

Glen Pettigrove. *Forgiveness and Love*. Oxford University Press 2012. 200 pp. \$65.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199646555).

Glen Pettigrove's *Forgiveness and Love* is a collection of essays that explores conceptual and normative questions about forgiveness, such as what it is and when it is appropriate. There are two main arguments in the book. The first is that the standard conceptual account of forgiveness is too narrow and needs to be expanded in order to better account for common practices. The second is that it is morally permissible to forgive someone who is unapologetic.

In chapter one, Pettigrove analyzes the nature of forgiveness by exploring what it means to say 'I forgive you'. In this, he finds three different possible meanings: (1) a disclosure of the speaker's emotional state, (2) a declaration of a cancelled debt, or (3) a commitment to act in a certain way in the future. As a disclosure of the speaker's emotional state, the statement 'I forgive you' indicates a reduction of negative emotions. Pettigrove says: 'It would take A's forgiveness to consist in the absence of or reduction in hostile reactive attitudes in A and the presence in A of a measure of positive regard for B in the aftermath of some moral failing on B's part' (9). As a declaration of a cancelled debt, the statement is understood as a speech act that cancels a debt much like a financial debt might be cancelled simply by declaring it so. As a commitment to act in a certain way in the future, the statement is like a promise not to act on any hostile feelings and return to the state of the relationship prior to the offense.

In chapter two, Pettigrove considers several arguments in support of the contention that only a victim has the standing to forgive, and finds each argument unsatisfactory. First, he considers the argument that forgiveness is the cancellation of a debt and that only a victim can cancel a debt created by a transgression. He responds to this argument by using examples from the financial sector that show parties other than lenders cancelling debts. Second, he considers the argument that forgiveness is the overcoming of resentment and that only a victim is in the position to do this. He responds to this by using examples of how bystanders can feel resentment equal to or more than a victim. Third, he considers the argument that forgiveness is the repairing of a relationship and that only the relationship with the victim is affected by a wrongdoing. He responds to this argument by showing how a wrong can even affect the relationships with others who are not directly harmed. Finally, he considers the argument that there are different norms governing responses for victims and non-victims and that such a difference means that both responses cannot be labeled forgiveness. He responds to this argument by showing that the difference between the norms governing the responses are not morally significant.

In chapter three, Pettigrove challenges the standard account of forgiveness that states that a wrong action is a necessary initiating condition for forgiveness. He thinks that traits of character also elicit hostile reactive attitudes and so are also initiating conditions for forgiveness. He gives three reasons to expand the standard account to include traits of character. First, actions often presuppose a certain character. He says: 'If we resent a person for a trait of character that was manifested in the wrong act that she performed, then we have a reason to enlarge the scope of the standard account of forgiveness. Overcoming such resentment will not merely be a matter of forgiving the wrongdoer for what she has done. It will also be a matter of forgiving her for who she is (or was)' (43). Second, hostile reactive attitudes can appear when no wrong act has been committed. One example he gives is contempt: a person may hold contempt for another without ever *doing* anything. Third, it seems

possible to forgive someone for an action but then to also need to forgive them for a related trait of character, which may only emerge later after many repeated occurrences of the previously-forgiven action.

In chapter four, Pettigrove examines the relationship between understanding and forgiveness and concludes that the connection is not as strong as some believe. Rather than promoting forgiveness, he says, understanding may actually make it more difficult in some cases because the victim now sees the absolute wickedness of the wrongdoer's actions. Also, understanding may lead to excusing the action, which makes forgiveness impossible because forgiveness requires the acknowledgement of wrongdoing. On the other hand, Pettigrove acknowledges that understanding can help because it 'may mitigate our sense of the wrong done [without entirely eliminating it]. It may alter our sense of the primary message communicated by the wrongdoing. And it may trigger empathy in a way that discloses the possibility of being reconciled with the wrongdoer' (72).

In chapter five, Pettigrove explores the connection between forgiveness and love. First he gives an analysis of love along three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and volitional. As an affective state, love is a positive valuing of the beloved. On the cognitive level, he thinks that love is a perception of the good in the beloved. As a volitional state, he says that love is an inclination and a commitment to promote the well-being of the beloved. Second, Pettigrove examines how this account of love illuminates the connection between forgiveness and love. On the cognitive level, there is an apparent incompatibility: a lover views the beloved as good, but a victim views a wrongdoer as bad in some way. However, Pettigrove argues that both love and forgiveness are compatible with perceiving flaws in the other, and a characteristic of mature love is loving in spite of the flaws. As volitional states, both forgiveness and love promote the well-being of the other, but love seems to be concerned with promoting the other's well-being always for the other's sake. Forgiveness can be given for many other reasons as well, including for one's own sake. As Pettigrove says, 'Love's interest in promoting the other's welfare may give rise to forgiveness, but not every case of forgiveness need be rooted in love' (98). As affective states, both forgiveness and love are complex, so the relationship between the two will be harder to understand. For one thing, feelings of love and resentment come and go and may even coexist. Also, some forms of resentment may depend on love. Pettigrove gives an example: 'The reason the child hates the parent so much is that she loves him and desires fervently for that love to be returned, for his approval, admiration, and commitment' (102-3).

Chapter six marks a transition in the book from questions about what forgiveness is to normative questions about the permissibility of forgiveness. In chapter six, Pettigrove considers both the possibility and the permissibility of forgiving someone who is unapologetic. First, he considers arguments against forgiving the unapologetic: (1) that it would condone wrongdoing and (2) that it would fail to respect oneself. Second, he addresses these arguments by analyzing the concepts of punishment, apologies, and forgiveness in order to show that forgiveness of the unapologetic can both 'block condonation and bolster self-respect' (121) just as punishment and apologies do. His analysis shows that punishment, apologies, and forgiveness have the same functions: (1) condemning the wrong, (2) vindicating the victim, and (3) reducing hostile reactive attitudes.

In chapter seven, Pettigrove argues against the notion that forgiveness must be deserved, saying that forgiving only those who deserve it breaks the connection forgiveness has with the concept of grace. Using Seneca's analysis of grace, Pettigrove defines an act of grace as 'an

intentional act of unmerited favour' (127) and the character of grace as 'an inclination and readiness to promote others' interests and bring them joy, which is not determined by the merit...of those towards whom it is directed' (133-4). He argues that grace is good because (1) we naturally admire exemplars of grace in the community, (2) grace is an essential part of raising children, (3) there are times in our adult lives as well that we need grace, (4) a loving person is one who has a character of grace, (5) grace is needed in order to fulfill our obligations to humanity in a Kantian sense, and (6) grace will lead to better outcomes in a utilitarian sense. Pettigrove says that the same reasons can be given to defend forgiving the undeserving as well.

Pettigrove makes it clear that he is not arguing for a universal obligation of unconditional forgiveness, saying that 'there may still be conditions that must be met before a particular act of forgiving is morally acceptable' (152). In chapter eight, he describes two types of conditions: psychological and social conditions. Possible psychological conditions that mitigate the need for unconditional forgiveness include waiting until the forgiving agent can do so from the right motive or can do so and not feel she is condoning the evil act. He says that people naturally move through stages and that forgiveness might be a later stage of moral development. Possible social conditions that mitigate the need for unconditional forgiveness include whether or not the society is supportive of the victim or whether the wrong is an instance of a systematic injustice, in which case sustained resentment might be appropriate.

In my view, neither of these conditions constitutes a compelling argument against unconditional forgiveness, for it seems that the reasons Pettigrove presents for showing grace in chapter seven outweigh either consideration. He says that it also depends on what kind of norm forgiveness is. He asks: 'Is it a threshold one must clear in order to avoid being guilty of transgression? Or is it an ideal to which we aspire—the sort of thing that over time one hopes to approximate but which one does not expect to achieve easily (or perhaps ever)?' (155). He says that because it is an ideal, we do not need to feel guilty about not attaining it, but this seems to miss something important. It is one thing to say that we might fail to reach the ideal, but is quite another thing to say that the ideal is not morally required. Perhaps an insight from virtue ethics will help here. Virtue ethicists distinguish between an act of virtue and being fully virtuous (the ideal). As Aristotle says in Book II of *Nicomachean Ethics*, 'For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g., men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts'. Related to the virtue of grace, we become more grace-filled by doing acts of grace; we become forgiving people through acts of forgiveness. Having the full virtue of grace may be beyond most of us for the time being, but this does not excuse our lack of grace. We can still act like it.

Pettigrove uses a quotation from Martin Luther King Jr. in chapter six, and I include it here in defense of unconditional forgiveness: 'Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, the command to love one's enemy is an absolute necessity for our survival. Love even for enemies is the key to the solution of the problem of our world' (104). Dr. King ties forgiveness to love, and if love is an absolute, then so is unconditional forgiveness. I end with his words: 'We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love' (*Strength to Love*, 44).

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