Eve Garrard and **David McNaughton**
Forgiveness.
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Eve Garrard and David McNaughton give a thoughtful and evocative response to the question of forgiveness in this addition to *The Art of Living* series edited by Mark Vernon. Recognizing that forgiveness is an important concept in many religious traditions, Garrard and McNaughton focus on philosophical distinctions and historical arguments rather than enter into theological territory or the vast area of religious conviction. Their intent in this volume is to examine some of the historical and current arguments supporting or denying forgiveness and discuss whether their conclusions are justified.

The opening chapter *The Debate about forgiveness* (1–19) argues that all humankind is implicitly flawed, that moral degradation has showed its ugly head throughout history, and that all human beings suffer and perpetrate wrongdoing or hurtful actions during their lifetime. With this in mind, and by relating the traumatic experiences of various people, Garrard and McNaughton consider three possibilities: one is to forgive, the second is not to forgive, while the third involves a process of recognition, acknowledgement, and reconciliation. Some interesting ideas are brought forward for consideration in this first chapter: generosity, the intrinsic value of an individual despite wrongdoing, and compassion, all of which point to an idealized state of harmonious existence in which goodwill overcomes ill will.

It is to the converse side to which the authors turn in the second chapter, *The case against forgiveness* (20–41). Consideration of such emotions as "anger, resentment, indignation, rancour, contempt, bitterness, malice, and a range of other negative attitudes" (22) towards wrongdoing lead Garrard and McNaughton to suggest that forgiveness entails a complex response and an even more complex resolution. Indeed, they argue that respect for others, self-respect, a code of honour, and chivalry offer an alternative which is developed alongside religious values (25), and they turn to the philosophical argument of Nietzsche to bring out several considerations that warrant attention: problems with the therapeutic conception (30–1), the contrast between revenge and justice (31–5), and the significance of respect for the victim (36–9).

Keeping these arguments for and against forgiveness in mind, Garrard and McNaughton offer for consideration a set of ideas to deal with wrongdoing which do not entail forgiveness or negative emotions. This is done in the third chapter, *A third way?* (42–62). The authors argue that such a response would necessarily include a concerted effort to learn and acknowledge truth, avoid further harm, advocate justice, promote the resolution of conflict, and look towards the possibility of reconciliation (46–7).

The psychological arguments for and against forgiveness are addressed in chapters 4, 5, and 6. These bear the titles *The case for forgiveness I: what the psychologists say* (63–82), *The case for forgiveness II: meeting the objections* (83–106), and *The case for forgiveness III: the*

positive argument (107–25). Although the benefits and shortcomings of psychological research into the theory and practice of forgiveness are outlined, the reader is led to conclude at the end of the fourth chapter that a succinct definition of and definitive approach to forgiveness is elusive in that it is difficult to "capture it for quantitative study" (82). Having said this, some interesting arguments arise in the following chapters. The notions of responsibility and acceptance (90) suggest an approach to forgiveness that may or may not include moving towards a process of reconciliation. The implications of this idea are the focus of the remainder of chapter 5. Garrard and McNaughton suggest the possibility that a satisfactory recovery from ill will may include retributive justice or 'just desserts' as a viable response toward a perpetrator for his or her wrongdoing.

The last chapter deals with this issue. If forgiveness is preferable, the authors assert, then some positive arguments need to be found in its favour (106). Various views in favour of forgiveness are suggested by Garrard and McNaughton: 1. Respect for each person as a unique individual must include each person's right to make choices and sometimes those choices lead to wrongdoings. In and of itself respect for another human being does not necessarily include the right to forgiveness; and 2. A common human frailty and fallibility which leads to the recognition that in the same circumstances the victim might respond in a similar act of wrongdoing and thus, the punishment or retribution wished upon a perpetrator might be also be levelled at a victim as a member of the human race.

In conclusion, Eve Garrard and David McNaughton argue that forgiveness is a gift, that there is no obligation to offer forgiveness, and that the perpetrator has no right to demand forgiveness. They also argue that this gift of forgiveness is a gift of love for the rest of humankind. Perhaps this book will be used as a basis for further study, either in undergraduate studies or theological studies. The arguments are thought-provoking and, even though they are not definitive, they offer sufficient insights for further reflection. The many illustrations from real life encourage the reader to supplement his or her own ideas or similar experiences.

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