‘moral assessment’ view cannot explain the ‘distinctive weight that moral blame seems to have’, as it is not clear why we would be so interested in assessing and ranking people’s characters (Scanlon 2008: 127). They have also argued that the ‘moral sanction’ view is wrong because it cannot account for the fact that there are many ways in which we engage in blaming behaviour without having any intention to punish the other person or apply unpleasant sanctions.

In this chapter I shall mainly focus on two influential accounts of moral blame, Thomas Scanlon's and George Sher's, which try to find a middle ground between the 'assessment view' and the 'moral sanction' view. The aim of this chapter is to critically evaluate both of these accounts, and finally argue that, although they succeed in explaining what blame adds to the mere judgment of finding fault, they fail to provide convincing accounts of moral blame. I focus on Sher and Scanlon because they both develop original and influential extended accounts of moral blame which do justice to the fact that blame often is neither punitive nor merely evaluative.

Another influential account of moral blame, which also represents a middle ground between the 'assessment view' and the 'sanction' view is the 'reactive attitude account' proposed by P.F. Strawson (1962), and later defended in more detail by Jay Wallace (1994; 2011). I will only focus on this account briefly, in the first part of the chapter. Both Sher and Scanlon criticize the 'reactive attitude account', arguing that reactive attitudes are not essential to moral blame, and so the account, according to them, fails to explain the nature of moral blame.

The strategy of this chapter is as follows. In the first part I will briefly discuss the 'reactive attitude account' of blame. In evaluating this view, we shall also see what is wrong with both the 'assessment' and the 'moral sanction' accounts of blame. I shall then spell out, drawing on Sher's argument, what is wrong with the 'reactive attitude account'. The shortcoming of the 'reactive attitude account' will motivate us to find an alternative view of blame. In the second part of the chapter I shall present and evaluate Sher's dispositional account and, in the last section, I shall critically discuss Scanlon's account of blame as a rupture in a relationship.

1.2 Blame as a 'reactive attitude', the 'assessment view' and the 'sanction view'

Recent authors writing on moral blame have maintained that blaming another person entails more than merely noticing that she is blameworthy for what she did. We can observe that the other person has committed a

wrong and yet, we can abstain from engaging in blaming attitudes and behaviour. Sometimes this distinction is reflected in our everyday language. For example, we say things like ‘I know he is blameworthy for doing X, but I just can’t bring myself to blame him for it’ (Smith 2013: 29).² So the question is, what do these blaming reactions and attitudes consist in?

I have already mentioned two common answers to this question. One is the ‘assessment view’, according to which to blame is to assess negatively in the sense of grading the other person’s character or conduct. And the other is the ‘sanction account’, which claims that to blame is to engage in punitive activity towards the wrongdoer.

Let me begin with the ‘sanction account’. According to this view, the point of responding with sanctioning attitudes is to deter the wrongdoer from committing future wrongs. One of the problems with the ‘sanction account’ is that it cannot account for cases where we blame the wrongdoer ‘privately’, without expressing any attitudes towards her and with no desire to punish or sanction her behaviour at all. A secretary may blame her boss for treating her condescendingly, without ever communicating this thought to him. We can also imagine cases where I blame my parents for neglecting me when I was a child, even if they may be dead. In this case I do not even get a chance to express my blaming feelings toward them, let alone sanction their behaviour. Another problem with the ‘sanction account’, whose main aim is that of deterrence, is that it is not

² It is not so obvious that there is a distinction between judging blameworthy and blaming an agent for what she did. One may argue that once we judge someone blameworthy, we should then also blame them for what they did, unless there are some defeating reasons for not blaming them. It is unclear what we mean by the quoted expression in our ordinary language. We may want to communicate a failure on our part, that is, we may want to say that the agent is blameworthy and therefore we should blame her but for some reason, which is our fault, we cannot blame her. However, if we could, it would be appropriate to blame. Or we might mean that we do not really think she is blameworthy for what she did, and that is the reason why we cannot bring ourselves to blame her. (Compare with ‘I can see she is admirable in this respect, but I cannot bring myself to admire her for all these other reasons; therefore, overall, she is not to be admired. On the second interpretation, I can see she is to be admired and I should admire her, but because I am really troubled now and I cannot attend properly, I cannot bring myself to admire her’). It is not clear whether blame/blameworthiness behave in the same way as admire/admirable. For the sake of the argument that follows, I ignore all these complications and assume that there is an intuitive distinction between blaming and judging blameworthy.

properly focused on what the agent did. Its focus is forward-looking as its aim is to prevent future wrongdoing. But this seems to miss the point of many cases of blame where we do not intend or do not care about reforming the wrongdoer. I may blame my friend's partner for cheating on him and yet lack any desire or intention that she change her behaviour. I may not care at all about her. However, I still disapprove of her behaviour and blame her for what she did.

Philosophers who either defend or criticize the 'assessment view', tend to describe the view using the metaphors of a 'balance sheet' or a 'ledger', arguing that what we do when we blame on this account is to record a person's faults or negative character traits on a balance sheet, whose purpose is to assess the wrongdoer's moral worth. For example, Michael Zimmerman (1988) summarizes the account in the following way:

Blaming someone may be said to constitute judging that there is a 'discredit' or 'debit' in his 'ledger,' or a 'negative mark' in his 'report card,' or a 'blemish' or 'stain' on his 'record'; that his 'record' has been 'tarnished'; that his 'moral standing' has been diminished (Zimmerman 1988: 38).

Thus, according to the 'assessment view', what blame adds to the judgment that the other person is blameworthy is the belief that her bad action reveals something negative about her character and thus has reduced her moral balance and stained her moral record. Our overall assessment of their moral worth will be diminished every time we believe they are at fault or have a bad character trait. So, on this view, 'each of us is soiled by his past misdeeds and... we are all perpetually running a moral tab' on our wrongdoers (Sher 2006: 76). There are many objections raised against the plausibility of such a view³, however, I shall here point to one I consider particularly important.

One of the main criticisms of the 'assessment view' is that it is not clear why such blame amounts to anything more than a 'pointless

³ For a detailed discussion, see Sher (2006), pp. 75-78.

assignment of moral grades' (Scanlon 2008: 127). That is, it does not seem to fit with what we in general call blaming practices and attitudes and thus it does not explain the distinctive force of moral blame. According to this view, anyone could make such a judgment about any wrongdoer, in a dispassionate and affectless manner as anyone could notice that the other person's moral record has been stained. However, it is not clear how this can account for the fact that we tend to have very strong feelings toward the person whom we blame, such as anger, indignation or resentment. So we need an account where blaming is not merely, as Gary Watson claims, 'a fault-finding appraisal – which could be made from a detached and austere 'objective' standpoint' (Watson 1987: 262). Blame seems to play an important role in our emotional lives and we invest much energy in targeting the blamed agent with many negative emotions and reactions. This objection brings us to the 'reactive attitude account' proposal, which pays special attention to the significance that our negative emotions have in our blaming practices.

According to the 'reactive attitude account' proposed first by Strawson in 'Freedom and Resentment', what he calls 'the reactive attitudes' such as resentment, indignation, and guilt are our most basic reactions to being hurt or wronged. We naturally tend to respond with resentment to the wrongful behaviour of others who wrong us. So blame is a reactive attitude, which is essentially a negative emotional reaction to the ill will that the wrongdoer manifests towards us through her bad action. It follows that on this view, to blame someone is to target her with a negative emotional reaction. What blame adds to the judgment of blameworthiness is the negative reactive attitude towards her. According to the 'reactive account', blame is not simply a matter of assessing dispassionately the other person's behaviour or a matter of sanctioning their behaviour, but it is a way of responding to the fact that they have expressed disrespect in their actions towards others or us. Being subject to one of the reactive emotions will also tend to limit our good will towards the wrongdoer, so blame will typically result in a partial withdrawal of good will towards our wrongdoers (Strawson 1962: 90).

However, Sher criticizes the reactive attitude account on the grounds that blame does not always involve the expression of a negative emotion towards the blamed party and it also does not seem to always be accompanied by a withdrawal of goodwill. We often blame people in dispassionate ways: we blame people we read about in the newspaper and we also blame historical figures for wrongs committed a long time ago. Even when we blame close family members, it is not clear that blame always manifests in a partial withdrawal of goodwill. Sher argues that the reactive account is not a realistic account of what we do when we blame as ‘we simply do not have the emotional resources to muster even a twinge of hostility toward each of the innumerable miscreants, scoundrels, and thugs –many of them long dead – whom we blame for what we know to be their bad behaviour or bad character’ (Sher 2006: 89).

Wallace (2004) doubts that cases of emotionless blame are really cases of blame. In such cases, he argues, we judge that the people in question are worthy of blame, but we do not count this as blaming them. He gives the example of a charming colleague who has lied and cheated you. You of course judge he has done wrong as ‘he has violated a moral obligation not to cheat or lie for personal advantage, and yet you may have trouble working up any resentment or indignation’ (Wallace 2004: 76).

Wallace argues that in this scenario your attitude towards your colleague is not one of blame, because you are not subject to a reactive emotion, although you do have a related belief that your colleague is blameworthy. Thus you hold your colleague morally blameworthy because you believe that feelings of anger and indignation would be appropriate if you happened to have them. To hold blameworthy, for Wallace, is to believe that ‘such emotions would be warranted on our part, despite the fact that we happen not to feel them, and that they would be warranted in virtue of the fact that a moral obligation we accept has been violated’ (Wallace 1994: 76-77). Thus, even if you do not harbour any feelings of anger or resentment in this case, your judgment is still connected to the belief that these feelings would be appropriate if you were to experience them. I tend to agree with Sher that intuitively one

could say that you may actually experience blame towards your colleague, even in the absence of hostile feelings.

However, Wallace's response to cases of 'affectless' blame is not satisfactory for another reason. Consider a case of blame which is not expressed and which is also accompanied by no feelings of hostility. For example, I may blame my dead parents for neglecting me when I was a child, but I may also think that any angry feelings or resentment towards them would be totally inappropriate as they would be pointless. So this kind of blame is incompatible with the belief that angry feelings would be appropriate. Sher gives two further examples of cases where the agent might 'view it as emotionally extravagant to allow himself to be bothered by each of the countless individuals whom he blames for violating moral norms; or might consider it unloving to want his errant daughter to undergo any suffering at all' (Sher 2006: 91). In all these cases the agent who blames believes that anger or resentment would be inappropriate responses to the blamed party, were he to experience them. So we see here that first, not every instance of blame involves a negative emotional response and also that not every instance of 'emotionless blame' is tied to the belief that a negative emotional response would be appropriate.

So, what then, does blame add to the belief that the other person is at fault if it is not the expression of an emotion?

1.3 Sher's Dispositional Account of Blame

Sher argues that there are many manifestations of blame, and the reactive emotions are among them. For example, we are disposed to react with anger and resentment towards another person, but blame can also manifest as reproach, punishment, or in cases of self-blame, apology. (Sher 2006: 94-96). But what do all of these manifestations have in common? What unifies them so that they all count as cases of blame? Sher argues that what unifies all blame-related dispositions and makes them instances of blame, is the following belief-desire pair. To blame is to believe that the agent has acted badly or has a bad character and to desire that she did not act badly and/or did not have the bad character. All our blame-related

dispositions (such as anger, reproach, hostile behaviour, or apology) are explicable, Sher says,

In light of a single type of desire-belief pair – a pair whose components are, first, the familiar belief that the person in question has acted badly or has a bad character, but also, second, a corresponding desire that that person *not* have acted badly or *not* have a bad character (Sher 2006: 14).

This is a promising account of blame because it can both explain what blame adds to the judgment of blameworthiness (i.e., the corresponding desire) and also why we are generally disposed to react with blame-related feelings. There is continuity, we can see here, between Wallace's and Sher's account. By introducing the emotional element of desire, Sher wants to try and keep this element of commitment; blame is not a totally dispassionate phenomenon. However, he wants to get rid of the idea that blame necessarily involves bodily sensations.

One may wonder why a desire that the blamed agent not have acted badly would cause us to manifest any anger or resentment towards that agent. So how can we explain the connection that such emotions seem to have to blame by appealing to the belief-desire pair? Sher says:

To explain why we are disposed to react to those whom we take to have acted badly by becoming angry at them, treating them with hostility, reproaching them, and, in cases of self-blame, apologizing for what they have done, we will have to trace each reaction to the single backward-looking desire that the person *not have done* what he in fact did (Sher 2006: 102).

On Sher's account, all blame-related dispositions are related to the frustration of our desire that the agent not have acted as she did. The thwarted desire that the agent not have acted as she did will often give rise to bad feelings, anger or resentment. This is how Sher explains this possibility, using D to refer to the desire that the other person not have acted badly:

Just why the motivational energy that is latent in unsatisfied desires should regularly discharge itself in bad feelings is not something a philosopher can explain. It is simply a brute fact of human psychology. However, precisely because it is a fact, the obvious way to invoke D to account for our disposition to become angry at those we blame is to assimilate that anger to the other negative feelings that we have when we see that we cannot get what we want. Just as obviously, the way to invoke D to account for our disposition to display hostility toward those we blame is to see our hostile behaviour as a natural expression of our negative feelings towards them (Sher 2006: 104-105).

Thus, when we feel angry or hostile towards the wrongdoer, these feelings are prompted by the fact that we feel badly about not getting what we want; when we reproach ‘we make it clear that if it were up to us, he would not have done so’, when we apologize we imply that ‘we would change what we have done or what we are if we now could’ (Sher 2006: 109).

Typically, when a person has the corresponding belief that the person has acted badly and the desire that he not have acted as he did, this will also be accompanied by the relevant dispositions, depending on what is appropriate in that context. Although the belief-desire pair will be constant in all instances of blaming, how people react will vary with the context and will depend on who did what to whom and in what circumstances. So this account can explain why in certain cases we feel resentment towards the person who harmed us and in other cases we feel disposed to reproach them.

Two Criticisms of Sher’s view

The first objection is that the belief-desire pair is not necessary to account for the reactions we tend to classify as blame. And the second objection is

that Sher's account is not sufficient to account for what we tend to classify as blame.

The first objection is that there seem to be cases of blame where it is clear we blame a particular offender but without necessarily desiring that she did not commit that bad action or had the bad character we blame her for. Consider for example a case of third party blame. Suppose John has cheated on my friend Alice and I blame him for hurting her feelings. However, I also totally despise John as I think he is a bad person and I am quite happy that Alice is finally breaking up with him. So it seems that I can blame John for what he did to my friend even if I do not desire that John had not behaved badly and cheated on her. If this is plausible, then it is clear that the belief-desire pair is not necessary for explaining all cases of blame. I can blame without actually desiring that that event take place.

Sher may reply by saying that he can safely concede that I do not desire, *all things considered*, that John should have done otherwise, because the only claim he needs is that if I judge that what he did was wrong, then I also believe the wrong ought not to have been done and *pro tanto* I desire that John not have done it. So at least in some respect I desire that it should not be done, even if under a different description I am delighted that he did it. So although I am wholeheartedly delighted that the cheating ended in their break up, I may still be sorry that it had to happen in this hurtful way. So Sher could modify his account and say that the object of the desire is not the 'all things considered' desire, but that it is sufficient that the agent desire at least in some respect that the wrong did not happen. We can, of course, imagine cases where we do not desire that the wrong had not happened in any respect. I may be delighted my friend got hurt in this way (even if I should not be), as I think it is a good lesson for her: she should not go out with people like John. But I can still think it is wrong to cheat in general.

However, for Sher's account to work, he needs to say that it is still conceivable that my friend could have learned her lesson without the undesirable effect of being cheated on and disrespected. And, if this is the case, then in a possible world where she breaks up with John in some other more convenient way and she also learns her lesson that she should

not let herself be fooled by people like John, then it is true that I do desire this better possible scenario. However, given that the possible world is a remote one, then I am nevertheless delighted that things turned out in this way as there are some very good consequences. In conclusion, if Sher is prepared to say all of these things about the object of our desires and in effect agree that in some sense we always desire that that thing did not happen (even if in a very remote possible world which is not realistic at all), then he does have a reply to the first objection. Even if you are sympathetic to Sher's response to my first criticism, nevertheless, there is a definitive criticism to his sufficient condition.

The second objection concerns the fact that the belief-desire pair is not sufficient for blame. We can imagine cases where one both believes the other person has acted badly or has a bad character, and also desires that she did not act badly or have a bad character, yet we would not consider such cases as instances of blame. Smith (2013) gives the following example. Consider the case of a mother whose son has been justly convicted of murder. She believes that he has acted badly and she really desires he did not commit the murder. However, the reactions that are prompted by her desire and her belief are those of pity, sadness and despair. She simply cannot bring herself to blame her son for what he did. She is worried about him and she further thinks she should now try to be very affectionate and supportive toward him. We would not, I think, describe her reactions as blaming attitudes. This is not an isolated example. We can describe many situations where we have the belief and the desire, yet blame is not forthcoming.

Consider the situations in which we think of the life of past literary figures. I may think Leo Tolstoy acted badly because he often neglected his wife and 13 children (as described in his wife Sofia's published diaries). I may also desire he did not act as he did and instead be a good father and husband. However, it would seem moralistic to insist that my attitude to him is one of blame. I am disappointed that his personal life did not meet my expectations; however, I would not describe my disappointment as a case of blame. So it seems that the belief-desire pair

is not sufficient to guarantee blaming attitudes and reactions, even if they may sometimes do so.

Sher is pluralistic about how blame might manifest itself so he may insist that if the disappointment experienced by the mother were based on the belief-desire pair, then it would be a case of blame on his account. However, at the very least, in order to make this response work he will have to tell us what is an intelligible connection between the manifestations of blame and the belief-desire pair. Otherwise, he will have to count any manifestations as blame, if they were causally connected to the belief-desire pair.

The belief-desire pair may also take as an object children or animals. I may believe my dog Fido has acted badly when he attacked the little girl, I for sure desire he did not act as he did, yet, the reactions I have towards Fido are not blaming reactions, although we can see the conditions for blame are met on Sher's account. I will be worried about Fido and about what he might do, I may feel sad about what he did, but I cannot blame him. The worry here is that Sher cannot account for the fact that blaming reactions, as Smith says, 'are properly directed only at morally responsible agents' (Smith 2013: 37). On the other hand, Sher might have in mind 'acted morally badly', in which case the Fido example does not work because only responsible agents would then be the proper objects of moral blame. Sher, however, is not clear about his use of 'acted badly'.

Furthermore, when I react with blame when my friend betrays my trust there is something special about my reaction, which cannot simply be reduced to the belief that she has acted badly and the desire that she did not act like that. It does not seem that the point of my blame here is to make salient my desire that she did not act badly, even if it may also be true that I have that desire.

Because of these two objections, Sher fails to convincingly show what the extra element that blame adds to the mere judgment of blameworthiness is. It is clear that a desire that the person have not acted badly is neither sufficient nor necessary for blame.

I shall turn now to discuss Scanlon's account of blame. He too argues that blame is not a matter of mere character assessment nor can it be

identified with punitive behaviour. He tries to find a middle ground between these two views. Further, he also argues that the reactive emotions, although they may accompany blame, are not central to blame.

1.4 Scanlon's Account: Blame as a 'Rupture in a Relationship'

According to Scanlon, blame is the response we have to our acknowledgement that there is an impairment in the relationship we have with another person. By blaming we modify (or we have reasons to modify) and adjust our attitudes and expectations towards the other person to reflect this impairment. Scanlon interestingly locates blame in the context of relationships. Thus, how we modify our attitudes will depend on the particular relationship we have with the blamed party and on the nature of the wrong done.

Scanlon distinguishes between two aspects of blame. First, we have a *judgment of blameworthiness*, a judgment about what the wrong act means to us, taking into account that the blamed party has displayed intentions that show an 'impairment' in relations. In his words, 'to claim that a person is blameworthy for an action is to claim that the action shows something about the agent's attitudes towards others that impairs the relations that others can have with him or her'. Secondly, we have *blame proper*, that amounts to a modification or 'rupture' in the relationship with the wrongdoer as a response to the perceived impairment in their relations. In his words, 'to blame a person is to judge him or her to be blameworthy and to take your relationship with him or her to be modified in a way that this judgment of impaired relations holds to be appropriate' (Scanlon 2008: 128-29).

Blame, according to him, is unilateral. It does not depend on the other person's response or on the other even noticing that she was blamed. Rather, it makes sense to respond in this way because friendship (the model of relationship that he builds his account of blame on) is constituted by a set of rules and obligations. Thus, your friend breaking any of the 'friendship-constituting norms'⁴ by behaving in a way that

⁴ This phrase is from Wallace (2011).

shows ill will, for example, changes the meaning of the relationship and thus gives you reasons to adjust your attitudes and intentions toward your friend. You are now justified in adjusting your attitudes toward your friend because she holds attitudes that 'are ruled out by the standards' of your friendship with her (Scanlon 2008: 135).

It is worth pointing out that Scanlon draws a distinction between the meaning of an act and its permissibility (its rightness or wrongness). Blame responses concern primarily the meaning of an act. The intentions of the people who perform the act are crucial to determining the extent to which they are blameworthy. It matters less whether the action is actually impermissible. To give an example, suppose you hate your uncle and you wish he was dead. However, he is attacking someone and you realize that you could kill your uncle and also save the person he is attacking, without anyone being suspicious. So in this first scenario, you decide to kill him not in order to save the person who is under attack but because you hate your uncle. Imagine a second case in which you kill your uncle but this time because you want to save the victim.

Scanlon argues that in both cases what you do is morally permissible (you kill your uncle to stop a murder). However, in the first case the meaning of what you do is quite different from the second case and the motivation of your action matters a lot. Thus intentions are not that important in evaluating the rightness/wrongness of an action. However, intent is important for establishing the meaning of the relationship with your uncle and the blameworthiness. Thus a judgment of blameworthiness is a judgment about what the act means to us, taking into account that the other person has displayed intentions that show an impairment in the relationship. Blaming means that we adjust our attitudes, intentions and expectations in the way that such impairment makes appropriate.

After blaming another person, the relationship cannot continue in the same way as before the blaming⁵, if it can continue at all. And this is not because of prudential reasons (we are afraid she might do the same in the

⁵ Of course, there is a trivial sense in which this can be the case. Anything that happens in a relationship amounts to a change. But for Scanlon blame changes the way you see the other person (because you blame her) and it changes the meaning and the quality of your future interactions with another person.

future) or because the friend does not regret or does not feel remorse for what she did. Blame has an important backward-looking aspect. We care about how our friend's past immoral attitudes changed the nature and the meaning of the relationship.⁶ This is supposed to capture the force of blame and to tell us what blame adds to the mere judgment of blameworthiness.

1.5 Problems with Scanlon's account

So far we have seen that, for Scanlon, blame amounts to a justified revision or adjustment of our attitudes in response to actions that impair our relations with another party. I discuss two problems for this view of blame. I argue, first, that the revision of attitudes in response to a perceived impairment in relations is neither sufficient nor necessary for blame. Second, drawing on Susan Wolf's view (2011), I argue that his focus on impairment of relations obscures the nature of blame in central cases of blame.

The Revision Argument

I turn now to argue that the revision of attitudes in response to a perceived impairment in relations is neither necessary nor sufficient for blame. This definition is problematic in cases of blame of strangers or distant agents. In order to show this, it is important to think about what it is that we need to revise as a result of blaming another person in Scanlon's account and why. It is also useful to look at the different types of relationships we can have with another person because blame, for Scanlon, involves a revision of the relationship we have with the wrongdoer: in blaming her you downgrade the relationship to reflect this fact.

⁶ This is not to say that Scanlon is not open to the possibility that blame can sometimes be ameliorative. However, he mainly insists on its backward-looking aspect and I take him to mean that this is what the most important aspect of blame is. Suppose your friend Joe has betrayed you. When you wonder whether Joe is still your friend this is not a question about his future conduct (you are not only concerned with issues of trust). Scanlon says 'And it may be that Joe feels very bad about the way he behaved and that this also indicates that his conduct is unlikely to be repeated. The question is not just about how he will act in the future but about what happened in the past, and what it indicates about Joe's attitude toward me and about the nature of our relationship' (Scanlon 2008: 129).

Consider his example of Joe, a friend that has been disloyal to you by betraying your trust at a party. Joe overhears some of your acquaintances making fun of you at a party and instead of defending you, he even contributes ‘a few barbs’, by revealing some embarrassing things you have told him in confidence.

Let us consider now the responses you might have when you find out what has happened. You may start to wonder what his behaviour means for your relationship with Joe, that is, if it shows something that can impair the relationship relative to the requirements of friendship and to this particular friendship. If you reach the conclusion that his attitudes show something that impairs your relationship with him, then this means that you judge him blameworthy. However, you still do not yet blame him for what he has done, in Scanlon’s account. To blame requires a different type of response.

To blame is ‘to hold the attitude toward him or her that this impairment makes appropriate. In the examples I have discussed, blaming someone involves *revising* one’s attitude toward him or her’, so the relationship will be modified in some way to reflect such impairment (Scanlon 2008: 131). Some of the attitudes you adjust might involve your decision to spend less time with him; you might decide to trust him less in the future or you might even decide that he cannot continue to be your friend anymore. A third type of response would be to communicate to him your blame and demand an explanation; but this is not a necessary condition for blame, according to Scanlon’s view. You can blame without communicating it to the wrongdoer. Communicating blame goes beyond what is necessary for blame and it is further not sufficient to communicate my judgment to Joe if I do not also revise my attitudes toward Joe.⁷ I could also judge him blameworthy and feel resentment toward him, but this again is not necessary for blame⁸ (Scanlon 2008: 137). But what responses are necessary and sufficient for blame and why? Scanlon claims

⁷ That this is a possibility for Scanlon can be seen from how he treats blame within family relationships and especially involving children. One can use expressions of blame toward children but they have merely an educative role (Scanlon 2008: 157).

⁸ ‘But taking seriously the fact that one has been betrayed involves more than making this judgment, and more than making this judgment plus feeling a certain emotion (a special kind of resentment, perhaps)’ (Scanlon 2008: 137).

that what is important to focus on are ‘the expectations, intentions, and other attitudes’ that constitute our relationships (Scanlon 2008: 128).

At the centre of Scanlon’s context-sensitive account of blame is the concept of a relationship. What modifications are required for blame will depend on the particular relationship we have with the other person. I shall focus in what follows on his conception of a relationship and I shall evaluate what particular kinds of revisions are involved in blame. I shall call this the *Revision Argument*.

Scanlon starts by looking at friendship and he then extrapolates his account to other more impersonal relations with strangers. A relationship, he says, is ‘constituted by certain attitudes and dispositions’, and the parties to a relation make certain assumptions about the intentions and expectations each have toward the other. Consider for example friendship. For Scanlon, being a friend involves being disposed to act in certain ways for the right reasons (not only from duty, but because you feel consideration and affection toward your friend). These dispositions include:

Intending to give help and support when needed, beyond what one would be obligated to do just for anyone; intending to confide in the person and to keep his or her confidences in return; and intending to spend time with the person when one can, and to ‘keep in touch’ (Scanlon 2008: 132).

Friendship also presupposes that one is disposed to have feelings toward the friend: of care, enjoyment in the other’s company and enjoyment of her accomplishments. These attitudes and feelings are mutual and are based on you recognizing that your friend has such attitudes/dispositions and her recognizing that you also have them.

Scanlon draws a distinction between the ‘normative ideal of a relationship’⁹ and a particular relationship. The ideal specifies how

⁹ Or what he calls the ‘ground relationship’, which ‘provides that standards relative to which the attitudes that the agent’s action reveals constitute an impairment. These standards also determine the appropriateness of various responses to this impairment’ (Scanlon 2008: 138).

individuals ideally should behave toward each other for such a relationship to make sense in the first place. It specifies some standards for any friendship in general relative to which each particular relationship can then be measured. Particular relationships can of course fall short of any of the ideal standards, and they can be better or worse relative to the standards imposed by the normative ideal. Also, relationships can be seen as impaired relative to these standards. Impairment occurs when one party to the relationship holds attitudes toward the other party that ‘are ruled out by the standards of that relationship’ (Scanlon 2008: 135).

Consider again the case of Joe who has been disloyal at the party by telling people some of my intimate secrets. Joe has not lived up to the standards of our friendship (it is usually an accepted norm of friendship that friends should not betray each other) so I have reasons now to revise my intentions and attitudes toward him. I can decide not to confide in him again, not to seek his company or to write him off altogether.¹⁰ It is also a possibility for Scanlon that the shift ‘may be purely one of attitude: you have reason to see my professions of concern for you in a different light – not, perhaps, as entirely disingenuous, but as nonetheless to be taken with more qualification than before’ (Scanlon 2008: 136). Revising my attitudes in any of these ways means that I blame Joe, according to Scanlon.

But how would Scanlon then explain blame of strangers and in general of people with whom we had no previous interaction? The ground relationship in such cases is what Scanlon calls the ‘Moral Relationship’ that we have with everyone in virtue of them being persons. What establishes this relationship is different from the case of friendship where what counts are the friends’ attitudes toward one another. The moral relationship is determined by certain normative standards and ‘certain general facts about people, namely that they are beings of a kind that are capable of understanding and responding to reasons’ (Scanlon 2008: 139). Scanlon claims that we owe it to one another to hold certain attitudes toward each other just because we stand in the relation of ‘fellow rational

¹⁰ All these can be characterized in terms of a ‘withdrawal’ from the relationship.

beings' with one another. So the moral relationship with a stranger is not grounded in the norms and obligations created by us having a relationship with that particular stranger (in fact there is no relationship at all between us and a stranger). In friendship we have certain obligations toward our friends because we are friends with them. In contrast, we have certain obligations toward strangers because they are fellow rational beings like us.¹¹

What are the attitudes and dispositions that are required by 'morality'? According to Scanlon's account, we need to avoid harming another human being, help them when they need our help and it is easy to do so, not lie to them, being disposed to hope that things go well for them, etc. (Scanlon 2008: 140) We need to hold these attitudes as a morally good human being and we owe them to everyone. He claims that we stand ideally in a relationship of mutual concern and consideration with everyone. Scanlon says:

We assume that this default relationship of mutual regard and forbearance holds between us and the stranger we pass on the road or interact in the market. When someone does not manifest this concern, it is this relationship that is the standard relative to which our actual relation with them is seen as impaired (Scanlon 2008: 141).

It follows that, to judge a stranger blameworthy is to notice that she lacks one of the general attitudes that are normal for any human being to hold toward another, i.e., minimal respect, forbearance, consideration etc. for another person. But what does it mean to blame such a person? What kinds of responses are justified once we notice that the other person is blameworthy? Scanlon does not endorse the view that we should suspend all our care and respect for such people. The moral relationship is not

¹¹ Wallace (2011) notices a problem here. He claims that what we owe to strangers is not relationship-based as in the case of friendship. Because of this, impairment in the case of strangers is different from impairment in the case of friendship. In his words, 'Hence the impairment of somebody's ability to relate to you on terms of mutual recognition is not something that gives you reason to modify your default moral attitudes toward them, in the distinctive way the impairment of a friendship gives you a reason to modify your intentions and expectations regarding your friends' (Wallace 2011: 17).

based, as in the case of friendship, on reciprocation.¹² That is, if a friend does not confide her secrets in you, you might have reasons to modify your behaviour and not confide in her in turn. But this is not the case with the relationship between you and a stranger. Even if a stranger has shown no respect for you or her fellow rational beings, they still ‘retain their basic moral rights’, that is, we still do not have a right to kill them, hurt them, we still have to help them if they are in terrible need, not lie to them, keep our promises etc.¹³

But this seems to pose the following problem for his view. What revision of attitudes is then justified in such cases if not the ones that constitute the moral relationship? Blame, it seems, does not involve a rupture of the relationship of fellow rational human beings that you stand in with everyone (this relationship cannot be undermined by anything, no matter how badly the other treats you). Blame amounts, in such cases, to a modification in our readiness to enter into more particular relationships with such people, according to Scanlon. For example, you probably would not want to become friends with such people or form relationships based on trust (Scanlon 2008: 144).

However, this reply does not seem to work when we blame distant persons with whom we have no causal interactions. Suppose that I often blame a certain politician for their outrageous views on immigration, because I regard them as racist. My relationship with that politician is already at its limits, there is no revisions to it that I can make in response to yet a new policy that I regard as racist. Once we have this idea of blame within the moral relationship, if blame is a revision of the relationship (a downgrading of the relationship in some sense), then, when the relationship between me and the politician I blame is ‘stuck’, there are no further revisions I can make to the relationship; there is no way to go from here once we got to the bottom of our relationship. But it seems that

¹² He thinks the same is true in the parent-child relationship. As a parent you need to care for your child in virtue of being a parent. It depends little on what your child’s attitudes are toward you or whether she reciprocates (Scanlon 2008: 139).

¹³ Scanlon claims that only self-defence is a good reason to justify the suspension of the other person’s moral rights

I keep them accountable by carrying on with blame, even if there is no adjustment of relationship to be done.

Blame, I shall argue, fulfils an important function in such cases and it would be a failure on my part not to continue to express my blame, but it cannot be explained in terms of a rupture in relations, which consists in modifications of attitudes and intentions towards that person. It is important for us to blame the politician for each instance of racism and this form of moral disapproval is essential to our moral life, even if my relationship with them as a politician got to the bottom and thus nothing can be changed between us anymore. Scanlon cannot explain why this continuous element of moral criticism and disapproval, expressed in my blame, is important for our moral community, even if we are blaming the same individuals again and again for the same mistakes.

Bennett (2013) also argues that the element of moral disapproval is missing from Scanlon's account. He says:

Blame, on Scanlon's view, is simply a reorientation of a relationship so that it better matches the level of commitment the person brings to that relationship. But nowhere does he canvas the natural and simple idea that the justification of blame lies in the need to disapprove of wrongdoing (Bennett 2013: 75).

Against the sufficiency claim

I turn now to discuss the sufficiency claim, that is, Scanlon's claim that the revision of attitudes in response to a perceived impairment is sufficient for blame. Remember that for Scanlon, to blame is to judge the person to be blameworthy and to modify your own attitudes toward her that this judgment makes appropriate. Now, as Angela Smith (2013) has pointed out, it is difficult to know what the appropriate attitudes to a perceived impairment in relations are in each case. Scanlon seems to allow for too many reactions to the perceived impairment of relations to count as appropriate responses. Consider the following example from Smith. A son has committed a crime. His mother is judging him blameworthy and as a

result she modifies her attitudes as a response to this judgment. One of the attitudes she modifies is her expectation that her son will become a police officer. She is also showing more affection for the son as a way of compensating for the hatred that others show toward him. But none of these modifications seem to be appropriate responses. Actually, we are tempted to say that she is not blaming her son at all. What this shows is that we need a method that would help us distinguish between the appropriate responses, the ones that count as instances of blame, from the inappropriate ones. Scanlon does not provide us with a solution.

Wallace (2011) raises a similar complaint when he claims that it does not seem appropriate to react to a crime with dispassionate adjustments of attitudes toward the murderer. Likewise, it does not seem to be appropriate to feel melancholy toward the murderer. He claims that we can only make sense of the distinctive quality of opprobrium that blame has by emphasizing the reactive emotions (such as resentment and indignation). Wallace insists that there is a range of emotions which are distinctively blaming emotions, and they need to be present in order for something to count as blame. Any other emotions are not appropriate because they lack the element of disapproval.

I do not want to defend the view that only certain particular emotions express moral disapproval, and, thus, unless present, one cannot count as blaming another person. One can disapprove of a crime without being emotionally involved, and especially without resenting the wrongdoer. However, I do agree with Wallace and Smith that certain emotions are not appropriate as the main emotions felt, unless they also contain some element of moral condemnation.

So why are melancholy or sadness inappropriate reactions to wrongdoing? If you feel melancholy toward someone who has committed a wrong you probably do not understand the full meaning of what has happened, and thus fail to appreciate the seriousness of the crime. Suppose that you start to feel regret for the fact that human beings are so vulnerable and so prone to make mistakes and you start to feel sorry for them. This attitude would probably amount to excusing or justifying the

wrongdoer's behaviour, and thus it is incompatible with a condemnatory attitude.

Or suppose that the mother starts to blame herself for the failure of her son because she believes somehow it is her fault. The worry here is that, by failing to focus on the wrongdoer and his acts, she fails to condemn and disapprove of her son's acts. The mother, by reacting only with sadness and melancholy to such a serious crime, fails to see and understand the full moral significance of what her son has done to the victim, to her, and to the entire community. As Bennett (2013) argues:

The flavour of blame can be captured by seeing it as an accompaniment to the question 'How could he/she/you/I?': it brings the offender's attitudes vividly into our field of attention and concerns us with how the offender could possibly have been thinking (as she acted thus) (Bennett 2013: 66).

Susan Wolf (2011) in 'Blame, Italian Style' puts forwards another argument which challenges Scanlon's claim that the revision in attitudes which reflects an impairment in relations is sufficient to count as blame. In her article, Wolf develops two criticisms of Scanlon's account. She first argues that we can react to something wrong (and blameworthy) someone did (we can sometimes modify our expectations and intentions toward someone as a result of their behaviour) without actually blaming the individual. Her second criticism is that there are cases of blame that do not exactly fit Scanlon's definition as they do not reflect an impairment in relations. I shall develop these two criticisms in detail and consider how Scanlon might reply.

Wolf's account: 'Angry Blame'

Wolf's first criticism shows that impaired relationships are not sufficient for blame. There are cases in which we can say that a judgment of blameworthiness is in order, the other person's attitudes might have changed because of this judgment (and they reflect this judgment),

although we would not consider such cases as cases of blame. She considers the following two examples.

Example 1. Susan Wolf has been delaying her contribution to an anthology of her articles much beyond the deadline as she has prioritized other projects. In this case, we might think that a judgment of blameworthiness is called for and anyone could make such a judgment. The judgment is: her behaviour (her being late with her manuscript) shows something about her attitudes toward the editor that impair the relationship with the editor. The editor might even decide to change his attitudes and expectations about her in the future in a way that reflects the impairment. She is unreliable as far as the project is concerned and he might decide to take this into consideration in the future when he has to consider whether to trust her again with such projects.

However, Wolf argues that, contra Scanlon, we would not say that he blames her for this as they have a very good relationship and he is not the type of person who would go in for blaming behaviour. Yet, according to Scanlon, the editor's revision in his attitudes – his decision not to trust her with similar projects in the future – which reflect the judgment of blameworthiness, would be enough to say that the editor actually blames Wolf for her behaviour.

For Wolf, on the other hand, this is not enough. The question of blame (in 'her dialect') has to be determined by other factors.¹⁴ The editor has impaired relations with Wolf, but she would not describe it as a case of blame. For example, she does not notice any change in the tone of their communication and their relations continue in the same warm way. Furthermore, as Wolf claims, the editor might not be the sort of person who does a lot of blaming, especially in relation with his authors, as he knows these things happen quite often. For Wolf then, a certain angry

¹⁴ It is no criticism of Scanlon to argue that his account of blame does not conform to our ordinary language or practices, as his account is revisionist. However, Wolf's point will be that by insisting on characterizing blame in this way (as an impairment in a relationship) we lose track of another important concept that we have good reasons to maintain. In her words: 'It must be that by using, or as I might say, co-opting, the term in this way, we run the risk of losing sight of another concept or category that we have reason to retain. This is the sort of position I shall outline in this essay' (Wolf 2011: 6). This position will become clearer once I present her second criticism of Scanlon.

‘tone’ or attitude towards her would have to accompany the judgment of blameworthiness as well in order to say that the editor actually blames her for being late with the manuscript. The fact that he merely notices she is blameworthy and decides, for prudential reasons, that she can be unreliable with deadlines is not sufficient to decide the question of blame.

Example 2. As a second example she discusses the case of Robert Harris (taken from Gary Watson 1987). Harris is a criminal who does not show any remorse toward his victims. However, we learn that he has had a terrible childhood and he has been appallingly abused as a child. According to Scanlon we can both judge Harris blameworthy and blame him for his crimes. That is to say, we can judge that his attitudes reflect an impairment in our relations with him and this judgment justifies an adjustment in our attitudes and intentions toward him. We would be right if we would stop trusting him, if we would be defensive or even if we withdraw our good will toward him. But Wolf argues that, even if all these adjustments would be justified, it is strange to say that we would actually be justified in blaming him, taking into account his terrible childhood, which may mitigate his blame. As Watson argues, we are ambivalent in such cases and Harris does not seem to be the proper object of our blame. Wolf claims that we are not justified in blaming him at all. Blame, according to Wolf, does not seem appropriate in such cases although it is clear that he has impaired his relationship with many, if not all of us.

Scanlon’s reply (2013) is that it is difficult to tell whether Harris is actually part of our moral community; further, being part of the moral community (and the capacity to participate in the moral relationship) is a condition of blame. Scanlon thinks that the ambivalence we feel in cases like Harris has to do with whether such individuals ‘are candidates for moral relations at all’ (Scanlon 2013: 95). If we think they are part of the moral community and so candidates for trust relations and cooperation, then it makes sense to say that we can blame Harris as it is then reasonable to withhold our trust toward him. But insofar as we think he is not capable of even being trusted because he is lacking the relevant moral

capacity, then he is not the proper object of our blame, according to Scanlon.

However, Scanlon is wrong in not acknowledging that there are other moral reactions that we can have toward Harris. It is not as if we either blame Harris so we already assume he is part of our moral community or we do not blame him because he is excluded. There are other options. We can continue to think that he has committed terrible acts and even think he is responsible for what he has done without properly blaming him for what he did. Further, we can continue to see him as part of our moral community. He is a damaged member of our moral community, but nonetheless a member. We might think we still owe him some kind of care and concern.¹⁵

Wolf is right that we are justified in modifying our attitudes toward Harris, but, at the same time, that our blame towards him would be unjustified. It follows that her argument against Scanlon works. However, we also need to make room for other moral ways in which we might respond to morally bad actions. It is important not to give up on moral judgment altogether as this would imply a failure to appreciate the horrors of Harris' acts. So it seems that not all responses to blameworthy acts constitute blame. But they are nevertheless moral responses.

The Impairment Argument

Wolf's second criticism is more important as she argues that Scanlon does not place blame where it should be placed. This is an argument against impairment as a necessary condition for blame. I call this the *Impairment Argument*. There are cases of blame that do not seem to fit the 'impairment' definition. She calls them cases of 'angry blame'.

¹⁵ It would also be helpful to look at Fricker's (2010) account of 'moral-epistemic disappointment'. She argues that this is a form of moral judgment directed towards historically distant individuals who have committed atrocious acts, but it is not a form of moral blame, as blame is not justified in such cases. These individuals couldn't have known better and they lacked the moral capacity to understand that they were engaging in morally bad behaviours. We can legitimately extend this concept to cover the case of Harris. This form of moral appraisal allows us to retain our moral criticism toward bad behaviour and acts without having to commit us to a form of judgmentalism and moralism.

This is a very important criticism as it points to the fact that blame's aim is very often quite different from what Scanlon takes it to be, or so I shall argue. Blame, according to Wolf, is an emotional reaction to the other individual's bad attitudes toward us and we sometimes react not by withdrawing from the relationship and by refusing to be emotionally or physically involved (as Scanlon assumes it is appropriate) but by 'getting in his face' (Wolf 2011: 12).¹⁶ The aim of this type of anger is to seek recognition (from the person blamed) that you are in pain and that you feel angry because of what she did. It could also be a demand for an apology. You might want to make the other person 'see your anger and feel your pain' (Wolf 2011: 12).

Wolf locates such cases within the family relationships. Consider the following example Wolf gives. Suppose a mother reproaches her daughter for taking her clothes without permission or her partner for not cleaning up the dishes on time. These cases do not involve a withdrawal from the relationship in the sense of not hoping that things go well for the other person or refusing to make further agreements and engage in projects with the other person. Quite the contrary, we get angry because we hope the other person will understand our feelings and because we want to continue the relationship on a proper footing. Expressing our anger does not have to reflect at all a rupture in the relationship or a cooling of relations. Actually, Wolf argues that, expressing our anger might bring people together in a new way especially if our anger has uptake, that is, if it inspires remorse and if the other recognizes her fault by apologizing. Getting angry and expressing your anger when you blame the other person is exactly the attitude to have if you respect the other as a person and if you regard her as a member of the moral community. It is a way of communicating to the other person that you care about what they have done. In Wolf's words,

Liability to feel angry emotions and to form angry attitudes
appears to be an inevitable feature of allowing oneself to be

¹⁶ I take Wolf's criticism to be that in such cases the aim of blame is different from what Scanlon takes it to be. It is no criticism of Scanlon that blame sometimes is done in a rough way, rather than by a cold withdrawal from the relationship.

not just physically but emotionally vulnerable to other people. If one thinks that relationships characterized by such vulnerability play a distinctively valuable role in our lives, then one must at least recognize the angry emotions and attitudes as necessary elements of a package that is desirable overall (Wolf 2011: 14).¹⁷

Wolf is right to point to the communicative aspects of blame. Even in impersonal contexts this type of blame that she describes, ‘angry blame’, can bring people together and strengthen the ties of the moral community. Blame indeed plays an important and unique role in our lives that goes much beyond the ‘withdrawal’ picture Scanlon has in mind.

Let me now turn to a worry that someone might have with Wolf's criticism. It is not clear how powerful her second criticism of Scanlon is. That is, someone might doubt that we can blame someone without that relationship being impaired in any way. Scanlon replies to this criticism in his recent article, ‘Interpreting Blame’.

Scanlon discusses the daughter example, who takes her mother's clothes although she is not allowed to do so. Wolf describes this case as a case of ‘angry’ blame where there is no impairment in their relations as a result. The mother blames her daughter and feels like putting a lock on her closet door. Scanlon argues that this reaction seems to ‘involve a shift in intention as a consequence of seeing one's relationship impaired’. He continues,

The kind of mother-daughter relationship one has reason to want would involve borrowing and lending clothes with pleasure, trusting the other to exercise the proper restraint and care in doing this. Intentions and expectations of the kind

¹⁷ Wallace (2011) defends a similar view when he claims that ‘emotional involvement is partly constitutive of relationships of the relevant kind’ (p. 25). He would agree with Wolf that blame is much more expressive than Scanlon allows it to be and also to the fact that emotional engagement is essential to our relationships but also a way of showing that we value the moral norms that have been violated and that we try to defend in blaming another person. In his words, ‘to blame someone is a way of caring about the fact that they have treated others with contempt or disregard’ and ‘a tendency to experience these particular emotions thus involves a special form of care and concern for the values around which morality is organized’ (Wallace 2011: 26-27).

Wolf describes, according to which one does not lend things gladly and take pleasure in sharing, but would prefer to put a lock on one's closet, constitute an impairment in my sense. There is a shift in attitude here that amounts to blame in my view whether it is accompanied by righteous anger or only by disappointment (Scanlon 2013: 99).

Scanlon is right that it does not matter for his view in what manner one blames another party. That is, it is not important if one blames with anger or with a dispassionate withdrawal. What is important in his account is whether the shift in attitudes does reflect an impairment in his sense and whether this is the function blame has in this case. But Scanlon's reply is not satisfactory.

Let us recall what Scanlon says about blame within family relationships. For him family relationships, especially the ones between parents and children, are not similar to friendships. The normative relationship of parenthood is 'robust and elective, less easily undermined than friendship and some other relations' (Scanlon 2008: 172). However, we can still say that a parent-child relationship can be impaired. But it is not impaired in the normal way. The responsibilities a parent has for her child are not undermined as these responsibilities are not dependent on that particular relationship, but they are acquired in virtue of what it means to be a parent. What is undermined is the way the members interact in the future and the qualities of these interactions (Scanlon 2008: 173). The mother is less reluctant to trust her daughter with her clothes even if she is not going to put a lock on her door.

Scanlon describes a similar familiar case where his son is borrowing his car and he repetitively neglects it and scrapes it. He will continue to lend his car to his son but out of a sense of duty (his son needs his car for work) and not because they have a good relationship or because he trusts him with his car. So the trust relationship is impaired and the quality of their future interactions lowered. However, it is an empirical question whether it is possible to still trust your son (even if he was so negligent with the car) and still continue to blame him. Wolf describes a case where

this is possible. She has very good, loving and trusting relationship with her daughter and her daughter's behaviour is not in any sense challenging her mother's good opinion of her. Her mother learns how to live with it but not because she is obliged to do so. Actually it is quite difficult to believe, if one thinks seriously about family relationships, that the trust is shaken and relationships undermined after every instance of negligence.

Scanlon seem to miss Wolf's point. Blame here is not a way of telling the other person that you do not trust them or a way of modifying our attitudes to reflect the fact that you do not trust them anymore. That is not why Wolf blames her daughter. The mother is not 'withdrawing' from the relationship in any way and blame's purpose here is not to indicate a rupture in the relationship. She blames her daughter as a way of making her understand her reasons (why she does not want her daughter to borrow her clothes) by making her feel her pain (Wolf 2011: 12). This is a type of communicative blame rather than silent (or angry) withdrawal from the relationship (or as a way of withdrawing one's trust). It seems that communicating this type of blame is a way of showing that you care about the other person and about your relationship with them. It is, contrary to Scanlon, a way of improving the quality of your future interactions rather than damaging them.

Wolf's criticism is quite important as she proposes an alternative interpretation of 'blame' where its function is quite different from what Scanlon takes it to be in such cases. She shows how blame can play a 'distinctive and positive role' in our relationships (Wolf 2011: 17).

However, I shall argue in the next chapter that a satisfactory account of blame has to make sense of cases of blame where there is no communication between the blamed agent and the victim as there is no form of second-personal interaction between them. So an account of blame should be able to tell us what is central about blame not only in interpersonal cases where blame is communicated to the wrongdoer, but also in cases where we blame distant agents, dead people or in third-personal cases.

So far I argued that blaming someone should amount to something more than merely ranking or assessing the other person's character, but it

should be less than the sanction view. Sher, Scanlon, and Wallace's proposals promised to find a middle way between the 'assessment view' and the 'moral sanction view'. However, I argued that all these proposals fail to provide a satisfactory account on the nature of blame, so we still do not know the answer to our initial question: what does blame add to the belief that the other person is blameworthy?

Chapter – 2 Blame as an Affirmation of Respect after Disrespect

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented various accounts of moral blame which tried to find a middle ground between two unsatisfactory views on moral blame: ‘the assessment view’ and the ‘moral sanction view’. Both of these views failed to provide a convincing answer to the question of what exactly blame adds to the mere judgment of finding fault, which will be able to explain the distinctive force of moral blame. I then argued that Scanlon, Sher and ‘the reactive account’ are more successful in explaining what blame adds to the mere judgment of blameworthiness. However, they all suffer other problems, and so ultimately fail to provide convincing accounts of moral blame. My concern in this chapter is twofold. First, I shall try to offer an answer to the question of what exactly the force of moral blame is and, specifically, what it adds to the judgment of blameworthiness. Second, I argue that we can shed light on the previous point and provide an analysis of blame if we look at what Scanlon calls ‘the ethics of blame’ (Scanlon 2008: 166). Scanlon observes that we can be open to moral criticism for blaming someone unfairly but also for failing to blame an offender when we should blame them.

The accounts presented in the previous chapter focused on second-personal forms of blame, in the context of interpersonal relationships – you wrong me and I blame you for what you did to me. However, blame can come in many forms. It can be directed at nearby or distant persons, the dead or the living, it can be expressed or unexpressed, and we can blame second-personally or as third parties. One of my main concerns in this chapter is to make philosophical sense of the idea that it is important, on the one hand, to blame those who wrong us, but it is also as significant to blame, on the other hand, those who wrong others. Suppose that my friend Bill has done something terrible to me. It is important for me to blame him, but it is also important for my partner Julia to join me in blaming him. It would be difficult for me to continue a normal

relationship with my partner if she did not see and understand what a terrible thing Bill has done to me.

Scanlon notices that a third party can sometimes be blameworthy for not blaming a wrongdoer, and this is because we seem to owe something to the victim of wrongdoing or to the moral community we identify with. Furthermore, we are required not only to blame wrongdoers, but sometimes we need to publicly express our blame toward the wrongdoer, especially when what is at stake is a grievous wrong, such as a human rights violation (Scanlon 2008: 169).

Many recent accounts of the nature of blame (T. M. Scanlon 2008 and 2013; Miranda Fricker 2016; Jay Wallace 2011; Susan Wolf 2011) have prioritized second-personal forms of blame at the expense of less interpersonal forms, such as blame of distant agents and third-personal blame. I reject two accounts of blame that give priority to its interpersonal form: one that gives it explanatory priority (Fricker 2016), and another that gives it conceptual priority (Scanlon 2008, 2013). In this chapter I aim to find some unifying element of blame, which brings cases of distant and third-party blame into the sphere of central cases of blame.

I shall proceed as follows. Section 2.2. further examines Scanlon's account of blame and section 2.3 presents Fricker's account. I argue that both accounts fail to fully appreciate the point of distant blame and third-party blame. In section 2.4 I advance the view that these two forms of blame are indeed central forms of blame. I develop an account that is well placed to explain the value of less interpersonal forms of blame, as well as interpersonal forms. My proposal is that blame *is a corrective affirmation of respect for the wronged party*. I hope to show that this crucial feature of blame will give us insight into its essential nature, only partly grasped by Scanlon and Fricker's accounts. I finally show how this proposal answers the main question raised in chapter 1, of what the distinctive force of blame is, and what exactly it adds to the mere judgment of blameworthiness.

2.2 Scanlon on blame as the rupture of a relationship

I have already presented Scanlon's account of blame in the previous chapter. There my arguments were directed at showing that Scanlon's account fails to provide a satisfactory account of moral blame. I argued that the revision of attitudes in response to a perceived impairment in relations is neither necessary nor sufficient for blame. We can react to something wrong and blameworthy by modifying our attitudes towards that person, without blaming them in Scanlon's sense. I also showed, drawing on Wolf, that there are cases of blame that do not fit Scanlon's definition as they do not reflect an impairment in relations.

In this chapter I need to revisit some elements from Scanlon's account. However, this time my aim will be to develop my own account based on an insight we can find in his work on the ethics of blame. I argue that third-personal cases of blame are as central to blame as second-personal cases. I also try to make sense of the idea that third parties can be blameworthy for not blaming our wrongdoers. This latter idea can be found in Scanlon's account, although I shall argue that it is incomplete and not properly developed in the following sense. On the one hand, he argues that we cannot properly blame as third parties. Blame is mainly a second-personal attitude. On the other hand, he claims that sometimes third parties can be blameworthy for not blaming our wrongdoers. These two claims seem to be in tension and I shall look at how Scanlon tries, although not explicitly, to reconcile them. So let me now recapitulate some of the important ideas Scanlon discusses which will help me introduce the problem of whether and when third parties should be blamed for their failure to blame wrongdoers.

Scanlon explains the distinction between second-personal cases of blame and impersonal forms of blame in terms of a distinction he draws between blame and what he calls 'judgments of blameworthiness'¹⁸.

¹⁸ It is worth mentioning here that there is separate important literature on whether we can/should actually draw a distinction between judgments of blameworthiness and blame. For this, see for example, Justin Coates and Neal Tognazzini's introduction to their edited volume on blame, especially pp. 8-10. There is also a disagreement about the conceptual priority of blame and judgments of blameworthiness. For example, Wolf, in response to Scanlon, argues that blame has conceptual priority. Wolf says 'It may be noted that on this interpretation the conceptual priority of blame and blameworthiness is

Blame, for Scanlon, has two components. The first is a judgment of blameworthiness, that is, a judgment about what the wrong act means to us, taking into account that the blamed party has displayed intentions that show an ‘impairment’ in relations. The second is the blame proper that amounts to a modification or ‘rupture’ in the relationship with the wrongdoer as a response to the perceived impairment in relations (Scanlon 2008: 128-9).

As I have argued in the previous chapter, Scanlon’s interpretation of blame works well in the context of interpersonal relationships. Suppose I find out that my friend Joe has betrayed me at a party by divulging some embarrassing things about me that seriously affect my reputation. I start to wonder what his behaviour means for our relationship and how I should interact with him in the future (Scanlon 2008: 129). If I reach the conclusion that his attitudes show something that impairs our relationship (because he violated norms that govern our relationship), then this means that I judge him blameworthy. But I still do not blame him for what he has done. To blame requires a different type of response. To blame is ‘to hold the attitude toward him or her that this impairment makes appropriate. (...) blaming someone involves *revising* one’s attitude toward him or her’ (ibid. 131). In this case, Joe has not lived up to the standards of our friendship (it is usually an accepted norm of friendship that friends should not betray each other) so I have reasons now to revise my intentions and attitudes toward him. I can decide not to confide in him again, not to seek his company, or to write him off altogether. So, what gives me reasons to adjust my attitudes toward Joe is the fact that he has impaired my relationship with him by betraying me.

Scanlon’s account is less than satisfactory in cases of third-party blame and distant blame. According to his account, the modifications that

the reverse of Scanlon’s. Anger, resentment, and the like are prior concepts’ (2011: 23). Hertzberg also seems to share her view. He says: ‘Actually, wanting to provide a theory of blame involves a misconception. This notion presupposes that we can distinguish judgments of blameworthiness, and the reasons for them, from the emotional attitude of blame and the circumstances that produce it. But these are not separate things, but two ways of viewing one side of human life. Only for someone who can feel resentment towards another for his conduct will anything count as a reason for judging him blameworthy’ (1975: 511). This chapter will not discuss this literature.

are appropriate to a perceived impairment in one's relations will vary depending on the particular relationship one has with the blameworthy agent. For Scanlon, the 'content of blame depends on the significance, for the person doing the blaming, of the agent and of what he has done' (Scanlon 2008: 145). The significance and the force of blame increase when the relationship between the blamed party and the blamer is more personal. When the relationship is minimal, there is very little that can be ruptured in the relationship and, in such cases, the content of blame is therefore so attenuated that Scanlon takes the view that blame vanishes, leaving nothing more than a mere judgment of blameworthiness. In third-personal cases and in cases of distant agents (including agents no longer living), blame is a form of disapproval and often it adds little to the judgment of blameworthiness. According to Scanlon's view, in third-personal cases we cannot say that we blame the wrongdoers, but we can, nevertheless, judge them blameworthy (Scanlon 2008: 146).

Consider again the example of Joe who betrays me at a party. Suppose I angrily tell my best friend Bill (who is not personally acquainted with Joe) about Joe's betrayal. On Scanlon's view, Bill cannot strictly speaking blame Joe for his betrayal, even if he shares my anger and outrage.¹⁹ Bill can judge that Joe has betrayed me and that this betrayal changes the meaning of my past and future interactions with Joe, but he is not himself in a position to blame Joe (ibid. 137). So, on Scanlon's view, a third party or a distant agent with no personal involvement in the case, cannot blame.

I find this aspect of Scanlon's account to be out of tune with our everyday practices. It does not correspond with our ordinary intuitions about blame. We do seem to do the same thing when dealing with people with whom we have no personal relationship. Bill, if he is a good friend, will be angry with Joe for betraying my trust and he will probably decide not to associate himself with Joe in the future. If Bill failed to blame Joe for what he did to me, I might even blame him for this failure. We need an

¹⁹ It is worth mentioning that Scanlon does not explain the difference between second-personal blame and third-party blame in terms of the reactive emotions of resentment and indignation, as he does not think such emotions are central.

account that can explain why Bill's response in this case is not a mere form of moral grading or rational moral criticism. The fact that Joe wronged me affects Bill in an intimate way: he expresses anger, indignation and outrage. As Bennett puts it, 'the flavour of blame can be captured by seeing it as an accompaniment to the question "How could he/she/you/I?"' (Bennett 2013: 66) or 'How could he do that to you?'

Scanlon can reply by saying that this is not a criticism of his account as he has already claimed that his account is to some extent revisionist and this means that it does not always fit our real practices of blame. It is a self-consciously revisionary feature of his account that he does not consider third-personal cases of blame as blame proper.²⁰

But there is no need to be revisionist. It is undesirable to take this path if there is another account that does not require us to be revisionist and which can make sense of everything Scanlon can make sense of. I shall propose an account that preserves our ordinary concept of 'blame' even in cases where there is no personal relationship between the wrongdoer and the one who blames.

One might argue that Scanlon can solve this problem by insisting that a neutral judgment of blameworthiness is available here, although not blame itself. However, this response does not properly fit with Scanlon's own acknowledgment (when he talks about the ethics of blame) that sometimes third parties can be blameworthy for not blaming the wrongdoer. For example, Scanlon argues, when he discusses the case of a third party failing to blame Hitler for harms he caused to people we know, that 'it can be blameworthy – that is to say, impair our relations with others – not to blame agents who harmed them' (Scanlon 2008: 147).²¹

So he seems to accept that third parties can sometimes properly blame wrongdoers. But how can his account make sense of this? In personal

²⁰ In 'Interpreting Blame' Scanlon concedes that this is an inevitable aspect of any revisionary account that insists on the personal character of blame:

So this problem, insofar as it is a problem, will arise for any account of blame that emphasizes what I called earlier its personal character. Blame of distant agents is most easily understood as an impersonal evaluative judgment of the agent's action and character. Beyond this, there may seem to be little room for blame, as opposed to the neutral judgment of blameworthiness (Scanlon 2013: 92).

²¹ See also Scanlon's example of Powers and Vincent, p. 169.

cases of blame, what justifies the victim's blame is the fact that the wrongdoer has revealed attitudes that impair their relations. But in cases where one does not have a relationship with the wrongdoer, Scanlon agrees that the wrongdoer's attitudes 'give us no special reasons to modify our own intentions and expectations toward them' (Wallace 2011: 7).

So why is third-party blame required in some cases?²² Scanlon claims that in some cases a third party should blame the wrongdoer, not because the wrongdoer's attitudes give the third party any special reasons to adjust her attitudes toward her. The third party should blame because, otherwise, she would impair her relation with the victim, and this is due to the wrongdoer's impairing of relations with the victim. Wallace notices that there is a problem with Scanlon's account here because there is an asymmetry in how Scanlon explains personal blame and third-party blame. Wallace says:

It seems to move the account in a subtly different direction. What renders appropriate the modification of my attitudes toward the wrongdoer is not the wrongdoer's antecedent impairment of my relationship with them, but the different fact that a failure to blame the wrongdoer would undermine my prospective solidarity with the wrongdoer's victim (Wallace 2011: 8).

But even if Scanlon could bite the bullet on this and simply accept the point that he offers a different justification of what makes blame appropriate in third-party cases, there is a more serious problem with Scanlon's explanation of third-party blame. An example would be useful here.

Suppose I find out my partner Julia has cheated on me behind my back for years and I blame her for what she did. In Scanlon's terminology, she is blameworthy because she has shown attitudes that impair the

²² What I mean here is that blame can be required all things considered. Of course, there may be reasons which defeat the initial justification for blame, such as discovering that the wrongdoer is not the type of person who can be responsible for her actions. I shall discuss in more detail the norms which govern our practice of blame in the section 'the duty to blame'.

relationship I can have with her and her attitudes give me reasons to adjust my attitudes toward her by not trusting her anymore or by breaking up with her. My friend Joe realizes that Julia has betrayed me and also believes that I have reasons to blame her. Suppose that this is such a case where a failure to blame on Joe's behalf would end my relationship with him. Now, the question is, why should Joe blame Julia? Given Joe has no relationship with Julia, Julia's impairment of my relationship with her gives Joe no special reasons to blame her by adjusting his attitudes toward her. Joe might even be happy that Julia and I will split up.

Scanlon's reply is that Joe should blame Julia because Joe would otherwise impair his own relationship with me. Nevertheless, this reply seems on the wrong footing for the following reason. What makes appropriate Joe's blame is not the fact that he might impair his relation with me. This sounds irrelevant and contingent (it might happen or not). Joe should blame Julia because Julia has done something wrong. I would be angry if Joe's reason for blaming Julia were not the fact that Julia has wronged me, but instead the prospect of impairing his relationship with me. The possible impairment of our relationship is irrelevant. What is important is for Joe to sincerely acknowledge that Julia should not have done what she did; she should not have treated me as she did. It is this recognition on Joe's part that would affirm my standing and that would demonstrate his solidarity.

If we imagine serious cases of wrongdoing (violations of human rights, racial hatred, cases of rape etc.), it becomes clear that we need to blame because we need to dissociate ourselves from the wrong done and recognize that a wrong has been committed. Joe's failure to blame Julia might result in an impairment of my relationship with Joe, but blame itself cannot be justified by the possibility of such an impairment.

Consider also the following case Scanlon discusses (Scanlon 2013: 88). Imagine that a member of an organized gang of criminals is blaming his colleague for violating the 'code of *omerta*'. Suppose this code involves having to follow orders without asking questions. For Scanlon, the Mafioso has reasons to blame him because his colleague showed faulty attitudes by the standards of their relationship. But now the

question is whether a close friend of Mafioso (who is not a member of the gang) has a duty to blame Mafioso's disloyal colleague just because a failure to blame would impair his own relations with Mafioso. I contend he does not. His close friend might actually disapprove of Mafioso being part of a criminal organization and might therefore not see anything wrong with what his colleague has done, that is, violating the 'code of *omerta*'. But blame is not in order just because the friend needs to show solidarity with the Mafioso.

What Scanlon describes above is right in some sense as he is pointing toward an interesting phenomenon; that is, if you do not blame, you will probably impair the relation with the victim. So he is right to suggest that there is a reliable correlation between the maintenance of the relationship and the blame; but he is wrong to suggest that we should blame *because* of a possible impairment of relations between the victim and the third party. The impairment should not be the core justification. Of course, Joe's special relationship with me will provide him with personal moral reasons for expressing the blame strongly to me, but that is different from what grounds the blame itself. Thus Joe may have other personal reasons for blaming Julia (such as his loyalty or concern for me as his friend), but what grounds the blaming attitude is the moral condemnation of the wrongdoing that is in order here.

Before I present my own account and in so doing offer an answer to the previous worries, I shall turn to discuss Miranda Fricker's account. She also proposes an interpersonal account of blame, but one that is communicative. In Fricker's account, distant forms of blame and third-party blame are indeed cases of blame but they are explained as derivative from the interpersonal ones.

2.3 Communicative Blame

Miranda Fricker (2016) argues that, in order to understand blame, we need to focus on the purpose of its communication. 'Communicative Blame' is blame conveyed in an illocutionary speech act whose illocutionary point

is that of inspiring remorse in the wrongdoer.²³ The remorse may prompt a change in the wrongdoer's behaviour in a way that brings the blamer and the wrongdoer's moral understandings closer to one another. The wrongdoer will come closer to understanding the blamer's point of view and, in certain cases, may acquire the desirable moral reasons (Fricker 2016: 167).

Blame is treated in the first instance as a second-personal attitude in her account, with other kinds of blame being explained as derivative. In Fricker's words, blame is 'an essentially second-personal, I-Thou interaction' (2016: 171). You are wronged and you blame the wrongdoer by communicating to her that she has wronged you. The illocutionary point of the communication is to make her see the moral significance of what she has done. This underpins Fricker's claim that Communicative Blame aims to generate shared moral understandings. But she also argues that it generates shared motivating reasons. For this, Fricker appeals to Bernard Williams' idea that blame can sometimes function 'proleptically'.

In 'Internal reasons and the obscurity of blame', Williams argues that blame may certainly function non-proleptically as a way of reminding the other that she had a reason to do otherwise. But blame can also function *proleptically* in cases when the other person did not (on Williams' conception) have such a reason – blame makes people acquire the new desirable good reasons. This can be done in two ways. The agent that is blamed might already have a desire to avoid a particular action X but until now they failed to act on it because they did not pay enough attention to it. Or the blamed agent might possess a general desire to be respected by the people that she respects. Now, by being blamed by the people she respects, she will acquire a new desire to avoid the action she is blamed for. So blame consists in 'a proleptic invocation of a reason to do or not do a certain thing, which applies in virtue of a disposition to have the respect of other people' (Williams 1995: 41). Thus, according to this view, there is a point in blaming people for failing to be motivated by

²³ Notice that, according to her, blame itself is not a speech act. Blame is just the judgment of finding fault.

what we consider morally good reasons. And, once we have done the blaming, they may have thereby acquired the right type of reasons.

Let us now see how the communicative account advanced by Fricker explains distant and third-personal blame. It is clear that in such cases blame does not fulfil the appropriate felicity conditions needed to become the intended speech act. For example, in third-personal cases, key felicity conditions are missing: the audience is not the wrongdoer, so I do not intend to inspire remorse in the wrongdoer. Fricker gives the following example.

If I am listening to the news with a friend, and we hear that certain pay negotiations in France have failed so that the French lorry drivers are likely to go out on strike, my friend might say he blames French union leaders for driving too hard a bargain, while I may blame management for being too inflexible (2016: 170).

In both of these cases of distant blame, Fricker admits that the distinctive elements of the transformative purpose of ‘Communicative Blame’ are missing: blame lacks both its second-personal perspective, as it is not directed at the wrongdoer, and its aim to inspire remorse in the wrongdoer is missing (2016: 177).

In order to explain the importance of third-personal distant blame, Fricker’s account appeals to vicarious communication. When I blame at a distance the management for not trying hard enough to find a solution, the blame is ‘essentially a vicarious application of the morally resentful accusation of fault that I consider the lorry drivers would be entitled to make for themselves in a performance of Communicative Blame addressed to their paymasters’ (ibid. 178).

But blame need not always be the speech act of Communicative Blame. For Fricker, expressions of blame which are not Communicative Blame (because they are not second-personal) can be understood as derivative from Communicative Blame insofar as they aim at the same illocutionary point, namely to elicit shared moral understandings. Third-

personal forms of blame are aimed at 'bringing others' moral understanding into alignment with our own', even if we are not able to amend the moral understanding of the wrongdoers themselves (ibid. 178).

It is easy to see how this appeal to the generation of shared moral understandings can work in second-personal interaction when the blame is directed at the wrongdoer. It can work in two ways. Either it reminds the wrongdoer of a reason she already had but failed to consider properly or, as Williams argues, the blame might function proleptically. But it is more difficult to understand why we blame at a distance, why we discuss our blame with a third-party when our friend's moral understanding is *already* aligned with ours, and why we must sometimes go in for Communicative Blame as third parties. An adequate account of blame must explain why a third party would sometimes be at fault for not communicating their blame. Suppose that I overhear one of my neighbours making a wounding racist remark against another neighbour, which I find incredibly offensive. I do not dare to confront him but I discuss the situation with my partner Julia and I express concern and outrage. I know that Julia already shares my moral point of view and agrees with me about the seriousness of the situation. But it is still important for me to blame my neighbour in front of Julia. This sort of case constitutes an important and central category of third-personal cases, namely those where the blamer is not trying to persuade her interlocutor of any particular moral understanding, for they already agree.

On Fricker's account, the blamer is achieving part of the point of second-personal blame (shared understanding) with the third party rather than with the wrongdoer. The function of blame in such cases is that we are trying out our moral reasons on others, testing and generating shared moral reasons with them. Fricker says that in communicating blame to other third parties, I engage in a practise of communicative blame where the normal aim of getting the wrongdoer to share moral understanding has been displaced so that I am aiming to shared moral understanding with the third party.

Fricker's defence is not convincing because it does not address the main issue here, which is that of explaining why it is so important that

Julia joins me in blaming our neighbour, by sympathizing with the victim of injustice. As Scanlon observes, it cannot explain why my relationship with Julia will suffer if Julia failed to blame my neighbour for what he did. It is worth noting that Fricker does not think that any relationships suffer if a blamer does not seek and find shared moral understandings with a third party. However, I agree with Scanlon here that my relationship with Julia will be impaired if she failed to blame the third-party. In this chapter I try to account for this particular phenomenon.

In the next section I shall argue that a third party's failure to blame may be blameworthy because one needs to morally condemn wrongs by affirming the moral standing of the victim. In the account I shall put forward, recognizing the moral standing of the victim and blaming on behalf of the victim as a third party is central and not derivative, and it is this aspect that explains the distinctive force of moral blame. It will flow naturally from my account that one can be blameworthy for not blaming the wrongdoer, even if the wrongdoer's attitudes are not directed towards us.

2.4 Blame as affirmation of respect after disrespect

In order to define moral blame, we need to understand why we care about being wronged. The key is that when we are wronged a certain deficit of respect is manifested. Displaying ill will, disregarding another person's interests or simply neglecting their interests shows a lack of respect toward the other person. Raimond Gaita (2004) and Stephen Darwall (2006) defend a similar view of wrongdoing, and it has a precursor too in the work of Adam Smith (1982). For instance, Gaita (2004) claims that what matters when we are wronged is not only the natural harm (physical injury, inconvenience, the loss of possessions etc.) caused by the wrong done to us, but that we have been wronged, undermined as persons. Adam Smith maintains that what we most resent when someone wrongs us is not so much the disutility that a certain wrong might create (wrongs that can be explained in naturalistic terms). What most 'enrages us against the man who injures or insults us is the little account which he seems to make of us... that absurd self-love, by which he seems to imagine, that

other people may be sacrificed at any time, to his convenience' (Smith 1982: 96).

Darwall argues this by suggesting that moral wrongs are mainly wrongs to our person:

When someone uses your foot as his footrest, this is an injury not just to your foot, but also to your person. It is a failure to respect your standing or dignity as someone who may not be so treated and who has the standing as one among others to hold others to this (Darwall 2006: 84).

Let me gloss Darwall's idioms by saying that wrongdoing expresses *disrespect* for the victim and therefore expresses *a deficit of respect*. A premise of my argument is that whenever someone wrongs us, whether my friend has betrayed me or my partner has been unfaithful, there is a failure of respect involved of some kind on the part of the wrongdoer – it may involve the violation of interpersonal norms of respect or of what Darwall calls 'recognition respect'.²⁴ The failure of respect does not have to capture the moral texture of any particular wrong, as any given wrong will involve many elements, such as the experience of hurt, anger, contempt, distrust, hatred or pain. Thus I agree that the nature of any given wrong does actually involve many other things. For example, when we experience being wronged, the details of the particular harm matters a lot. If a person has been raped, we can accept that there is a failure of respect involved, but this need not be understood in reductive ways; we must also appreciate the added or 'aggravating'²⁵ harms such as the pain experienced and the trauma it may have caused. So it might not be that the

²⁴ For Darwall (1977) 'recognition respect' is a type of respect that is owed to all persons. Holding the attitude of moral 'recognition respect' toward another person means giving 'proper weight to the fact that they are persons', and it also means being willing to constrain your behaviour in ways required by this fact; that is, having the disposition to take persons into account in deliberations about actions (39). In his latest account, Darwall claims that 'The object of recognition respect is not excellence or merit; it is dignity or authority. Recognition respect concerns, not how something is to be evaluated or appraised, but how our relations to it are to be regulated or governed. [...] we respect something in the recognition sense when we give it standing (authority) in our relations to it' (Darwall 2006: 123).

²⁵ This term is borrowed from Archard (2007). He contends that rape is seriously wrong even if the 'aggravating harms' are not present in every instance of rape.

failure of respect captures the nature of the hurt, but I want to use this broad Kantian idea that whenever people hurt each other or wrong each other, all those wrongs involve at a level of abstraction a failure of respect.

One may immediately worry that my account presupposes a Kantian/contractualist conception of wrongdoing, so I would like to address this worry right away. Blame, in my account, is directed towards an action of disrespect. However, I am willing to allow that whether an action is disrespectful will be distinct from its permissibility or impermissibility. Although I am agnostic about what makes a particular action permissible or impermissible, I am sympathetic to the Scanlonian idea that blame has to do with the relation between persons and with how we stand in relation to one another. So the disrespect is part of the meaning of an action, and will not necessarily determine its permissibility.

So, when someone wrongs another, their action expresses moral disrespect, and to that extent the wronged party is left with a deficit of respect. When blame is expressed²⁶, either by the wronged party or a third party, that deficit is expressively made good through a corrective affirmation of respect for the victim.

One way of understanding the metaphor of the deficit of respect which needs to be made up for is to look at Jean Hampton's idea (1988) of how moral status relates to retributive reactions. Assuming an egalitarian Kantian conception of human worth, I take it that our status as persons comes from our membership of the moral community we are a part of. It is thus important for us to live in a way that recognizes that one has dignity and moral status as a person within a moral community where everyone has equal status and dignity. This amounts to desiring to be treated with the appropriate amount of respect and recognizing and reacting appropriately when someone has treated you or others badly and with less consideration than they are due.

Being wronged sends a message about what attitudes the wrongdoer has towards you as the victim and about what relationship you can have

²⁶ In my account, moral blame is essentially expressive and I use 'expressive to mean the representation to oneself or others.

with such a person, thus it says something about your status and her status in the moral community. Hampton claims that when a wrongdoer insults you through her actions, she also provides false evidence of her superior moral status relative to you. She in effect says that she is your superior, that is why she can neglect your interests and use you for her own purpose with no consideration of your own. Thus she communicates to you and to the entire community (who learn about the action) that she does not view you as a moral equal and also the false message that you can be treated in such a demeaning way.

Now, it does not mean that you will believe such a false message or that you necessarily fear it is true, even if this may happen – after all, you may be committed to an egalitarian conception of human worth, whereby we are all equally valuable. Nevertheless, you need to ‘fight back’ and try to negate or annul the false moral claim. You need to vindicate your standing relative to your wrongdoer and affirm that it is false that you can be treated in such a demeaning way. You deserve to be treated with more respect, and this should be known and respected by the wrongdoer and everyone else. However, this should not be understood in terms of a competitive struggle for standing, Hampton argues. By reacting to what she has done to you, you are not trying to elevate yourself above her and show that you are better than her. You are simply trying to assert ‘moral truth in the face of its denial’ (Hampton 1988: 125). You are trying to re-establish that you are worth the same as your wrongdoer.

Now, although I am partially sympathetic to this picture, I have concerns about Hampton’s position. It is not clear to me why the victim needs to necessarily react and deny some false evidence, unless the victim doubts her own status relative to others or she is afraid other members will doubt her status. It is not even clear that wrongdoers provide evidence at all of their superiority. At least in certain situations, there is no reason for the wrongdoer to believe that you could not do the same to them. But it is true that it might be the case that people sometimes forget or falsely believe we do not live according to an egalitarian conception of human worth or they do not take this conception seriously enough, and then they

must be told or reminded that treating another person as less than what they are owed is impermissible.

But more importantly, wrongs have to be marked as wrongs, recognized as such in order to make a point, and this comes from the need to dissociate oneself from the wrongdoing. Letting the offence go may imply that one is accepting the wrongdoing instead of morally disapproving of it. It may also give the impression that the wrongdoer was right in treating the victim as she did and that such behaviour is legitimate. By reacting to the wrongdoing, you avoid complicity in it and you also hope the wrongdoer will change their minds and reconsider their attitudes in future interactions with others or us.

So one way to redress the balance of respect is for the wrongdoer to apologize to the victim. The wrongdoer must show to the victim and to the entire community that she has changed, that she does not believe she can treat the victim as she did. She owes that to the victim but also to the moral community she is a part of, as she has to show she is able and willing to live according to norms of mutual regard and good will we hold each other to. But I want to argue that another way for at least starting to restore the balance of respect, in case an apology is not forthcoming, is for a victim or a third party to blame the wrongdoer.

The victim is sometimes in a position to blame, so the victim could re-affirm and demand respect for herself. But victims are not always in a position to affirm a corrective respect for themselves. If a child were bullied in the playground, then it would be a third party's responsibility to make sure the bully does not get away with the wrongdoing. Third parties, I shall argue, play a crucial role in vindicating the victim, especially in a non-egalitarian world where we often forget that others are as valuable as we are.

Wrongdoing carries meaning much beyond the particular insult communicated or implied in one's action. Wrongs in general communicate messages to the entire community – not taking someone's interests into account says something about your attitudes toward the person you disrespect but also about your attitudes towards the norms of the community. So we all care and should care about breaches of moral

standards and obligations and there is a stake in it for all members of the moral community.

Further, when we deal with serious violations of rights, for instance the wrongs committed during apartheid in South Africa, although they are wrongs aimed at particular individuals, they are wrongs which need to be addressed by all of us. We need to all stand together and show solidarity for the victims and we are all responsible for making it the case that such wrongs are remembered and never repeated. It follows that there is a division of labour among the members of the moral community: different members differently positioned could make up for the disrespect in different ways. Some members may decide to join the victim in blaming the wrongdoer and thus to stick up for the victim. In more serious cases where violations of human rights are at stake, then the state could and should do this by punishing the wrongdoers.

I agree with many writers that there is a series of moral attitudes and responses which fit coherently together and which enable us to make sense of wrongdoing and eventually restore a certain sort of moral balance through apology and forgiveness. Thus, working back, what I try to offer here is an account of blame, which fits well with the attitudes of apology and forgiveness as responses to wrongdoing. So we should ask what account of blame makes best sense in that set of attitudes. I want to introduce the idea that there is something corrective about the expression of blame. Wrongdoers create a deficit of respect and blame expressively makes good that disrespect.

Thus my claim is that both accounts discussed above are missing the fact that the following is a constitutive feature of moral blame: the affirmation of respect for the wronged party of a kind that correlates specifically with the wrongdoing. Blame is essentially a correction of the disrespect involved in the wrongdoing because in blaming I dissociate myself from the wrong action. When I express blame towards someone (when I say it out loud) I thereby affirm the wronged party's entitlement for more respect. Thus, blame constitutively involves an affirmation of respect for the wronged party. Blame in effect says it out loud that the victim should not be treated this way. Thus in expressing blame through

some blaming action (which is the expression of the moral judgment that they have done wrong), for example, in saying ‘you are wrong in doing that’²⁷ ‘you shouldn’t have done that’, you thereby correct a deficit of respect which has been created by the wrongdoing. So expressions of blame, in themselves, perform a corrective role.

There is an interesting precedent in the philosophy of law for modelling the justification of retributive punishment on a certain retributivist conception of blame. The parallel with the philosophy of law is instructive for the particular conception of blame as affirmation of respect that I am advancing here. Joel Feinberg in ‘The expressive function of punishment’ argues that one important function of punishment is that of expressing symbolically the ‘*judgment* of the community that what the criminal did was wrong’ (Feinberg 1970: 100). In other words, punishment has the force of expressing the community’s moral disapproval and condemnation. But, Feinberg argues, a related and important expressive function of punishment is that of reaffirming the victim’s moral standing in the community, by vindicating her violated rights and by ‘relieving’ her of suspicion and guilt (1970: 104-105).

Feinberg uses an example from the novel *By Love Possessed* (1957), where a young girl brings charges of rape against her boyfriend, who claims that it was consensual sex. If the jury confirms the rape charges, the punishment would then absolve the girl of any suspicion and guilt, and, by the same token, it will vindicate her claim that she was treated unfairly and also her reputation and standing within the moral community would be reconfirmed. It is not surprising to find both elements in the mechanism of blame, as one of the things the retributive idea of punishment in part does, is to be an institutionalization of blame.

Although I agree that the moral condemnation of the offence and offender is crucial in blaming an offender and it explains part of its special force, the related function of affirming the victim’s moral standing takes priority in its public expression, because of its performative role. Let me explain this point.

²⁷ Note that on this account one can also express blame to oneself by ‘saying’ to oneself, for example: ‘I shouldn’t have done that to him’.

My account tries to capture this central feature of blame in judgment, the affirmation of respect for the victim, because it has important explanatory connections with wider performative roles for the expression of blame: it enables one to stick up for oneself or for others, therefore it does not let bullies and tyrants get away with wrongdoing. It is therefore also, at least implicitly, a demand for shared moral values. In publicly blaming the wrongdoer you stick up for the victim by reaffirming her proper standing. You thereby vindicate her claim for respect and you also challenge the implicit claim that it is acceptable to treat the victim in this demeaning way. And, by doing that, you also demand that the wrongdoer abide by the community's moral standards.

One may wonder if there may be other ways of affirming respect for the victim, or whether blame does this uniquely. I have also mentioned apology, which is a very effective way of showing respect for the victim, and punishment, in cases of grave wrongs. But when these responses are not available, either because it is not a matter where the state can interfere or because an apology is absent, then blame is particularly suited to perform this role.

Feinberg considers the same question when he wonders if something else can fulfil the function of punishment: 'Could not the state do this job without punishment? Perhaps, but when it speaks by punishing, its message is loud and sure of getting across' (Feinberg 1970: 105).

But what about feeling grief, disappointment or contempt for the wrongdoer instead of blaming them? Could these attitudes be enough in order to vindicate the victim? Although they do something to mark the wrong as a wrong, these emotions are not appropriate reactions to wrongdoing for the purpose of vindicating the victim or for the purpose of affirming shared values in the community. Contempt, for example, is a self-indulgent emotion, which does not properly focus on the victim or proportionally on the wrong done to her. When you feel contempt you are more concerned with yourself and with your status relative to the victim²⁸;

²⁸ For this view on contempt and particularly on the disvalue of contempt, see Doris (2005), Kim (1999) and Garcia (1996). Mason (2003) argues that 'properly focused contempt' is sometimes morally justifiable (to a person who manifest a bad moral

you look down upon the victim and try to elevate yourself above her, and this is mainly your aim, which is not an appropriate or justified reaction to being wronged. Grief and disappointment are also not appropriate because they are not necessarily condemnatory attitudes towards what the wrongdoer did. Blame, unlike all these other reactions to wrongdoing, both expresses our moral condemnation and also sees the wrong as a deficit of respect that needs to be made up.

The main competing views I have presented fail to satisfactorily account for impersonal forms of blame. They either explain them as mere judgments of blameworthiness (Scanlon) or argue that they are derivative from second-personal forms of blame (Fricker). My claim is that these shortcomings can be avoided if we focus instead on this central aspect of blame: that of signalling a matching or a counterbalancing affirmation of respect for the victim which correlates with the specific wrong. This main feature is always present when we blame, in both its impersonal and interpersonal forms.²⁹

Although I agree that blame can sometimes be a way of ‘reminding’ the wrongdoer of the wrongness of her actions, or proleptically constructing motivating reasons in her psychology (Bernard Williams), or at other times it aims to inspire remorse in the wrongdoer (Fricker), I contend that all these different forms of blame are particular interpersonal manifestations of the more generic practice whose main basic function is that of affirming respect for the wronged party, and whose secondary function is that of affirming our shared moral values in its more public expression.

Let me show now how my account can explain cases of distant blame and third-party blame. To understand better the importance of the type of

character). For a recent discussion of ‘contempt’, see Bell’s recent work (2013). She argues that contempt does not deserve its bad reputation and that we should reevaluate its role in our moral lives. Sometimes, she argues, it is reasonable to respond with contempt to certain vices (such as racism, which she sees as involving contempt).

²⁹ It is worth noting that intentions are irrelevant here. I can blame the wrongdoer and thus condemn the wrongdoer and vindicate the victim’s claim for respect, even if I do not intend to do so and even if I totally despise the victim for other reasons. As I have argued, affirming the victim’s respect is a constitutive feature of blame.

expressed blame I am advancing, I propose to look at a rich example where both second and third-personal forms of blame are at stake.

Interpersonal blame and third-party blame

Bernadette Hartfield, in her article ‘A Story of Anger Compounded’, tells the following story of her childhood.³⁰ She is a young black girl in Ohio in the 1950s or 1960s. She makes friends with a white family and their children and they all go one day to a public swimming pool in the north. She is not allowed to enter because she is black. The white family, although they do not endorse racism, nevertheless think that the child should get over it and try to overcome her anger since these things happen all the time and the child should be used to it by now. Hartfield’s response is not that of understanding their point of view. Her anger and resentment are now directed towards the family as well. She continues to cry despite the family’s various attempts to calm her down. She cries even more when they fail to defend her and when they start to criticize her for being angry. Hartfield retrospectively interprets her attitudes as seeking and demanding respect for herself.

In the view I am defending, the girl was affirming for herself that she deserved better. In this case Bernadette is not primarily worried about the disutility of the wrong. She is not upset because she cannot swim (she could, after all, attend another swimming pool if she wished), but because of the institutionalized disrespect. The moral deficit is a deficit of respect. That is the function that blame is performing in this case: attempting to restore her respect.

This example helps to illustrate how important it was for the self-respect of the victim to be able to have an attitude of blame with regard to the perpetrators, even in their absence and even if nobody was going to understand her experience. Before her blame was publicly communicated in her article, it was important for her to blame the wrongdoers for herself and in dialogue with herself. Were she to directly and publicly blame the

³⁰ This example is also discussed in Margaret Walker (2006), pp. 143-144.

wrongdoers, she would have received no answer. A failure to blame, even to privately blame, would have meant that a wrongdoing would have gone unnoticed and she might even have failed to properly understand her situation, and to stand for what she believes now when she has the capacity to articulate her experience better.

Expressed blame must be distinguished from a communicative account of blame. Bernadette can express her blame even if no one is listening. It would be communicative if anyone were listening and if she had a communicative intention. But her blame is still expressive even if is not communicative in the same way that my actions can express desperation (imagine that I cry to the gods in desperation on a desert island) even if nobody will ever be there to witness my action. So my account is not limited to a communicative account, as Fricker's account is. Blame can have a certain value and achieve a certain aim in the world just by being said out loud, even if there is no uptake. Of course, it is better if there is uptake. In the case of Bernadette, it would have been better if the family said it out loud and there would have been uptake. But blame does a useful job even when it does not receive uptake.

But what significance does it have for the child that the family (in this case the third-party) failed to join in, or at least to sympathize, with her blame of the wrongdoers? We can see here that both aspects of the power of blame have failed: they have failed to affirm respect for the victim, and they have failed to stick up for the victim and thereby counteract the wrongdoing.

It was very disorienting and discouraging that the people she was depending on and who were in this case also witnesses to the wrong, did not stand up for her and did not affirm her value. If the family she was with had expressed their blame (at least to the victim), it would have fulfilled the desirable social function of affirming the victim's shared values (against racism) in a way that would enhance and affirm the victim's self-respect. The child's sense of respect was severely damaged and her status as a person undermined. Their blame would have corrected for this by affirming her desert of respect. They would have affirmed the relevant moral facts: that she should have been treated better, that being

racist is morally unacceptable, that those people are morally condemnable and their behaviour strictly prohibited. By refusing or failing to blame, the members of the family failed to distance themselves from the wrong done.³¹ The victim's anger was righteous because they did not condemn the wrong and, in addition, they refused to adequately defend and sympathise with the victim.

Distant blame

Let me explain now how the view I am proposing deals with cases of distant blame. By 'distant blame' I mean cases where the personal connection between the wrongdoer and the victim is missing. Consider the following example.

Suppose I blame the Prime Minister for the rise in unemployment due to recent cuts in public spending. It is important to blame him for two reasons. First, I might do it just for myself as a way of affirming my respect for the victims of austerity: those who have been forced out of their houses, those on zero-hour contracts or those who lost their jobs and benefits.

But, secondly, it can also fulfil a broader purpose. It is important for me and for the community of which I am a member (maybe the anti-conservative community) to blame the Prime Minister for his unreasonable cuts. It affirms shared values in the community and it strengthens our moral identity as members who stand against such policies.

My account can also explain why it makes sense to blame distant dead agents. Sometimes we blame Eichmann and Hitler for atrocities committed during the Second World War against the Jews. I propose to understand this form of blame as a way of affirming that the victims of Nazism should not have been treated as they were. It makes sense to identify with each other as members of a community that stands against racism, and the public or collective expression of our shared values serves

³¹ For an interesting account that makes this aspect of blame central see Bennett (2013). For him, in order to properly condemn the wrong the blamer needs to distance herself from the wrong by withdrawing from the relationship with the wrongdoer (2013: 76).

an important purpose. It is a way of mutually recognizing each other as part of the moral community that stands against such atrocities, and it is a way of building solidarity. It is important for strengthening and forming the integrity of the moral community to promote and identify with values that are against racism.

The duty to express blame

On the view I am defending, it is easy to see why a third party might be blameworthy for not expressing her blame. In the Bernadette example, the family's failure to publicly blame is blameworthy because they fail to fulfil blame's secondary explanatory role, which I argued blame is connected to in its more public manifestations. If we imagine a similar case to that of Bernadette, but in this case the family did indeed blame the wrongdoers, but only among themselves, they would be blameworthy for not publicly expressing their blame because they have failed to stand up for the victim. Here we can see that one of the aspects of blame (its practical feature) is not fulfilled. Thus my account can easily explain why we are sometimes blameworthy for not blaming wrongdoers. A failure to blame amounts to a failure to affirm the moral status of the victim and to stick up for the victim. I am of course not arguing that one is always blameworthy for not publicly expressing one's blame. Sometimes one should stay silent, and often silence is at least permissible. The duty to express blame depends on many conditions: on whether someone has standing to blame (in this case, the relationship the family has with Bernadette is important), on whether it would be too costly to do so (imagine you are severely punished if you speak up against racism; sometimes it is worth taking the risks but arguably not always), on whether it would make it worse for Bernadette or on whether the wrongdoer is actually responsible for her actions. So not all failures to blame will count as failures of respect because there may be pragmatic reasons or reasons of standing which will justify the victim or bystanders to abstain from expressing blame.

The same value of affirming someone's worth is also going on even in cases of silent blame when we are the victims, because we also have a

duty to ourselves to re-affirm our own worth. Suppose you are the person wronged and you blame privately because you are not in a position to publicly express your blame. Here you do it for yourself rather than for another person. We sometimes blame and give expression to our moral disapproval only in our own thoughts. It is an internalized version of blame; it is a way of practising your moral understanding by enacting a dialogue with yourself. This fulfils the role of affirming and enhancing our own sense of self-respect when we are wronged. Thus expressing one's blame in such contexts enhances one's self-respect because it is a way of sticking up for oneself. It is important to notice and register for ourselves that the other person has wronged us. We need to recognize others and ourselves as objects of respect who should not be disrespected. Expressing to myself that the other person is at fault and that she should not have treated me as she did counts as blame even if unexpressed, as it is essentially the sort of thing which could be expressed, if it had the chance. So this form of private blame is parasitic on the public practice of its more communicative forms.

In both of these cases, whether there is a duty to others or a duty to oneself, blaming is a form of resistance in the context of power relations. We can publicly blame a wrongdoer and thereby reclaim respect for the victim. Suppose that Bernadette's case was different and the white family openly blamed her oppressors. They would have resisted the wrong by defending her and standing up for her. The family issuing blame would already have treated the victim better.

Often, when there is a power imbalance between the victim and the wrongdoer, the victim has very few opportunities to reproach the wrongdoer. But in such cases the expression of blame retains its importance, for the wronged party may express the blame to others and thereby reaffirming her entitlement to respect. Suppose the secretary blames her boss for treating her unfairly. She does not dare to address her boss for fear of losing her job, and so she complains to her colleague instead. My account can explain why it is important to express blame even if the blame is not communicated to the wrongdoer. Blame can fulfil its social and political value of resistance when it is, for example, discussed

with a third-party that the victim trusts. Uptake is very rarely secured and many times an oppressed individual does not dare to address her superior.

Judgments of blameworthiness and blame

I have not yet said much about the distinction between judgments of blameworthiness and blame proper. I take it that there is such a distinction in the following sense. To judge blameworthy is to believe that the other person has wronged us or others, by manifesting disrespect. The judgment of blameworthiness might have a kind of expressive aspect attached to it. However, in order to count as blame, it must have something that is fundamentally the sort of thing which could be expressed, even though it has not been expressed yet (if it had the chance, it would be expressed in the normal way). If someone is not at all involved in the wrongdoing and if she stands back with no inclination or motivation to express her judgment of blameworthiness, then it is not blame but a mere judgment of blameworthiness. So blame has a motivational aspect. To blame is more than merely believing the other person has shown disrespect. Blame, as I have argued involves affirming the victim's standing and expressively makes good the existing deficit of respect. In this way, the victim or a third-party can stick up and defend the victim of wrongdoing.

It is an advantage of my account of blame that it fits well with a theory of apology and forgiveness. Forgiveness presupposes that the offender has wronged me, and this judgment is preserved even when forgiveness is forthcoming. When I forgive I continue to believe that the other person is blameworthy for what she did, but I now have reasons to withhold blame. Earned forgiveness through apology involves a recognition that the affirmation for the need for the deficit of respect to be made good is no longer necessary, as apology makes good the existing deficit of respect.

2.5. Concluding Remarks

By way of conclusion I would like to consider a possible objection to my account.

Not all cases of blame involve a failure of respect

Some may argue that we sometimes blame people where there is no failure of respect involved, or at least not obviously so. Let me consider some cases. Suppose Alice blames John for not being loving enough on her birthday. It does not seem that Alice blames John for disrespecting her. Alice rather complains that John is not caring enough. He should be more considerate and attentive on her birthday.

Consider another case where a bank robber complains to his colleague that he is not doing a great job because he is too slow and lazy in helping with the robbery. It does not seem that ‘being lazy’ or inefficient involve violations of respect.

Finally, suppose I blame a private company owner for polluting and so damaging some of the flora on a deserted island far away from any civilization. She does no harm to me or anyone so, again, it is not clear that the point of my blame is that of demanding respect for myself as I am not a victim at all.

My reply is that none of these cases strike me as cases of moral blame in my sense as there is no proper moral wrong involved. For example, not being loving or caring enough on a special occasion may generate sadness or disappointment, but not blame proper. If we imagine a case where moral blame does seem in order, that would be precisely because it now concerns moral respect. I recall a scene from *the Sopranos* where Carmela Soprano is very angry when Tony Soprano is not caring enough on their anniversary. Instead of spending time with her at the dinner table in the restaurant, he keeps going to the bar to talk to this Mafioso he is doing business with. In this case, her type of blame looks more like moral blame in my sense, as he seems to disrespect her in some sense – he does not take her wishes and interests into account. He neglects her and disrespects the special occasion Carmela cares so much about. We can see here a failure of respect on his part, even while the kind of experienced nature of this particular wrong will have all kinds of different characteristics – probably Carmela feels undermined, let down and unloved by her husband. This is a case of moral blame as there are norms of interpersonal respect violated. So I would maintain that the domain of moral blame is the domain of moral respect.

On the one hand, we can see that there are cases where it does seem to be a case of moral blame, because there is some form of insult, so it is a moral matter. But, on the other hand, if it is just a case where someone disappoints you for being unaffectionate or not attentive enough, then it is not a case of moral blame.

The burglary case is again complex because, on the one hand, one can blame the colleague for not pulling his weight in a burglary. But this blame can have two functions and two different objects. The burglar might just be worried and annoyed that his colleague is not hurrying enough so he just tells him to keep up and focus on the task at hand. This, again, is not a case of moral blame as there is no disrespect involved. But if the burglar is reproaching the other burglar that he makes him late because he does not care enough about his feelings or the job they both agreed was important, then there is some form of disrespect present, so it is a case of moral blame. In the first scenario the burglar is just being useless, where in the second scenario he is being inconsiderate so he deserves moral blame.

In the last example when I blame the private company owner for polluting the island, it seems that what I do is to express my moral disapproval of what he did. But, again, it is not a case of moral blame and I am not even sure whether there is any form of blame involved. She has not wronged me or anyone else and it is not clear whether there are negative consequences of her actions. There are other reactions to wrongdoing, such as criticising, disapproving, feeling disappointment, disgust etc., which play an important part in our emotional and moral life, but which we cannot classify as moral blame. Things would be different if the company owner polluted our town's public waterways. We would legitimately blame her for her carelessness or even meanness, as she should not pollute public waterways. She would be disrespecting the entire moral community and me (by not considering our values, interests, law etc.) if she did not care about polluting our waterways. So we would all be victims of her wrongdoing and my blame would be a case of moral blame.

My aim in this chapter has been to offer a defence of blame in both its interpersonal and more impersonal public dimensions. I have elaborated an essential feature of blame that is present in all contexts: blame necessarily expresses respect for the victim so as to counterbalance the disrespect expressed in the wrongdoing. I have argued that this condition is importantly linked with blame's wider performative roles in its more public expression: it has a real practical and psychological force in the world, reasserting respect for the victim and thus expressively countering the wrongdoing.

The fact that blame corrects for the balance of respect does not defeat the need for an apology on the part of the wrongdoer. The job of affirmation needs to be done by all parties, especially the wrongdoer. If someone wrongs me and you blame her, you have made a certain expressive correction of the wrongdoing. However, this has not changed the fact that I still want her to agree with that, I want her to correct for the wrong done by apologizing. It is only at the expressive level that the disrespect has been made up for by you. The expressive economy between me and the wrongdoer is just as it ever was. Between me and her, there is still a deficit of respect that needs to be corrected for. So, in the next chapter, I turn to explain the crucial role apology has in a theory of forgiveness.

Chapter – 3 Earning Forgiveness Through Apology

3.1 Three Desiderata for a Theory of Forgiveness

The account of blame I put forward in chapter 2 has implications for a theory of earned forgiveness through apology, which I shall present and defend in this chapter. Wrongdoing, I have argued, creates a deficit of respect and blame affirms the need for that deficit to be made good. Apology, I shall argue here, does make good the existing deficit of respect between victim and wrongdoer and thus forgiveness can be forthcoming. The distinction between the judgment of blameworthiness and blame is also important for a theory of forgiveness. Forgiveness, on the one hand, preserves the judgment that the other person has done wrong, while, on the other hand, overcomes blame. There is no need to stand up for the victim and affirm her respect as the deficit of respect has already been made good through apology. This brings us to the questions of what forgiveness is.

In order to understand what forgiveness is and how it is possible, let me start with the following well-known puzzle about forgiveness, which almost all theories of forgiveness address and try to solve. On the one hand, forgiving seems to imply that we put the wrong behind us – we commit to let go of negative attitudes and feelings towards the wrongdoer, such as resentment and anger. On the other hand, the space for forgiveness opens when we see our wrongdoer as culpable for what she has done – when we can legitimately blame our offender for hurting us. Therefore, forgiveness cannot be the same as condonation, for it remains compatible with an attitude of condemnation of the wrong. Forgiveness thus requires continued moral condemnation of the wrong done, or, as some philosophers argue, justified resentment: we cannot properly forgive what we cannot properly resent. Nevertheless, if this is the case – if it is necessary to always acknowledge the culpability of the wrong done and of the wrongdoer, even after one has forgiven – then it is difficult to see how the victim can put the offence behind her and forgive the wrongdoer. Let

me reformulate the puzzle. It seems that forgiveness only makes sense when we accept the following preconditions:

1. What the wrongdoer did was wrong; it was a moral offence. (If there is no moral offence, then there is nothing to forgive the wrongdoer for.)
2. The wrongdoer is in general capable of being responsible for her actions. (If the wrongdoer is insane, then, again, there is nothing to forgive because it would be unfair to blame such a person.)
3. The wrongdoer is responsible for this particular wrongdoing, so she is not rather to be excused for what she did – excusing is not the same as forgiving.³²

These three preconditions justify the victim's moral condemnation of the offender and probably her resentment. The problem for a theory of forgiveness is to show how it is possible to forgive the wrongdoer and overcome hostile feelings towards her, while continuing to hold her responsible for what she did to you. The challenge is therefore to explain how one can forgive without denying the three preconditions listed above, despite the fact that they are the very preconditions that justify our resentment against the wrongdoer.

So far, I have presented one desideratum for a theory of forgiveness: it must solve the puzzle just described. However, there are other desiderata that emerge from a close examination of the puzzle. I have claimed that forgiveness involves the overcoming of negative emotions or attitudes against the wrongdoer. The three preconditions justify the victim's negative feelings toward the wrongdoer, usually resentment, or anger.³³ When a victim forgives, it is commonly argued, she must overcome her hostile feelings and on occasion even replace them with an attitude of good will toward the wrongdoer. But although the overcoming

³² Some authors argue that if the victim tries to excuse the wrongdoer's behaviour then this may fall into complicity and condonation of her actions, because it would absolve the wrongdoer of culpability, and therefore it does not count as forgiveness. For this idea see Kolnai (1974), H.J.N. Horsburgh (1974), Hieronymi (2001) and Zaragoza (2012).

³³ Recently philosophers have argued that there is in fact a broad class of emotions that forgiveness overcomes. Pettigrove (2012) and Walker (2006) mention sadness, humiliation, mistrust, fear, hatred, and contempt. For a detailed discussion of the emotions that forgiveness overcomes, see Roberts (1995).

of such emotions is essential for forgiveness, it does not constitute a sufficient condition for forgiveness. Rather, it is said, one must overcome resentment in the 'right' way, that is, for the right sorts of moral reasons. On these grounds, Jeffrie Murphy (1988) argues that forgiveness is a moral virtue, and, for this reason, forgiving must be distinguished from other activities such as condoning, forgetting, or getting rid of unpleasant feelings by manipulating them. Forgetting about a wrong because it is too difficult for us to live with the resentment is not something we do for moral reasons, but for prudential or simply selfish reasons. Similarly, for Murphy, going to the psychologist in order to control our angry feelings does not constitute forgiveness. Thus, another desideratum for a theory of forgiveness is that of specifying the moral reasons that legitimate forgiveness.

Some of the most common reasons for granting forgiveness mentioned in the literature are repentance and apology on the part of the wrongdoer. The puzzle can be solved, some writers have argued,³⁴ if the wrongdoer takes steps to correct for what she has done by apologizing to the victim. It seems that even if an offender has wronged us seriously, we are often willing to forgive her if she sincerely apologizes. This might seem puzzling as it is unclear why such a simple gesture might have the power to convince the victim to grant forgiveness to her wrongdoer. It is therefore crucial for a theory of forgiveness to explain how apologies work in relation to forgiveness. Apologies seem to have the power to provide the victim with the right moral reasons to forgive her wrongdoer. They make it justified for the wrongdoer to overcome her resentment. Admittedly, forgiveness may also come about without apology, and, furthermore, sometimes apologies may be given yet forgiveness is not forthcoming. But still, there is an important connection between sincere apologies and appropriate forgiveness, and any account must explain why apologies have reason-giving powers.³⁵

³⁴ See, for example, Murphy (1988), Hampton (1988) Hieronymi (2001) and Griswold (2007).

³⁵ I am not committed to the view that earned forgiveness is the only kind of forgiveness that exists. Pettigrove (2012) for example thinks that there is a kind of forgiveness which need not be earned, what he calls 'gracious forgiveness'. This could

It follows that we have three desiderata for a theory of forgiveness.

a) It must solve the puzzle: it must explain how it is possible to forgive and overcome hostile feelings toward the wrongdoer while continuing to regard her as culpable.

b) It must articulate the moral reasons that justify forgiveness without, again, denying that what the wrongdoer did was an unexcused moral offence.

c) It must explain the reason-giving power of apology.

The aim of this chapter is to propose a theory of forgiveness, which can satisfactorily meet all three desiderata. Before doing this, though, I shall discuss in the next section two similar and influential accounts in the literature on forgiveness, which seem to meet the three desiderata. They aim to solve the puzzle of forgiveness; they try to represent forgiveness as grounded in moral reasons and they attempt to explain the connection between apology and merited forgiveness. I will, however, argue in section 3.3 that we have good reasons to reject these accounts because they fail to meet the second and third desiderata. The accounts I shall be discussing are those proposed by Pamela Hieronymi (2001) and Jeffrie Murphy (1988). They propose a particular version of what I characterize as the ‘insult accounts’. I look at these accounts because my aim is to ultimately propose an improved version of the ‘insult accounts’. I want to preserve the correct intuition behind these accounts, which is that what is wrong about wrongdoing is that it disrespects us as agents. But first, in the next two sections I describe and then reject one version of the ‘insult accounts’.

3.2 The Insult Accounts

Many accounts of forgiveness have tried to offer an answer to the puzzle of forgiveness. How is it possible to cease to hold a particular wrong against your wrongdoer, but without denying that what your wrongdoer

be a type of forgiveness motivated by self-preservation. (See Pettigrove, pp. 148-149 for other reasons that might motivate forgiveness that are not about merit). There are occasions where it is better for the injured party to put the wrongdoing behind them and let it go, even if it is not an earned forgiveness. In chapter 5 I put forward the view that there is a type of unearned forgiveness which is not justified by apology or repentance, but by different justifying reasons such as compassion or community support.

did was an unexcused and unjustified moral offence? Hieronymi and Murphy argue that we can solve the puzzle of forgiveness if we consider the fact that our offenders, when they wrong us, manage to insult and degrade us with their actions. Murphy says:

One reason we so deeply resent moral injuries done to us is not simply that they hurt us in some tangible or sensible way; it is because such injuries are also messages – symbolic communications. They are ways a wrongdoer has of saying to us “I count and you do not,” “I can use you for my purposes” or “I am here up high and you are there down below.” Intentional wrongdoing insults us and attempts (sometimes successfully) to degrade us (Murphy 1988: 28).

According to Hieronymi and Murphy, wrongdoing communicates to others a certain insulting message: that it is acceptable to treat the victim in this undignified way and that such treatment is acceptable in general (Hieronymi 2001: 546). So wrongful deeds send messages about what the victim deserve but also about their moral status. For Murphy, the wrongdoer communicates to the victim that she believes she is worth more than her victim: ‘I count and you do not’. Wrongdoing thus poses a ‘threat’ to a person’s sense of self-worth because wronging someone sends the message that the victim deserves the bad treatment. Wrongdoing also humiliates and degrades the other person because it sends the message that the wrongdoer has more worth than her victim. It follows that, according to these views, the mere fact that someone wrongs us, will insult and undermine our worth.

Hampton criticizes Murphy’s claim that wrongdoing manages to insult and sometimes successfully degrade us. Hampton argues that insults can be understood in two ways, as ‘demeaning’ or ‘diminishing’. She argues that you can demean someone by wronging them, without actually diminishing them, without degrading them in Murphy’s sense –the victim might not feel that their sense of worth has been degraded. Hampton thinks these are two distinct types of wrongs. We can wrong victims by

insulting them and this is wrong, Hampton argues, even if the victims do not feel diminished in any way. For Hampton, victims cannot be diminished strictly speaking even if they feel diminished because she argues that moral status is always equal and not something which can be lowered. I shall go back to discuss this distinction because it will be important for the account I want to defend. I shall agree with Hampton that actions can insult wrongdoers, but not in the sense of diminishing them. Further, it is wrong to insult wrongdoers, even if they do not feel diminished by these insults.

Hieronymi understands insults to our sense of worth, in the ‘diminishing sense’ Hampton proposes, in terms of what she calls ‘the threatening claim’ which the wrongful ‘event’ in question makes. Following from this, Hieronymi proposes to understand resentment as a form of protest against this ‘threatening claim’ expressed by the wrongdoer’s action, ‘claim’ which causes the victim to feel threatened and thereby resentful. While the past action still persists as a present threat against a person’s worth, it is rational to feel resentment as it challenges the implicit ‘threatening claim’ (Hieronymi 2001: 546-547). If nothing else or no one else will protest the wrongdoer’s behaviour, at least the victim can do so by resenting the wrongdoer.

So what justifies resentment in Hieronymi’s account is not only the (justified)³⁶ belief in the wrongdoer’s culpability for the offence, but also the belief that the wrong expresses or ‘poses’ a continuing threat to the victim’s sense of worth (Hieronymi 2001: 546-547). Resentment is a ‘fight response’ because it is aimed at affirming the victim’s worth (it affirms and it tries to re-establish the worth that was denied and threatened in wrongdoing) and so, when the victim forgives, she does so when the ‘threat’ to her worth has been removed. In order to assuage the

³⁶ There is an interesting question here of whether the belief in the culpability of the offender must be justified or not. I think the belief must be justified if we want justified resentment. What justifies my resentment must be the fact that the wrongdoer is culpable, i.e., if she is culpable, then that justifies my resentment. So, resentment should be justified by a justified belief in the wrongdoer’s culpability. Surely, not any belief can justify my resentment. Nevertheless, it is not clear if Hieronymi leaves open the possibility where even an unjustified belief could justify one’s resentment. Sometimes she seems to put it in more internalist terms when she talks about the judgments that justify resentment.

victim's resentment, the wrongdoer should retract symbolically this 'threat' by apologizing. Thus, a successful apology retracts the 'threat' (and the insult) to the person's worth. This is what then explains the role of apology in forgiveness for Hieronymi: the apology retracts the insult so the victim feels safe and justified in forgiving.

Adrienne Martin (2010) summarizes the 'insult accounts' as follows. 1. Wrongful deeds insult their victim's worth. 2. Resentment is a form of protest against this insult. 3. A successful apology retracts the insult (Martin 2010: 538). On these views, then, resentment is aimed at the insulting message expressed in wrongdoing. A good apology will negate this message and thus the victim will see that her warrant for resentment is undermined.

In Hieronymi's account, for instance, apologies (or repentance³⁷) justify forgiveness because an apology constitutes a retraction of the 'threatening claim'. In apologizing, Hieronymi claims, the wrongdoer 'renounces the deed', and 'anger loses its point' (Hieronymi 2001: 548). Similarly, Murphy maintains that by apologizing, the offender manages to 'bring herself low' and raise the victim up (Murphy 1988: 28). In this way, the victim's self-respect is re-established as she stops feeling threatened. The victim is now in a position to acknowledge that the offender has retracted her claim, and this recognition will motivate the victim to forgive because resentment will no longer be warranted.

To sum up, there are four central claims implied by the insult accounts. First, wrongful actions make 'threatening claims' to the victim's sense of worth, by sending the message to their victims that they deserve the disrespectful treatment and that they are worth less than the wrongdoer. Second, resentment protests against the 'threatening claim' expressed by one's action and it tries to reaffirm the victim's worth. Third, a successful apology retracts the threat/insult and restores the victim's sense of worth, so it dissolves the victim's resentment. Fourth, forgiveness amounts to an acknowledgment that the 'threat' to one's worth has been removed, and, as a result, the victim is now justified in

³⁷ Hieronymi does not distinguish between these two responses to wrongdoing.

overcoming her hostile feelings as their warrant has now been undermined. In the next section, I discuss three objections to the insult accounts and argue that these objections should give us good reasons to reject them.

3.3 Problems for the Insult Accounts

1. We have just seen that, according to the insult accounts, wrongdoing threatens a person's sense of worth by sending the insulting message that the victim deserves to be treated badly, and apologies are aimed at restoring and removing this sense of threat to one's worth. So an apology is aimed at negating this insulting message and at restoring the victim's sense of worth which was called into question when she was wronged.

Nevertheless, this picture is problematic for the following reason. When an offender asks for forgiveness, she is directing her efforts wrongly if she is directing them solely at the victim's feeling of threat and damaged self-esteem. The need for apology must be of a different order of importance than simply rebuilding the victim's self-esteem. There are important moral reasons for apologizing, but these reasons are not about trying to lift the victim's spirits. If we thought the victim's self-esteem was the core element that requires amends we might decide, as offenders, to perform some symbolic gestures that we know will make the victim feel better but which do not address the wrong committed. For example, we might decide to compliment her looks. However, it is hard to accept that complimenting our victim's looks after a serious offence is appropriate, even if the victim's spirits are lifted in the moment.

Accordingly, the offender must make amends for what she did, motivated by the right moral reasons and in the right way. To be precise, the offender must make amends to the victim motivated by the fact that she, as the offender, has done wrong. Additionally, she has to do this in the right way, i.e., by at least showing that she is sorry for the offence in question, and that this is genuinely meant. This is precisely why we think forgiveness is justified following an apology.

One might think that this criticism does not apply to all accounts because Hieronymi, at least, may be read as making an objective claim

about what actions convey. That is, in her account at least, the ‘moral threat’ to a person’s worth communicated by the ‘threatening claim’ is there, no matter how the person threatened perceived it. To understand better this idea, it will be helpful to look again at Hampton distinction between ‘being insulted’/‘demeaned’ and ‘being diminished’. The person who feels resentful is worried that they have been diminished, that their status has been lowered. They are afraid that the message communicated by the wrongdoer is actually true. This is precisely why they need to fight back and protest the message communicated through the wrongdoing, in order to re-establish their sense of respect. By contrast, on an egalitarian view of status, where status is not something competitive, they realize that they cannot lose their moral status, according to Hampton. They, of course, acknowledge that they have been insulted and they probably have to do something about it. But the reason why they need to do something about it is not because they have been diminished.

I want to argue in what follows that Hieronymi understands the notion of the ‘threatening claim’ in the sense of ‘diminishing’, and that this is important for her account. Even if the very notion of a ‘threatening claim’ in itself can be taken as an objective thing, in the sense that wrongdoing insults us but it does not diminish us, it is often treated by Hieronymi as equivalent to feeling undermined, or to feeling bad about yourself in the sense of doubting your own sense of worth.

For example, in her account, the victim needs to accept the fact that she was threatened (in the sense that her worth has been undermined) in order to feel resentment. The emotion of resentment is therefore entirely dependent on how the victim perceived the other person’s actions. Hieronymi claims that if the one offended ‘can somehow come to believe that ... he himself commands respectful treatment ... then perhaps he can forgive uncompromisingly, even absent an apology’ (Hieronymi 2001: 553). It is clear that Hieronymi here imagines a case where, in the absence of an apology, which would confirm the victim’s moral status, the offended party may still find it in herself to forgive were she to have trust in her self-worth. So the problem the resentful victim has, to begin with, is that she does not trust sufficiently her moral status, and this is precisely

why she is resentful. Wrongdoing has put her moral status into doubt and she needs to redeem it by fighting back (through resentment). However, if she were more confident in herself, then she would not need to fight back, according to Hieronymi, because there would be no reason to protest.

Hieronymi also claims that the victim's protest and resentment (she understands resentment in terms of protest) would not be necessary and would actually mean that there was no threat to the victim's worth if the victim could '*denigrate* the wrongdoer so his claims are not threats' (Hieronymi 2001: 547, my emphasis). This is possible (to denigrate our wrongdoers), for example, with claims made by people who do not matter to us and which, therefore 'don't carry enough weight' to be perceived as threats to our sense of self-worth. We are not troubled or undermined by these persons' actions or claims and we do not perceive what they do as threats to us, no matter how they might objectively be interpreted (no matter if they have in fact insulted us). Again, Hieronymi seems to assume here a competitive view of moral status. Surely, she claims, if we could lower enough our wrongdoers (*denigrate them*), then their threatening message would be canceled as we have shown them that they are not our superiors (If we can denigrate them as they tried to denigrate us, we show them we can do the same to them as they did to us and this will show them who is in charge). Or, alternatively, there would be no point in trying to elevate ourselves above our wrongdoers (and perhaps resent them) if we already think they are lower than us (in the case of people who do not matter enough to us to even be bothered by what they do).

What this suggests is that Hieronymi understands the 'threatening claim' communicated by one's actions in terms of *feeling* threatened and undermined by the offence. There would be no reason otherwise to protest and fight back by resenting the wrongdoer. Apologies, then, are aimed at removing this feeling of threat on her account. If this is true, then Hieronymi's account cannot offer a satisfactory answer to my objection.

So far, I have argued, despite what the insult accounts maintain, that apologies should not be aimed at removing the victim's sense of threat. I shall defend the view that apologies should only be aimed at addressing

the insult involved in the wrongdoing, understood objectively. I shall also argue that the victim needs to do something about being insulted, independently of whether she feels or not threatened by the insult.

Now, the insult accounts further face the following related problem. If they assume that apologies are aimed at removing the victim's sense of threat, then it also follows that the threat or insult does not have to be removed by apology. For all the insult accounts say, it could be removed by simply paying a compliment, so they do not succeed in showing that apology has a central and special role in justifying forgiveness, as for them it is only one of many ways in which the harmed party's sense of threatened self-worth is cancelled. But if it is true that apology is not necessary for earned forgiveness, then it is not clear on their account why forgiveness remains grounded in moral reasons (this was the second desideratum above).

2. I now wish to consider a particular problem for Hieronymi's account, which should make us worry about accepting her account. It is crucial in her account to be able to explain how an apology can undermine the victim's resentment. However, an apology might be all that it should be (it is done for the right moral reasons), and yet the victim may continue to feel threatened. In Hieronymi's account, the agent's withdrawal of the threatening claim in apology should be sufficient to cancel the victim's resentment or anger. Once the wrongdoer has retracted the threatening claim, the insulting message has been 'cut off from the source of its continued meaning', so that 'anger loses its point. Continued resentment would now constitute mere vindictiveness...' (Hieronymi 2001: 548). In Hieronymi's account, resentment presupposes a judgment of culpability but it is also grounded in the judgment that 'the event in question makes a threatening claim'. An apology, Hieronymi claims, 'undermines that judgment. It changes the significance of the event. And so resentment loses its footing' (Hieronymi 2001: 548-549).

However, this will not always be the case as anger may continue and may even have a point even in the face of a sincere apology. It is a completely contingent question whether in fact someone's feeling of anger goes away after an apology: it might or it might not, depending on

the victim's personal psychology. But certainly, what should matter instead is whether forgiveness is in order.

To see this point, consider the following two examples. In the first case imagine that you overhear your friend Bill gossiping about you at a faculty party, revealing some embarrassing things which you told him in confidence. Bill realizes what he has done and he apologizes the next day. Even if Bill is very sincere in his apology, some suspicion about whether he will repeat his offence is rational. Indeed, it might in some cases be irrational not to be cautious. After all, it is difficult to believe that Bill could have changed his character dramatically: he is still the person who committed the offence. You might reasonably think that, if he was put in a similar situation (drunk at a party and in good company, for example), he might let slip again. Sincere apology does not necessarily go with not doing it again. So it seems that the victim can continue to rationally feel threatened even after a sincere apology, for the wrongdoer may do it again. Sometimes people wrong us in characteristic ways, and in these cases the sensible forgiver will not forgive in a spirit of assuming they will never do such a thing again.

A second case I have in mind is the example of a woman in an unhappy marriage who is often insulted by her partner. He tells her repeatedly that she is stupid and worth less than him. Her self-esteem is damaged and she feels threatened by him in the sense of feeling morally diminished. She might even be oversensitive about this issue because of past personal history – a different spouse may have insulted her in the past. But suppose that one day her partner realizes the significance of what he has done; he realizes that he has been treating her badly. So he decides to admit his fault and apologize. Again, it seems that a sincere apology might be sufficient to earn forgiveness but insufficient to remove the threat as the woman may continue to feel diminished.

This suggests that it is wrong to tie the notion of forgiveness to the perception of the moral threat. I presented cases where one can forgive following an apology while continuing to feel morally threatened. So an apology may be sufficient to earn forgiveness, but insufficient to remove the sense of threat to one's worth. If this is right, then Hieronymi fails to

explain how an apology can dissolve the victim's resentment. Remember that, on Hieronymi's account, resentment protests against the 'threatening claim' expressed by one's action and it tries to reaffirm the victim's worth, while a successful apology retracts the threat/insult and restores the victim's sense of worth, so it should dissolve the victim's resentment.

3. Finally, the problem that ties all of my objections together is the fact that the insult accounts link the conditions of forgiveness to a claim about the psychological state of the victim's sense of worth, specifically, feeling morally undermined. This, however, is too contingent and subjective a condition to ground forgiveness. Hieronymi's account, for instance, is based on the claim that wrongdoing threatens a person's sense of worth, and that this sense of self-worth can be redeemed in various ways. The appropriateness of forgiveness in her account therefore depends on an empirical psychological claim about the victim's sense of worth.

However, this will turn out to be problematic in the following example. Consider, for instance, a victim of wrongdoing who is simply not the type of person to let herself be affected by moral injuries as she is confident in her self-worth. In Hampton's words, imagine someone who is 'beyond resentment', in the sense that she is so confident in her standing as a person that 'demeaning actions cannot call it into question' (Hampton 1988: 58). Such a victim might decide to break her connection with the wrongdoer because she can see they are not pleasant, even if this is accompanied by no feeling of threat or damage to self-esteem. I argue that in this case, there is certainly a role for forgiveness. Hieronymi is mistaken to think that because the victim does not feel threatened, she does not care about the offence or she cannot be empowered to forgive. Hieronymi says: 'It fails to pose a threat only if it concerns an unimportant matter or if you fall from the status of moral peer' (2001: 549).³⁸ I disagree, and instead argue that if the victim morally condemns the offence and justifiably believes it is an unexcused offence, then this is

³⁸ See also her reply to Hampton and Minas in footnote 34 where she seems to suggest that if we care about human beings we will feel threatened about actions that disrespect us.

sufficient for forgiveness. The victim does not need to feel a sense of threat to condemn an offence and expect an apology.

It is further unclear for the insult accounts what the role of apology is in cases where the wrongdoer does not threaten the person's sense of worth because the wrongdoer did not succeed in making the victim feel threatened. If there is no insult sent by the wrongdoing and if the wrongdoer does not attempt to lower in value her victim, then again, it is not clear what an apology's role is in forgiveness. Apologies, on these accounts, are supposed to remove the sense of threat to one's worth and negate the insulting message that the victim deserves the bad treatment. However, when there is no threat or insult involved, then their accounts cannot explain how apologies give the victim a reason to forgive, thus they fail to meet the third desiderata. Furthermore, and related to the previous point, in their accounts it makes sense to apologize for and to forgive only a very small group of wrongs, namely those in which the victim feels threatened.³⁹ But this is wrong because we can imagine cases where apologies and forgiveness are in order where there is no threat posed to the victim's sense of worth at all. This may be because the wrongdoer fails to pose a threat in a case where the victim's belief in her

³⁹ Adrienne Martin raises a similar difficulty for the insult accounts when she notices that the insult accounts can be true (if at all) only in 'those cases in which the wrongdoer intends to make her victim believe that he deserves his treatment or in which she tacitly believes that her victim deserves his treatment' (Martin 2010: 541). So apology can provide a reason to forgive the wrongdoer only in a limited set of cases, those in which wrongdoing indeed sends such a message. On Martin's view, wrongs by themselves do not have the power to insult their victims (that is, to send the message their victims deserve no better treatment). She adopts a Gricean view of meaning and argues that what the speaker intends to communicate in uttering a certain sentence is crucial to determining the meaning of that sentence. So, on her view, one can send an insulting message only if one intends to do so. It follows then that apology would make sense only in cases where the wrongdoer intends to insult her victim. However, Martin argues, apologies are in order in many other cases, even in cases where the wrongdoer has no such intention. So the insult accounts must be wrong as they cannot account for the fact that we should apologize even in cases where we did not intend to insult the other person. I depart from Martin as I think wrongful deeds can have the power to send insulting messages, even in the absence of a communicative intention on the part of the speaker. I may insult someone by accident (think of the many cases where people make jokes which end up insulting the audience, but without them even realizing there was something problematic about that particular joke). So the insult accounts might reply by saying that the wrongdoer needs to apologize because she insulted the victim, even if she did not intend to insult. However, the insult accounts are still wrong, I suggest, even if this is true (even if we can insult people without having that particular intention, despite what Martin argues), because the victim might fail to feel threatened and undermined. Apologies are in order even when the victim fails to feel undermined.

standing is too strong to be shaken. Casting the role of apology in terms of retracting a ‘threatening claim’ or an insult to one’s worth is problematic in cases where there is no such insult or threat because, as Adrienne Martin puts it, ‘this means that resentment often is entirely unreasonable and that it makes no sense for the wrongdoer to ask for forgiveness or for the victim to offer it’ (Martin 2010: 541).

In addition to this, I have also explored cases in which the victim might be oversensitive about a particular offence and might take it too personally. The fact that the victim feels hurt every time in these cases is not what makes forgiveness appropriate. How the victim feels is an entirely contingent psychological matter and it should not constitute a necessary condition for appropriate forgiveness. It should instead be a normative question whether forgiveness is in order. Where people would be entitled to feel wounded and resentful, even if they do not, forgiveness is still in order because they have been wronged. Likewise, an apology is not necessarily the appropriate response to a person’s sense of threat if that sense of threat is misplaced. An account of forgiveness must be able to explain why apologies give us a moral reason to forgive whenever we are wronged, and not only in cases where we feel threatened, undermined, or simply hurt.

3.4 A New Proposal – The Balance of Respect Account

I now turn to offer an account of earned forgiveness which solves the puzzle outlined in section I, which explains the reason-giving power of apology in forgiveness and which also represents forgiveness as properly grounded in moral reasons. I am trying to preserve what I think is convincing about the ‘insult accounts’ proposal. Hieronymi and Murphy are right to argue that forgiveness is responsive to moral reasons. They are also right that apology must be one of the important reasons which justifies forgiveness. But the insult accounts are wrong to assume that we condemn and then forgive wrongdoers only when wrongdoers have threatened our sense of worth, and then restored it or when wrongdoing manages to insult and degrade us.

I take the view that we forgive people for wrongs done to us, that we care about being wronged, and that we must adequately respond to wrongs not just because of the contingent, psychological fact that our sense of worth is damaged or not, *but because wrongdoing disrespects us*. I propose to understand this disrespect as objective, in the sense of ‘demeaning’ proposed by Hampton. I preserve here the intuition that motivates the insult accounts, which is that wrongdoing insults us as persons. However, disrespectful actions (insults) are wrong even if they are not threatening our sense of moral worth. They are wrong because objectively the victims were not treated with the respect that is their due.

Apologies in my account are for wrongs done, where the nature of the wrong done is understood objectively, and not specifically about the harm caused involving the subjective feelings of an individual; so it does not matter whether the victims are or feel diminished.⁴⁰ The victim of wrongdoing can recognize that the treatment has been disrespectful and blame the wrongdoer for it, without feeling diminished by the moral offence as she may be quite confident she is worthy of respect. Thus we do not need to think of resentment as necessarily responding either to a threatening claim implicit in the act (Hieronymi) or as a ‘defiant reaffirmation of one’s rank and value in the face of treatment calling them into question in one’s own mind’ (Hampton 1988: 60).⁴¹ We can justifiably resent wrongdoers because they have been disrespectful towards us and thus failed to live up to certain moral norms of mutual regard. This suggests that we should separate resentment from the perception of the ‘moral threat’ to our worth and accept that we resent

⁴⁰ I am not denying here that there is a conceptual connection between our tendency to feel hurt by certain sorts of behaviours and them counting as wrongs.

⁴¹ On Hampton’s view, resentment is never a justified feeling to have, following a wrong. This is because she understands resentment as a fight response, a *personal defence*, which hides insecurity and which tries to reaffirm the victim’s superior status relative to the wrongdoer, so it is never justified. It may even prompt moral hatred and it always tends to exaggerate the moral offence. But I think we can blame and resent wrongdoers proportionately to the wrong they have committed without seeing our wrongdoers as totally rotten individuals. I shall discuss in more detail this aspect of Hampton’s view in the next chapter.

wrongdoers, but not because they threaten our sense of worth; we resent wrongdoers because they do not treat us with the due respect.

This idea that we blame wrongdoers for the disrespect and lack of consideration expressed in their actions and behaviour goes back to the view on wrongdoing I defended in the previous chapter. Following the work of Raimond Gaita (2004), Stephen Darwall (2006), P. F. Strawson (1962) and Adam Smith (1759) I argued that what really matters to us when we are wronged is not only the natural harm (physical injury, inconvenience, the loss of possessions etc.) caused by the wrong done to us, but that we have been wronged as persons. We care about being wronged because we care that the other person has not shown us the consideration and good will we are supposed to show everyone in the moral community. This relates to the Kantian idea that it is important for us to be treated and recognized as moral equals in the moral community as we all have equal worth, so we care about relations of moral equality between people. If a black person is not allowed to enter a shop because she is black she is not only concerned by the disutility of being unable to buy from that shop, but more importantly because she was insulted as a person: she is undermined by the fact that she was not treated with the due respect, with the correct value as a person. Darwall (2006) argues this by suggesting that moral wrongs are mainly wrongs to our person.

I defended the view that whenever there is wrongdoing, whether my friend has betrayed me or someone has hacked my email account, all these wrongs do in fact involve a failure of respect of some kind, with no presumption though that wrongdoing is reducible to a failure of respect. So I want to use the broad Kantian idea that whenever people hurt each other there is a failure of respect involved. Following this idea, I proposed to understand wrongdoing as expressing disrespect for the victim and therefore creating *a deficit of respect*. Thus there is a necessary task to be done after wrongdoing: the disrespect shown must be corrected and the victim's respect must be re-affirmed. The wrongdoer must recognize that how she treated the victim was wrong, that she should not have treated her in such a manner, and that the victim deserves to be treated better, with

more respect. The victim is owed certain regard and consideration and the wrongdoer failed to pay her the due regard.

Let me now explain how my model works in the case of your friend Bill, who gossips about you at a party. When Bill spreads malicious rumours about you at a party behind your back, his action expresses disrespect, so that the balance of respect between you and your friend has you in deficit. So the question is, what could be done to make good the deficit of respect that has been created by Bill's betrayal? The obvious answer is a meaningful apology on the part of your friend. This suggests that when someone accepts a meaningful apology, it is because the deficit of disrespect has been made good by the apology, and thus forgiveness can be forthcoming. I propose we understand earned forgiveness through apology as follows.

The Balance of Respect Account of Earned Forgiveness: Earned forgiveness involves two central elements: 1. The acknowledgement that the wrongdoer has done enough to make good the disrespect shown toward the wronged party; 2 Holding an attitude (or committing to hold an attitude) toward the wrongdoer that this acknowledgment makes appropriate, and on the basis of this acknowledgment.

Forgiveness is justified when enough has been done to redress the balance of respect. How much is 'enough' will depend in turn on the seriousness and the meaning of the wrong done and also on the particular relationship the victim has or used to have with the wrongdoer. In order to forgive, the victim must have good reasons to believe that the offender has now tried to make good the deficit of respect created by the offence. Forgiveness indeed involves some revision in judgment, as Hieronymi argues. However, unlike Hieronymi's account, in the view I am taking what essentially happens when we forgive is that we give up the judgment that the wrongdoer's action continues to disrespect us. So the fourth condition for appropriate forgiveness should not be that the victim's sense of worth has been threatened and rebuilt, but the fact that the wrongdoer has

changed the balance of respect: there is no longer a deficit of disrespect. It is this objective expressed disrespect that is made good in apology, not any subjective feeling of being morally threatened. My account fulfils the first desideratum and thereby solves the puzzle of forgiveness because the victim continues to believe that the wrongdoer is culpable for the wrong done, but the balance of respect between the two has nonetheless been restored. Earned forgiveness is also justified by moral reasons: forgiveness is appropriate following an apology because the respect score was changed so victim and wrongdoer are on a par again.

What earned forgiveness essentially does, in the view I am defending, is to restore the moral relationship between the victim and the wrongdoer following an apology, because the apology restores the expressed levels of respect to one of equal respect. Apology does this because the wrongdoer distances herself from the wrong action. Following an apology, personal relations will normally be restored as well – and it is not possible to have this intimate restoration of personal relations without restoring first the more generic moral relationship. However, in certain cases of wrongdoing, some people may decide that, given what happened, it is better if they continue estranged from one another. So there is a sense in which the relationship is not totally restored as they feel they cannot be intimate again as friends. Nevertheless, apology does its job, as the moral respect would still be equalized even in this case.

In forgiving, the victim holds an appropriate attitude toward her wrongdoer (or at least commits to eventually change her previous attitudes which were caused by the wrongdoing and, by committing to this change in attitudes, she also implicitly commits to restore relations with the wrongdoer) that is justified by the fact that the wrongdoer, by apologizing, has made good the existing deficit of respect, and thus she restores the moral equality that was lost in wrongdoing. As I have claimed, wrongdoing creates a gap because the wrongdoer treats her victim with less respect than what is owed to her. In a minimal sense, what forgiveness restores is the moral equality between the victim and the wrongdoer in terms of the ‘reciprocal recognition of the standing to make certain demands of one another, that is, in the moral case, mutual respect

of the equal dignity of free and rational persons' (Darwall, 2006: 83-84). Thus, forgiveness acknowledges that respect relations between the victim and the wrongdoer have been restored.

One of the reasons which makes my account different from the other insult accounts is that my account opens up the possibility that, although an apology has to express remorse and forgiveness has to overcome to a certain extent negative feelings, nevertheless an apology need not express thoroughgoing remorse and forgiveness need not overcome all resentment. The other insult accounts discussed are committed to the implausible view that you can only apologize when you are remorseful in a thoroughgoing way, because only then you can undo the threat. They are also committed to the view that negative feelings of resentment need be totally overcome in forgiveness.

On my account, on the other hand, the performance of both apology and forgiveness can work in many cases even when emotional attitudes have not properly caught up with the *forgiving* victim. I can count as forgiving you even if my heart has not quite caught up yet in how I feel about you, and this is because at an expressed level there has been an equalization of equal moral relations between us.⁴² That is to say, the deficit of respect that you brought about by wronging me, you have now made good again by apologizing, and therefore I can acknowledge this in forgiving you. The moral relationship is restored through apology and in forgiveness primarily at the expressive level – through a declaration that each party is equally morally worthy. So my account is an improvement of Hieronymi's account because an apology, I argue, can do the moral work and can justify the victim to forgive even if her emotions have not yet properly caught up. The insult accounts cannot account for this aspect of forgiveness as they are too concerned with the real psychology of the victim.

On this model, the necessity of apology for merited forgiveness is based in the wrongdoer's recognition of the necessity to make good the

⁴² The view I defend here is also compatible with Walker's claim that victims can restore the moral relationship with the wrongdoer even if they 'continue to lack positive regard for the offender', so even if they did not totally overcome all their negative feelings and grievances (Walker 2006:167-168).

deficit of respect that was caused by wrongdoing. The offender can do so *symbolically* by admitting that the victim was not treated with the due respect, and *actually* by compensating the victim for the inconvenience caused. This necessity is independent of how the victim actually feels or perceives the wrong done. It is important to make good the experienced deficit of respect both when the victim is not emotionally affected by the wrongs against her, and even when the victim continues to feel diminished for an unduly long time. We can do justice to the fact that forgiveness is grounded in moral reasons if we argue that what gives us good moral grounds to forgive is not the alleviation of a sense of threat or the fact that the wrongdoer has undergone humiliation in begging for forgiveness (Murphy), but making good an objectively existing deficit of respect caused by the wrong done.

My view of wrongdoing and forgiveness fits very well with an existing account of apology already available in the literature on apology, proposed by Luc Bovens (2008)⁴³. The logic of wrongdoing and forgiveness implies that we need an account which portrays apology as a central kind of speech act which is capable of redeeming the deficit of respect involved in wrongdoing. I have argued that apology is an appropriate response to the acceptance that one is a wrongdoer, for the purposes of correcting for the disrespect expressed. I have also claimed that apologies do more than merely signaling the extinguishing of a threat. Apologies have reason-giving powers: they make forgiveness rational.⁴⁴ So, what is the role of apology in forgiveness and why does an apology give the victim a reason to forgive?

Drawing on the account of apology Bovens proposes, I suggest that we can make sense of the claim that apology can equalize the level of respect by understanding apology as a speech act whose illocutionary point is that of affirming respect for the victim. Apologies, Bovens claims, are ‘admission that I did not treat you with the respect that is due to you. I

⁴³ I could have equally taken the well-known account of Smith (2005; 2008). However, there are elements in Bovens’ account that are particularly apt for my discussion and which fit perfectly the balance of respect account I propose here.

⁴⁴ On this point, see Macalester Bell (2012).

bow my head to make up for the deficit of respect in my earlier treatment of you' (Bovens 2008: 231). Bovens uses an example from Kant to illustrate this idea. Imagine a case where a rich offender, in apologizing, kisses the hand of the victim who is lower in social status. Through this gesture of humility, the wrongdoer expresses an 'excess of respect, and this excess is meant to put the scales of respect back into balance' (Bovens 2008: 231).

Although I am sympathetic to his view, I am not committed to the view that apologies work because the wrongdoer expresses 'excess respect' for the victim. This is because, contrary to what Bovens suggests, we cannot literally make up the deficit by quantitatively adding up a bit more respect so that the victim is not in deficit anymore. One can apologize and this apology would redress the balance of respect, but without doing this by paying 'excess respect' or by showing humiliation. However, I do agree with some elements from Bovens' account of why an apology has force. Apologies typically involve four elements⁴⁵:

a) The acceptance that one has done wrong, 'an admission of a moral failing' (Bovens 2008: 231).

b) An admission that the wrongdoer did not treat the victim with the due respect.⁴⁶ I would add to Bovens' analysis that this will be followed by an attitude of self-blame: the wrongdoer now stands by the victim, admitting that the victim was disrespected and thus re-affirming the victim's moral standing. Self-blame involves repudiating the wrong done, by committing the wrongdoer not to repeat the moral offence (or at least trying not to repeat the moral offence). For moral wrongs that result from characteristic bad behaviour⁴⁷, self-blame means that one is committed to change the character traits that made possible the moral offence;

c) Apologies imply a certain sort of moral risk. The wrongdoer takes a risk by giving the victim the opportunity and the power to decide whether she (the wrongdoer) can be accepted back as a person worthy to associate

⁴⁵ In what follows I focus on four elements of apology. It is worth mentioning that Smith (2005) proposes nine elements that an apology must have in order to count as 'categorical', that is, a full apology.

⁴⁶ On this point see also Pettigrove (2012): 119 and Radzik (2009): 92-97.

⁴⁷ See Glen Pettigrove and Jordan Collins (2011)

herself with again on equal footing. Bovens claims that by transferring this power to the victim, the wrongdoer expressively pays excess respect to the victim. By admitting her fault, the wrongdoer ‘acknowledges a loss of moral stature due to her wrongdoing. She can regain this moral stature only if the victim freely awards her the respect that is due to her on grounds of her personhood’ (Bovens 2008: 233);

d) They commit the offender to repair the harm (the inconvenience etc.) occasioned by the wrongdoing in a proportional manner.

I would like to develop Bovens’ idea that apology redresses the balance of respect, and claim that apology does this in a unique way. That is to say, I argue that one cannot make good the deficit of respect without apologizing to the victim⁴⁸.

At first, this may seem counterintuitive. Suppose A has insulted his friend, B by unjustifiably doubting B’s philosophical abilities and by not inviting B to speak at a conference A organizes, despite his initial promise that B will be one of the invited speakers. Now suppose that later on, A changes his mind and decides, nevertheless, to invite B to the conference as a plenary speaker. Does not this make good the deficit of respect, even if A has not apologized? The answer depends on how we interpret A’s attitudes toward B.

If we interpret A’s gesture as an apology, then it does manage to redress the balance of respect, precisely because it is an apology. The forms of expression of an apology are not fixed – what is important is that an apology be expressed in some way or another, no matter whether it is done through deeds or words. If A’s gesture of inviting B to the conference does not count as an apology (suppose A only wants to make B feel better and boost his confidence, but has no intention whatsoever to admit he was wrong), then it cannot redress the balance of respect. The wrongdoer has to show respect to the victim *with regard to that particular wrongdoing*, by admitting that he was wrong about that particular offence. A can only make good a particular deficit of respect, if A invites B to the

⁴⁸ This does not commit me to the idea that forgiveness can be justified only through apology. There may be other ways of justifying forgiveness.

conference in order to make up for the fact that A has wronged B with that particular offence in mind. If it simply happens that A invites B to the conference because there are not enough speakers, then it is not an apology and it has not made up the deficit of respect because it is not making up the deficit of respect caused by that insult. A has to make up for the deficit of respect to B in relation to that particular offence, which caused the deficit in the first place.

So it seems that apology is particularly effective in forgiveness because it can be related to the victim in the right way: the wrongdoer shows the victim due respect. The offender's focus in apology is precisely on the victim of wrongdoing and on that particular offence, and not on oneself or on other factors irrelevant to the wrong done. Consider for example a self-indulgent way of showing regret about a particular wrong. Imagine a case where you encounter an old friend of yours who once bullied you for being overweight. She has now changed. Actually she has changed so much that she cannot believe that she could have behaved so abhorrently. She is now ashamed because she thinks this is not how a decent person should treat people. She regrets her old character but she fails to consider how much she has offended you in particular (she is not focused on the deficit of respect caused by her insult) and so she never apologizes.

Similarly, imagine a case where the same friend is repentant before God. She cares about not having followed her obligations towards God, at the expense of a proper acknowledgment of you, as her victim. She might have a grasp of the seriousness of the situation but, again, fails to appreciate how much she has hurt the victim. Although your friend has provided you with evidence that she has changed, you might reasonably feel offended by her failure to apologize and you might consider it inappropriate to forgive her.

The wrongdoer has failed to earn forgiveness in these cases precisely because the offender is not properly focused on the deficit of respect caused by that particular offence. The deficit of respect which needs made up for is a specific deficit of respect caused by that wrongdoing – it is not about net levels of respect which could be counterbalanced in different

other ways. It is not just a matter of showing the victim you respect her generally, but of addressing and engaging with particular insult which was expressed in the wrong done. When A invites B at the conference, it shows that A has enough respect for B to do that. Maybe A has changed her mind about B and he thinks B is a good person to invite. But it still does not redress the balance of respect as it does not address the initial insult. A's invitation only shows that A respects B, but without actually correcting for the deficit of respect caused by the fact that A has unjustifiably doubted B's competence to begin with (let alone not keeping his promise), as A does not apologize for that act.

We are now in a position to see clearly that the 'insult accounts', by claiming that after wrongdoing the victim's self-esteem must be restored, they do not do enough to explain that restoring the victim's self-esteem must be in respect to the particular wrong which needs to be made good. In the previous section, one line of objections was that, on the one hand, the 'insult accounts' are too psychological and not normative enough – they depend too much on the psychology of the victim. But also, on the other hand, we can see that they do not make it clear *enough* that it is that particular insult of the wrong that needs to be made good, and not just net levels of sense of respect. So my complaint then is not only that they are not normative enough, but also that they are not focused enough.

We see that when the offender successfully apologizes she admits her fault, she recognizes that the victim was wronged and she acknowledges that the victim did not deserve the bad treatment. Although I think an apology need not be communicated in order to achieve its point (my justified belief that my friend is sorry for betraying me may be enough to earn my forgiveness), there is something powerful about communicative forms of apologies. The force of an expressed apology comes from the fact that it is performative, and thus it expressively corrects for the balance of disrespect.⁴⁹ Thus, when we apologize we change the moral relation with the victim and our commitments towards her (the wrongdoer

⁴⁹ In the literature on speech acts, it is given as a standard example of a performative speech act.

commits to repair relations with the wrongdoer), by affirming the fact that she is owed better treatment from us.

This suggests that apology is the appropriate frame for communicating our remorse as it encourages proper, non-corrupt forms of remorse. As I have briefly argued, it would be properly focused on the victim and on the wrong done to the victim. An apology is not always successful; it may misfire if it is obviously insincere and it will not achieve its point, which I claim is that of expressing the moral respect owed to the victim, in relation to the specific deficit caused by the wrongdoing. One of the necessary conditions of apology is that the audience must recognize that it is an apology. A child uttering the words 'I apologize' to his brother while he turns his back or it makes it clear that he does not mean it, counts as an act of speech but it is not a speech act of apologizing. Also, uttering 'I apologize' convincingly (you think I am being sincere) but without being remorseful in the slightest, is an abuse; it is an infelicitous act in the same way that 'I promise you' is infelicitous if the promise is made with no intention to be kept. But even if it falls short of some felicity conditions (suppose the wrongdoer has not totally understood the extent to which she has hurt you), it is still an apology as it creates obligations for the wrongdoer to behave in ways which reflect her apology.

However, if one utters 'I apologize' in the right context, with the right intention and if it is performed more or less well, then it manages to be the right speech act and thus achieve its point, that of correcting for the disrespect caused by the wrong done.

I claimed that on my account merited forgiveness involves two elements: 1. The victim recognizes/accepts that the wrongdoer has made good the existing deficit of respect, and 2. The victim commits to change her attitudes toward the wrongdoer that this recognition makes appropriate, and on the basis of this recognition.

In order to understand the second condition and see exactly what attitudes forgiveness restores we must consider again what is involved in wrongdoing. I described wrongs as generally involving a deficit of respect. However, this definition will not capture the specific range of

emotions and attitudes that might be involved in each particular case of wrongdoing. The nature or the texture of any particular hurt will be specific to the case and will involve many things: the pain suffered, the disappointment, maybe the physical loss, the trust, contempt etc. So I have described the general idea that forgiveness involves the restoration of respect, but what attitudes would be appropriate for the forgiver to have will be full of texture again. The particular attitudes that the forgiver will be now justified in having (or committed to change) will again depend on who did what to whom, and in what circumstances. Wrongdoing essentially expressed disrespect for the victim, but it also generates lack of trust, disappointment, pain, contempt, resentment, or anger etc. The fact that you betrayed our friendship justifies me to perhaps be angry with you but it may also make me reluctant to confide in you again or have an attitude of goodwill towards you.

So what attitudes will be revised and restored in forgiveness will depend on the particular relationship the victim has with the wrongdoer, on the particular negative attitude that the wrong occasioned and on the nature of the wrong done. In close family relations, the expectation is that forgiveness will restore some sense of trust that was lost, together with the disrespect involved – so typically the victim will renew her relationship with the family member. For example, if your mother has betrayed your trust by divulging embarrassing things about you to your friends, forgiveness might involve being able to see her again as a person that you can trust with such things in the future.

If the person that wronged you is your co-worker, then forgiveness need not involve more than an ability to resume normal work relations with your colleague and maybe restoring minimal relations of goodwill between you and your colleague. So what the restoration amounts to in forgiveness earned through apology will depend on the particular relationship the victim has with the wrongdoer and on the particular attitudes that the wrongdoing caused. When a victim forgives by accepting a sincere apology, she commits herself to not holding towards the offender those particular attitudes which were made appropriate by committing that particular wrong.

This is an advantage of the view I am proposing as it accounts for the variability of forgiveness. Although wrongdoing always creates a deficit of respect between the victim and the wrongdoer, it will also, as I already claimed, involve many other things, which will vary depending on the nature of that particular relationship which may have been impaired in some ways after wrongdoing. Thus, ultimately earned forgiveness usually does two things: 1. It acknowledges the restoration of the moral balance of respect between the victim and the offender and 2. It repairs relations between the victim and wrongdoer, as a result of an apology⁵⁰. This is how earned forgiveness ‘wipes the slate clean’: it responds to moral reasons because it recognizes that the wrongdoer has redeemed herself by apologizing.

My account is also different from Hieronymi’s in the following sense. In Hieronymi’s account, what forgiveness involves is an acknowledgement that the wrongdoer has retracted her ‘threatening claim’ through apology. As Hieronymi says ‘it now looks as if forgiveness amounts to merely acknowledging the truth of the moral situation: the offender has repented, and the offended must now acknowledge that fact. But why should this acknowledgment be given the lofty title of ‘forgiveness’?’ (ibid. 549) Hieronymi answers this worry by saying that ‘in accepting an apology, the offended in some way ratifies, or makes real, the offender’s change in heart’ (ibid. 550). My account proposes a different answer to this worry. The offended not only acknowledges that the offender has retracted her disrespectful claim (in my account, it acknowledges that the deficit of respect has been made good) but also commits to a change in attitudes and thus commits to restore the relation between herself and the victim (this is the second condition of my account). So forgiveness has a performative aspect because it expresses a moral commitment towards the wrongdoer.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Interestingly, Walker (2006) has a rich and specific conception of moral repair as trust in others that they will adhere to common moral norms. I mean something more modest than this, that is to say, repairing individual moral relationships and perhaps personal relationships.

⁵¹ The performative view of forgiveness defended here is compatible with other philosophers who defend the view that forgiveness can consist in a performative utterance. For example, Haber (1991) compares the performance of ‘I forgive you’ with

Finally, I would like to address a last objection. One may worry that an articulate account of forgiveness may not address the intuition that forgiveness is something we decide to offer another person as a ‘gift’, that is, forgiveness is always elective. But, if forgiveness responds to moral reasons, if forgiveness is made rational by the wrongdoer apologizing, this may suggest the view that forgiveness is rationally required following an apology. I claimed the apology restores the balance of respect, so is it possible for the victim to rationally elect not to forgive her wrongdoer? I shall address this worry in detail in the chapter on elective forgiveness. What I will say is that I leave open the possibility that justifying reasons (such as apology and repentance) to forgive do not generate moral obligations to forgive. I will argue for the claim that, although the victim will be rational in forgiving her wrongdoer following an apology, she will also be rational in not forgiving her wrongdoer because apology does not have requiring force. So earned forgiveness through apology is not required of victims. Apology justifies the victim to forgive and counts in favour of forgiving, but it does not compel the victim to forgive. This is because, depending on the situation and on the particular wrong, the victim might have other compelling reasons for not forgiving. A victim might not find it in her heart to forgive her wrongdoer because she has been seriously hurt, so forgiving him may constitute a serious burden to her. Thus even if apology will justify her in forgiving, this reason could always be overridden by broadly consequentialist reasons related to the victim’s well-being and general state of mind. I will explain this idea in more detail in the last chapter.

the utterance of a promise. Thus, according to him, ‘I forgive’ you can be a successful speech act even if it turns out the victim finds herself harboring anger when she thinks again about the wrong done to her at later times. For other interesting accounts of performative forgiveness, see Norlock (2009) and Pettigrove (2012). Pettigrove argues that we can use ‘I forgive you’ to communicate that our emotions have changed (‘to communicate, for example, ‘I’m not angry with you anymore’), to ‘declare a debt cancelled’, but also ‘to commit ourselves to a future course of action’ (Pettigrove 2012:1).

3.5 In Conclusion

My aim here has been to propose an account that offers guidance on how a theory of earned forgiveness can successfully meet the three desiderata by solving the puzzle of forgiveness, representing forgiveness as grounded in moral reasons, and by explaining the important (but not necessarily exclusive)⁵² role that apology has in justifying forgiveness. Uniquely through apology, forgiveness can be justified by being earned. But, of course, there are other ways that forgiveness might be justified, but not earned by the wrongdoer. So apology is not the only justification for forgiveness (as we shall see in the final chapter), but it is the only way that the wrongdoer has the power to give the victim a reason to forgive.

I have proposed to understand earned forgiveness as a change in attitudes or a commitment to change them, grounded in a change of judgment, where that change of judgment is a response to the fact that the wrongdoer has corrected the balance of respect by making up for the disrespect expressed in the wrong. The normative account I have defended does justice to the fact that forgiveness is sensitive to moral reasons – the wrongdoer apologizing to the victim justifies it. Forgiveness becomes rational provided the victim accepts that the justified negative attitudes directed at the wrongdoer are no longer warranted attitudes to hold. Finally, my account can also explain the reason-giving power of apologies in forgiveness: they make good the particular deficit of respect expressed by the wrong done.

⁵² I would like to remain neutral here on the question of whether other things besides apology could justify forgiveness.

Chapter - 4 What is Forgiveness Emotionally? Forgiveness as *deciding to trust*

4.1 The emotion that forgiveness overcomes

The main aim of this chapter is to make sense of the claim that forgiveness involves a change of heart towards the wrongdoer, and to spell out exactly what this change of heart consists in. I shall argue for the claim that forgiveness involves overcoming retributive emotions or negative attitudes toward the wrongdoer, as a result of having had a change of heart towards the wrongdoer. I propose to understand this change of heart as ‘deciding to trust’ that the wrongdoer will not repeat the moral offence. I shall look first at other accounts that have tried to make sense of the ‘change of heart’ metaphor, in particular to Butler 1896, Allais 2008, Hampton 1988 and Bennett 2001.⁵³ I shall argue that all these account have shortcomings, although I shall draw upon and use many of the insights developed in them.

It is worth noting at the outset that, although I claim that a change of heart is present in all cases of forgiveness, I defend a pluralistic view of forgiveness and of the sorts of reasons that justify forgiveness. In the previous chapter I argued that there is a type of forgiveness that is deserved and which responds to desert-type reasons – related to the wrongdoer achieving some form of atonement for the wrong done. In the next chapter I will argue that there is another form of forgiveness, undeserved forgiveness, which responds to non-desert reasons. All of these reasons justify the victim to forgive, yet there remains a gift aspect to all cases of forgiveness, deserved and undeserved alike. In this chapter, though, I will not be concerned about reasons which make acts of forgiveness appropriate. Instead, I shall be concerned particularly with the question of what sort of a thing forgiveness is emotionally; that is, what kinds of attitudes must one have towards the wrongdoer in order to count as forgiving?

⁵³ For an interesting take on this metaphor, see Calhoun’s paper ‘Changing One’s Heart’. Calhoun’s main focus in her essay is on developing a view of unmerited forgiveness. That is not my topic in this chapter.

It is widely accepted in the literature on forgiveness that forgiveness involves a change of heart towards the wrongdoer. I am going to evaluate this claim and ask what exactly this change of heart amounts to. In order to articulate the change of heart that forgiveness involves, I shall first discuss resentment, the emotion that forgiveness is said to overcome. Although there is some recent disagreement over whether resentment is the only or the most important emotion that forgiveness overcomes (Pettigrove 2012; Walker 2006; Bell 2008), many philosophers argue that it is (Allais 2008, Hieronymi 2001, Hampton 1988, Murphy 1988, Bennett 2001, Griswold 2007, Butler 1896). In this chapter I follow these latter philosophers, but without presuming that there are not other emotions such as contempt, anger, disappointment etc., which may also be overcome through a process of forgiveness. I limit my discussion to the emotion of resentment.

In this chapter I focus my discussion on four influential accounts of forgiveness (Butler 1896, Allais 2008, Hampton 1988 and Bennett 2001), which see forgiveness as a change of heart towards the wrongdoer. But, most importantly, I argue that there is continuity between Butler, Hampton and Bennett's accounts. They all portray forgiveness as a correction of our negative exaggerated and unjustified feelings (usually resentment) towards the wrongdoer. When we are wronged, we tend to exacerbate our negative feelings towards the other person; we misperceive what has happened and we tend to see the other person as totally reduced to this particular wrong. Butler, for example, says

We are in such a peculiar situation, with respect to injuries done to ourselves, that we can scarce any more see them as they really are, than our eye can see itself. If we could place ourselves at a due distance, i.e. be really unprejudiced, we should frequently discern that to be in reality inadvertence and mistake in our enemy, which we now fancy we see to be malice or scorn (Butler 1896: 100).

These feelings, in turn, are disproportionate to the wrong done to us, which is why they are unjustified (Butler 1896: 101). The role of forgiveness then, in these accounts, is to do justice and correct for these unjustified feelings, so we can again see the wrongdoer in a more positive light, with a corresponding attitude of good will.

The emotion of resentment and its function

I turn now to discuss Joseph Butler's account of resentment and forgiveness. Butler (1896) in Sermons VIII ('Upon Resentment') and IX ('Upon Forgiveness of Injuries') argues that there are two kinds of resentment. The first type, which he calls 'hasty or sudden', is a type of resentment provoked by mere hurt or pain, where no disrespect is involved because the type of being who hurt you is not capable of such complex attitudes (imagine your cat has damaged your computer). This type of resentment is manifested by sudden anger and its role is to defend, prevent or remedy mere violence, threat to our person, or pain. It 'stands in our nature for self-defence, not for the administration of justice' (Butler 1896: 92). The second kind of resentment, 'settled' resentment, is provoked by moral injuries and it has a component of injustice to it. You need to have been wronged morally in order to feel the latter type of resentment. Its function is to fight the injustice inherent in the wrong done to us. The latter type of resentment is important and plays a crucial role in our moral life as it helps us fight and prevent the wrongdoing. Butler says:

The indignation raised by cruelty and injustice, and the desire of having it punished, which persons unconcerned would feel, is by no means malice. No, it is resentment against vice and wickedness: it is one of the common bonds, by which society is held together; a fellow feeling, which each individual has in behalf of the whole species, as well as of himself (Butler 1896: 92).

Wrongs can give rise to both types of resentments. When we are wronged we will most likely feel both sudden anger and settled anger. But mere

harms or inconveniences can only occasion instances of sudden anger. Furthermore, sudden anger cannot cause malice or a desire for revenge. Butler argues that we need to be cautious about the feeling of resentment as it may evolve into malice or revenge, but our worry should extend only towards the second type of resentment. This is because it is only when we have been *wronged* that we tend to exaggerate our emotions by becoming vengeful and malicious. Resentment is often abused when we are the person wronged and when we imagine the injury done to us as much worse than it actually was. So we may fall into an ‘extravagant and monstrous kind of resentment’ because we are not capable of impartially thinking about the wrong done to us and we make too much of it (Butler 1896: 93).

While resentment is a virtue and has been implanted in us for a good reason, it can become a vice when it is transformed into malice and revenge. This is where forgiveness finds its place. Forgiveness is supposed to correct for the ‘excess and abuse’ of the natural feeling of resentment. For Butler, resentment can very well be compatible with an attitude of good will toward the person who has wronged us: ‘We may therefore love our enemy, and yet have resentment against him for his injurious behaviour towards us’ (Butler 1896: 99). However, the resentment we feel can be exaggerated and could destroy the good will and benevolence we have towards the wrongdoer: ‘But when this resentment entirely destroys our natural benevolence towards him, it is excessive, and becomes malice or revenge’ (Butler 1896: 99). This happens when instead of feeling resentment about the particular wrong he has done to us, we see him as a completely rotten and bad person. In this sense, Butler says:

Thus, in cases of offence and enmity, the whole character and behaviour is considered with an eye to that particular part which has offended us, and the whole man appears monstrous, without any thing right or humane in him: whereas the resentment should surely, at least, be confined to that particular part of the behaviour which gave offence, since the

other parts of a man's life and character stand just the same as they did before (Butler 1896: 101).

When this happens – when we can only see the other person entirely in terms of her wrongdoing and thus we see her as totally rotten – then we should forgive so that we can correct for the excesses of our resentment to the level where the resentment we feel is again proportionate to the injury done to us. It follows that, for Butler, to forgive just means to overcome or prevent resentment from 'its having this effect'; that is, the effect of malice or desire to revenge/vengeful feelings that are incompatible with love and benevolence. Revenge and malice are also contrary to the very purpose of resentment; revenge, instead of defending ourselves and seeking justice for ourselves, tends to obscure the whole purpose of the resentment we are justified in feeling and distorts the reality of what was done to us. In this way, instead of demanding justice, we unjustly seek revenge and thus we become malicious. However, some form of justified (settled) resentment may remain in us even after we have forgiven, as this is compatible with an attitude of good will towards our wrongdoers⁵⁴ (Butler 1896: 99).

Now, although I agree with Butler that resentment is a way of defending ourselves and protesting the injustice done to us, it is not clear whether he is right to assume that protesting such injustice and harbouring moderate resentment is compatible with an attitude of forgiveness. In his account, to forgive is just to moderate exaggerated feelings of resentment. So it is compatible, on this view, to continue to protest the wrong done even when forgiveness has achieved its point of correcting for our disproportionate resentment. After we have corrected for this exaggeration, then we are left with justified feelings of resentment, feelings which fit the wrong done to us.

⁵⁴ The interpretation of Butler I propose here is compatible with Charles Griswold's interpretation of Butler. Griswold defends the view that Butler has never maintained that forgiveness involves the forswearing of resentment and that he is often misquoted in this sense (Griswold 2007: 20.) Griswold mentions Murphy as one of the first persons to misquote Butler. Griswold claims that what Butler really says is that forgiveness is the overcoming of revenge. Some form of resentment can be compatible with forgiveness, according to Griswold's interpretation of Butler. For more on this, see Griswold 2007: 19-37.

However, we can also see forgiveness as a way of entirely overcoming any desire to protest the wrong done to us. So, although we are entitled to feel ‘settled’ and moderate resentment toward the wrongdoer, there are reasons that may undermine any type of resentment toward our wrongdoer. The most common reasons that come to mind are apology and repentance. Many philosophers think that apology or repentance are good moral grounds for forgiveness, in the sense of undermining our entitlement to continue to harbour resentment toward the wrongdoer.

In the last part of this chapter, though, I suggest that the solution is to accept that forgiveness can go both ways and take two forms. Sometimes, especially in cases of elective forgiveness, forgiveness could just amount to our moderation of exaggerated feelings of resentment. Forgiveness involves a change of heart, but only insofar as it amounts to a partial removal of the feeling of resentment (as on Butler’s account). We may think that, in the absence of an apology, our blame is still justified (although not excess feelings of resentment⁵⁵), even after we have forgiven. However, in most cases of forgiveness, especially in cases of merited forgiveness, forgiveness will totally wipe the slate clean in the sense that it will overcome all negative feelings. Lucy Allais, for example, sees all forms of forgiveness (elective and conditional alike) as necessarily putting all negative feelings behind you.

In this chapter I argue that there is something right about Butler’s account: sometimes forgiveness does involve the moderation of our exaggerated feelings of resentment. I take up and develop this suggestion even further. I suggest that, even if Butler is right to suggest that forgiveness corrects for disproportionate resentment, he does not discuss cases where forgiveness involves the overcoming of our justified feelings of resentment. However, before I do this, I shall turn to present Allais’s account first, as it will make it easier for me to show what the problems are with a unified account which presents forgiveness (both elective and earned) as putting behind all negative attitudes towards the wrongdoer. I

⁵⁵ I shall explain later in the chapter why, according to this view, excess feelings of resentment will indeed be incompatible with any type of forgiveness.

argue that even when we overcome our justified feelings of resentment, some awareness of the wrongdoer as the person who wronged us still remains.

4.2 Lucy Allais on the puzzle of forgiveness and her solution

In the recent literature on forgiveness, most philosophers have not followed Butler's view, and they often see resentment as incompatible with feelings of good will or love towards the wrongdoer, and thus with forgiveness. So many efforts in the literature have concentrated on finding the right moral reasons that would justify the victim in overcoming her resentment toward the wrongdoer. But why is this a difficult task? When someone wrongs us in the sense that Butler has in mind, by committing an injustice against us, we tend to morally disapprove of what she did and we also tend to see the other person in a bad light – we tend to hold it against her when we have to interact with her in the future.

Allais in her article 'Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness' argues that when we are wronged we also tend to change the way we 'affectively' see our wrongdoer as a person (Allais 2008). Allais uses this phrase here 'affectively seeing someone' to roughly mean the way we feel towards someone; the way we emotionally perceive someone in a salient way. In what follows I shall use her terminology. Thus, on her view, to forgive seems to involve not holding the wrongdoing against the wrongdoer in both the way we feel about her and also in the way we tend to behave toward her. For example, it would hardly count as forgiveness, Allais claims, if we continued to hold a grudge, to see her as a bad person, or not to have an attitude of good will toward our wrongdoer. Allais introduces the idea that forgiveness involves 'wiping the slate clean' in the sense of having a 'change of heart' towards the wrongdoer.

Before I explain what both of these metaphors amount to according to Allais, let me first explain another condition of forgiveness that she discusses. Allais argues (as do Butler and Hieronymi) that forgiveness must also involve continuing to believe that an injustice has been committed against us. It therefore involves continuing to believe that what the wrongdoer did was an instance of culpable wrongdoing. Nothing that

the wrongdoer does or can do will ever undermine the belief that the action in question was wrong. Forgiveness commonly becomes appropriate in relation to a culpable wrong done to another party. We have been wronged, we believe that the offender is culpable for what she did, and now we are entitled to feel certain negative emotions towards her such as resentment and maybe anger.

Although forgiveness entails that we put the wrong behind us in some sense and we stop harbouring blaming attitudes toward the wrongdoer, it does not imply that we stop believing that the other person is culpable for what she did. As we said, believing that the offender has committed an instance of culpable wrongdoing is presupposed in the very concept of forgiveness. But this seems to pose a challenge for an account of forgiveness, as it is difficult to see how we can stop holding the wrongdoing against the offender while we continue to believe that she has wronged us. So long as I affectively see her as the person who wronged me (and this is the only thing salient to me right now), it seems difficult for me to stop seeing her in that light and start having a positive attitude toward her. Some authors, such as Allais, regard this as the basic puzzle of forgiveness.

Butler, on the other hand, would not regard this as a puzzle as for him, when we forgive, we continue to harbour resentment towards the wrongdoer. In a sense, we still hold the wrongdoing against the wrongdoer. So we can see here why Allais may think she has something against the Butlerian view of forgiveness, as he does not have a solution to this puzzle. He does not propose an account of forgiveness where we overcome *justified* feelings of resentment. So maybe Butler indeed fails to capture an important aspect of forgiveness.

Let me now turn to discuss the puzzle in more detail. So why is it difficult to have a 'change of heart' towards the wrongdoer, while acknowledging that what she did was wrong? In what follows I shall explain what Allais means exactly by having a 'change of heart' and why she thinks it is challenging to both maintain that the victim undertakes a change of heart while the victim continues to regard the perpetrator as the one who has wronged her. Here is how Allais describes the difficulty of

providing an account of forgiveness. Forgiveness presupposes, she argues, that what the offender did is an unexcused, unjustified and unacceptable act of wrongdoing. We must continue to believe that this is the case – the act is unexcused, unjustified, unacceptable – even after we have forgiven. However, she says:

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, in which case there is nothing to forgive. My account [...] aims to show that we can make sense of wiping the slate clean while continuing to recognize unexcused, unjustified, unacceptable wrongdoing (Allais 2008: 36).

It would be easy to see how the victim could psychologically and emotionally ‘wipe the slate clean’ if she were to forget about the offence, for example, or if she were to discover that the wrongdoer is not to blame for the offence because she was under hypnosis at the time. What is challenging is to explain how the victim can have a change of heart toward her offender while, at the same time, being fully aware of the terrible offence committed against her, which has no excuse or justification.

Allais argues that we can make sense of how it is possible to stop holding the offence against someone without giving up the belief that what the wrongdoer did was a blameworthy moral offence, if we ‘cease to regard the wrong as centrally attaching to [the wrongdoer’s] character’ (ibid. 51).

In a sense, this may be compatible with what Butler says, depending on what Allais means by ‘centrally attaching to one’s character’. When someone wrongs us, for Butler, we tend to reduce the other person to that particular wrongdoing and see her whole character in terms of that wrongdoing; we see her as a monstrous being. This, in turn, will produce

in us excessive resentment. However, for Butler, what we do when we cease to regard the wrong as centrally attaching to the wrongdoer's character is make our resentment more accurate or more proportional.

On Allais's view, on the other hand, ceasing to regard the wrong as centrally attaching to her character will help us to totally overcome our negative feelings towards the wrongdoer, and this will enable forgiveness. Further, she argues, our negative attitude toward the wrongdoer will be replaced by a positive attitude. Forgiveness, according to her, involves seeing the wrongdoer as better than her action would suggest because when you forgive, your attitude towards her 'as a person is no longer the negative one that her wrongdoing supports' (Allais 2008:56).

There are two ways of understanding the expression 'centrally attaching to one's character'. One interpretation might be, as Butler suggests, that we reduce the wrongdoer to that particular wrongdoing and we see her as totally monstrous. Forgiveness is incompatible with such an attitude, on Butler's view. But on a different interpretation, and I think Allais moves between these two, 'centrally attaching' could mean that a certain behaviour is typical or characteristic of that person's character. So, for example, some people are forgetful or untrustworthy, and we see these attributes as centrally attaching to their characters, but they are not preventing us from seeing other qualities in the wrongdoer, which are independent from the wrong done. Often, Allais takes this interpretation. Forgiveness is compatible, on Butler's view, with regarding a wrong as centrally attaching to one's character (for example, with thinking that someone is an untrustworthy person), if we take the second interpretation. On Allais's view, I shall show forgiveness is incompatible with such an attitude toward the wrongdoer, and I suggest this is problematic.

Further, what enables us to cease to regard the wrong as attaching to the offender's character, on Allais's view, is to separate the wrongdoer from her wrong act so that 'the wrong act does not play a role in the way the victim affectively sees the wrongdoer' (ibid. 51). Unless we are able to separate the wrongdoer from the wrong done, we will never be in a position to totally wipe the slate clean because we will always be tempted to see the wrongdoer through the lens of her offence. Through this

separation, which is constitutive of what forgiveness is, we manage to cease holding the wrong against our offender as the wrong act will stop playing a role in the way ‘the victim affectively sees the wrongdoer’ (ibid. 51).

Let me now turn to present what Allais means exactly by holding the wrong against your victim and what is involved in changing the way you affectively see your wrongdoer as a result of the separation between the act and the offender.

Allais claims that, as a result of being wronged, we tend to judge people’s characters as bad or good and, based on these judgments, we tend to think less of our offenders in the sense of esteeming them less than before. We tend to see them in a more negative light, as ‘lowered’ in value and we thus negatively appraise their characters in a way that their wrongdoing makes appropriate (ibid. 56). It follows that, when we forgive, we cease seeing them as the bad persons that the wrongdoing supports, we change our negative appraisal towards them, and thus the wrongdoing will no longer play a role in the way we perceive our offender. Suppose your friend has betrayed your trust by divulging embarrassing things about you, which ruined your reputation. As a result, you resent her for what she did to you and you thus automatically negatively appraise her as unreliable, on Allais’s account. In this scenario, forgiving her will involve changing this negative attitude towards her: you will no longer see her as unreliable. In her words,

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 (ibid. 57).

In the next section I turn to discuss two criticisms of Allais’s view.

4.3 Criticisms of Allais's account

First worry

The first worry is related to what the separation between the offender and offence is supposed to do in Allais's account. Let me explain by considering an example. Imagine a case of unfaithfulness in a romantic relationship. One partner in a monogamous marriage is unfaithful. The act is unexcused, unjustified and unacceptable. The woman is offended and resentful of her partner. She negatively appraises him and she thinks of him as unreliable, not worthy of her trust; she sees him as a mean and careless person and she probably starts to doubt whether his commitments towards their marriage were truthful and whether they still characterise their relationship. Suppose now that, after many discussions and a sincere apology on his part, she decides to forgive him.

Now, on Allais's account, in forgiving her partner the woman dissociates the wrongdoing from the wrongdoer so that the wrong will not play a role in the way she affectively sees her husband. This dissociation is important because it will help the woman not see her husband as someone who lies and cheats on her. In a previous example discussed by Allais she claims that, in the case where your partner has lied to you about secretly seeing her ex-boyfriend, the space for forgiveness opens when you do not want to 'be accepted *as someone who lies*' (ibid. 36). The woman in my example thus wipes the slate clean and this will probably allow them to move forward in their relationship.

Although it seems plausible that the woman can forgive and can move on, I doubt this can happen in a way not affected by the wrongdoing, i.e., the infidelity.⁵⁶

I find this prediction unconvincing and untrue to our everyday practices of forgiveness. I would say in this case that the woman indeed moves on, but not by not letting the wrongdoing affect the way she sees

⁵⁶ Allais says that in forgiving 'the wrong act does not play a role in the way the victim affectively sees the wrongdoer' (2008: 51) Further, she says '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...forgiving involves not having specific attitudes towards her as a person that her wrongdoing supports' (2008: 57).

her partner. The relationship cannot resume as it was. Rather, if she forgives, then her forgiveness will change the relationship with her partner and maybe she will start the relationship anew on different footing. This means that she still somehow sees her partner through the lens of his wrongdoing. This is similar to Butler's suggestion. She still sees him as the person who has cheated on her, although she does not see him as a monstrous human being. This is how it is possible for her to give him a new opportunity. She hopes he will not repeat the offensive behaviour. It is difficult to believe that a serious offence does not change the meaning of the relationship and does not affect the way she sees her partner.

Moreover, forgiveness can enable one to resume relationships in a new and maybe more healthy way. One can discover things about one's partner that one did not know before and, in some cases, this can be positive and even deepen the relationship. A couple might come now to understand each other and their needs and expectations better and know how to respond to each other in the future. They might even reach the conclusion that the only acceptable relation they can have is an open relationship. But all this is done precisely because the woman thinks of her partner through the lens of his wrongdoing. If she manages to separate him from his offence and cease to appraise him negatively (as the offence justifiably supports) then there would be no motivation for her to re-evaluate her relationship and establish new conditions and priorities. She cannot overcome easily a serious offence. That would be untruthful and even alienating.

The solution cannot be to totally dissociate the wrongdoer from his act. Norlock (2013) interestingly suggests that a better strategy 'for proceeding into the future is *to integrate* the information about the wrongdoer into a wider story, so that his authorship is a part of what I know about him, neither ignored nor confused with his total identity' (Norlock 2013: 42; my emphasis).

So the woman changes her heart not by totally dissociating the wrongdoing from the wrongdoer, but by assimilating this new information to the way she sees him so that she can adjust her attitudes towards him in the future. She cannot ignore the fact that he has cheated on her, and this

information could play a role in the way she trusts her partner in their future interactions. However, she does not reduce him to that particular wrongdoing: she can see he is more than just a cheater. I shall argue that she has forgiven him because, first, she did not reduce him totally to his wrongdoing (she still thinks he is a person worth associating herself with, and this constitutes a necessary condition) and also because she has decided to trust him as a person by giving him another opportunity. But the change of heart involves being completely aware of what he has done wrong.

Second worry

I shall now turn to explain the second worry I have with Allais's account of forgiveness. On Allais's view, forgiveness involves not seeing the wrongdoing as centrally attaching to the wrongdoer's character but also, when we forgive, we have a more positive attitude towards them; we see them in a better light than the wrongdoing warrants. However, Allais argues, we cannot see the wrongdoer as better than what the wrongdoing indicates of her if, at the same time, we also believe that the wrongdoing attaches centrally to her character. It follows that we cannot forgive actions that we know follow from deep character traits.⁵⁷

Allais claims that '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' and that, 'you cannot have a relevantly positive attitude that involves seeing the wrongdoer as better than her offence indicates her to be, *at the same time as believing that the act is deeply indicative of her character* (at least you cannot rationally or appropriately do so)' (Allais 2008: 59, my emphasis).

If forgiveness involves always seeing the other person in a better light than what her wrongdoing supports, then, it follows on this account that you cannot forgive someone when you know the wrongs are done in character. If you justifiably believe the wrongdoing says something deep and true about the person's character, then it will be difficult to see her as

⁵⁷ For an interesting account which argues that we should expand the standard action-focused account of forgiveness and include character-traits among the things we forgive, see Pettigrove (2012), chapter. 3.

better than what her wrong indicates of her as you already see her as bad in some sense. So this separation between the sin and the sinner will only work in cases where you do not think ‘the act is deeply indicative of her character’ (Allais 2008: 59).

I find the prediction that we cannot forgive while we believe that the wrong act is deeply indicative of the wrongdoer counterintuitive and at odds with many cases of forgiveness where we precisely forgive for wrongs done in character. People often claim they can forgive their unfaithful husbands, even when they believe their unfaithfulness is in their character, so to speak; even when they believe their husbands are untrustworthy and they will do it again.

But let me explain first why Allais thinks that this is not a problem for her account. Allais argues that forgiveness always requires some limited knowledge of someone’s character. She maintains that a) we are almost never in a position to judge peoples’ characters and make final judgments about them and, in addition, b) we are not required to judge their characters either. Allais puts forward two related arguments for defending claims (a) and (b). I will refer to the entire argument as the ‘knowledge of character’ argument.

The first argument is that we are probably never epistemologically in a position to judge other people’s characters as good or bad. This is because the evidence always underdetermines these judgments; we can never really know what the deep traits of someone’s character really are (Allais 2008: 60). We have so little evidence in many cases of wrongdoing of how people really are that there is evidential room to have a hopeful attitude toward the wrongdoer, rather than a pessimistic attitude towards them. Because we know so few things about people’s real characters, we have epistemic licence to assume that they are better than this particular instance of wrongdoing indicates. So we always have epistemic license to separate the wrongdoer from her wrongful deed, even if she is unrepentant.

The second argument is that we can always be wrong about these judgments as people’s characters change over time. It follows that (because we can never have complete knowledge and because these

characters can change), we are not obligated to form beliefs about people's characters. Even when we judge that the other person is culpable for the wrong done to us, we can, nevertheless, abstain from forming character judgments about her, and thus we 'choose not to let [our] view of her be affected by it' (ibid. 61). The affective attitudes we may form about the wrongdoer are not epistemically mandated or prohibited, thus we can decide to change them even if they have wronged us and never repented. We can always decide to overcome our negative attitudes towards the wrongdoer because it can never be epistemically obligatory or forbidden to do so.

Moreover, as we are both justified in having the negative attitudes and equally in not having them, it follows that forgiveness is always elective and rational. It is elective because we can always decide to change or not to change our view of the wrongdoer, and it is rational because we will be justified in our decision either way.

It follows that forgiveness, on Allais's account, is always rational. This is because her account of forgiveness makes it the case that we are both justified in believing the other has wronged us and, further, that we are also justified in not letting her wrongdoing affect the way we see her. This is an important consequence of her argument, if true, because it solves the puzzle of forgiveness: it means that in forgiving, one continues to believe in the culpability of one's wrongdoer (something we are obliged to do), while ceasing to hold the wrong against the wrongdoer by affectively changing the way one regards her. This is possible, on Allais's account, precisely due to the separation she draws between the judgments of culpability, which are morally required, and the judgments about people's characters and the corresponding affective appraisals based on these judgments, which are optional.

Although I agree that in some cases it is true that we can have a more cheerful attitude towards our wrongdoers, my contention is that in some cases this is false. Allais's account cannot make sense of forgiving people whose characters we know full well. If I live with someone all my life, then I will know that he may betray me again and that this is characteristic of his behaviour. Yet, I can forgive him every time he does so, despite me

having the belief that he is an untrustworthy person. So there will be at least some cases where we would not be limited in the way Allais suggest. So it is not clear what happens when we do not suffer from those epistemic limitations, when we know full well that the particular wrongdoing attaches to his character. Is there any room to forgive in those cases? Is there any room for forgiveness when the mistakes are caused by ingrained character flaws?

One way we could solve the above problem is to distinguish between a weak and a strong sense of judging our wrongdoers' characters, and this point relates back to the distinction I drew between two senses of 'centrally attaching to one's character'. I may have some evidence of how the wrongdoer's character is (I have lived with them for thirty years so I know that his behaviour is typical of him and he might do it again), but the evidence is still limited. The evidence allows me to judge him as untrustworthy, but I have a choice in whether I decide to see him as totally reduced to this particular instance of wrongdoing. If I do not see him as totally rotten, at least I can make sense, on charitable reasons, of forgiving him (I do not have to, but I can forgive him if I choose to). Although it may be reasonable to form attitudes about people based on their actions and we may come to appraise them negatively as a result, it is unreasonable to see them as totally defined by their worst actions. We can judge people's characters and it is reasonable to do so as beliefs about our wrongdoer's characters are often supported by the fact that they have wronged us. But we should never judge our perpetrators in a strong sense; that is to say, we should not reduce them to that particular deed and think they are totally rotten individuals.

Now this latter position has a lot in common with Butler's proposal, which argues that we must resist the temptation to take one particular act of wrongdoing as representing all that person is. So we may accept, contrary to what Allais sometimes seems to suggest, that forgiveness is compatible with believing that the wrong act is deeply indicative of the person's character. However, what we must resist is thinking of our perpetrator as totally rotten, as totally reduced to her wrongdoing – moreover, we are never justified in taking this extreme attitude.

Forgiveness does seem incompatible with thinking the other person is totally rotten and incapable of redemption, as Butler argues. In a sense, this preserves the spirit of Allais's view as she also sometimes argues that the point of the separation between the deed and the actor is to enable us 'to get away from seeing each other as defined by our worst actions' (Allais 2008: 62).

We can do this, I suggest, not by asking the victim to separate in her mind the wrongdoer and his act, but by not identifying him with his act⁵⁸; by seeing that there is more to him as a person than his lying, for example. This is just the idea that we need to keep our blame proportional to the wrong done, and not exaggerate it (also similar to Butler's view).

However, contrary to Allais, I claim that forgiveness does not involve seeing the wrongdoer as better than their wrongdoing justifiably indicates them to be either. If you lie to me, I am entitled to see you as a person who may lie. It is true that I should not see you as entirely defined by that particular lie, especially if it portrays a false view of you. That would be cruel and irrational. I need to remind myself that you are not a totally bad person just because you have done one bad thing to me. But it would also be irrational not to see you as you are: as someone who sometimes lies or as a liar. Forgiving cannot involve ignoring that you sometimes lie or that you are indeed a liar.

If forgiveness involves not reducing the wrongdoer to that one bad deed, then I agree with Allais that forgiveness involves a separation between the wrongdoing and the wrongdoer. It is true that we should not see the husband who cheats on his wife, in my example, as *nothing* but a cheater. But if it means totally wiping the slate clean, behaving towards them as if they are not cheaters, or liars, then this attitude amounts to forgetfulness rather than forgiveness.

However, it is not entirely clear what exactly the position Allais defends is. On the one hand, she suggests that when one person forgives his lying partner, he should not accept his partner as someone who lies (this suggests that forgiveness is incompatible even if we understand

⁵⁸ For a similar view, see also Govier (2002).

‘centrally attaching’ to someone’s character in the sense that a certain behaviour is typical). She does not say that he should not accept his partner as someone who *only* lies (which would suggest the second interpretation, as totally reduced to that particular wrongdoing), but as someone who lies. So if you think it is in your partner’s character to sometimes lie to you, then it would be difficult to forgive. However, other times, she suggests that the problem is to see your partner as someone who *only* lies, that is, the problem is to reduce him entirely to this one character trait.

In the next section I turn to discuss another two accounts of forgiveness which also claim that forgiveness involves a change of heart towards the wrongdoer, but which are much closer to Butler’s original account. These accounts will help me articulate exactly what is involved in the change of heart towards the wrongdoer.

4.4 Jean Hampton and Chris Bennett’s accounts of forgiveness

Both Hampton and Bennett argue that forgiveness involves a change in how we see the wrongdoer as a person. When we forgive, Bennett argues, we put the wrong behind us and we ‘leave it out of consideration in [our] attitude towards the wrongdoer’ (Bennett 2003: 127). For Hampton, this change in attitude involves coming to see the wrongdoer as ‘still decent, not rotten as a person’ (Hampton 1988: 83). Wrongdoing, according to Hampton, makes us see the wrongdoer in a bad light, as someone rotten or morally indecent. We tend to make negative overall judgments about her character and ignore other good qualities our offender has, that we could value in her. So we start to think she is a rotten person, not worthy to associate ourselves with. When we forgive, according to Hampton, we view our offender differently as a person by changing, affectively, the way we feel about her. Seeing her in this new light is usually enabled by her repentance or apology. The wrongdoer’s repentance gives us evidence that the wrongdoer is not totally rotten after all and will usually also give us evidence that she is a person with whom it is worth re-establishing relations with.

What is interesting in Hampton's account is her claim that the wrongdoer does not have to undergo a total moral rebirth in order to be forgiven. The victim can forgive by deciding to trust her offender, and, for this, it is sufficient to believe that the wrongdoer is 'good enough' to be forgiven. Forgiveness, she says, is 'thus the decision to see a wrongdoer in a new, more favourable light' (Hampton 1988: 84). This does not mean that the victim changes her mind about the culpability or the wrongness of the act, or about the bad character traits that the wrongdoer has. The victim continues to believe that the wrongdoer has those bad moral character traits, even after she has forgiven.

This is an interesting difference between Allais and Hampton's accounts. We saw that, according to Allais, forgiveness is not possible when the victim believes that the wrong done is the result of ingrained character traits. Hampton seems to leave room for the following possibility. You believe that the wrongdoer is a bad person in some sense and with respect to those character traits that enabled her wrongdoing. Forgiveness is compatible with believing that, if you were to put her in a similar situation, she may repeat her moral offence. Thus, you do not totally separate her from her wrongdoing. When you forgive, you see that the wrongdoer cannot be reduced to those bad character traits. You believe that there is more to her than the character traits that caused her to offend (in the sense that she is not a monster, she is not totally rotten). So you arrive at the conclusion that your wrongdoer is still a decent person, despite her wrongdoing and despite the bad character traits.

I find this way of describing forgiveness more convincing as it does not involve a total dissociation between the act and the actor. The victim continues to see the wrongdoer as the person who committed the wrongdoing and even believes that the wrongdoing may be the result of bad character traits that will not change. However, she still decides to forgive and see the wrongdoer as a decent person. As Hampton nicely puts it, the victim 'drops the perspective from which he looks like a morally rotten individual' (Hampton 1988: 85).

It is interesting that in her account forgiveness is possible for immoral acts but also for bad character traits (Hampton 1988: 86). She says 'We

also have an explanation for the locution “She forgave him for his —,” where the phrase is completed by some immoral action or character trait of the wrongdoer’ (Hampton 1988: 85-86). Before I evaluate the shortcomings of such a view, let me turn to discuss a related view on forgiveness.

Chris Bennett in ‘Personal and Redemptive Forgiveness’ distinguishes between two types of forgiveness. *Redemptive forgiveness* is the result of a moral transformation on the part of the wrongdoer. The wrongdoer engages in some form of ‘reparative activity’⁵⁹, usually taking the form of remorse or apology. You put the wrong behind you as a result of the other person redeeming herself for the wrong done. In forgiving her, you acknowledge that she redeemed herself. However, we can also engage in what he calls *personal forgiveness*. It is in this concept that I am interested in here. You can forgive the wrongdoer by changing your attitudes toward her where the wrongdoer makes no amends and shows no form of remorse.

What is involved in personal forgiveness? Bennett identifies such forgiveness with the metaphor ‘turning the other cheek’. You forgive the other person as a way of trying to get her to show remorse and apologize. You decide to trust her and put yourself at risk, because you recognize ‘the appropriateness of putting the wrong behind’ you (Bennett 2003: 141). You hope to get the other person to understand her wrongful behaviour and hope to resume good relations.

What is interesting in this account is that the negative feelings that you overcome when you forgive are feelings that you should not have had in the first place. Bennett mostly talks about the feeling of resentment, which is a way of trying to recover your own diminished sense of moral worth. The offender has insulted, diminished your status and you have been reduced, as Hampton says, to the level of an inferior, so resentment is mainly a reaction to a perceived threat to your moral status (Bennett 2003: 49-51). As a result, you have lost your moral confidence and you have become insecure. So the wrongdoing manages to make you fear that

⁵⁹ I borrow this phrase from Ware (2014).

you may really deserve the bad treatment and be your offender's inferior. In order to prove to yourself and to your offender that you are better than him or at least not inferior, you try to get back at him by harbouring hostile feelings. So resentment, according to Bennett and Hampton, is a fight response and a 'defiant reaffirmation of one's rank and value in the face of treatment calling them into question in one's mind' (Hampton 1988: 60).

Resentment is not, however, a noble feeling to have as it shows weakness and confusion. Ideally, a virtuous person should never feel diminished by the other person's wrongdoing. In forgiving, thus, you manage to recover your sense of an 'egalitarian' moral status. This means that you know that your moral status is not something that can be lost or gained, and that you know you have to be treated with the appropriate level of respect. Bennett says that 'one morally important task that the victim has in the face of wrongdoing is therefore to regain moral confidence, where this involves regaining full conviction in a belief about the egalitarian nature of moral status' (Bennett 2003: 139). Thus forgiveness, on this view, involves overcoming an *unjustified* form of resentment.

The same is true on Hampton's view. To forgive involves changing your morally inappropriate emotions and beliefs about the wrongdoer. Remember that, on her view, when you resent you regard the other person as someone bad and totally rotten, not worthy of your attention. However, these attitudes are not justified. There are very few occasions or wrongs that are so bad as to totally stain and reflect on the entire character of a person, so your feelings are most probably unjustified.

What is worth retaining from both accounts is that forgiveness involves a certain change in view about the wrongdoer as a person. This change of heart may involve not seeing the wrongdoer as totally rotten or a bad person. You start thinking of him as a decent person, a person worth associating yourself with.

What I find unsatisfactory about both accounts is the claim that forgiveness involves overcoming *unjustified* feelings. In Bennett's account, you give up resentment that results from a feeling of 'insecurity'

that you should not have had in the first place. Your resentment is unjustified. In Hampton's account, you overcome your resentment by starting to see the offender as not totally rotten. But you should not have regarded him as totally rotten to begin with. You are never justified in thinking that someone is totally rotten and never capable of redemption or moral transformation.

The problem with both these accounts is that it is not clear why correcting for unjustified feelings or beliefs should deserve the name of forgiveness.

Bennett responds to the above worry in two ways. The first thing he says is that deciding to reunite again with the offender by 'turning the other cheek' may have the desirable effect of bringing your offender to feel remorse; thus, your wrongdoer may come to redress the wrong done. Although it may have this effect, it does not mean that forgiveness has happened. It may result in forgiveness once the offender shows some form of repentance, but there is no evidence to show that it has happened before this.

The second reply is that correcting for unwarranted negative feelings is a difficult thing to do and a challenging task. We can say the same thing in the case of Hampton's account. It is hard work to be able not to see the other person as totally rotten after they have committed a heinous crime. On the one hand, although the attitudes that are incompatible with personal forgiveness are attitudes that we are not entitled to have, it is quite understandable that we have them and they require hard work to overcome. For this reason, Bennett argues, it seems like a genuine case of forgiveness.

I am convinced by this last argument in the sense that we should allow for cases of forgiveness where the victim overcomes not only totally justified forms of negative feelings, but also negative feelings that are not warranted because they are exaggerated. This goes back to the point made by Butler that forgiveness means that we are able to temper and overcome exaggerated feelings of resentment that are often and understandably felt when we are badly wronged.

Although this seems right, I would like to make room for the possibility that we can also overcome *warranted* feelings of resentment, and not only in cases of personal forgiveness. Sometimes resentment is not mainly or not only a response to a perceived threat to our moral worth and it is not felt because of one's insecurity. There are also cases where we do not think and we do not see the other person as totally rotten; cases where we do not exaggerate our resentment to such a level that it becomes disproportionate to the offence committed. The challenge then will be to explain what is involved in overcoming warranted feelings of resentment and, a related question discussed in the last chapter, what reasons would justify the victim to overcome negative attitudes she is entitled to have.

What I have in mind is a case where I think you are not entirely rotten, but you have wronged me by betraying my trust. So, precisely because you have wronged me, I am now in a position to break off relations with you, harbour negative feelings and attitudes toward you, or maybe complain about you to other people, etc. I will be justified in doing all these things, however, I decide not to. So, although I do not see you as totally indecent, it is still in my right to do all these things to you because you have wronged me.

Forgiveness seems then to involve something more than simply not seeing you as totally rotten or not seeing this particular instance of wrongdoing as representing all of who you are. When my partner asks me to forgive him for betraying my trust, he is not only hoping that I will not see him as totally rotten. This much is already taken for granted. He is hoping for much more than this. He is probably also hoping that I will be able to trust and confide in him again. It is true that there are serious cases of wrongs (mass killings, torture) where forgiving may only amount to not seeing the other person as completely rotten. However, in everyday cases of wrongdoing forgiveness allows us to move on in our relations in a way that is not conditioned by particular instances of wrongdoing.

4.5 An alternative account: what is the change of heart involved in forgiveness?

So, what is involved in a change of heart toward my offender where I am justified in feeling resentment and where I do not think my offender is totally rotten? I propose to understand this change of heart in terms of *trusting* or *deciding to trust* that the other person can change their behaviour; in forgiving, we give the other person a chance not to do that same thing again, not to repeat the bad behaviour.

The notion of trust I have in mind comes from Richard Holton's article 'Deciding to Trust, Coming to Believe'. Let me use one of Holton's examples to show how I use 'trust' here. Suppose you run a shop and you hire someone as a cashier who has just recently come out of prison, after a theft conviction. You decide to trust them when you put them in charge of the till, even if you do not strictly speaking believe they are trustworthy. That is to say, you do not bet on the fact he will not steal again; however, you decide to trust he will not do it. In doing this, you show them you are willing to put yourself at risk; you are showing them you are willing to trust them. Deciding to trust them does not mean that you are sure or believe they will be honest and will not try to cheat with the money. However, you hope they will not do it and you hope they will be honest.

One of the effects of deciding to trust them might be that they will decide to live up to your expectations; they may indeed become trustworthy people. In forgiving you also decide to trust they will not repeat the moral offence. You do not form the judgment that they will not do it again and you will not bet on the fact they will not do it again; however, you decide to trust they will not do it again and by this you give them an opportunity not to do it again and hope they will change.

If my partner cheats on me, I can forgive him when I decide to trust that he will not cheat on me again, even if I do not expect or I do not believe he will not do it again for certain. It is true that my decision to trust him again will partly depend on whether I believe he will cheat on me again. If I am convinced that he will cheat on me again, then it may be difficult to trust him. However, I can decide to trust him and hold him to

this expectation even if I have doubts over whether he will keep his promise. My decision to trust him on this might have the desirable effect on him – assured by my trust, he might come to keep his promise. This, in turn, might make me change my beliefs about his trustworthiness. I might come to the realisation that he will not cheat on me again.

Forgiveness indeed involves a change in our attitudes towards our wrongdoer as a person, as Hampton, Bennett and Allais suggest. On my account, we overcome our hostile feelings, as a result of undertaking a change of heart toward the wrongdoer. Although we do not lose the wrongdoing from our focus, we may decide to focus on other character traits or good deeds the person may have performed, and see her through the lens of all these other great qualities she has. We recognize the offender is still a good person so we decide to give them another chance to change their behaviour by trusting them.

So although the wrongdoing supports all kinds of blaming attitudes towards our offender, we decide that they are not worth having anymore – maybe because we prefer to move on or because we think harbouring negative feelings is never a good idea in this particular case, so you relinquish them. Of course, we open ourselves to a great moral risk as the possibility they may do it again is always there. We can never know how we will feel about the offender in the future or whether the offender will change or has changed her behaviour or character. So it is in a sense subject to moral luck. This idea fits nicely with the metaphor of ‘turning the other cheek’ that Bennett uses. When I decide to trust my partner again I am making myself vulnerable to him, as he may do it again, but I am, nevertheless, willing to run this risk.

I would like to clarify further how I use the expression ‘deciding to trust’. One may worry and object that, when I decide to trust someone, in a sense I do not really trust them. I only behave as if I trusted them. If that is so, can my account really capture the change of heart involved in forgiveness? When I forgive them, do I trust in my heart they are really trustworthy, do I really have confidence in them? This seems to be the notion we need for an account of forgiveness. Another way of understanding trusting someone could be in terms of entrusting them with

something, if we make ourselves vulnerable to them in some way or another. We can do this without having any type of confidence in them. So is my account of trust more similar to this latter notion of entrusting? Is forgiveness more similar to deciding to act as though I trust the other person, when I do not really trust them in my heart? This latter interpretation would imply that I should not act towards them as if I haven't had a change of heart towards them, I should not keep bringing the stuff up again in conversation, but this does not seem sufficient for having forgiven as forgiveness must involve a change of heart.

My answer is that forgiveness involves both of these notions. I entrust my partner with the car even if he has just passed his driving test. I trust he will not crash our car, even if I am not totally confident he will not get into an accident. But, in a sense, I do trust he will not get into an accident. If I thought he would get into an accident, I would definitely not entrust him with the car (I would probably accompany him until I am sure I could trust him). So I must believe with a certain probability he will not crash our car to entrust him with it, and I do trust in my heart that he will be careful with his driving, even if there is a suspicion over whether he will get into an accident. I am not and I cannot be certain that he will not. So we need a notion of reasonable trust here.

Let me compare two cases to make this point clearer: the cheating partner case discussed previously; and a case where I decide to trust someone out of necessity, even when I do not trust them at all in my heart.

I am in the middle of the desert and there is no way I can walk my way out of it unless I get a lift, so I find myself in a desperate situation. A man comes along and I really do not trust him. He looks shifty and does not inspire trust at all. However, I do trust him to drive me out of the desert. Out of necessity, I have got to trust him so I decide to trust him. Could this notion of trust 'out of necessity' then really capture the sense of trust involved in forgiveness?

I agree that, surely, forgiveness cannot go to this extreme – it cannot be that I forgive and decide to trust my wrongdoer out of pure necessity. It still has to be reasonable to trust the person in my heart; I still need to approve of them in some way.

Compare the desert case with the unfaithful partner case. I decide to trust my partner and give him another opportunity, even if I am not sure he won't do it again. But I do internally trust that he will not do it again. I do not do it because I have to trust him. I do it because I do trust him and my trust is based on the reasonable belief that he is indeed trustworthy. In the desert case, my trust is out of necessity; it is not based on such a reasonable belief. So, in the case of forgiveness, you act as though you totally trust someone and in this sense you decide to trust them, but it must also be accompanied by some form of internal deliberation about how much you really trust this person in your heart and how much you put yourself at risk emotionally if you indeed decide to trust them.

My view has the advantage that it allows for the possibility of forgiveness in cases where we do judge people's characters. Judging people's characters is important and sometimes the right thing to do. My partner may lash out at me when he is under stress and, as a result, he may say all kinds of insulting things. I can see how his behaviour follows from his character traits. But he wants to be forgiven despite the fact that what he did was a product of his character. He recognizes he did wrong and that I did not deserve to be treated that way, and this may be enough for me to forgive him, even if there is a possibility that he may do it again. So in forgiving him I decide to trust that he can change his behaviour and that he will work on the bad character traits that caused his behaviour.

Do we need to see our wrongdoer as totally separated in our mind from their wrongful behaviour in order to be able to forgive? I think not. It is not necessary to see them as totally separated from their acts. This is because forgiveness is possible even when we are fully aware of the fact that the wrongdoer is the type of person who may lash out at us again if placed in a similar strenuous situation. We can decide, however, to give them another chance and to relinquish the negative attitudes that would be justified considering their behaviour. Although we are entitled to regard them as somewhat difficult or troublesome, we may decide to focus on their more positive attributes. Maybe they are good colleagues with whom we can have decent work relations, despite their occasional outbursts. So

we behave toward them with consideration and good will, even if we know they do not have perfectly good manners or characters.

However, there remains something true about the separation between the act and the actor. We need to be able not to reduce the wrongdoer to his act and not to see him as totally rotten, as Hampton and Bennett suggest. I take this more as a condition of possibility of forgiveness. Forgiveness, often, involves much more than this. If we strongly believe there is no hope for them, then it is difficult to see how we can change our attitudes towards them as a person and see them in a good light. What forgiveness is ultimately achieving is to remove the barrier that has been created by the wrongdoing between the two parties. If the injured party thinks that the other person has a deeply defective character and is totally rotten as a person, then it is difficult to remove that barrier, put the wrong behind her and renew trust between her and the wrongdoer.

So, does the metaphor of 'wiping the slate clean' rightly characterize what we do when we forgive? This, I think, will depend on how we interpret the metaphor. If it means that we continue the relationship with the wrongdoer in the same way as it was before the wrongdoing, or if we behave toward her as if nothing happened, then forgiveness does not involve totally wiping the slate clean. My view of her and the way we restore our relationship will still be affected by the way she treated me. However, when we forgive we do commit to put the wrong behind us in the sense of not bringing it up again in future conversations, for example. Forgiveness is surely incompatible with reminding you, every time you do something wrong, that you also wronged me last year. If I forgive you for what you did to me last year, then it would be cruel of me and irrational to keep bringing up that argument again in our conversation. So in forgiving we relinquish our right to harbour blaming attitudes toward the wrongdoer, at least concerning that particular offence.

If we understand 'wiping the slate clean' in this latter sense, then I agree with Allais that forgiveness involves putting the wrong behind us in some way, in the sense of not bringing it up again in our discussion in a blaming manner.

It may seem different in cases where I blame you for something you always do. For example, if my partner often forgets to wash the dishes, then I might be tempted to mention that he forgot to wash the dishes on a previous occasion as well, when I am angry at his neglect today. However, when I do this – suppose I blame him for the fourth time this week for the same thing – and I react very angrily by telling him he has a very bad character and that he does not try hard enough, then what I actually blame him for this time is not a repetition of every instance of forgetfulness from the past. It is not true that I bring up the fact that he forgot to wash the dishes yesterday. What I blame him for today is an accumulation of similar sorts of wrongs, so I blame him for totally different reasons. I now probably start to assess his character and think that maybe he does not care about my complaints enough to take this issue seriously.

If forgiveness always involved putting the wrong behind us in the first sense of forgetfulness (I let it go and I behave as if it never happened), then this would make my relation with my partner very difficult. I would never be able to pick up the signals and understand that my partner really does not care about me anymore. His small instances of constant forgetfulness might have a deeper meaning and might indicate that our relationship is breaking apart. It follows that it is important to forgive in the sense of putting the wrong behind us and starting a new chapter in our relationship, but not in the sense of forgetting what has happened.

My main aim in this chapter has been to answer the question of what exactly forgiveness is emotionally and what kinds of attitudes we need to have towards our wrongdoers in order to count as forgiving. I propose to understand this ‘change of heart’ in terms of deciding to trust that the offender will not repeat her moral offence.

In the next and last chapter of the thesis I turn to discuss again the question of reasons that justify our forgiving wrongdoers. This time though, I shall be concerned with justificatory reasons for *elective or undeserved* forgiveness. Reasons which justify us to electively forgive our wrongdoers cannot be desert-based reasons as the wrongdoer never apologizes for the wrong done. So, in the absence of apology or

repentance, what other reasons can there be which will make it rational and intelligible for us to forgive? In the next chapter I shall argue that there are all kinds of reasons that can justify a victim to forgive. I shall defend the view that these reasons, although they have justificatory force, are not the type of reasons that generate moral obligations for the victim to forgive.

Chapter – 5 In Defence of Elective Forgiveness

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 I proposed an account of earned forgiveness where the victim is warranted in forgiving only if the wrongdoer makes amends for the wrong done. According to such an account, forgiveness is made rational by the wrongdoer apologizing. But this account creates a puzzle because it seems to make cases of elective forgiveness (where there is no apology or repentance) unreasoned and unjustified.

Charles Griswold (2007) for example takes this position and argues that forgiveness is always conditional on the wrongdoer taking some necessary steps to earn or merit forgiveness. In the absence of these steps, forgiveness looks unjustified, even unintelligible. My aim in this chapter is to argue that unearned forgiveness can be both intelligible and justified. I shall first examine why philosophers have argued that elective forgiveness⁶⁰ is problematic. I shall then consider accounts in the literature (Garrard and McNaughton 2003; Pettigrove 2012) which claim that forgiveness is not fundamentally the sort of thing that requires apology. I will present problems for both of these accounts.

Finally I propose an alternative account that I believe is well-placed to explain why elective forgiveness is both intelligible and justified. So the puzzle I am trying to address here is how there can be reasons for forgiveness that conserve its elective quality. I argue that there are different kinds of reasons that can justify forgiveness. It is not the case that the only reasons for forgiveness are reasons that come from apology or remorse on the part of the wrongdoer. I suggest that there are justificatory features of a situation, such as generosity and strong community support, which can make elective forgiveness intelligible and justified. Such reasons are not the type of reasons that automatically generate moral obligations. As a result, my account can make sense of the fact that forgiveness can be intelligible as an elective phenomenon.

⁶⁰ I use 'elective' here to mean 'undeserved' or 'unearned' through remorse or apology by the wrongdoer.

In Chapter 3 I proposed an account of earned forgiveness through apology. However, I dispute the assumption here that earning forgiveness through apology will automatically generate obligatory reasons to forgive. One can earn forgiveness and this ‘earning’ may only generate permissive reasons, rather than obligatory reasons. I am pluralistic about the sorts of reasons that justify forgiveness: apology can justify forgiveness but non-merit-based reasons can also justify forgiveness. However, I argue that none of these reasons have the power to generate moral obligations. It will remain open to the victim whether she will forgive her wrongdoer or not, even if these reasons will count in favour of forgiving the wrongdoer.

In Chapter 3 I argued that any account of forgiveness should solve the following puzzle. It should tell us how it is possible to cease holding the wrong against the wrongdoer without denying that 1. What the wrongdoer did was wrong; 2. The wrongdoer is culpable for what she did; and that 3. There is no excuse for her action. Philosophers tend to agree that the previous conditions are necessary to make forgiveness intelligible. In order for us to believe that there is something to forgive, we need a wrongful act and someone to legitimately blame for it. Further, we need to distinguish forgiveness from excusing the wrongdoer’s behaviour. Trying to find excuses for the wrongdoer’s behaviour by trying to lessen the seriousness of the wrongful act or of her culpability is not really to forgive her. Forgiveness presupposes that what the wrongdoer did is a serious moral offence and that the wrongdoer should be held accountable for it.

Philosophers have also argued that holding the three previous conditions justify the victim to have certain negative reactive attitudes towards the wrongdoer, such as resentment, anger, contempt, etc. So forgiveness, it is said, involves overcoming such negative reactive attitudes but without denying that the wrongdoer is culpable for the wrongdoing. Forgiveness must also be distinguished from other ways in which the victim might overcome her justified retributive emotions, but which will not count as forgiving. For example, if a victim relinquishes resentment about a wrong merely through amnesia or by way of hypnosis then she does not count as having forgiven. We will also not count as forgiveness the letting go of resentment merely because the victim is fed

up with the wrongdoer and wants nothing to do with her. To count as having forgiven, the victim must let go of her negative emotions because of the right sorts of reasons.

The strategy I employed in Chapter 3 was to try to find a further reason that justifies the victim's resentment but which disappears when the victim forgives. Apology, I argued, has reason-giving powers: it rationalizes forgiveness. But now, one might legitimately wonder what might justify the victim's decision to forgive in the absence of such a reason. There is nothing the wrongdoer does or will do and, further, there is no reason to believe that the wrongdoer repents. So how can we explain the thought that the victim is nevertheless responding to normative reasons in forgiving? Why would the victim give up her warranted negative feelings toward the wrongdoer and have a change of heart toward her? Forgiveness seems totally without reason.

Further, giving up too easily one's negative feelings after a serious offence, some authors argue, may fail to condemn the wrongdoing enough and might even evince a lack of self-respect on the part of the victim. We can see here that the worry concerns the type of justifying reasons the victim may have in forgiving, and not the reasons which merely explain her action. Philosophers often distinguish between 'explanatory reasons' and 'justificatory reasons'.⁶¹ A victim may forgive her cheating partner because she falsely believes that if she does, her partner will marry her. Her false belief explains her action, but it definitely does not justify it. Her partner will not marry her and there is nothing good that will result from forgiving him. She is better off not forgiving him, as he is a philanderer who will cheat on her again as soon as he has the opportunity.

Moreover, we need to specify the justificatory reasons of why someone forgives if we want to offer a good reply to critics who claim that there is something problematic with unearned forgiveness because the victim either fails to condemn the wrong enough or shows a lack of self-respect.

⁶¹ For an excellent discussion, see Lenman 2009.

Following Joshua Gert's (2004; 2007) definition I propose to understand justification and *justifying reasons* as reasons that can show that an action is not irrational to perform, even if there are considerations against it. So forgiveness needs reasons that have a justifying force because, in their absence, forgiveness will be unjustified or unintelligible.

Before discussing in detail worries related to elective forgiveness, let me consider an example of interpersonal elective forgiveness. The following example is taken from Lucy Allais's article 'Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness'. The example is from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

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 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. 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'" (Allais 2008: 39-41).

This example is interesting for two reasons. First, Babalwa Mhlauli does not condition her forgiveness on repentance; she does not demand that her wrongdoer repents. Second, it is a case of interpersonal forgiveness. The victim wants to meet the killer and to forgive *him* for what he did; it is not

only about her wanting to let go of her negative feelings because it is too burdensome for her to live with them. She wants to have a change of heart about this particular man. The purpose of this chapter is to make sense of her change of heart toward the wrongdoer and articulate the reasons that make her forgiveness intelligible and reasonable.

Now, there are two common worries raised against elective forgiveness. The first one is that ‘forgiveness’ in such a case is not really an act of forgiveness; it is not intelligible as an act of forgiveness, but as some other, related, phenomena, such as condonation. The second is that, while it may count as forgiveness, it is nevertheless immoral.

5.2 Objections to Elective Forgiveness

First worry: it is not forgiveness, it is something else.

Griswold formulates the first worry in the following way. In order to forgive, the victim must justifiably believe that what the wrongdoer did was wrong, that she is culpable for what she did, and that she has no excuses for her behaviour. But, holding these beliefs also justifies the victim to feel resentment toward her perpetrator. Unless the wrongdoer takes steps to make her victim’s resentment unwarranted, why would the victim try to let go of her justified resentment? Griswold claims that:

If moderated resentment *is* still warranted all things considered, then forgiveness is impossible or premature. Forgiveness does not attempt to get rid of warranted resentment. Rather, it follows from the recognition that resentment is no longer warranted. And what would provide that warrant can be nothing other than the right reasons. These specify the conditions the offending party should meet to qualify for forgiveness (Griswold 2007: 43).

He further remarks:

Forgiveness comes with certain conditions or norms, else it would collapse into forgetting, or excusing, or condonation, or

rationalization, as the case may be. When satisfied, these conditions qualify the offender for forgiveness and entitle the victim to forgive (Griswold 2007: 47).

So we can see that the difficulty comes from trying to define forgiveness in a way that does not equate forgiveness with related concepts such as condonation, excusing or rationalizing. Griswold claims that people who say they forgive in the absence of the offender meeting some conditions are mistaken and they most probably confuse forgiveness with something else, such as condonation of the wrong done or with excusing the wrongdoer's behaviour. However, condoning and excusing do not constitute forgiveness at all (Griswold 2007: 66). Furthermore, forgiveness offered electively 'would likely be interpreted by the offender (and possibly third parties as well) as condonation or excuse making – either amounting to collusion with wrong-doing' (ibid. 121) and might even 'provide encouragement to more offences' (ibid. 64).

Now, Griswold does not offer much support for his argument that forgiveness offered electively is either conflated with condonation by the victim or is interpreted by the offender as condonation or excuse making. But why might Griswold think that? The idea here is that if we think forgiveness has to be 'uncompromising'⁶² (forgiveness only makes sense when the victim thinks the wrongdoer is culpable for her wrongful behaviour), then it is difficult to see what reasons might justify the victim's forgiveness without giving up the thought that the wrongdoer is culpable for her wrongdoing. For example, imagine a case where you have good reasons to believe your husband has cheated on you. Were you to discover that your husband did not actually cheat on you, then you would have to let go of your resentment because it would be unjustified. But this would not count as forgiving your husband, because there is nothing to forgive him for.

Alternatively, imagine that he did cheat on you but you now try to explain or rationalize his behaviour. You think that he might have done it

⁶² This expression is borrowed from Hieronymi (2001).

because you also have cheated on him on previous occasions. So you decide to get over it and overcome your hostile feelings. This is closer to forgiveness but it seems to condone or justify his wrongdoing. It says that what he did is acceptable all things considered, as you did the same thing last year and so you do not feel you are in a position to blame him because it would seem hypocritical: you are no better than your partner.

Griswold distinguishes between two senses of ‘condoning’. One can condone in the sense of ‘accepting while not disapproving (by not holding the wrong-doing against its author)’ or by ‘tolerating while disapproving (a sort of “look the other way” or “putting up with it” strategy)’ (Griswold 2007: 46). The woman in my example condones the wrongdoing in the latter sense, by looking the other way. She disapproves of what he did but she does not condemn him properly as she thinks it would be inappropriate to do so, so she decides to move on.

Finally, you might try to excuse his behaviour by convincing yourself that he is mentally unstable and he could not have helped it, so you conclude that you should stop blaming him because he cannot be held responsible for what he did. Again, this seems to compromise forgiveness because the wrongdoer cannot be held responsible for his actions. The question is then how you can overcome your hostile feelings toward your husband while acknowledging that what he did was wrong, that he is blameworthy for what he did and that there is nothing that can excuse his behaviour. Part of the solution is to find the right moral reasons which will justify the wife’s overcoming of her hostile feelings. The right moral reasons will not compromise forgiveness in the ways mentioned above. She will not try to excuse or justify his behaviour, but she will forgive for good moral reasons. The puzzle so far for any theory of forgiveness is to explain how it is possible to overcome your warranted resentment in a way that makes for genuine forgiveness.

However, Hampton in ‘Forgiveness, resentment and hatred’ complicates this picture and she argues (against Murphy’s account) that overcoming justified resentment for moral reasons is not sufficient to make sense of genuine, uncompromised forgiveness. She provides a case where it is clear that the victim overcomes her warranted negative feelings

for good moral reasons (she is not trying to excuse her wrongdoer's behaviour in any way), yet it is not a case of forgiveness. I presented before a case where the wife condones her husband's behaviour for bad moral reasons. She condones his behaviour and she decides to look the other way because she is afraid she will be accused of hypocrisy. However, there can be good moral reasons for condoning another person's bad behaviour, yet we will still not say it is a case of forgiveness. Before I say why Hampton thinks it is not a case of forgiveness, I shall first present her example. The purpose of discussing both the original puzzle of forgiveness and Hampton's worry is to establish the clear marks which distinguish forgiveness from morally justified condonation. We will then be in a position to reply to Griswold's worry and thus show how elective forgiveness is genuine forgiveness.

Hampton's example

A woman marries a man with a stern, rather rigid father who is getting on in years. The father comes to stay with the couple for a visit, and finds his daughter-in-law's conduct irritating, the food less than perfect, the house less than clean, the conversation rather dull; in small ways he makes his dissatisfaction known, and he also makes it clear that he considers the daughter-in-law to blame for the imperfections in his son's house. Whatever the motivations for the old man's attacks, let us suppose that they are unfair and give pain to the daughter-in-law. However, her husband says to her: "Look, he is my father and we should be on good terms with him. I know you think he is behaving badly, but be good and forgive him so that family peace can be preserved." (Hampton 1988: 39).

In this example the woman decides, for the sake of her marriage and for the sake of harmony in the family, to forgive. She relinquishes her justified anger and resentment for good moral reasons: the preservation of good family relationships. For Hampton, this is a case of condonation

rather than genuine forgiveness. The wife, Hampton says, is required to ‘drop’ the judgment that she has been wronged, to relinquish her justified angry feelings for the sake of preserving family harmony and, in this way, she allows herself to continue to be injured by the father-in-law and she also condones this injury because she is required to accept it with no protest or recognition that a wrong has been done to her. Therefore, the first point Hampton makes is that this compromised form of overcoming resentment cannot be forgiveness, as forgiveness can never involve acceptance of the wrong with no protest of the wrong done. The woman in effect is silenced and required to ‘bite her tongue’; she is asked to sacrifice her own integrity in some way (she has to compromise with something she regards as morally wrong) so she is never allowed to blame her father-in-law proportionately for his behaviour.

In addition, Hampton raises another interesting and related point. The wife rids herself of her resentment, Hampton says, but not in a way that constitutes forgiveness, for the ‘forgiveness’ here is not directed at the wrongdoer in any way. She is changing her feelings but the manner in which she lets it go does not constitute a change of heart toward the wrongdoer. She still sees him as the person who wronged her and maybe still sees him as a terrible sexist old man. Just because she internally changes her feelings in order to preserve peace in the family does not mean that she really forgives him for his behaviour. She is simply trying to put the wrong behind her and in a sense to behave as if nothing happened, so, in effect, she is asked to forget. As long as the victim still has a bad opinion of the wrongdoer we cannot say she has forgiven him. We can only say that she is not angry with him anymore. But, as I argued in the previous chapter, forgiveness requires a genuine change of heart towards the wrongdoer.

Hampton says ‘we typically think of forgiveness as an act which is “directed” at the wrongdoer, and not merely as some kind of internal emotional change inside the victim’ (1988: 36). If the victim overcomes her negative feelings towards the wrongdoer because she cannot cope with them, and yet continues to believe her wrongdoer is a totally rotten person, then we would not say she has forgiven the wrongdoer.

So what are the marks of forgiveness, as opposed to moral condonation? As I proposed in the previous chapter, a victim uncompromisingly forgives by relinquishing negative feelings towards a wrongdoer, but as a result of having had a change of heart towards them. So we need a change in how we see the agent as a person. For Hampton, it is enough not to see the agent as a totally rotten person, not to reduce her to this particular act. While recognizing Hampton is right in some cases, in my account, there are cases where the victim never believes the agent is a totally rotten individual. In such cases, I proposed to understand the change of heart as ‘deciding to trust’ that the wrongdoer will not repeat the moral offence. So in my account, forgiveness is indeed directed at the wrongdoer and does not merely constitute an ‘internal emotional change inside the victim’ (Hampton 1988: 36).

I will come back to this worry and I shall try to show why my account satisfactorily addresses it when I specify the conditions that make elective forgiveness intelligible and justified.

Second worry: elective forgiveness is possible, but immoral

Some philosophers have argued that even if we can show that elective forgiveness is conceptually possible and that it can be distinguished from other related concepts we are still left with a problem because the person who forgives electively often fails to take wrongdoing seriously enough. Furthermore, she is at risk of manifesting low self-esteem. I shall address these worries in turn.

Failure to condemn enough

Consider the following quote from Richard Swinburne (1989):

Indeed not merely is it ineffective but it is bad, in the case of serious acts, for [a] victim to treat the acts as not having been done, in the absence of some atonement at least in the form of apology from the wrongdoer. In the case of the acts done to hurt us which are not done with much deliberation and where the hurt is not great, this may indeed be the best course of action ... But this would not be the best course in the case of a serious hurt, and above all one done deliberately. Suppose that

I have murdered your dearly loved wife; you know this, but for some reason I am beyond the power of the law. Being a modern and charitable man, you decide to overlook my offence (in so far as it hurt you). 'The past is the past', you say; 'what is the point of nursing a grievance? The party we are both going to attend will go with more of a swing if we forget about this little incident.' But of course that attitude of yours trivializes human life, your love for your wife, and the importance of right action. And it involves your failing to treat me seriously, to take seriously my attitude towards you expressed in my action. Thereby it trivializes human relationships, for it supposes that good human relations can exist when we do not take each other seriously... Is the disowning of a hurtful act by the victim even forgiveness when no atonement at all has been made? I do not think that ordinary usage is very clear here, and a verbal decision is called for. In view of the fact that forgiving is normally thought of as a good thing, I suggest that a victim's disowning of a hurtful act is only to be called forgiveness when it is in response to at least some minimal attempt at atonement such as an apology (Swinburne 1989: 85-87).

It is worth noting that the 'failure to condemn enough' comes in two parts. On the one hand, we have Swinburne's worry that the victim fails to take wrongdoing seriously by forgiving too soon. On the other hand, we have Aurel Kolnai's (1973) worry that forgiving before the other person has repented is a way of condoning the wrongdoing. The 'failure to condemn enough' and Kolnai's 'condonation' worry have a lot in common and I shall address them together.

We can see here that the condonation objection of elective forgiveness can be interpreted as a worry about the possibility (definition) of forgiveness and about its permissibility. Griswold is worried that accounts of elective forgiveness have trouble with offering a definition of forgiveness which is distinct from other related phenomena. Aurel Kolnai's concern is that electively forgiving someone will condone the wrongdoing instead of condemning it. Kolnai says: 'Condonation means that Fred is clearly aware of Ralph's wrongdoing, insult, offence or viciousness and *per se* disapproves of it but deliberately refrains from any retributive response to it' (Kolnai 1973: 95).

Kolnai assumes that wrongs deserve proportional moral condemnation. One needs to respond with the appropriate retributive emotions in a proportional manner to the wrong done. The worry here is that acting in a way that does not involve proportional condemnation is not enough to count as moral condemnation. What condemnation consists in is not merely judging that the other person has wronged you and disapproving of the wrong done, but responding with some alleged set of retributive reactive attitudes. When you condone an action, you do not react with the retributive attitudes that would otherwise be appropriate.

Swinburne's position seems to assume that whenever someone forgives electively, she necessarily fails to condemn the wrongful act or the wrongdoer, thus she fails to take morality or human relations seriously enough. He further claims that in cases of serious wrongdoing, it is incoherent to say that one can forgive in the absence of the wrongdoer meeting some minimal conditions. So he raises both worries; elective forgiveness is both impossible and immoral.

My reply to Swinburne and Kolnai is as follows. It does not seem to be necessary that the victim forgive in the way described by Swinburne's example. First, he assumes that the only way to forgive electively is by thinking to yourself 'the past is the past', 'what is the point of resentment when we can all be friends?' However, it seems to me that one may resist resentment for good moral reasons. One may take the view that the fewer resentful and angry feelings in the world, the better the world we live in is. One may also think that manifesting retributive emotions or insisting on your resentment every time someone wrongs you might backfire and it might propagate itself by creating even more resentment, instead of getting the other to apologize.⁶³

An easier way to get the offender to change her ways and repent might be by 'turning the other cheek'⁶⁴ and showing compassion. It seems to me that Swinburne trivializes the idea of elective forgiveness. For him, not to require atonement necessarily involves thinking that what the wrongdoer did was not really wrong or that we do not blame him for what

⁶³ For this, see Butler (1896, *Sermon IX*, p. 97).

⁶⁴ See Bennett (2003) for such an account of what he calls 'personal forgiveness'.

he did. Nevertheless, it is not clear why we must think that this is what the victim has in mind – unless he just assumes that to condemn just means to require atonement.⁶⁵ I shall argue that a victim can condemn wrongdoing and blame the wrongdoer without necessarily demanding atonement or insisting on her retributive emotions. Further, elective forgiveness is compatible with hoping that one day the wrongdoers will change her ways and eventually regret her deeds. In the last part of this chapter where I present my own account of elective forgiveness I shall describe a case of elective forgiveness (the Jean Valjean example from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*) where forgiveness can be seen as a way of getting the offender to change her ways for the better.

Consider again the case of Babalwa Mhlauli, whose father was tortured and killed. Her request to know the murderers and to then forgive them can hardly be interpreted as an attempt to trivialize the death of her father or as not taking seriously the moral offence against her father and herself. Second, it is also implausible to maintain that she is confused in her request to forgive them, as what she is really trying to do is to condone their actions. For Griswold, to condone may 'amount to complicity in or collusion with the wrong-doing' and it may even encourage further wrongdoing (Griswold 2007: 46-47).

However, it does not seem that Mhlauli fails to properly condemn her father's murderers. It is implied in the testimony that what the wrongdoers did was unacceptable and that they are culpable for what they did. Mhlauli asks to forgive them, thus acknowledging that there is something to forgive them for and that they are guilty.

Kolnai might object by claiming that judging that what the wrongdoer did is wrong is not sufficient. Mhlauli, by forgiving the wrongdoer in the absence of atonement, frustrates the demand for proportional moral condemnation; thus, she fails to take the wrongdoing seriously enough. This objection, however, is based on the controversial assumption that we are morally required to denounce every wrong that happens to us. Nevertheless, this cannot be true in all cases and in all contexts. There

⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion of Swinburne's position, see Bennett (2003, p. 129).

may be very good reasons for not harbouring resentful feelings, reasons that clearly outweigh any considerations in favour of denouncing the wrong by harbouring resentful feelings. I am thinking here about broadly consequentialist reasons where we can see that it will be better for us, for the wrongdoer or for the other people around us to relinquish our retributive emotions.

Although we morally disapprove of the wrong done, we may think that it is better to move on and put the wrong behind us for our own sake or for the sake of other people. Therefore, given the consequences, we might decide it is not appropriate to respond with the attitudes that we would in different circumstances. It would be worrying if we all went around complaining about every minor infraction and, in addition, felt obliged to denounce and condemn each other for every injury and insult.

Kolnai might reply by conceding that this may be right, all things considered, but that to forgive requires something to regret. Just showing that there are consequentialist reasons that might override the duty to engage in moral condemnation does not necessarily show that the need for condemnation has been totally cancelled. So he may still be able to say that there is nevertheless something wrong with not engaging in moral condemnation, even if, overall, it is the best thing to do. My response to this is that this only shows that sometimes forgiving can be the right thing to do, all things considered, even if it is non-ideal in some ways.

Now the worry remains that forgiving in the absence of atonement encourages more wrongdoing by the offender. The idea is that, if he got away with it the first time, why would he not do it again? However, this seems puzzling. There is no reason to believe that Sicelo Mhlauli's murderers will interpret Babalwa Mhlauli's forgiveness as meaning that they should commit more crimes, as Griswold would argue. The purpose of the TRC was that of discovering first the truth about the serious violations of human rights during the apartheid, and of granting amnesty to its perpetrators as a means to better achieving that outcome.⁶⁶ However, Mhlauli's forgiveness is compatible with condemning wrongdoing,

⁶⁶ For the full report on the commission, see the following link: <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/index.htm>

demanding reparations, and even with delivering state punishment. Forgiveness does not absolve the wrongdoers from culpability, and so does not render punishment inappropriate. Especially in cases of grave crimes, which are already seriously morally condemned and punished, it is difficult to see how someone can mistakenly believe that it is acceptable to commit such crimes and that forgiveness is an invitation to further wrongdoing.

Lack of respect objection

Griswold states:

A failure to manifest proper resentment may manifest low self-esteem (Aristotle's 'slavishness') (Griswold 2007: 45).

Consider also the following quote from Murphy:

A too ready tendency to forgive ... may be a sign that one lacks respect for oneself ... Not to have ... the 'reactive attitude' of resentment when our rights are violated is to convey – emotionally either that we do not think we have the rights or that we do not take our rights very seriously. To seek restoration at all cost – even at the cost of one's very human dignity – can hardly be a virtue (Murphy 1988: 17-18).

Finally, David Novitz remarks:

People who forgive too readily ... do not manifest the right degree of self-respect; they underestimate their own worth and fail to take their projects and entitlements seriously enough (Novitz 1998: 299).

It is worth mentioning that there is a way of understanding the self-respect objection as collapsing into the condonation objection. That is to say, the self-respect objection can be seen as a particular variant of the not-condemning-enough objection. For example, Murphy wonders whether not having the appropriate reactive attitudes such as resentment when our rights have been violated just means not to take our rights, and thus the

wrongdoing, seriously enough. I made a decision to treat the objections (condonation and self-respect) separately even if they sometimes have things in common or amount to the same thing. Thus, I already replied to the condonation worry when I considered Swinburne's objection. This section's task is to find out if there is anything independently problematic about the self-respect objection, which does not relate back to the condonation objection.

Griswold, Murphy and Novitz consider cases where the victim forgives too early. Now, it is difficult to say what 'too early' means exactly. If they mean without the wrongdoer repenting, then anything before that is too early. But they might also mean too early temporally after the moral offence. In this sense, consider the case of Gordon Wilson who forgives his daughter's murderers within hours after the bombing on the 8th of November 1987 in Northern Ireland. He declares on television: 'I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge'.⁶⁷ Consider also the case of the battered wife who forgives her husband every time he hits her, with no apology on his part. The philosophers quoted above would presumably claim that in both cases the victim is too submissive; forgiveness is not a virtue here as the victim lacks self-respect. The victim should postpone forgiveness until it is appropriate.

Now, to assume that forgiveness is appropriate only when an apology is forthcoming is to beg the following question. We are trying to see whether forgiveness in the absence of an apology can be morally unobjectionable. So why might one worry that the victim forgives too soon, or in the absence of an apology? It is suggested (by Murphy) that it is demeaning for the victim. Remember that in chapter 3 I presented Murphy and Hieronymi's view of the 'threat' account. Murphy claims that offenders manage to degrade and insult us with their actions. Wrongdoing communicates to the wronged party and also to the entire community that it is acceptable to treat the victim in this demeaning way. To refrain from retributive emotions and to fail to protest the wrongful act, Murphy might argue, is just to accept that you deserve the bad treatment. This is

⁶⁷ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon_Wilson_\(peace_campaigner\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon_Wilson_(peace_campaigner))

problematic because, for one, you may end up believing the false message communicated by the wrongdoer's action. Moreover, secondly, the message might reach other members of the moral community. They may end up believing that you indeed deserve the bad treatment.

Indeed, one can and should worry whenever a victim lacks self-respect. However, this is not necessarily a worry about elective forgiveness. There are many cases of elective forgiveness where the victim is very confident in her sense of worth, so confident that she cannot be bothered to be angry with the wrongdoer. So there is no necessary link between forgiving electively and lacking in self-respect.

More importantly, it seems that the same worry can be raised with respect to earned forgiveness. We can imagine cases where the wrongdoer apologizes to the victim after betraying her trust. The victim might decide to forgive her wrongdoer, but not because he has apologized. She forgives him because she is afraid of him and she does not want to create problems. She lacks self-respect and she thinks she deserves the bad treatment. Even in this latter case, I do not see anything problematic with forgiveness *per se*. In this respect, Pettigrove claims that 'in the case of the forgiver who lacks proper self-respect, it is not the forgiveness that is the problem, but the deficiency of self-respect' (Pettigrove 2012: 115).

There is a further complication with claiming that a victim who forgives too soon lacks self-respect. The victim cannot lack self-respect *altogether* when she forgives, because, if she did, she would fail to see the wrongdoing as a wrong in the first place. In addition, if this were the case, then it would not count as forgiving at all. The victim must have enough self-respect to believe that a serious wrong has been committed against her and that she deserves better treatment (recall Hieronymi's preconditions). So, were there to be a complete lack of self-respect, this would indeed render forgiveness itself unjustified, but, insofar as it is doing that, it would also stop being forgiveness at all because the victim will not see it as a wrong done to herself or she will not see it as the serious wrong that it is. The lack of self-respect will erode not only the justification for forgiveness (as Griswold argues), but the very fact of

forgiving itself, because the wronged party will not see herself as wronged.

Let us consider a case where a victim, in forgiving, manifests a lack of self-respect. The lack of self-respect explains her forgiving the wrongdoer. Imagine a relationship where a violent husband has got his wife so demoralized that she starts to think that she deserves to be hit by him, she deserves the bad treatment. She is so used to it by now that she immediately forgives his abusive behaviour. Here, clearly, the woman does not see his behaviour as a serious wrong at all, and she probably even fails to blame him for his behaviour. Therefore, the question of forgiveness does not even arise in this case. We need a case where the woman clearly sees the wrongdoing as a serious offence against her, where she believes she deserves better treatment from him; she blames him, yet, in forgiving him, she manifests a lack of self-respect (and this lack of self-respect is a significant part of the explanation of why she forgives him).

Whenever the level of self-respect is so low as to not see the wrongdoing as a serious offence against oneself, I do not see how forgiveness can be genuine, uncompromised. So a lack of self-respect will always corrupt people's moral perceptions of how they are treated, and this will compromise their forgiveness. If, on the other hand, the victim blames the wrongdoer proportionately and condemns the moral offence before forgiving, I do not see how her forgiveness can be morally problematic in any way. Surely, she has enough self-respect to take herself and her projects seriously enough (see Novitz), and that is why she condemns the wrongdoing and blames the wrongdoer.

Consider, on the other hand, a person who lacks self-respect and starts to doubt that she is worthy of respect as a result of the offender's action. The offender disrespects the victim and, because the victim feels threatened by what the offender did, she harbours a lot of resentment and angry feelings toward him and she sees him as a totally rotten individual not worth associating with.

Now, suppose the angry feelings are caused by the victim's own insecurities: the victim is afraid the wrongdoer may be right to treat her

like that. We would probably not say that a resentful victim is better off or that she manifests more self-respect because she is resentful. There is actually something problematic with her being resentful in this particular case. It is a good question then to ask philosophers who defend the view that forgiving (electively) necessarily shows a lack of self-respect what aspect of the forgiveness actually displays the self-respect. It would be also good to know what the alternative is; that is, if one thinks forgiving would show a lack of self-respect, what would then be the thing that is necessary to show self-respect? In the last example we can see that the answer to the question cannot not be that the victim must necessarily harbour resentment. The victim will most likely not start to believe she is worthy of more respect just because she is resentful. Further, the community will not believe she is worth more or less respect because of how she feels.

Similarly, a victim may be confident and not doubt her sense of worth at all. What should the victim do? Would it be problematic if she refrained from retributive emotions? I think not. As long as the victim condemns the wrongdoing and blames the wrongdoer for what she did, then I see nothing objectionable about not being resentful.⁶⁸

The self-respect worry seems to be a worry not so much about elective forgiveness, but about victims lacking self-respect. Some philosophers seem to argue that only victims with self-respect should forgive. However, this is simply wrong. There are good reasons to forgive an offender (maybe because the offender has apologized; maybe because it is better for her psychologically), even if the victim does not respect herself very much.

There is another way of interpreting the worry. One might worry that forgiving 'prematurely' will have undesirable consequences for the victim. In the case of the battered wife, it might be unwise for the wife to restore her relationship with her husband because he will hit her again and, moreover, he will never learn good behaviour. So maybe she should

⁶⁸ See also Pettigrove's discussion of the self-respect objection to elective forgiveness (pp. 112-117). He argues that the permissibility of forgiveness should not depend on whether the victim has self-respect.

withhold forgiveness for her own good. Nevertheless, the fact that forgiveness may result in bad consequences for the victim does not automatically expose it as a moral mistake. In principle, any act of forgiveness may have bad consequences for both victim and wrongdoer, even in cases where the wrongdoer apologizes.

However, forgiveness can be nevertheless appropriate and even praiseworthy. I might forgive my friend, after a sincere apology, for being the type of person who will sometimes make sexist comments, even if I know it is foolish on my part, as she will probably do it again. Similarly, the battered wife might refuse to hold the wrongdoing against her husband because she thinks it is virtuous and wiser to forgive; this might be prudentially unwise, but it is not immoral. The battered wife should probably consider leaving the relationship after she has forgiven and her husband should consider changing his behaviour.

Reasons to withhold forgiveness

I have shown that none of the arguments usually proposed in the literature against elective forgiveness work. Nevertheless, I should just note that I am not arguing for the claim that forgiveness would therefore be appropriate in all cases. I leave open the possibility that forgiveness is not always permissible because there may actually be good reasons for withholding even merited forms of forgiveness. There may be certain reasons that could override our justification for granting forgiveness. For example, sometimes withholding forgiveness and continuing to blame the wrongdoer is the right thing to do in cases of grave wrongs done to third parties or to entire communities. I am thinking of cases where we owe it to third parties to continue to blame their wrongdoers in order to stick up for them and show solidarity. There are complex cases where a particular insult is affecting not only the injured person, but also a whole community. This might be the case with racist insults and especially with racially motivated crimes.

Consider Simon Wiesenthal's challenge that he presents in his book *The Sunflower*. He is a concentration camp prisoner who is asked by a Nazi soldier before he dies for Wiesenthal's forgiveness for war crimes

done to others. The Nazi soldier apologizes and he is definitely repentant, so we have reason to think that, in some sense, he merits his forgiveness.⁶⁹ However, Simon refuses to grant him forgiveness. He considers in the book whether he did the right thing. When he goes back to the camp he discusses the situation with his two friends, Arthur and Josek. Josek claims that Simon had no right to forgive the Nazi soldier in the name of the Jewish people. At first one might think that Josek raises issues of standing when he asks: How can Simon dare to forgive a murderer for the crimes committed against an entire community without the community's authorization?⁷⁰ But Simon shows that those issues of standing are not relevant. Simon replies: 'but aren't we a single community with the same destiny, and one must answer for the other?' (Wiesenthal 1969: 65). Rather, I think we can interpret Simon's refusal to forgive as a sign of solidarity with the Jewish people and as a way of standing up for them.

So even if Simon could bring himself to forgive the wrongdoer, it seems that he owes it to his community to withhold forgiveness. Forgiving the wrongdoer for such atrocities may be seen as a sign of betrayal of his community, especially when the others in the community think that forgiving the wrongdoer for crimes of the Holocaust is not an individual issue, but rather an issue worth addressing at the community level. I shall discuss in the last section the role the community has in making it safe for the victim to forgive.

To sum up, I agree that there are cases where one has good reasons to withhold forgiveness (both earned and elective forgiveness). I am not committed to the view that forgiveness is always appropriate. Deciding

⁶⁹ I say in some sense because some may disagree that, in this particular case, the Nazi soldier really merits his forgiveness. In the book, Josek claims that the soldier can never earn his forgiveness. In a dialogue with Simon, where Simon suggests that the Nazi did not make up for his wrongs (because he did not have time; he is dying, after all), Josek implies that one cannot make up for such atrocities. So, maybe his actions are actually unforgiving. I am not addressing this very complex issue here. The only thing I wanted to say is that, even in cases where one may have reasons to forgive, these reasons can be overridden by other more important reasons, such as the ones given by Josek.

⁷⁰ It is also disputable whether this is what Simon tries to do, to forgive on behalf of the entire community. When Simon is first presenting his account and when he describes the scene he does not seem to assume or be preoccupied with the question of whether he can forgive as a representative of the Jews. He only struggles with the question of whether he should/can forgive this particular man for harms done to other people and also to himself.

whether forgiveness is appropriate or not is a complex issue, and it will depend on who did what to whom, for what reasons and in what circumstances.

5.3 Reasons for Elective Forgiveness: Garrard and McNaughton's account

Garrard and McNaughton, in their paper 'In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness', argue that a good general reason that grounds elective forgiveness is human solidarity. We should forgive wrongdoers because we can recognize our shared humanity and our common 'moral frailty' (Garrard and McNaughton 2003: 57). We can recognize that the wrongdoer is 'one of us', that we share a 'common predicament'. So we should forgive in order to assert our human solidarity with our peers (p. 54). In this way, we show our concern for each other. The idea here is that we should recognize that we could have also done the same thing in a similar situation, as we are all essentially similar. They say:

Our common (and morally frail) humanity provides us with a reason for unconditional forgiveness. We are all in this boat together, and our common condition gives us a reason to be forbearing about each other's weakness and indeed wickednesses, a reason stemming from our awareness of our own (ibid. 59).

There are several objections considered and rejected in their paper. One might worry that we do not share so many things with our wrongdoers and that we are actually quite different from them. However, Garrard and McNaughton reply by saying that 'when the offences are described at some suitably high level of generality, then it turns out that we could indeed have acted in that general way' (ibid. 54). And, even if I could not have acted as they did taking into account my circumstances, I have to accept that, if my circumstances changed and if I had been raised similarly to how my wrongdoers were raised, then I would have done the same thing and I may have become the sort of person who commits crimes. So

this counterfactual ('Had I been raised in similar circumstances, I may have done the same') should count as a consideration in favour of forgiving our wrongdoers by recognizing that we have more in common with our wrongdoers than we think. It is just a matter of luck, they argue, that I am the type of person who would not commit atrocious crimes. Further, the recognition of this constitutive moral luck may 'produce a sense of commonality between the virtuous ... and the vicious' (p. 54).

Although I agree with Garrard and McNaughton that we should recognize our 'dark potential' for committing crimes and especially that we should acknowledge that some people were not so morally lucky as we were (the 'virtuous'), I still do not see how recognizing our common potentiality for evil or ill will should give us a reason to forgive. It might give us a reason to blame less, and maybe to be more understanding, but not a reason to forgive if this implies restoring relations with the wrongdoer by changing our feelings toward them and the way we see them. Recognizing our common human frailty and the fact that it was sheer bad luck that our wrongdoers have become the persons that they have become does not constitute a reason to forgive, but a reason to excuse the wrongdoer's behaviour. So it basically has the function of an excuse, as it makes it not seem as bad as it first appeared. But forgiveness, for sure, cannot be equated with excusing the wrongdoer's behaviour, as Garrard and McNaughton also acknowledge (2003: 57). They acknowledge this worry could be raised against their position. My aim in what follows is to see whether there is any acceptable defence of their position.

So the worry is that the considerations they offer in favour of forgiveness are the same considerations that make us understand and excuse the wrongdoer's behaviour, and because of these, forgiveness collapses into excuse-making. This is problematic because considerations about the offender's background conditions might make me believe that it is unjust for me to blame her at all. So I consider the offender as someone who cannot be held responsible for her actions. I regard the offender as someone I cannot even feel resentment towards or as someone whom I cannot legitimately blame because it would be unfair.

Alternatively, I may use such considerations to see the wrong done as less wrong than I initially thought, because there are mitigating circumstances that can excuse the offender's behaviour. However, forgiveness is not a moral compromise; it insists on the wrongdoer's culpability and capacity to have been able to do otherwise and also on the fact that a serious wrong was committed.

If, on the contrary, you could have avoided the bad action and you can be legitimately blamed for it, then it is not clear that I can or I should forgive you. So Garrard and McNaughton face a serious difficulty because we are left with a dilemma. We can recognize the perpetrator's difficulties to avoid the bad action, and then exempt them from moral responsibility or excuse their behaviour. Or, we can insist on their accountability and on the fact that they can legitimately be blamed for what they did. We can admit resentment is still warranted, despite their difficulties. In this latter situation, the question of forgiveness arises, but it is not clear why the victim should get rid of her warranted resentment.

One way of salvaging Garrard and McNaughton's position is to claim that what they mean is not that acknowledging our common human frailty and the background conditions would actually absolve the wrongdoer from culpability. Our reactive attitudes towards the offender are appropriate and she should be legitimately blamed for what she did, just as I should be blamed were I to do the same wrong (Garrard and McNaughton 2003: 57). Even if wrongdoers can be fairly blamed for what they do, we are not actually obliged to blame them. We can choose to bestow forgiveness on them even if they have done something wrong. What makes bestowing such a gift upon them intelligible is for us to think about the ways in which we could have also ended up like them, were we to be raised and put in similar circumstances. We are all vulnerable to the same sort of moral failure and we must acknowledge this as none of us can totally control our fate. So, according to this position, we are entitled to not forgive if we do not want to (because we are justified in blaming the wrongdoer), but we are also justified in forgiving them.

One worry one may raise against such a view is whether forgiving on grounds of human solidarity is virtuous or not. According to their account,

even if I recognize the common frailty in another person, I have no obligation to forgive them. So I can decide to forgive one person, but not another person, even if I have the same type of reasons to forgive them: we are all frail, we have the same human nature, we are born under the same predicament and she is also someone with whom I can have human solidarity. So, then, why is it fair to forgive one person and not another person? Surely, they do not want to argue for the claim that recognizing human frailty generates a moral obligation to forgive everyone. This would actually undermine the point that we are justified in continuing to blame the wrongdoers and it would also undermine their main point that forgiveness must be elective.

It seems that were I to forgive one person and not another who comes along, I owe them some kind of explanation. What could this explanation consist in if their positions are not relevantly different, as we all share the same common predicament, at least at the general level? Why would I take these reasons as relevant in some cases but not in other cases? We are not allowed to arbitrarily treat individuals differently. Doing so would undermine the moral status of forgiveness as a virtuous and good thing to do. I will argue in the next section that Pettigrove's account faces a similar difficulty, what I call the 'equity problem'.

5. 4 Glen Pettigrove on 'Gracious Forgiveness'

Glen Pettigrove in his recent book, *Forgiveness and Love* offers a model of elective forgiveness, which represents an alternative to thinking that reasons to forgive are obligations. He offers an escape from the many recent alternative accounts on earned forgiveness, which claim that forgiveness should be deserved and it is 'commendable because it is what the offender *is due*' (Griswold 2007: 69, my emphasis). Pettigrove proposes an account of elective forgiveness where one can forgive by bestowing an unmerited favour on someone who does not deserve it. He calls the bestowing of such a favour on the wrongdoer 'gracious forgiveness'. His account is attractive because it questions the idea that forgiveness should be deserved and it also preserves the intuition that forgiveness is an elective act, not something that is owed to anyone. Such

a gift given to the wrongdoer is praiseworthy because it is an act of grace. 'Gracious' forgiveness is admirable even when the wrongdoer does not deserve it, or maybe precisely because she does not deserve it.

Drawing on the work of Seneca, Pettigrove defines an act of grace as 'an intentional act of unmerited favour' one person bestows on another person (2012: 127). According to this account, in order to show grace, you must first reasonably believe the act will benefit the other person; secondly, the act must also be undeserved. So, in order to show grace, you must intentionally do something you do not have to do for someone whom you think will benefit from the act of grace.

Pettigrove claims that one particular act can be more gracious than another depending on how 'costly' it is for the person to perform such an act. For example, giving a small proportion of your salary to charity is gracious; however, giving half of your income to charity is even more gracious as it is more costly to you (2012: 127). Acts can also be more or less gracious depending on the type of reasons you might have for performing them. For example, it is still gracious to self-interestedly give money to charity (maybe because it would make a good impression on others); but it will be more gracious if you gave money to charity only for the sake of the people you help (2012: 127).

Further, Pettigrove also proposes an account of what 'the character trait of grace' is and what a person has to be like if she is to be called 'gracious'. The gracious person, according to Pettigrove, spontaneously wants to promote other people's interests and happiness, even when it comes at a cost for her. She must do so in a way which 'evokes gratitude rather than resentment' (2012: 128). To a certain extent, an act counts as gracious if it is so understood by its intended audience. According to Pettigrove, if the audience thinks it is rather insulting, then it is not an act of grace (2012: 130).

Pettigrove gives the example (taken from Seneca) of the wealthy Roman who 'showers benefits' upon the poor. The poor may see nothing gracious in his act. They may see it as a self-indulgent preposterous act. Further, the willingness to promote another's interest must not be determined by the fact that the other person deserves the favour in some

way or another, although it does have to be determined by reasons. For Seneca, in order for anything to count as a virtue, it must be determined by reason: ‘nothing should be done without reason. It is only a favour if it is done with reason, since reason must accompany anything that is honourable’ (2012: 129). However, the reasons that move the gracious person to show grace are not reasons about merit, that is, they are not about whether the other person deserves the act of grace or not. The gracious person is usually motivated by the well-being of the person she bestows grace upon. Although a gracious act is not determined by the merit of another person, it may be ‘attentive to the merit’ (2012: 133).

Pettigrove distinguishes between two senses of ‘merit’. We can use ‘merit’ in a strong sense, as equivalent to ‘owed to’. For example, you deserve to receive the money for the car you sold me because it was stipulated by the sales contract. But we can also use ‘merit’ in a weaker sense. A rich person might decide to donate money to a university in order to provide scholarships for talented students. The act of donating money is an act of grace, which pays attention to the merit of the students. A talented student deserves (in a weak sense) the grant more than an untalented student does. However, nothing is owed to the students. So the act of grace is not determined by what the students are owed, even if it is attentive to their merit (Pettigrove 2012: 131-132). The important point here is that, for an act to be gracious, it must not be determined by merit in the strong sense of being owed to another person, but it may nevertheless be compatible with reasons of merit in the weak sense, at least in some cases.

Although Pettigrove defends the view that a gracious act can be compatible with merit understood in the weak sense, he argues that some gracious acts will in no way (weak or strong) be conditioned by merit. So some acts (maybe the majority) will pay no attention to considerations of merit and will not be even indirectly related to reasons of desert.

Now, considering a theory of forgiveness based on the notion of grace defended by Pettigrove, the challenge is to explain why bestowing an unmerited favour on someone is different from a related phenomenon such as mercy, and why such forgiveness is morally praiseworthy.

Pettigrove himself recognizes that ‘something must be said to motivate the claim that grace is a virtue, lest we beg the question’ (2012: 134).

What Pettigrove seems to assume is that, if a person forgives electively, that is, if she bestows an unmerited favour on someone who has shown that they do not deserve favourable treatment, then the victim has shown grace. He also claims that bestowing such an unmerited favour is always praiseworthy. However, I doubt he can show that such unmerited forgiveness is always praiseworthy unless he appeals to the justificatory reasons the victim has for bestowing such a favour. The justificatory reasons are important because, on the one hand, they explain why forgiveness is a virtue, and, on the other hand, appealing to them helps us see how it is possible for the victim to continue to believe the offender is blameworthy for what she did while managing to ‘wipe the slate clean’. The reasons can explain and justify how the victim can change her heart about this particular person, thus they make forgiveness intelligible as an act of forgiveness. The justificatory reasons for forgiveness will hopefully tell us the difference between forgiveness and mercy. The reasons that govern mercy can be quite different from those governing forgiveness. In mercy, for example, one absolves the offender of punishment, but one need not change her or his heart about the offender.

Pettigrove’s project draws a parallel between mercy and elective forgiveness; he proposes a model of elective forgiveness based on the model of mercy, and all the examples he uses (most from Seneca) have as a subject the powerful emperor who is lenient toward the crowd. He seems to suggest that elective forgiveness can be justified in the same way acts of mercy can be justified, that is, through pity and compassion.

But we face a problem here. The way Pettigrove talks about gracious forgiveness sounds more like the powerful relation which is assumed when one powerful person in an official position shows mercy to another less powerful individual who awaits to be forgiven. Even if gracious forgiveness can happen between equals, many times it happens between non-equals. Consider the range of ways in which a person can be ‘at another’s mercy’, for example, the case where the powerful Roman

emperor graciously forgives the reckless crowd their debt. In mercy there is an assumption of superiority. The powerful shows mercy to the undeserving powerless person. Even if all the conditions for being an act of grace are fulfilled, it still does not seem a virtue. Pettigrove, using an example from Seneca, considers the wealthy Roman who throws coins to the crowd. Although it is intended to benefit the poor and it is not based upon the merit of any particular individual, it is not seen as an act of grace by the crowd. It is also unlikely to evoke gratitude in the crowd, so it cannot be gracious. One may legitimately see the wealthy Roman, Seneca argues, as 'just indulging his own particular weakness' (Pettigrove 2012: 130).

Even if it evoked gratitude in the public and even if it created joy rather than resentment, it is difficult to see it as an act of grace precisely because we do not know the justificatory reasons the wealthy Roman had for distributing the benefits. Without such reasons, his act just seems a capricious whim of his. Likewise, the wealthy Roman forgiving electively the poor peasant who wronged him also seems like a whim of his. He may even do it in a patronizing manner; he does not take the peasant seriously. The poor peasant might be grateful and might not realize the fatuousness and contempt behind the act.

So we will not say that such forgiveness is praiseworthy. We need to know more about the case. In conclusion, I do not think Pettigrove can explain away the injustice that may result in elective forgiveness – what I call the 'equity' problem. For instance, it is not clear why the Roman emperor is virtuous in forgiving one poor peasant and not another poor peasant who also wants his misdeed forgiven. The reasons cannot be about desert. When we do not know the justificatory reasons for such unmerited forgiveness, then it is difficult to see it as a virtue. Suppose the Roman emperor only forgave the white peasants and never the black ones; his act would meet the definition of an act of grace according to Pettigrove's account (an intentional act of unmerited favour that evokes gratitude), but it would not be virtuous. Such forgiveness may even result in systematic injustice, so it cannot be praiseworthy. So the real problem with Pettigrove's 'gracious forgiveness' is that, in the final analysis, it

does not look like a norm-governed practice, it looks like the emperor's whim.

The good news is that we do not need to introduce this idea of 'gracious' forgiveness in order to defend elective forgiveness. As I shall argue in what follows, once we introduce the idea that reasons to forgive need not be obligations to forgive, the notion of grace ends up being redundant. Let me explain this point.

Part of Pettigrove's main project is to propose a picture of forgiveness that is entirely elective; there are no justificatory reasons that can or should oblige the victim to forgive. In order to make sense of this idea, he proposes an account of elective forgiveness where there are no merit-based reasons that can justify the victim's forgiving her wrongdoer. His view is useful as a response to people who think that all good reasons to forgive are obligations. For Griswold, for example, the wrongdoer needs to meet many conditions related to apology, repentance and acceptance of the wrong done (see Griswold 2007, pp. 49-51 for the entire list). If these conditions were met, then 'under certain conditions it would be blameworthy not to forgive' (Griswold 2007: 67). In this sense then, I agree with Pettigrove that we need to make sense of forgiveness as a gift we offer to another person.

But if we see that reasons to forgive need not provide obligations to forgive, then we do not need to contrast two types of forgiveness: the elective one with the obligatory notion of forgiveness. If we take the view that there is a conception of reasons which allows that there is a gift aspect to any act of forgiveness, then we do not need this special account of gracious forgiveness.

5.5. Not all moral reasons have the force of obliging

Not all moral reasons will generate a moral obligation. Being justified in performing an action is not the same as being obliged to do that action. Gert (2004) distinguishes between considerations that can *justify* us in performing a certain action and thus make it permissible, and considerations that can *require* us to perform a certain action, thus making it obligatory. But not all considerations that make an action permissible

will be strong enough to count as considerations in favor of making that action obligatory. For example, I am justified in killing in self-defence, but I am not required to do it. To be more precise, if someone tries to kill me, then considerations of self-defense make the action of killing my enemy morally permissible. In the absence of such considerations, killing the other person would be impermissible. But it would also be permissible if I chose not to kill my enemy.

Equally, I may decide to donate to charity and my donation would be justified by me thinking it is a good thing to donate to charity and that, by donating to charity, I will save the starving poor.⁷¹ So I do it for the sake of the people I may help. I may also have different normative reasons for choosing one charity over another. Maybe I trust more one charity than another or I relate more to its cause. But the fact that there is a justification for donating to charity does not mean I am obliged to donate to charity, especially if donating to charity will constitute a high cost to me. Also, in order for me to be able to call it ‘charity’, it must be elective in some sense and I must be free to choose whether I want to donate or not. Further, even if it would be nice of me to donate and it would be good to do so, I do not *have* to donate if I decide that I do not want to donate to charity.

There may also be other overriding reasons, which may prevent me from donating to charity (maybe I do not trust that the money goes to the right people, maybe it is too much of a cost to me). I am not required to donate to charity and no one can require that from me and, further, there is no sanction or blame that would be warranted if I failed to give to charity. So, I am justified in donating to charity because it is a good thing to do,

⁷¹ It may sound strange to say that I need a justification in order to donate to charity. After all, a critic may argue that it is always good to donate to charity. However, it is not clear that it is. One may reply by saying that some charities are compromised so I should have a good reason to donate to particular charities. Also, some may argue that some charities are more important than others. So I am in need of a rationale of why I decide to donate all my money to this charity and not to another one that is even better and saved more people. In the case of forgiveness it is even clearer that we need justifying reasons for forgiving undeserving wrongdoers.

however, it is also optional and not required. Supererogatory actions have this puzzling aspect of being both morally good to do yet not required.⁷²

In a case of earned forgiveness through remorse or apology, some philosophers maintain that the wrongdoer apologizing gives the victim an overwhelming reason to forgive in the sense of generating a moral obligation. After remorse, a victim owes it to the wrongdoer to forgive.⁷³ Even if it does not generate a strict moral obligation, one may maintain that, after an apology, the withholding of forgiveness on the part of the victim calls for an explanation. After a proper apology, the victim's justification for her retributive feelings is undermined. So why shouldn't the victim forgive? I want to maintain that even in such a case, reasons that count in favour of forgiving a wrongdoer (such as an apology) do not necessarily have the force of a moral obligation.

One way of seeing that considerations in favour of forgiving are not considerations that oblige the victim to forgive is to consider cases where the victim may have other moral considerations that override the first considerations she had. For example, consider again the case of Simon and the Nazi soldier discussed above. We may say that the fact that the Nazi repents and apologises counts in favour of Simon forgiving him. But Simon has other good moral reasons to withhold forgiveness in this case, which morally override the first considerations. So it is permissible for him not to forgive, even if he has good moral reasons to do so. So forgiveness remains elective for Simon in this case. He would be justified

⁷² For more on supererogation, see David Heyd (2011) and Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons (2010). According to Horgan and Timmons, other actions that may count as supererogatory are acts of heroism, generosity, gift-giving, favors, volunteering, forgiveness etc. (2012: 32). Horgan and Timmons also claim that in cases of supererogatory actions not 'all good moral reasons for an agent to perform some action, even reasons that are possibly considered 'best', are such as to require that she perform that action, even *prima facie*. Some moral considerations clearly do have a requiring force, but (we submit) others need not' (2012: 50).

⁷³ Although Griswold, for example, argues that even if the wrongdoer cannot demand the victim to forgive, the victim still owes it to the wrongdoer and she would be blameworthy if she failed. I find this contrast puzzling as it is not clear how it is possible that it would be appropriate for the wrongdoer to blame the victim for not forgiving yet it is not appropriate to demand it. Actually, he further claims the wrongdoer owes it to the victim out of respect not to demand it (2007: 67-68). But then he claims that it would be unwise to demand forgiveness because a change of heart simply cannot be compelled. It seems to me here that he has changed the line of argument. It is true that it would be pointless to demand something impossible. However, it is not clear why he also makes the moral argument that the wrongdoer would be at fault if she insisted on it.

in forgiving as he has good reasons to do so, but he is also justified in his decision not to forgive. The first types of reasons do not have the moral strength to generate moral obligations, and they can be morally overridden. But I think other types of reasons, which are not necessarily moral, can also prevent moral reasons from generating moral obligations.⁷⁴ For example, if the victim cannot bring herself to forgive her wrongdoer easily and it would constitute a high cost to her (suppose she could forgive if she tried very hard, but she is not willing to suffer such a high cost; or maybe the harm was so serious, that again, continuing relations with the wrongdoer would be too much for her to take psychologically), then this reason is sufficiently weighty to prevent the first moral reason from having a requiring strength. She will not therefore owe anything to the wrongdoer, even if her wrongdoer has done everything he could to make up for the wrong done to her and even if the forgiveness would be very beneficial to him.

On the other hand, elective forgiveness involves letting go of negative feelings one is still justified in having, and nothing can undermine this justification. So when one decides to forgive in the absence of an apology, one does so unconstrainedly and freely. However, the reasons surrounding elective forgiveness must also be about justification because we are interested in a rationale for forgiveness, but also in making sense of why the victim invests energy in changing her heart towards the wrongdoer. We are always astonished when someone offers such an unmerited gift. These reasons make elective forgiveness both intelligible and acceptable. I have in mind cases where someone wrongs someone else, she is blameworthy for what she did, there are no excuses that could justify her behaviour and she does nothing to show that she regrets what she has done. The victim decides, nevertheless, to forgive the wrongdoer. She

⁷⁴ This is how Portmore (2008) proposes to solve the puzzle of supererogation. He argues that that an act's moral status (in what he calls 'agent-centred options' – whether to donate money to charity, for example) is determined not only by moral reasons, but also by non-moral reasons. Non-moral reasons (reasons of self-interest) can often prevent moral reasons from generating moral obligations. Non-moral reasons can make an action that would otherwise be morally required because favoured by the moral reasons, only morally permissible. Non-moral reasons thus sometimes justify a particular action that would otherwise be impermissible. My aim here is not to solve the puzzle of supererogation, although I am very sympathetic to Portmore's solution.

does not forgive because she cannot cope with her angry feelings. She is the type of person who may very well continue to feel resentment or anger. However, she decides to relinquish such feelings and to forgive the wrongdoer. She has a change of heart towards the wrongdoer and she does not let the wrongdoing influence the way she sees her as a person. The difficult job is to explain how we can make intelligible and reasonable such a choice in a way that does not force us to say that what the victim is really doing is condoning or excusing her wrongdoer's behaviour, and in a way that seems morally acceptable.

There are all sorts of reasons that can explain and justify the victim's decision to forgive her wrongdoer rather than continue to blame her. These reasons, also, need not require the victim to forgive: the victim will be justified in forgiving her but also justified in not forgiving her; so forgiveness is elective. Elective forgiveness seems puzzling to many writers because they implicitly assume that moral reasons to forgive will generate obligations. So they conclude that forgiveness either cannot be elective (Griswold) or that it cannot be justified directly by moral reasons (Pettigrove). However, reasons of beneficence that could count in favour of forgiving an unrepentant wrongdoer are insufficient to generate moral obligations. An altruistic victim may, nevertheless, not find it in her heart to forgive her wrongdoer because she has been seriously hurt, so forgiving him may constitute a very serious burden to her. So even if reasons of beneficence will justify her in forgiving, they could always be overridden by broadly consequentialist reasons related to the victim's well-being and general state of mind.

Defending this view of reasons can also help us to solve the equity problem that both accounts discussed above suffer from. Although we have reasons that count in favour of forgiving, these reasons do not compel us to forgive because, depending on the situation and on the particular person who has wronged us, the victim might have other compelling reasons for not forgiving. So it would be permissible to forgive one perpetrator but not another one that comes along. It is true that if all the factors were exactly the same (if the wrongdoer has done the same thing, if there is no extra cost for the victim to forgive and if she is

still motivated by the same reasons to forgive), then it does seem arbitrary to forgive one person and not another who is exactly in the same situation. The victim would probably owe some kind of explanation and, were she to forgive recklessly, her forgiveness would be morally problematic. After all, not all cases of forgiveness are virtuous. But in most cases the situations of the wrongdoers and the state of mind of the victim would probably vary quite a lot.

In conclusion, if we see that there are justificatory reasons to forgive that do not generate moral obligations – if we do not endorse a misconception of reasons as always generating moral obligations – then we do not need Pettigrove’s alternative model to explain cases of genuine electivity. Further, as I have already argued, the alternative model Pettigrove proposes of forgiveness always being a gift (totally underserved in a strong sense) has a troubling aspect about it as it may be built on inequity and power relations. The inequity problem with mercy, I have argued, translates to an inequity problem with the particular conception of forgiveness that Pettigrove defends. The powerless party is waiting for the powerful party to whimsically show grace and forgive them. Bestowing unmerited favours on wrongdoers is not always virtuous.

5.6 In Defence of Elective Forgiveness

Let us say that to forgive someone electively involves overcoming bad feelings or attitudes toward the wrongdoer, as a result of having had a change of heart towards them. In most cases, this would also entail re-establishing relations with the wrongdoer. What the restoration amounts to will depend on the particular relationship the victim has with the wrongdoer and on the particular attitudes the wrongdoing has impaired. However, some find the idea of an elective change of heart very difficult to understand.

As Griswold asks, why would someone be able to genuinely forgive or what reasons might they possibly have to render forgiveness justified in the absence of an apology or remorse? His challenge is to say what would make this type of forgiveness genuine. In what follows I try to put forward an account which explains what sorts of attitudes might facilitate

that change of heart and what sorts of considerations might count in favour of forgiving an undeserving wrongdoer. I shall describe the presence of some enabling conditions that do two things: they can psychologically enable a genuine change of heart and they also provide reasons for it. One of the enabling or facilitating attitudes I explore is a general commitment the victim may have to minimizing the amount of resentment and anger there is in the world for the purpose of making the world a better place. Another might be a commitment to not wanting to live with too much anger or resentment in one's heart. Some of these attitudes, I shall argue, are related to the community redeeming the disrespect involved in wrongdoing. All of these enabling attitudes have reason-giving force, but not the force of obligation. They rationalize the victim's change of heart and they make it psychologically intelligible.

Let me now turn to a detailed discussion of some of these enabling conditions.

Reasons to Forgive Undeserving Wrongdoers

One of the enabling conditions that might give the victim a reason to forgive undeserving wrongdoers might be a certain moral view of the world the victim may have. For example, the victim may be the type of person who believes that the fewer angry or resentful feelings in the world, the better the world is; so her mainly consequentialist reasons are about a certain social good which will be achieved by her avoiding negative feelings. If she is psychologically capable of avoiding such angry feelings and retributive emotions, she might prefer not to take part in it and to forgive the victim.

The person I have in mind also believes that, if she were disposed to anger, then her attitude would be justified. But, although she sees the wrongdoer as culpable, she decides to give up feelings and attitudes she is quite entitled to have, things which are in her right to do to the wrongdoer (break off with him, distance herself from him). Moreover, she thinks that the less negativity there is in the world, the better. This view of the world the victim might have can also explain why the victim bothers to forgive – rather than continuing to be angry – even when she is feeling angry after

being wronged. She does not want to take part in resentful feelings and, in finding herself prepared to forgive, she decides, despite her justified anger, to let go of her resentment and succeeds in having a change of heart toward the wrongdoer.

She legitimately believes the wrongdoer is culpable and she is feeling hurt by his insult; nevertheless she finds herself investing effort in forgiving the wrongdoer because she thinks such a world is a better world to live in. So she decides to trust him and see him in a better light. She does it because she justifiably believes it would benefit the wrongdoer and it would create more noble interpersonal and social relations. What she does is admirable, I think, because a certain social good is achieved. The world is better off with fewer resentful feelings and anger. Maybe the victim endorses a Butlerian view of resentment and, as a result, she is committed to eradicate all resentment in the world and replace it with positive feelings. Recall Butler's claim that:

Malice or resentment towards any man hath plainly a tendency to beget the same passion in him who is the object of it, and this again increases it in the other. It is of the very nature of this vice to propagate itself, not only by way of example, which it does in common with other vices, but in a peculiar way of its own for resentment itself, as well as what is done in consequence of it, is the object of resentment' (Sermon IX, p. 97).

A second reason might be related to the victim's character. She might be a very generous, compassionate and altruistic person who intends to perform actions that would promote happiness and bring benefits to other people. Such generosity is important for our moral life and showing generosity might bring the wrongdoer to feel remorse about the wrong done and change his ways. I shall describe a case where forgiveness involves generosity but where it is also done as a way of insisting on the wrongdoer's accountability.

What I have in mind is the case of Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*.⁷⁵

The novel centres on Jean Valjean, a poor man, who is convicted and sent to prison (first for five years and then, after he attempts to escape several times, for another 12 years). After he is released from prison, he is banished from society because everyone sees him as a dangerous ex-convict. He is not offered any opportunity to participate in the community until he encounters Bishop Myriel, who decides to trust him and give him an opportunity. However, although the Bishop trusts him and lets him stay in his house, Valjean steals some silver from the house and runs off. The police catch him and want to send him back to prison. The Bishop, instead of denouncing him to the police, decides to forgive Valjean and he tells the police the silverware was actually a gift for Valjean. In addition, Myriel insists that Valjean take two silver candlesticks as well, because he has forgotten them. Valjean is astonished by such generous behaviour and very confused. The Bishop's forgiveness poses a challenge for Valjean. He is asked to choose the person he wants to be: a thief or a virtuous person. The Bishop tells Valjean that he trusts he will become an honest person. The generosity shown in forgiving Valjean will inspire and change his character. Indeed, Valjean undergoes a complete moral transformation after the encounter with the Bishop. The story then follows Valjean's process of redemption and his successful attempt to become a good and honest person, especially defending the powerless and the most vulnerable members of society.

We can see in the story that the Bishop makes himself vulnerable to Jean Valjean and he helps him at high costs.⁷⁶ The Bishop opens himself to the possibility that Valjean might do it again. But he decides, nevertheless, to trust him, so he gives him another opportunity. So it poses a dilemma for Jean Valjean. Forgiveness, in this case, instead of condoning Valjean's wrong action, is a way of showing power and strength of character. The Bishop does not feel at all threatened and he is

⁷⁵ See also Raymond Bernard's excellent film adaptation of Hugo's book into the movie with the same name, *Les Misérables*, in 1934.

⁷⁶ The Bishop's housekeeper thinks, indeed, that he is making an enormous mistake in helping Valjean because everybody else sees him as a dangerous convict.

not afraid of Valjean, despite the fact that he is an ex-convict. He opens his house and his heart even after he has been robbed. Valjean accepts the challenge and decides to mend his ways; he, indeed, becomes a better person.

The book continues by describing the type of person Valjean becomes after the Bishop gives him a second chance. There is nothing in the book which indicates that the Bishop condones his behaviour. Actually, the Bishop encourages Valjean to take the money and use it to become an honest person. Valjean also seems to get the right message: betraying the only person who trusted him is a serious wrong and he should not have done it. Valjean was not mistaken about the message communicated by the Bishop's forgiveness. He did not think, as Griswold sometimes suggests, that forgiveness meant he should commit more acts of larceny because this time he got away with it. On the contrary, Valjean takes the opportunity to think about what he has done (indeed, every time he finds himself in a moral dilemma, he thinks again about the Bishop) and to eventually become a better person (and not only in relation to his benefactor).

I would like now to turn to discuss the two worries I presented at the beginning. The worries were that forgiveness without apology or repentance is not really forgiveness, but something else. Second, even if it is forgiveness, it is not permissible because it involves some form of moral condonation.

So why is Valjean's case a case of genuine forgiveness rather than a case of justified moral condonation, as Hampton worries? It is a case of forgiveness, I argue, because there is some internal change in the victim (The Bishop sees Valjean in a positive light), it is properly directed at the wrongdoer (the victim is not simply changing his attitudes like in Hampton's example for reasons of family peace, while continuing to see the wrongdoer in a bad light), and forgiveness assumes that the Bishop is within his right to have certain retributive attitudes towards the wrongdoer, however, he decides to waive this right and overcome such feelings.

Thus we have here, I think, a genuine case of forgiveness, because the Bishop decides to see Valjean in a positive light; he does not see him as a totally rotten individual. He sees him as a decent person worth giving another opportunity. Although the Bishop condemns Valjean's behaviour (he is not simply overlooking his wrongdoing, excusing his actions or accepting the wrong), he decides nevertheless not to let this instance of wrongdoing influence the way he sees Valjean as a person, and he undergoes a total change of heart toward him. He sees him as someone who can be trusted to change his ways. Everyone in the community thinks Valjean is a totally rotten individual and they only see him through the lens of his wrongdoing; they, in effect, reduce him to that particular instance of wrongdoing as they can only see him as a thief. The Bishop, on the other hand, is moved by Valjean's particular circumstances and decides to trust him.

In turn, Valjean understands that he has done something wrong by betraying the only person who trusted him, so he knows he has to do something to change his ways and eventually make up for the wrong done. So it is common knowledge between the Bishop and Valjean that his wrongdoing hasn't gone ignored and that reparations are in order. Valjean in a sense is expected to and promises the Bishop he will become a better person, which he undertakes as his main project in life.

The Bishop never really sees Valjean as entirely rotten. However, he still judges that Valjean has wronged him and this wrongdoing puts the Bishop in a position where it is in his right to decide not to associate himself with him, or to denounce him to the police. So the Bishop waives his right to protest and lets Valjean off with treatment which will be in his right to hold against. The Bishop, however, decides not to do these things he would be justified in doing. The Bishop, being a very generous and compassionate person, gives Valjean another opportunity to do the right thing and Valjean, eventually, shows his gratitude.

Later in the book (or film) we see that Valjean considers the Bishop a moral saint. What the Bishop does is morally praiseworthy (so also morally permissible). He performs a good act motivated by the right sorts of moral reasons; he acts from a genuinely altruistic reason to help and

advance Jean Valjean's interests. The Bishop is therefore warranted in forgiving Jean Valjean and his action is praiseworthy, as it is an act of beneficence and kindness.⁷⁷ The Bishop, were he to decide not to forgive Valjean, would also be warranted in not forgiving him. Forgiving him is definitely 'beyond the call of duty'. So not forgiving him would not be blameworthy, even if forgiving is the morally good thing to do. In this particular scenario, forgiving Valjean and giving him another opportunity is also the best thing the Bishop could do as, if he were to take a totally different course of action and resent him for the betrayal, instead of forgiving him, Valjean would have never become the honest and virtuous person that he became. He would have probably continued to be a thief or spent the rest of his life in prison.

This example is also mentioned in Griswold (2007: 121, ft. 5). Griswold calls this type of forgiveness, where there is no repentance, 'prospective forgiveness' and he says that it is not really forgiveness. He says 'my claim is that whatever it is that the injured party is doing *proleptically*, it is not forgiving but something else that seeks to become forgiveness but has not yet crossed the threshold as defined at the start of this chapter' (Griswold 2007: 121-122, my emphasis). My claim here, however, is not that the Bishop forgives proleptically.

Griswold criticizes the following view. One can forgive without repentance because one can forgive in order to encourage the offender to repent. As a result, once Valjean repents, the Bishop will now have acquired the desert-based reasons to forgive. Griswold argues that it is false that forgiveness can take this proleptic form. If the Bishop expects Valjean to repent then it means that he does not forgive until Valjean repents. Therefore, what the Bishop does is not strictly speaking forgiveness, but something which will become forgiveness once the

⁷⁷ See also Hallich (2013) who also proposes to extend the category of the sorts of reasons which can make forgiveness desirable and virtuous. He claims that we should accept both prudential reasons (related to what is better for the forgiver's well-being) and considerations related to the forgiver's character ('the willingness to control one's passions', p. 1014). Such reasons, he argues, are too weak to make it morally mandatory to forgive – he actually argues that no reasons are strong enough to generate a duty to forgive – but they can, nevertheless, favor forgiveness. Unfortunately, I do not have the space in this chapter to explore in detail his account. However, I agree with him that prudential reasons count in favor of forgiving a wrongdoer.

wrongdoer repents. For Griswold then, there is no forgiveness here until the other person repents.

Griswold's response seems to beg the question of whether genuine forgiveness can happen without repentance. I offer here an account of how elective forgiveness in the absence of repentance is possible. The Bishop forgives before the wrongdoer repents, trusting that he will become a better person. So it is a genuine case of elective forgiveness, although not totally without reasons. Nevertheless, the Bishop does not base his forgiveness on desert-based reasons. The Bishop trusts and hopes that Valjean will become an honest person. This is different from saying that the Bishop does not forgive until Valjean repents. He does not hear of Valjean for many years and he does not know whether or not Valjean will ever repent. It is my contention that it is reasonable to say that the Bishop forgives without waiting for Valjean to repent.

The reason-giving power of the community

Let me turn now to discuss the role of the community has in helping and justifying the victim to forgive her wrongdoer. This point relates back to an example discussed before in this chapter, that of Simon who wonders whether he should have forgiven the Nazi soldier who apologizes to him. Simon has desert-based reasons to forgive the soldier, however, even when forgiveness is possible and justified, there may be community based reasons for not forgiving the soldier, as Josek points out to him. Similarly, reasons of social context may have to be in place in order to support someone in their forgiving, or in making it possible. These community-based reasons are important and they played a crucial role in the case of Babalwa Mhlauli (the example discussed at the beginning of this chapter) forgiving her father's killer. It is plausible to argue that the community punishing the perpetrators and sticking up for the victim of injustice makes it safe for the victim to forgive.

This point about how safe the victim must feel in order for her to forgive, also ties back to a point made by Hieronymi, discussed in Chapter 3. Even if I criticize her account for being too psychologistic, in a sense she is right to point out that a threat to the victim is removed when, in my

terms, the deficit of respect is made good. The deficit of respect, however, in some cases, is made good but by the community, and not by the perpetrator apologizing. When the community removes this existing threat to the victim by showing solidarity with her, then she can feel safe and empowered to forgive her wrongdoer.

Let me turn now to explain in more detail how the social context can play a role in explaining how it is possible for victims to forgive their wrongdoers, even in the absence of merit-based reasons. Consider again the case of Mhlauli who asks to meet the killers of her father so she can know whom to forgive. How can we make sense of her behaviour? Why would she want to forgive the unrepentant wrongdoers?

Although it is true that the wrongdoers did not correct for the disrespect expressed in their offences, the role the TRC played in counterbalancing the disrespect was enormous. The TRC marked and recognized as truth the terrible atrocities committed as wrongs and gross human rights violations. The TRC served as a symbolic way of taking seriously the wrongs and their victims. I suggest that the strong support of the community and of the commission that has been put in place to deal with such difficult cases enabled Mhlauli to forgive the perpetrators. She is acknowledging that enough has been done collectively to show the proper respect and this makes it safe for her to forgive. So there is enough recognition of the wrongs done to her by the community and, even if not the perpetrator, others in the community are redeeming the level of respect owed to her. The community therefore rationalizes and justifies her forgiveness; this gives the victim a justificatory counterpart reason to apology.

So we can see here that we can find reasons for forgiveness in a collective form as well. The forgiveness is unearned in relation to the wrongdoer, but conditional on the community redeeming the level of respect. The forgiveness is essentially elective, as it is too weak to generate an obligation to forgive: nothing is owed to the wrongdoer. However, the community makes it intelligible, rational, and safe for the victim to forgive, if she were to choose to do so. Moreover, this in turn is

important for the perpetrators as it gives them the opportunity to continue with their lives, and enable them to change for the better.

To see the point better (of how the community's support can serve as an analogue reason to apology as they achieve similar things), consider another example where the victim cannot forgive because the community has not done enough to counteract the wrongdoing. This is the case of Jean Améry, a survivor of the Holocaust and a victim of imprisonment in concentration camps, after trying to resist the Nazi occupation. He refuses to overcome his resentment against Nazi Germany and his perpetrators even after the reparations paid by the German government to Holocaust survivors. In his book *At the Mind's Limits*, he says:

But to my own distress, I belonged to that disapproving minority with its hard feelings. Stubbornly, I held against Germany its twelve years under Hitler. I bore this grudge into the industrial paradise of the new Europe and into the majestic halls of the West. I “stuck out”, as I once had in the camp because of poor posture at roll call; I attracted the disapproving attention no less of my former fellows in battle and suffering, who were now gushing over about reconciliation, than of my enemies, who had just been converted to tolerance. I preserved my resentment (Améry 1980: 67).

Améry believes the government has not done enough to condemn the wrongs and thus has not shown enough respect for its victims. His resentment is rather focused on the failure of the community to offer enough reassurance and validation. Walker describes his resentment as not only directed to his torturers, but due to ‘a moral failure by responsible parties and by the communities of judgment from which he as a victim expects and demands affirmation and defense of the reality and depth of his injury’ (Walker 2006: 141).

Améry refuses to give up his grudge and in his essay he tries to explain why his resentment is morally justified. He is not happy with the

economic optimism and the post-war rehabilitation, he demands that future generations continue to recognize and mark the crimes as the shocking and shameful crimes that they were; we have to always remember the horrific past, he urges us (1980: 76-77). He is unhappy that the community fails to recognize the complicity of the majority of Germans in the Nazi regime: 'All in all, for me they were the German people. What was taking place around them and with us, they knew exactly. For they perceived the burnt smell from the nearby extermination camp as we did' (ibid. 73-74).

In this we can see how important the solidarity of the community is and how disastrous a failure to properly condemn wrongs and give proper recognition to wronged parties can be. This is an interesting example for a theory of forgiveness because we can see that Améry cares much less about the immediate perpetrators showing remorse. He is more upset and outraged by the reaction of the German moral community and about the international community's failure to properly correct for the wrongs done. Améry describes his resentment not as a desire for revenge or for atonement from the victim. He says:

SS-man Wajs from Antwerp, a repeated murderer and an especially adroit torturer, paid with his life. What more can my foul thirst for revenge demand? But if I have searched my mind properly, it is not a matter of revenge, nor one of atonement. The experience of persecution was, at the very bottom, that of an extreme *loneliness*. At stake for me is the release from the abandonment that has persisted from that time until today' (ibid. 70).

Améry resents the idea that he should forgive as he thinks not enough has been done yet to condemn the crimes (1980: 72). He resents how easily the German people and the international community have forgotten the horrible atrocities during the Nazi regime. In his words,

Only I possessed and still possess, the moral truth of the blows that even today roar in my skull, and for that reason I am more

entitled to judge, not only more than the culprit but also more than society – which thinks only about its continued existence. The social body is occupied merely with safeguarding itself and could not care less about a life that has been damaged. At the very best, it looks forward, so that such things do not happen again (ibid. 70).

He is not satisfied with letting time heal the wounds; he wants the community to take a proper stance and to show that they care. He argues that there is an unresolved conflict between the victim and their perpetrators and this conflict needs to be ‘externalized and actualized’ (1980: 77). This is not the perpetrator’s duty, but the community’s duty. He has some suggestions about what it would take for the German community to do in order to eradicate the ‘ignominy’ and to alleviate the victim’s resentments. For example, he suggests that everything that has been culturally created between 1933 and 1945 should be reduced to ‘pulp’:

The spiritual reduction to pulp by the German people, not only of the books, but of everything that was carried out in those twelve years, would be the negation of the negation: a highly positive, a redeeming act. Only through it would our resentment be subjectively pacified and have become objectively unnecessary (ibid. 79).

This aspect can be accommodated in my view, as it is a requirement in cases of wrongs against humanity that it is this socially disseminated affirmation of respect which allows for forgiveness of the unrepentant to be possible and even desirable.

My account can also explain why it makes sense for the victim to refuse to forgive when there is not enough moral support from the community. In the absence of such support and recognition from the community, the victim does not feel emotionally prepared or morally justified to put the wrong behind her.

My aim in this chapter has been to respond to Griswold's worries that forgiveness in the absence of remorse or apology is unintelligible or unjustified. Griswold is right to argue that forgiveness is tied to reasons, else it would be unintelligible and morally impermissible. In this chapter I have proposed to understand the sort of attitudes that might facilitate and justify the victim's change of heart in terms of a general commitment the victim might have to minimize the resentment and anger there is in the world, or as involving a type of generous character or attitude toward other people. Finally, I have explored the role of the community in redeeming the victim's level of respect. The community can make it the case that the victim feels safe and justified in forgiving her unrepentant wrongdoers. These attitudes or conditions, I have argued, provide the normative and emotional scaffolding that might enable and justify someone to forgive electively.

Conclusion

I conclude by providing an overview of the central ideas I put forward in this thesis. The main questions this thesis addresses are: What is blame and what it adds, if anything, to the judgment of blameworthiness? How should we understand earned forgiveness through apology? Is elective forgiveness an intelligible and a justified moral phenomenon? And, finally, what is forgiveness emotionally?

I put forward the view that blame is the sort of thing which has an expressive importance, and, when it is expressed it affirms the speaker's respect for the wronged party insofar as that respect has been called into question by the act of the wrongdoer. So blame should be understood in terms of an expressive affirmation of respect for the wronged party. In expressing your blame, for example in saying 'you are wrong to do that', you thereby correct a deficit of respect that has been created by the wrongdoing.

I then propose an account of forgiveness, which draws on the interpretation of blame I propose in the first part. I first look at an account of earned forgiveness through apology. Forgiveness on the one hand, preserves the judgment that the other person has done wrong, while, on the other hand, overcomes blame. I argued that earned forgiveness through apology involves two elements 1. The acknowledgement that the wrongdoer has done enough to make good the disrespect shown toward the wronged party; 2 Holding an attitude (or committing to hold an attitude) toward the wrongdoer that this acknowledgment makes appropriate, and on the basis of this acknowledgment.

Forgiveness further involves an important emotional element. So in Chapter 4 I ask the question of what sort of thing forgiveness is emotionally. I defend the view that forgiveness involves a 'change of heart' towards the wronged. I proposed to understand this 'change of heart' in terms of *trusting* or *deciding to trust* that the other person can change their behaviour; in forgiving we give the other person a chance not to do that same thing again, not to repeat the bad behaviour.

Finally, I defend an account of elective forgiveness. I argue that elective forgiveness, despite the fact that it is not earned by the wrongdoer's apology, is an intelligible and morally justified phenomenon. The types of reasons which justify and make intelligible elective forgiveness do not have the power to generate a moral obligation to forgive. Thus I argue that forgiveness remains an essentially elective phenomenon.

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