Interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained

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Interpersonal Forgiveness is the Recognition that Justice is Attained

by

Raphael F. Moser

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Abstract

In this dissertation I defend the thesis Interpersonal Forgiveness is the Recognition that Justice is Attained. In arguments and exemplars from films, I contend that interpersonal forgiveness is a paradigm category of forgiveness between family, friends, and acquaintances who seek to restore mutual good-will, reconcile, and affirm shared values and thereby attain a category of justice that I introduce as personal justice. I draw on P.F. Strawson’s account of reactive attitudes such as resentment, regret, and forgiveness as the natural basis of our moral responsibility. Reactive attitudes reflect the expectation of good-will and regard among moral agents in interpersonal relationships. This expectation and demand for regard indicates the rights of the parties. I further argue that this is a reciprocal relation. The interpersonal forgiveness process requires both the injured party and the wrongdoer fulfill conditions in order for interpersonal forgiveness to obtain. I propose that the injured party must forgo revenge, relinquish resentment, not hold the wrongdoing against the offender, and communicate forgiveness to the offender. The offender must acknowledge, repudiate, commit to change, and express regret to the injured party. If the wrongdoer is not held accountable by both the injured party and the wrongdoer himself, the resulting effect is condonation, which is a structural and substantive flaw so that interpersonal forgiveness does not obtain and personal justice is not attained. Other structural and substantive flaws which preclude interpersonal forgiveness and personal justice occur if the injured party refuses to hear out a genuinely contrite offender which may manifest in an expression of the objective attitude, or a charge of testimonial injustice. I argue in this dissertation that interpersonal forgiveness is a reciprocal process of moral responsibility.
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Introduction

Forgiveness is a familiar concept that is encountered in aspects of daily life. It is associated with other positive states of affairs and attitudes such as love, gratitude, and compassion, though it is not synonymous or reduced to these other expressions in interpersonal dynamics. It seems that what they all have in common, however, is good-will toward another person. Forgiveness, is salient among this group by demonstrating good-will, despite, and as a result of having experienced a wrong doing. Thinking about forgiveness within this family of terms raises interesting questions about how it is possible to express good-will in exchange for harm.

Though I would like to begin thinking about forgiveness in this dissertation by considering the ways forgiveness is distinguished from gratitude, compassion, and love; this is not to dismiss the vast philosophical literature in forgiveness studies. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss aspects of the work of such forbears as Joseph Butler, Jeffrie G. Murphy, Charles Griswold, Howard McGary, Michele Moody-Adams, and Lucy Allais as well as others. I will argue that features such as necessary conditions for forgiveness to obtain and the relinquishment of resentment are strengths in some of these accounts while arguments in favor of unconditional forgiveness are missing elements that contribute to the realization of interpersonal forgiveness as personal justice.

My objective, in this dissertation, is to argue for what might be a controversial notion of forgiveness, stated as, “interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained.” I will introduce a concept of personal justice in chapter 1, that will ground my arguments in support of a conditional reciprocal forgiveness. Discussing my concept of personal justice in chapter 1, will also help to further develop my thesis of interpersonal forgiveness, as a paradigm case of
forgiveness that connects forgiveness and justice through reactive attitudes, rights, and moral responsibility. It is a view of forgiveness as a process of moral responsibility.

I will focus on interpersonal forgiveness as a particular category of forgiveness involving the face-to-face encounter between family, friends, and acquaintances (I contend that true in person face-to-face exchanges bring an important visceral as well as nuanced aspect to the forgiveness process, yet, face-to-face encounters may include interactions through letters, email, telephone, or other devices---the critical element consists in a proximity of consciousnesses----serious attention and consideration are involved in the process.)

Though interpersonal forgiveness may share features with other forms of forgiveness, such as Judaic and Christian practices, debt forgiveness, and forgiveness involving less serious slights, I will consider several differences between these other forms of forgiveness and interpersonal forgiveness---not to offer definitive arguments, but, rather, as additional conceptual means with which to enter into my argument that interpersonal forgiveness is a distinct category of forgiveness. Furthermore, given the very personal one-to-one exchange between the injured party and the offending party and the emphasis on moral responsibility and reconciliation toward the attainment of personal justice, I hope to show, by my arguments, that forms of forgiveness, such as third-party forgiveness, forgiveness involving a deceased party, or self-forgiveness, are not within the scope of interpersonal forgiveness,

Features of interpersonal forgiveness can be recognized in films such as *L’Enfant* (2005), and *A History of Violence* (2005). I will argue that in these films and others, the conditions that constitute interpersonal forgiveness are found to be critical to the forgiveness process. In this way, these exemplars help to identify interpersonal forgiveness and the conditions that form its structural and substantive basis as a distinct and familiar category of forgiveness. I further
contend, that these conditions form a threshold requirement for interpersonal forgiveness to obtain. If the conditions are not fulfilled, what transpires, on the morally negative view, may be interpreted as condonation, or on the morally favorable view, as compassion or unconditional love---but not interpersonal forgiveness. In further defense of my account of interpersonal forgiveness, I raise objections and arguments to accounts of forgiveness that propose alternate views that counter the foundational grounds of interpersonal forgiveness.

Examining the various aspects of interpersonal forgiveness through the lens of film exemplars will provide an additional conceptual and affective tool with which to consider interpersonal forgiveness. Film engenders an environment that is immersive while at the same time conducive to a dispassionate view. The viewer may be emotionally invested in the characters and the situations portrayed in a film, though her reflective capacities of judgment are attuned to the nuances comprising the dynamic of the relationship and circumstance. Film affords a multiplicitous experience heightened by a distanced view.

In what follows, I will raise questions comparing gratitude, compassion, and love in an effort to attain insight, suggest distinctions, and more clearly winnow a path to my argument for interpersonal forgiveness.

In the film *The History of Violence* (2005), the last scene portrays the Stall family at the kitchen table about to begin the evening meal. Tom Stall, the husband to Edie and father of Jack and Sarah, enters the room, hesitantly uncertain he remains standing. His place at the table has not been set. Seeing her father standing at the entrance to the kitchen, Sarah gets up and sets his place at the table. No one speaks or greets Tom as he joins them at the table. Wordlessly, his expression of remorse palpable, he searches the faces of his family. After a moment, Jack passes him the platter of meat. The camera focuses on Tom’s face as he gazes at Edie, his
distress transforming into an expression of hope, love, and gratitude. This scene represents the beginning of the process of interpersonal forgiveness.

In the scene described above, the beginning stages of interpersonal forgiveness are a response to lies that Tom has told, and the danger that these lies have exposed his family to. How is it possible to receive good-will for harm done? Tom’s expression of gratitude suggests that interpersonal forgiveness is unearned. Considering interpersonal forgiveness from the perspective of the injured party, interpersonal forgiveness is unlike gratitude which is a response to, what may be regarded as, receiving an unearned or unexpected benefit, rather than a harm. If from the perspective of the wrongdoer, interpersonal forgiveness is unearned, then under what conditions does it present itself? Is it a gift, based on nothing but the generosity and good-will of the injured party? Doesn’t this incur the risk of condonation? It is not unreasonable to question whether wrongdoing rewarded signals acceptance of the injury as a behavior or attitude that requires no redress. Is interpersonal forgiveness, in this sense, a perverse form of gratitude? A gratitude for unexpected or unearned harm, rather than unexpected or unearned benefit? Which in turn raises the issue that in providing no constraint, whether a failure to hold someone responsible for wrongdoing may encourage future bad acts.

I will argue that in order for interpersonal forgiveness to obtain both the injured party and the offender must fulfill conditions. I examine the injured party’s conditions in chapter 2 and the offender’s conditions in chapter 3. In chapter 4, I will argue that the structure of interpersonal forgiveness is a reciprocal exchange of responses between the injured party and the offender. I will further contend that condonation is a substantive deficiency that impairs the realization of interpersonal forgiveness, facilitating such harms as continuance of the injury and the possibility of future injury.
Interpersonal forgiveness, also, unlike gratitude, is more than a response to another’s action or attitude. Interpersonal forgiveness possesses the form of the transitive verb ‘to forgive.’ It seems to give it the sense that it is active, that it initiates an action or attitude. So that when one says “I forgive you,” as opposed to “I am grateful to you” the former appears to have a standing of authority as a decision maker (which will further be explored in chapter 2) determining whether to forgive or not as opposed to the latter which seems to be causally linked to the agent of benevolence in a more passive role.

Gratitude is conventionally considered to be something owed, and, accordingly, the beneficiary does not occupy a position that affords him aretaic support in withholding an appropriate demonstration of thanks. Hume, is adamant on this point, even characterizing ingratitude as a crime. He states “of all crimes human creatures are capable of committing, the most horrid and unnatural is ungratitude.” ¹ Gratitude is not obligatory in the manner of promising where fulfillment of the promise can be demanded, however, its failure warrants blame and reactive attitudes such as resentment. Interpersonal forgiveness does not seem to have the sense of quasi-obligation possessed by gratitude, but might there be the worry that the prerogatives of interpersonal forgiveness may stray too far, so that, rather than an obligation to forgive, the injured party in recognition of the power of her position, adopts an imperious attitude toward the wrongdoer in granting interpersonal forgiveness or not, which may be considered a form of condescension? What’s more, if the injured party held an attitude of indifference toward the wrongdoer, though, it is, arguably, not as harsh as an imperious attitude, is it an attitude that is appropriate to interpersonal forgiveness? A question arises as to how the authoritative standing of the injured party to forgive can be integrated into an account of

interpersonal forgiveness, so that, it is not wielded in a manner that degrades the offender demonstrating ill-will as opposed to the good-will that is intuitively associated with interpersonal forgiveness in its aim to realize personal justice.

In examining the injured party’s conditions in chapter 2, I will consider the role of good-will in the process of interpersonal forgiveness. Though the injured party has the authority to forgive, this does not entitle her to attitudes evincing ill-will toward the offender.

Compassion is another emotion or attitude of good-will that may be contrasted with interpersonal forgiveness. If it is possible to feel compassion toward someone who has injured you, is this interpersonal forgiveness? As an expression of concern and care, one can have compassion for an individual who has suffered injury through the actions of a third party, yet, compassion is not restricted to relations where one is merely an uninvolved observer; it is also not uncommon to show compassion toward someone who has caused one harm. If compassion is not a form of interpersonal forgiveness, how does compassion differ from interpersonal forgiveness?

In the state of compassion, one expresses sympathy for the situation and emotional states of another. One offers emotional support to another without regard for one’s own status or interests because they have no bearing on the feeling of compassion. That is not to say that one may not be more readily compassionate toward someone in circumstances that one has also experienced at some point in one’s life, but the focus is on the suffering of another and providing some form of emotional support even if it is just an understanding of their pain through sympathy. Does interpersonal forgiveness have this sense of self-less regard for another’s suffering? Should the injured party show concern for the wrongdoer without regard for her own interests or recognition of her right to redress?
In chapter 2, I consider the injured party’s resentment in response to the wrongdoing. The presence of resentment is an indication of self-regard, and so does not conform to the notion of self-less regard for another’s suffering. However, I will argue, that though resentment is an appropriate response to wrongdoing, in order to forgive the offender, the injured party must relinquish her resentment. Resentment may not instantaneously dissolve, still, the injured party resolves to let it go.

We may think of compassion as elicited by individuals who have suffered injury through no fault of their own, or even in the case where whatever role they had in instigating the injury it did not warrant the resulting level of pains endured. It is also possible, though, to have compassion for someone’s suffering regardless of culpability. We may have a sympathetic response to anyone who is suffering; we don’t enjoy or even want it to be the case that anyone is in pain. There may be no reason for compassion other that another human being is in pain. Does interpersonal forgiveness require reasons in order to extend its form of good-will toward the wrongdoer? Is a response to the offender’s suffering, reason enough to forgive? How do the actions and attitudes of the wrongdoer affect the determination to forgive? Does the contrition of a wrongdoer provide more reason to forgive than does a wrongdoer’s unrepentant intransigent attitude?

I will argue that the injured party requires reasons to forgive. I contend that the reason to forgive is the belief that the offender’s contrition is genuine. In chapter 3, I will examine the elements of the offender’s contrition. In chapter 1 I will argue that the fulfillment of conditions by both parties attains a type of personal justice that is interpersonal forgiveness.

In its active sense as the verb ‘to forgive,’ interpersonal forgiveness occupies a position of determination, where something is done (forgiving or not-forgiving) that seems especially
associated with reasons and practical thinking. Compassion, similar to gratitude in this way, does not seem to be as reliant or connected to practical thinking. In both, the passive cases of the verbs reflect an expression that is less dependent on rendering a judgment through consideration of relevant factors. Though one may have to determine how to express gratitude, the determination that it is owed is already set. In compassion, it does not seem to be a determination as much as an emotional response to someone’s suffering. Though it may be sensitive to background information on the circumstances of the injury, it appears to possess more of an immediacy as opposed to a basis in reflective thinking than interpersonal forgiveness.

One can suggest that it is possible to resolve to be more compassionate, but this seems more along the lines encouraging one to be a better person in general rather than the mental state arising from the specificity of being wronged and the consequences to oneself if ignored.

If interpersonal forgiveness is, at the very least, and I am taking this as a primitive, an expression of good-will, should or can one forgive a wrongdoer who does not want to be forgiven? Perhaps, he stands by the wrongful act, continues to endorse it, and does not want it to be withdrawn. Does interpersonal forgiveness require uptake? Does the imposition of good-will to an unreceptive recipient become a form of harassment or nuisance?

In chapter 2, I will argue that attempts to forgive an offender who does not want to be forgiven are a form of ill-will and disregard of the offender and that interpersonal forgiveness requires uptake. In chapter 4, I will argue that unilateral forgiveness is a structural deficiency for interpersonal forgiveness, consequently, interpersonal forgiveness does not obtain.

Love is the third emotion or attitude that I will explore to motivate further inquiry into the dimensions of interpersonal forgiveness. A form of love may be the basis of interpersonal forgiveness, compassion, and gratitude, in its manifestation of good-will, but romantic love taken
purely as itself, between two people, does not specifically involve a direct response to harms
done to one-self or another, or to unexpected benevolence, though, these other forms of good-
will may arise within the relationship of love at some point. Romantic love, between two people,
at its best, is one of attraction where each recognizes the other as possessing distinct and special
qualities, as a result, a strong commitment between the two is formed. If interpersonal
forgiveness, is a form of love, is it unrequited love, unconditional love, or like the reciprocal
romantic love between two people?

In chapter 3, I will identify forgiveness as its own species of love, that encompasses the care
and good-will common to all varieties of love.

What role does each party perform in the interpersonal forgiveness process? For
interpersonal forgiveness to remain an expression of good-will based in love, would it not be the
case that each party should be shown the care and respect due a moral agent? If the injured party
forgives for reasons of self-care, does this reflect a qualification to good-will? If determinations
to forgive focus on ways to humanize the offender or considerations as to whether the
wrongdoing represents him as a person, but exclude his input in the process, is this a form of
treating the offender with the objective attitude---as someone that can’t be reasoned with but
simply managed or handled?²

Forgiving for reasons of self-care, I will argue in chapter 2, does not respond to the
interpersonal context of the injury and evinces a paucity of good-will toward the offender as the
intention to forgive is indifferent to the repentant offender who wants his amends to positively
impact the injured party. In chapter 3, I will argue that unconditional forgiveness that focuses on
ways to humanize the offender in order to forgive without his input exclude him from the

meaning making process and represent a withdrawal of good-will and trust that is shared in the moral community. Moreover, it risks treating him as one who “can’t be reasoned with” as one does when employing the objective attitude.

Whereas, gratitude, compassion, and love, are direct responses to another, would it be problematic for interpersonal forgiveness to be a direct response to an offender who has caused one harm? For interpersonal forgiveness to have the same causal relation to the other’s action, attitude, or circumstance would be to bestow good-will in turn for harm done. Do efforts by the wrongdoer to repudiate the offense, rather than continuing to endorse the act, shift the relation from imparting good-will for harm done to one of mutual respect and good-will? It is a perspective that views mutual good-will as the threshold of an interpersonal exchange that reflects the depth of humanity in its cognitive and affective dimensions.

I argue, in chapter 3, that by repudiating the wrongful act, the offender severs himself from the ill-will demonstrated by the injurious act. He further conveys that he shares the injured party’s values (at least with respect to attributing wrongfulness to the act and attitude), and that he values her as an individual and as a member of the moral community.

Though the moral injury cannot be metaphysically undone, does the injured party have a right to the offender’s contrition? Is this claim connected to the offender’s obligation to make amends? In chapter 1, I will argue that as a member of the moral community, the injured party has a right to redress according to the moral principle enjoining intentional harm. At the same time, a truly contrite offender, as a moral agent, has the right to have the injured party “hear him out” with regard to his contrition, though he does not have the right to be forgiven. In this dissertation, I will be arguing, from a Strawsonian point of view, that reactive attitudes, such as interpersonal forgiveness, are connected to rights and moral responsibility, and rights and moral
responsibility are a basis of justice.

In the film L’Enfant (2005), Bruno and Sonia are young, carefree lovers living off petty thievery and the government. Shortly after the birth of their child, Jimmy, Bruno sells him to black-marketeers. When he tells Sonia, she immediately collapses, and then notifies the police. Bruno is genuinely surprised at Sonia’s reaction, and says “I thought we could have another one,” and “I am sorry I didn’t mean to hurt you.” He is able to recover Jimmy, but, at twice the price he received for the sale. He returns Jimmy to Sonia, though, she refuses to forgive him or resume their relationship.

After snatching a purse leads to his younger accomplice’s arrest, Bruno goes to the police station to confess to the police that it was he, and not the younger boy, who had coordinated the theft. He also returns the boy’s moped which the two had abandoned while trying to avert the police. Rather than selling the moped and slipping into anonymity in avoiding the police, Bruno takes responsibility for his actions.

The final scene in the film shows the reconciliation between Bruno and Sonia. More than the acknowledgment and repudiation for his wrongdoing in selling Jimmy, Bruno demonstrates a commitment to change and regret for the pain he caused Sonia. Bruno is in prison when Sonia visits him. It is an intimate caring exchange where Bruno’s remorse builds into wrenching sobs as they both cry and hold one another.

In returning the moped and confessing to the crime, Bruno demonstrates a commitment to change and the taking of moral responsibility for his wrongful act and attitude. He is not portrayed in the film as a malicious or abusive individual, but his feckless childishness leads him to an unspeakable act—the sale of his child. The final scene in the film is a representation of the significance of moral responsibility to interpersonal forgiveness. It reflects how moral
responsibility includes not only acknowledgment and repudiation of the wrongdoing but commitment to change and regret for the pain caused the injured party and how it is an integral part of interpersonal forgiveness.

If taking moral responsibility for wrongful acts and the belief that the offender’s contrition is genuine are necessary conditions for interpersonal forgiveness, does this involve an aspect of trust where one makes oneself vulnerable to the potential indeterminacy of the offender’s future actions? Does one’s decision to forgive also incorporate a sense of hope, hope that the offender’s regret and commitment to change are sincere, and hope in a larger sense that human beings have the capacity for true interpersonal relations? Alternatively, does contrition render interpersonal forgiveness redundant, in that there is no longer anything to forgive?

In chapter 2, I will propose conditions that the injured party must fulfill for interpersonal forgiveness to obtain that include: forgoing revenge, relinquishment of resentment, not holding the wrongdoing against the offender, and communication of forgiveness. In fulfilling these conditions, I contend that the good-will that is extended by interpersonal forgiveness is informed in part by trust and hope.

At the point where the injured party is amenable to forgiving, perhaps this purely mental and emotional transition constitutes interpersonal forgiveness; or is something else necessary for interpersonal forgiveness to obtain? One may consider that it seems that the injured party should communicate interpersonal forgiveness to the offender. Thinking along these lines, a worry comes to light that if the offender has taken moral responsibility, acknowledged and repudiated the wrongdoing, expressed regret for the action and has committed to change, an uncommunicated interpersonal forgiveness might cause him undue suffering through continued efforts to make amends, or contribute to a sense of futility in being forgiven or induce a sense of
unfairness at the seemingly unyielding resistance, possibly incurring resentment in the offender himself.

In support of the communication condition that I propose the injured party must fulfill, in chapter 2, I consider the potential effects that the non-communication of interpersonal forgiveness may have for the offender. I argue that interpersonal forgiveness as a process of reciprocal good-will indicates communication of interpersonal forgiveness is a necessary condition.

There are many questions and interesting puzzles surrounding forgiveness. Some of the questions raised above will be directly addressed in this dissertation, while a consideration of other questions may be found interwoven in the discussions. Good-will performs a significant role and permeates the structure of forgiveness in its core features. *Interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained* is the thesis that I will argue in the following chapters of the dissertation. I endeavor to propose an account of forgiveness that argues that a form of personal justice is attained through the fulfillment of necessary conditions by both the injured party and the offender in the interpersonal forgiveness process.

It is a perspective that is worth exploring because the value of interpersonal and social relations is made richer when we take moral responsibility for our actions, and in the taking of moral responsibility, a necessary aspect of justice can be realized. Interpersonal forgiveness arising out of the taking of moral responsibility involves both parties participating in the painful and hard work of relations between human beings. Interpersonal forgiveness in this way endorses a world of interpersonal relations that takes wrong doing seriously, but also believes in renewal and the capacity to change. It is a commitment to recognizing the past wrongful act without letting it subsume the future relationship as members in the moral community whose
basic rule consists in behavior and attitudes that reflect good-will toward one another, and so through the interpersonal forgiveness process, the value of both individual and community relations is reaffirmed.

As asserted above, this dissertation focuses on a face-to-face interpersonal forgiveness involving serious injury. Before arguing that interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained, I will first consider forgiveness in a more general sense, through reflecting on its role in several alternate modes, including, as it is employed simply as a kind reassuring phrase; its application in debt forgiveness; and its understanding in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Forgiveness is a familiar notion that has various forms and nuances within distinct contexts. It is used in interpersonal contexts that are not viewed as serious injuries, such as lateness to a lunch date where an exchange may take place such as “I’m sorry, I left later than I should have” with a response saying “Don’t worry, I forgive you.” In cases like these, however, forgiveness seems almost unnecessary, because no serious damage has been done, the injured party does not feel particularly injured, and the act was not intentionally done to injure the party left waiting. Of course, if the friend left waiting considered the late arrival as a harm, or the lateness is habitual then the behavior and attitudes are no longer associated with this benign category of general benevolence and would fall under the category of serious wrongs that I am considering with respect to interpersonal forgiveness.

In cases of a different sort, such as forgiveness of a debt, there is a transaction where one party performs some service or issues a loan, or provides some kind of goods and the receiving party owes the creditor some form of compensation that will satisfy that debt. Forgiveness of the debt generally occurs when the creditor agrees to accept less than the amount owed in complete
satisfaction of the debt. This practice may share with interpersonal forgiveness the sense that in forgiving the forgiver is not made whole.

Debt forgiveness, however, is missing a critically important feature of forgiveness as it is experienced interpersonally. It does not represent the moral aspect associated with interpersonal forgiveness, and the incommensurability of certain injuries, in that there is no standard form of measurement, and no act or object of equal value to replace that which was injured, something Kant recognized in dignity as an end-in-itself. Since I am arguing that rights are a significant feature of interpersonal forgiveness, it is notable that Joel Feinberg contends that the knowledge that one has rights is a primary feature of the dignity and self-respect that is the basis of one’s humanity.  

The moral aspect is present in the Judaic tradition where it is held that when ethical commandments are violated and wrongs committed against individuals it is a sin against God as well. Some sins are forgiven by God immediately upon repentance and some take an entire lifetime to be forgiven. The moral aspect is similarly emphasized in the Christian tradition, where repentance is a means for God to expunge one’s sins, and in the gospel according to Luke the injured party is admonished to reproach the offender and if he repents forgive him.

The secular understanding of interpersonal forgiveness maintains the moral aspect that a wrong has been committed, though, shifting the focus from sins against God, to a breach within an interpersonal context. In the religious context forgiveness involves the ultimate authority of God expiating the sins of the repentant and affording the wrongdoers a “clean slate.” In the

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3 The moral issues in cases of usury, are not a standard feature of the form of debt forgiveness where a part is accepted for the whole. In cases such as these, rather than falling under the category of debt forgiveness, they would more appropriately be addressed in interpersonal forgiveness or the criminal law.


6 Ibid, p. 67.
interpersonal context the injured party of wrongdoing has the authority to forgive the wrongdoer though it does not necessarily follow, as in the religious context, that if the wrongdoer repents—acknowledges and repudiates the wrong, commits to change, and expresses regret to the injured party, that the “slate will be wiped clean,” instead, the injured party resolves not to hold the wrongdoing against the offender. In this way, accounts that claim that contrition obviates the necessity to forgive fail to recognize that the past can’t be undone but that there is good-will directed toward the present and future. The egregiousness of some acts is intertwined with the incommensurability of the loss (moral wrongs to dignity are not measurable and replaceable as are some material losses), yet interpersonal forgiveness is still possible as a process that is supported by a commitment to forgive.

It may benefit an understanding of interpersonal forgiveness from a secular point of view to distinguish interpersonal forgiveness from alternative responses to wrongdoing. Interpersonal forgiveness is not a forgetting of the injury. A difference that separates the two can be seen in a feature of forgetting where the disappearance of the memory of wrongdoing is a passive process that does not capture the decisiveness represented by interpersonal forgiveness. Additionally, since interpersonal forgiveness can occur without forgetting, interpersonal forgiveness and forgetting are not synonymous. Serious injuries occupy a powerful presence in memory. Part of the reason for this is that the memory of serious injury is reinforced by the emotions it is associated with. Anger, fear, resentment, and grief are among the emotions that contribute to the persistence of memories of serious injury. An unfortunate accident may result in a serious injury but negligent, and most importantly, intentional acts are further differentiated by the effects of the moral implications of the wrongfulness of the act. The memory of the serious injury, the emotions attached to the memory and the wrongfulness of the act, and the conceptual recognition
of the wrongfulness of the act, resist forgetting the act and require the specificity of a purposeful action in order to forgive.

Interpersonal forgiveness is also not unconditional love. Unconditional love is like a continuum. It is a cohesive force uninterrupted by breaches of any kind. In contradistinction, interpersonal forgiveness signifies a before and after. There is a difference between forgiving and not-forgiving, when interpersonal forgiveness begins, not-interpersonal forgiveness ends. Interpersonal forgiveness is an act that initiates the change. The act is a commitment that may require a continual effort, but the determination to forgive is guided by that commitment, so that the difference between interpersonal forgiveness and not-interpersonal forgiveness does not blur.

Identifying the motives that foster interpersonal forgiveness can provide another means to differentiate interpersonal forgiveness from other acts, attitudes, and emotions that address wrongdoing, such as vengeance or some forms of punishment. Interpersonal forgiveness is not a manifestation of ill-will. In the notions of forgiveness that share a family resemblance, though do not accurately portray secular interpersonal forgiveness, such as debt forgiveness and the Jewish and Christian traditions, forgiveness is acknowledged as a positive outcome. Furthermore, it is a recognition of the elimination of a debt, in the case of debt forgiveness and in the Jewish and Christian traditions, the repentance of sins. In the latter cases, forgiveness is the response to a fulfillment of an obligation, in the former forgiveness deems the obligation satisfied. They both take the actions and attitudes of the debtor or offender into consideration in order to forgive. In the Jewish and Christian traditions’ cases, an expression of ill-will would be reflected in a refusal to forgive.

In secular interpersonal forgiveness, where wrongdoing is not resolved through monetary compensation, or the expiation of sins, forgiveness expresses more than the lack of ill-will, it is a
demonstration of the good-will of the injured party. However, as I will argue, it is still a response to the acts and attitudes of the wrongdoer. Secular interpersonal forgiveness, as an interpersonal process, is still an exchange between parties as it is in debt-forgiveness and in the Jewish and Christian traditions.

A consideration of the elements that contribute to shaping secular interpersonal forgiveness reveals that in addressing serious wrongs, interpersonal secular forgiveness is an act, an attitude and an emotion. The act is the commitment to achieve mutual resolution, engendering a process which may require continual effort. As discussed above, secular interpersonal forgiveness as an act is not a forgetting, or a manifestation of unconditional love. Secular interpersonal forgiveness is also an attitude of good-will that reaches beyond the prudential parameters of debt forgiveness, and even the Judeo-Christian forms of forgiveness which are focused on the obligations and expectations of God’s love. As an emotion, it relinquishes resentment and is a form of love that is the basis of care and good-will.

Chapter 1

Interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained

Personal Justice

The claim that interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained, refers to justice between persons, a justice based on the moral responsibility of the face-to-face encounter of human beings in the moral community. Personal justice may not be a conventional category of justice in the philosophical literature, though, I believe that it is a concept that can reflect the dynamics in some areas of interpersonal relations and I try to articulate it in what follows. It is not a form of retributive justice which seeks to punish the offender in proportion to the offense committed. The aim of personal justice is not to punish the offender, though,
incapacity, deterrence, or rehabilitation, may be additional state mandated consequences of the injury. In this way, retributive justice does not necessarily conflict with the justice that forgiveness recognizes, though it is distinct from the justice attained through moral responsibility alone.

Though personal justice is not retributive justice, as a form of justice it still belongs to a family of justice terms which share some common features. Acknowledgement is a necessary component in both personal justice and guilty pleas in the criminal law. Regret and remorse are also constituents of both. As I will discuss below and in subsequent chapters, regret and remorse are among the reactive attitudes which are identified by P.F. Strawson as reflecting the good or ill-will that another directs towards you. Though remorse is not required to plead guilty, it has a mitigating effect on the punishment received for commission of the crime.

An analogy with the New York criminal justice system reflects that in order to accept a plea of guilty it is necessary for the defendant to swear under oath that he committed a specific crime on a specific date, and that he waives both his right to be presumed innocent, and to be tried by a jury where the standard of guilt is “beyond a reasonable doubt.” If the defendant does not agree to the conditions of the plea, his guilt or innocence will be determined by a trial.  

The moral responsibility demonstrated by a plea of guilty usually benefits the defendant by reducing the severity of the sentence he would receive if he had gone to trial. Of course, if the defendant is innocent that is not a benefit. Social justice problems relating to guilty pleas for expediency and inadequacy of counsel are not the subject of this dissertation, so that for the sake of cogency, I am referring to acts where the defendant is guilty of the crime.

On the other hand, to plead not guilty when one is guilty of the crime is to eschew moral

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responsibility and even though a subsequent verdict of guilty after trial and sentence may be imposed there is still a sense that justice is not complete, since, the offender has not taken moral responsibility for the wrongdoing, but, instead, his responsibility has been produced in a governmental system. This indicates an additional need for personal justice, but, also, in this way, similar to personal justice where moral responsibility is missing, justice is not attained.

Moral responsibility is reflected by the plea of guilty, though, there are prudential reasons for receiving a reduced sentence after a plea of guilty, such as considerations as to the expense of a jury trial in court days, expert witnesses, jurors, transcripts, and legal fees, yet, there still is a basic appreciation for the taking of moral responsibility represented by the guilty plea, if it is a result of a determination to face the consequences of one’s actions. In the case of personal justice, the offender asserts himself as a moral being, purposeful in taking responsibility for his actions in recognition of the injured party as a human being to whom he is accountable.

Rectifying justice, as a form of Aristotelian justice, views criminal acts as a loss suffered by the injured party and an unlawful gain arrogated by the offender. In order to rebalance the state of affairs between the injured party and the offender a penalty is imposed by a judge.\(^8\)

Distributive justice, on the other hand, addresses the correct apportionment of such things as honors and money.\(^9\) In both branches of justice, reciprocity---which is a fundamental feature of personal justice---is indicated. It “…is based on the concept of proportional reciprocity in the cases of justice in transactions and distributive justice and on balanced reciprocity in the case of corrective justice…”\(^10\)

A relation between the two forms of justice is posited by Nicholas Wolterstorff, who takes an

\(^9\) Ibid, Book V, chapter 2, 1130b-30-34 (p. 1005-1006).
expanded view of distributive justice by considering it as the ground of rectifying justice. He argues that in rectifying justice, desert is a response to a violation of justice and that which the injured party and offender have as a “right,” so that he finds that “what Aristotle calls distributive justice is then that species of justice that has been violated.” Wolterstorff designates this explicated view of distributive justice as “primary justice.”¹¹ He finds that the term “distributive justice” is inadequate because not all forms of “primary justice” consist in maldistribution of material goods.¹²

A Wolterstorffian view that finds that distributive justice includes rights in general, rather than just a narrow material concern with such things as honors and money can lend support to an account of personal justice which is indicated in the claim that forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained. By incorporating rights which is a focus of personal justice, a Wolterstorffian view of Aristotle helps to locate personal justice in a lineage of justice terms originating in the notion of reciprocity which can be found in Aristotle’s account of justice. While Wolterstorff may be referring to the rights that are breached by crimes such as rape, murder, or robbery, which he includes in his expansive notion of distributive justice designated “primary justice,” I am focused on including the rights that are not necessarily recognized in criminal law, though, they are fundamental to participation in the moral community; such as the right not to be lied to or betrayed. In personal justice the ideas of proportion and balance found in Aristotle are discerned and applied by the two parties associated with the wrongdoing---the injured party and the offender, rather than an independent judge.

Justice in terms of addressing the violation of rights, reaches the core matter of the individuals involved in the breach. Aside from any punishment in the form of imprisonment,

¹² Ibid.
rehabilitation, or community service, which is meted out by an institution of government, there is a personal element that reflects membership in the moral community and the duty of the offender to be accountable to the injured party herself.

In the film *Luce* (2019), Luce is an adopted Eritrean-African-American high-school student who exemplifies excellence in school-work, athletics, leadership, and charm. His white upper-middle class adoptive parents, the school principal, coaches, and teachers hold him to a high level of achievement. He especially resents that his African-American history teacher, Harriet Wilson, holds him to this superior standard, yet, turns in his African-American class-mate, DeShawn, for having marijuana in his locker, causing him to lose his scholarship.

Luce secures a series of alibis for himself while he arranges for Harriet’s home to be vandalized with racial epithets. He is also behind Harriet’s mentally ill sister appearing at the high-school while students captured her breakdown on their phones, and he coordinates the fire in Harriet’s class-room, finally causing Harriet to lose her job. Harriet had reached out to his parents regarding a paper he wrote, and fireworks found in his locker, and she later schedules a conference between Luce, his parents, the school principal and herself. Luce’s slick maneuvering and his enabling parents—who have seen evidence to doubt his innocence—prevent him from being exposed as the perpetrator of the wrongdoings.

Personal justice is not attained between Harriet and Luce. Luce does not take moral responsibility for his actions. Features of personal justice, that are also found in the criminal law, such as acknowledgement, repudiation, and regret, are not demonstrated by Luce’s behavior. Rather, he uses all his resources to disguise his wrongdoings. Questions as to whether Harriet violated rights in her different handling of DeShawn’s and Luce’s infractions do not justify Luce’s violation of Harriet’s rights and the severity of the various assaults. Luce’s
actions fall under Joseph Butler’s abuses of resentment which I will consider in chapter 2. Luce’s aim is to inflict misery on Harriet, and his ill-will targets her mercilessly to achieve his objective.

The injured party has a valid claim that gives her standing to demand redress from the offender as a right. The claim is considered valid in recognition of the moral principle enjoining intentional harm. Joel Feinberg contends that the knowledge that one has rights is a primary feature of the dignity and self-respect that is the basis of one’s humanity.\textsuperscript{13}

Personal justice emphasizes the injured party’s right to be addressed as a human being rather than ignored as an uncomfortable reminder of failings or relegated to a component of the legal process. In this way, there may be some overlap with restorative justice. The recognition of the humanity of both the injured party and the offender is also an aim of restorative justice which, contrary to the state centered process of retributive justice, focuses on the individuals involved in the conflict.\textsuperscript{14}

Personal justice is a fundamental constituent of restorative justice though it is not synonymous. The offender’s acknowledgment, repudiation, commitment to change, and expression of regret to the injured party for the injury, if I am right, constitute necessary conditions for the attainment of personal justice. These characteristics of moral responsibility are also encouraged in restorative justice, though they are not so much an affirmation of human beings as morally responsible, as conditions to facilitate healing between the parties.\textsuperscript{15}

Another distinction between restorative justice and personal justice is the role of forgiveness. In personal justice, forgiveness is a response to the efforts of the offender to take responsibility.

\textsuperscript{13} Feinberg, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
and make amends. One can say that in personal justice forgiveness comes after the offender’s contrition, whereas, in restorative justice, the injured party is encouraged to forgive the offender as part of the process itself, or in some interpretations of restorative justice, forgiveness does not merely facilitate the process, it is a necessary feature without which restorative justice is not achieved.

Thinking about retributive justice in the criminal law and restorative justice practices indicates that reactive attitudes are integral to the process in both areas of justice. A question that may arise as to what reactive attitudes have to do with justice can look to these institutionalized practices to see how personal justice is not unique in the application of reactive attitudes to achieve its objectives. As I will be arguing, from a Strawsonian point of view, reactive attitudes are connected to rights and moral responsibility, and rights and moral responsibility are a cornerstone of justice.

In this dissertation, I am focusing on the violation of justice and the restoration of justice in personal justice. Prior to any breach in the rights of a moral agent, a state of personal justice can be said to exist through the reciprocal objectives of good-will exchanged between moral agents as members of the moral community. Adam Smith wrote that justice was ("on most occasions") a "negative virtue" and "only hinders us from hurting our neighbor." In this way, according to Smith, justice is exhibited when rights are not violated. In my Strawsonian application of the reactive attitudes which are associated with an expectation of good-will, I am emphasizing that prior to any breach of rights, there is an undisturbed personal justice based in good-will. It is not merely a Smithian state that is free from personal injury and property damage. Smithian justice

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18 Smith, p. 82.
may possess more indifference than personal justice. Personal justice is based in good-will and is a more positive state than the simple avoidance of transgression associated with a Smithean justice.

Justice as manifested in personal justice involves individual moral agents coming together in a face-to-face encounter to recognize rights and to make efforts to repair through the restoration of good-will. It is an emphasis on the present and the future, rather than adhering to the past and the act or attitude of wrongdoing. The attainment of justice is not just a matter of the offender making amends; the injured party has an essential role in achieving justice; she is not just a passive party to the process. If she continues to resent or hold the wrongdoing against the offender, even though he has proffered his contrition, justice is not attained. Her inability or hesitance in reconciling with the offender and restoring good-will towards this end indicates that she does not believe or accept that justice is attained. Whether the injured party herself is unjust, in this case, is more of an open question, since interpersonal forgiveness is not obligatory, though a charge of testimonial injustice may be levied against the injured party. Alternatively, she may be subject to aretaic disapproval from the moral community if her continued resentment is deemed vicious.

The account of interpersonal forgiveness that I am arguing for---interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained--- requires that both parties participate in the process. In considering the offender’s role in the attainment of justice through his moral responsibility to acknowledge, repudiate, commit to change, and express regret for the wrongful act or attitude it may be helpful to draw from David Shoemaker’s distinctions of moral responsibility as

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19 The term “recognition” may seem to retract from the process aspect of forgiveness. However, it is a “success” term that implies the process is completed. I discuss the role of “recognition” more in chapter 4. (Thank you Rachel Cohon for suggesting the concept of “success term.”)
“answerability,” “attributability,” and “accountability.”

Interpersonal forgiveness as an intersubjective process requires that each party respond to the other. The original context of the injury involved two parties and the interpersonal forgiveness process as a further development of that context should include the participation of at least both of the original parties in an interchange. What could the offender say or do to make up for an irremediable act? He cannot make the injured party whole by replacing what was lost, the act cannot be undone. Yet, if interpersonal forgiveness is conceived as a letting go of resentment because justice has been realized, interpersonal forgiveness can represent that the offender has been held to account for the injury.

Justice can be accomplished outside of political institutions through the offender taking moral responsibility for the wrongdoing. I am arguing that one way to accomplish this is the acceptance of the offender’s acknowledgement, repudiation, and regret by the injured party. The process of interpersonal forgiveness is able to achieve justice, in part, through efforts by the offender to take moral responsibility for his wrongful act or attitude.

David Schoemaker argues that “answerability” and “attributability” are distinct conceptions of moral responsibility. What one requires to be morally responsible and “answerable” pertains to the justifiability of one’s reasons for an action or attitude. An agent is “answerable” where he possesses reasons that support an evaluative commitment. He can be challenged and a demand may be made to defend the reasons for his actions or attitude. Actions which are unjustifiable are recognized as those that are given warrant by reasons supporting evaluative commitments that fail to at least correspond to the standard norm of the relationship.

For one to be morally responsible by having one’s actions and attitudes “attributable” to

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21 Ibid, p. 622.
oneself, though not ‘answerable,’ involves evaluative or emotional commitments that are not grounded in reasons. In such a case one cannot be challenged as to the sufficiency of one’s reasons, though an aretaic appraisal of one’s actions and attitudes may be rendered affecting any future interactions that one may engage in.22

“Accountability” is a concept of moral responsibility which refers to holding someone responsible for his attitudes and actions. It is a concept that involves relationship defining norms. All parties to the relationship have claims that these norms be upheld. A breach of a relationship defining norm is impermissible, and as a result, reactive attitudes and sanctions are warranted. In a case where relationship defining norms are violated, the offender may also be “answerable” for his action or attitude, though if his evaluative commitments are not supported by reasons that he can assert in his defense, the offense may instead, still be “attributable” to him thereby invoking the moral response of aretaic appraisal and importantly, the sanctions that the injured party is entitled to. 23

In the account of interpersonal forgiveness, that I am proposing, the offender has intentionally committed a wrongful act or expressed a wrongful attitude. As members of the moral community, we have an obligation not to harm other moral agents and a right not to be harmed. 24 These obligations and rights do not only refer to bodily or material safeguarding. As members of the moral community we have an expectation and a right to be treated with a certain amount of regard.

In Shoemaker’s terms, the offender, as a member of the moral community, has violated a “relationship defining norm” by his wrongful act or attitude and is accountable to the injured

24 In this dissertation, I am focusing on relationships between moral agents, it is not a claim that moral agents only have obligations toward other moral agents and that only moral agents possess rights.
party. The injured party has a right that the norms of the relationship, as members in the moral community be upheld. In the film *A History of Violence*, Tom Stall’s lies to his wife Edie and their family are a violation of the norms of the relationship. Beginning from their first meeting and throughout their twenty-year marriage, Tom withheld his criminally violent past life from Edie, instead, deceiving her with an entirely fabricated version of his life before they met. Further compounding this duplicity, when Tom’s former associates show up and expose his illicit past, he denies that the claims are true when Edie asks.

Tom has been a caring and responsible husband and father for the duration of his marriage. For Edie, and his children, the lies call in to question the veracity of this perceived experience. His identity has become unstable, and the care, protectiveness, trust, and intimacy that had secured the family bond has been fractured. Both lies---the lie about his past, and the lie denying that the mobsters’ claims are true, in addition to what the lies uncover---create a breach of the defining norms of the relationship.

Considering Tom’s moral responsibility in terms of Shoemaker’s distinction between “answerability” and “attributability,” the reasons behind Tom’s lies indicate that Tom is “answerable” as well as “accountable” for his wrongful acts. Furthermore, his reasons can be “challenged” and a demand made that he defend the reasons for his wrongful acts. Tom has told Edie that he spent three years in the desert “killing” “Joey”—Tom’s name in his former life—and that he was reborn when he met her. In addition to these reasons for perhaps both lies, Tom has spent twenty years caring for his family, his community, and his place of business, all which lend further support for his reasons.

Though recognizing the distinction that Shoemaker draws between “answerability” and “attributability,” it may not be as sharply limned as he argues, since, it still seems possible that
the moral responsibility of at least some wrongdoers may include both designations. In the film *L'Enfant*, one reason that Bruno gives to Sonia for selling their son is that he thought that they would have another one. This reason may have been inchoate at the time that he agreed to the sale with the black-marketeers, yet become more fully formed when confronted with Sonia’s distress. So that Bruno is “answerable” for the wrongdoing and the wrongdoing is “attributable” to him, as well. It is also plausible that “attributability,” in general, may include cases where reasons for wrongful actions or attitudes may be gleaned after the fact through reflection by the offender and discussion with the injured party and others.

I will be arguing that interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained. The justice referred to is the justice that occurs between two people, a personal justice that reflects shared values and the respect for one another’s rights as moral agents within the moral community. The interpersonal forgiveness that recognizes that justice is attained is an attitude, an emotion, and an action supported by the belief that the wrongdoer regrets, and repudiates the wrongful act and is committed to change.

The injured party believes that the offender is making an effort to repair his disregard or breach of her rights. The interpersonal forgiveness process is concentrated in part on the restoration of appropriate regard and good-will. Though the injured party has not violated any rights of the offender, the interpersonal forgiveness process also preserves the rights of the offender through the injured party’s forgoing revenge. This contributes to maintaining the offender’s rights as revenge is considered an abuse. Joseph Butler contends that revenge is an abuse of resentment because it “aims at misery” whereas appropriate resentment “aims at good” in order to prevent and remedy injury.\(^{25}\) The offender’s rights are also preserved by

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communicating to the moral community that he wants to abide by the norms that protect the rights of moral agents, that he shares these values and does not want to be exiled from the moral community.

A reader may wonder how rights are connected to reactive attitudes. Rights may seem to possess a more universal character while reactive attitudes may seem more local. These perceived differences may represent the seemingly more objective quality of rights. The criteria for fulfillment of rights appear more fixed than they are for reactive attitudes while also possessing an aspect of necessity in contrast to reactive attitudes. However, these differences are reconciled to a practicable degree when considered in relation to moral agents’ interpersonal relations as members of the moral community. Understanding the reactive attitudes as semi-cognitive, in addition to viewing the expectation for a certain regard from other moral agents as a right which the reactive attitudes reflect in interpersonal relations can provide a means to bridge reactive attitudes and rights.

I will be arguing that interpersonal forgiveness arises out of a series of events as follows: an offender intentionally injures an agent, the agent responds with an attitude of resentment, the offender acknowledges, repudiates, commits to change, and expresses regret for the wrongful act and injury done to the agent, the agent forgoes revenge, relinquishes resentment, refrains from holding the wrongdoing against the offender and expresses forgiveness to the offender.

Resentment, repudiation, regret, and forgiveness are reactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes are semi-cognitive, they are directed to an object and are supported by an evaluative belief that that is the appropriate reaction to the object. The evaluative belief is further supported by other

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beliefs held by the agent that contribute to determining whether interpersonal forgiveness is appropriate. Beliefs of this sort may be based on evidence of the offender’s “change of heart” and efforts to change.

P.F. Strawson’s seminal paper “Freedom and Resentment” remarks of “the great extent to which our personal feelings and reactions depend upon or involve, our beliefs about these attitudes and intentions.” Further developing this insight, beliefs are cognitive states of mind that reflect the strong criterion of “all things considered” or the weaker criterion to match the evidence in the world. Reactive attitudes are not themselves beliefs but they are closely connected to the beliefs from which they arise, to the effect that reactive attitudes are caused by beliefs about the object.

In this dissertation, I am arguing for conditional interpersonal forgiveness, an interpersonal forgiveness that requires the offender’s contrition. The reactive attitudes involved in the interpersonal forgiveness process include, resentment, repudiation, regret, commitment to change, and forgiveness. It is a view of interpersonal forgiveness as a process of moral responsibility. As I shall contend in the following chapters, the offender violates a right of the agent, the injured party feels resentment based on the belief that she has been unduly harmed, the offender takes responsibility for his breach through acknowledging the wrong, repudiating the wrong, expressing regret for the injury and committing to not perpetrating wrongful acts in the future. The injured party decides to forgive the offender based on her belief that his contrition is genuine. The injured party in turn, forgoes revenge, reduces resentment, commits to letting go of resentment entirely, and not holding the wrongful act against the offender, and communicates forgiveness. Moral responsibility is a fundamental component of justice and the conditions that

each party fulfills in the process will be shown to be reflective of moral responsibility and regard for moral agents and the moral community.

Jay Wallace connects the reactive attitudes to moral responsibility through means of the “quasi-evaluative stance.” Drawing from Strawson, he argues that moral responsibility is the “susceptibility” to the reactive attitudes of resentment, indignation, and guilt (or finding reactive attitudes to be appropriate). Furthermore, Strawson’s characterization of the expectation moral agents have to be treated with a certain amount of regard or good-will, and the demand associated with these expectations\textsuperscript{28} is further adapted by Wallace. The connection that the reactive attitudes have to “expectation” as a prohibition or requirement is developed by Wallace into the “quasi-evaluative stance” of holding someone to an expectation that one assents to. \textsuperscript{29}

Wallace emphasizes the expectation is one that the agent assents to, in order to distinguish irrational manifestations of the reactive attitudes, such as guilt, arising from an upbringing that prohibited certain behaviors that one finds now to be acceptable.

Though, Strawson does not specify “assent” to the reactive attitudes as necessary to support the assumption that “the expectation that one holds another (and oneself) to be treated with a certain amount of regard” has rational underpinnings, reason is an integral part of the reactive attitudes. That is made clear in the conditions that render the reactive attitudes inappropriate. Strawson proposes two species of exceptions to the reactive attitudes. The first species consists of cases where the agent “didn’t know,” “couldn’t help it,”\textsuperscript{30} “they left him no alternative” \textsuperscript{31} among other such cases. In cases like these the reactive attitude of resentment, of holding someone responsible, is not appropriate because the agent did not have the requisite intention to

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{30} Strawson, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p. 8.
harm. The reactive attitudes can be seen to respond to the evidence that intention to harm is not present, thus providing a reason to withhold, relinquish, or at least mitigate resentment. Reasons arising out of the evidence of the circumstances support the belief that resentment is not appropriate.

The second species of exceptions has two sub-divisions. In the first sub-division, “he was not himself,” or “under a great strain,” resentment is not appropriate based on reasons that assess the circumstances and the character of the agent. The belief that resentment is not appropriate is based in reasons. So, though reactive attitudes are not beliefs, they are supported by reasons that ground the belief as to whether they are appropriate or not. In this way, the requirement of beliefs that they conform to the world, is also the measure of the appropriateness of the reactive attitudes and an aspect of moral responsibility.

The second sub-division of Strawson’s second species of exceptions to the appropriateness of the reactive attitudes involves cases where the reactive attitudes should be withheld in all circumstances because the agent is “psychologically abnormal” or “morally undeveloped.” Agents in this category are not held to obligations of moral responsibility embedded in interpersonal relationships, instead they are to be “handled,” or “managed,” “cured,” or “trained.” Importantly, they cannot be “reasoned” with.

In cases where the reactive attitudes are to be entirely suspended, it is because reason, and the reasoning process are not available. Reactive attitudes are only appropriate where actions and attitudes can be justified by reasons, and there is a reciprocal recognition as to the reason based manifestation of the reactive attitudes, and the necessity for a response.

An appropriate degree of good-will is a right to be upheld in the moral community between

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid, p. 9.
34 Ibid, p. 10.
moral agents. It is an obligation in the interpersonal setting of the moral community. The injured party feels resentment based on her belief that her rights have been violated supported by the evidence of the circumstances, ruling out the excuses Strawson delineates in species one and sub-division one of species two, and the assessment that the offender does not fall under subdivision two of the second category, where reason and the reasoning process are not available.

The interpersonal response of the repentant offender—which will be more fully discussed in chapter 3—ensues as follows: the repentant offender, feels guilt, and regret, and recognizes his act or attitude that caused the injury is wrongful, and the reasons that support this finding, and as an accountable moral agent it is his responsibility to convey to the injured party, acknowledgement of the harm he caused, repudiation of the act, a commitment to change, and regret for the injury,

Along with the conditions the injured party must fulfill in order to forgive, I shall argue, these are the basic features of justice. Within this framework of personal justice, the injured party has a legitimate claim to redress. The reasons that support the injured party’s resentment are now contrasted with the reasons provided by the offender’s contrition, and the injured party may be convinced by the genuineness of the proffer and decide to forgive, based on her belief that his regret is real and he will not repeat his wrongdoing.

An objection that justice is attained through a process of interpersonal conditional forgiveness may be raised by Martha Nussbaum’s criticism of “transactional forgiveness.” Martha Nussbaum finds that the forgiveness process itself is a form of abuse.\(^\text{35}\) She argues that conditional forgiveness is entrenched in practices of self-denigration\(^\text{36}\) and unconditional forgiveness is


\(^{36}\) Ibid.
susceptible to attitudes of moral superiority or condescension.\textsuperscript{37} Though I will develop the conditions necessary for interpersonal forgiveness and personal justice in chapters 2 and 3, it is instructive to consider Nussbaum’s argument against conditional accounts of forgiveness to determine if my claim that interpersonal forgiveness attains justice is refuted by Nussbaum’s account.

Nussbaum traces forgiveness to Jewish and Christian traditions that require punishing rituals.\textsuperscript{38} She claims that the sheer amount of commandments which must be upheld according to the Jewish teshuvah\textsuperscript{39} and the necessity of a public repentance in cases of interpersonal wrongs \textsuperscript{40} in addition to the attitudes of anxiety and abasement that are expected to permeate one’s life \textsuperscript{41} impose all-encompassing burdens on the transgressor. However, Nussbaum finds the Christian practices are even more oppressive, she asserts that the “Christian transactional forgiveness process places a far greater accent on humility and lowness, as essential features of the human condition. Jewish teshuvah urges worry and discourages pride and confidence; but the tradition never claims that the human being as such is low and base and has no worth.” \textsuperscript{42}

Her exegesis of Jewish and Christian texts reflects an interesting dynamic in religious foundations of forgiveness. I am not persuaded, though, that contemporary forgiveness relies on the humiliation and degradation of the offender as integral to its practice. Nussbaum argues that through the auspices of the organized church \textsuperscript{43} a forgiveness process that is “violent toward the self” \textsuperscript{44} has informed our understanding of forgiveness. She refers to Charles Griswold’s

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p. 72.
account of forgiveness to point out that the conditions he includes for forgiveness to occur are associated with “Judeo-Christian history” and are representative of “transactional forgiveness”---which is her interpretation of conditional forgiveness and its abuses.  

Contrary to Nussbaum’s characterization of the conditional forgiveness process as “…a traumatic and profoundly intrusive process of self-denigration”, Griswold’s account is based in both the offender and the injured party engaging in Smithean sympathy. His narrative informed process doesn’t emphasize the “lowness” of the offender, rather, it aims to foster an understanding of his perspective and how it has changed. Making oneself vulnerable by contrition doesn’t entail “groveling.” And regret for wrongful action and commitment to change do not have to be equated with “acts of humiliation.” The offender engages in Smithean sympathy to understand the injury from the injured party’s perspective and his “change of heart” reflects this awareness. As moral agents we are all accountable for our acts and attitudes of wrongdoing, it doesn’t require a spectacle of “self-denigration.”

In Griswold’s account the injured party is not lording over the offender’s vulnerability, she is not relishing his discomfort, rather, she is engaging in Smithean sympathy to understand his perspective and “change of heart,” and she herself also comes to change her view of him in kind.

There is also no evidence in the film L'Enfant that Sonia is exploiting Bruno’s regret. Her forgiveness of him is not based on the degree he humbles himself. She also does not lecture him, beat him down with her anger and concern, or sneer at his efforts to make amends in order to escalate his expressions of self-reproach.

46 Ibid, p. 72.
47 Griswold, pgs. 51, 57, 89
48 Ibid, p. 51.
49 Ibid, p. 57.
It is not the intensity of his contrition or the lowering of himself in a self-flagellatory manner that moves Sonia to forgive Bruno. It is, specifically, the actions of moral responsibility he takes in confessing to the police that he engineered and was responsible for the theft, together with not letting his young accomplice take the blame in his stead, resulting in Bruno serving a prison sentence for his crime, that demonstrate his capacity and willingness to change. And of course, returning Jimmy to Sonia, without which, it would be questionable as to whether Bruno would be forgiven. Though there is potential for the forgiveness process to be abused, contrary to Nussbaum, it is not necessarily an abusive process. Accordingly, my argument that interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained is not refuted by Nussbaum’s account.

Chapter 2
The injured party’s conditions for interpersonal forgiveness

1. Forgo revenge

An explication of my thesis: interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained, will continue by examining the conditions necessary to interpersonal forgiveness starting with the injured party’s conditions and then followed by the conditions of the offender.

In order to forgive, the injured party must forgo revenge for the wrongful act or attitude. Revenge involves an intention or desire to inflict harm or hurt on the perpetrator of the injury. Since it encompasses an attitude of ill-will, it contradicts the good-will that is at the core of interpersonal forgiveness. The ill-will that seems to drive revenge as opposed to justice is partly a question of proportionality. In some forms of retributive justice the punishment is exacted in proportion to the severity of the crime. In revenge the idea of proportionality does not seem to
drive the impulse; it seems to be motivated by a desire for “payback”. If the agent affirms that what they are seeking is “revenge” as opposed to “justice,” it seems to be an extreme state of mind that directs ill-will onto an offender. In this highly agitated, biased state, the agent has anointed themselves as judge, jury, and executioner leaving no room for alternate views to assess an appropriate response to the wrongdoing. Furthermore, the idea of “payback” is persuasively argued by Martha Nussbaum to be “normatively problematic” because what was lost or injured in the offense cannot be restored through “payback,” so that the beliefs involved in the desire for revenge as payback are “false and incoherent.”

An objection may arise that good-will is a somewhat vague term and it is something that has no definite measure. However, it is not so arbitrary that its expression lacks a basis for communicating understandably in a common cultural setting. I am associating good-will and ill-will with the reactive attitudes, drawing from Strawson’s contention that the reactive attitudes and the good-will and ill-will that they reflect, are grounded in belief.

Considering beliefs as truth sensitive attitudes with an aim to match the world provides support to identifying good-will and ill-will in a more consistent way. In following Strawson, the determination of whether good-will or ill-will is expressed is based on evidence for the belief that reactive attitudes are appropriate. Thinking about good-will with respect to the film *A History of Violence*, if Tom Stall continued to engage in criminal activities and lied about his involvement, this would be evidence to disbelieve that he expressed good-will toward his family and it would warrant the reactive attitude of resentment as opposed to interpersonal forgiveness.

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50 Nussbaum, p. 5.
51 Strawson, p. 5. Strawson includes resentment, gratitude, and forgiveness among the reactive attitudes. He posits that attitudes such as these reflect a belief about the regard or lack of regard that another’s action to one conveys. Strawson pgs. 5-7.
52 Connecting good-will and ill-will as manifested in reactive attitudes with beliefs strengthens the argument that good-will and ill-will can be directed in a culturally sensitive way by associating the evaluative belief that the will is appropriate with other beliefs about the context of the situation.
An objection may also arise that the notion of good-will may be viewed skeptically between parties of unequal power. From this perspective, it may be suggested that where there is an imbalance in power, the party which possesses a stronger position, materially, socially, psychologically, or emotionally, may not grasp the other’s standing as a moral agent, and so the gesture of good-will will be unwelcome or inadequate. Though the account of interpersonal forgiveness that I am proposing is aimed at individuals where power differentials are not an issue, there is a mechanism that can address the concern for circumstances with an unequal power dynamic and can also contribute to clarifying the notion of good-will itself.

A test proposed by Annette Baier for the moral decency of a trust relationship can help to clarify the questions about good-will. The test of a good-will is based on a question that considers if the motives of each party were known to the other whether it would weaken or strengthen the relationship. Baier states “it is a test which amounts to a check on the will and good-will of the truster and trusted…” Applied for the purposes of interpersonal forgiveness, good-will is a motive that can strengthen a relationship and it can be justified to the recipient, while, alternatively, the ill-will that results in injury and the refusal to proffer contrition does not strengthen the relationship nor is it justifiable to the recipient.

Returning to revenge as an expression of ill-will, if an injured party intends to forgive a

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53 If an injured party possesses less power than the offender, it may be argued that forgiveness is a means to assert power by making a determination based on the injured party’s own beliefs and agency regardless of the offender’s perspective in taking moral responsibility for the injury or not. I can understand the merits of this view, though, I worry that if the offender is forgiven without taking moral responsibility that it allows the wrongdoing to continue to exist unrescinded. A separate point is made by Myisha Cherry who argues that those in position of power may use moral exemplars to persuade those with less power to forgive demonstrating a failure to recognize the autonomy of the victims. p. 56 “Forgiveness, Exemplars, and the Oppressed” in The Moral Psychology of Forgiveness, ed. Kathryn J. Norlock, London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2017. I would suggest that perhaps rather than forgiveness, an alternative approach is that the injured party can assert her agential powers by applying Strawson’s “objective attitude” toward the unrepentant offender, whereby she treats him as one that can’t be reasoned with, but only handled or managed. In this way, perhaps, the power differential is de-emphasized or even refused recognition by the injured party, so that there are now two individuals facing off and neither one respects the other.

wrongdoer, the difference between ill-will and good-will is recognized in common cultural settings and grounded in the belief supporting the reactive attitudes. Furthermore, the test for moral decency helps to clarify the difference between ill-will and good-will. Revenge as an expression of ill-will contradicts interpersonal forgiveness which is an expression of good-will, so in order to forgive the injured party must forgo revenge.

Revenge as the antithesis to interpersonal forgiveness is reflected in the film “Moonlight” (2016). The film explores Chiron’s (or “Little” ----as he is called---) life in three periods, as a child, an adolescent, and as adult. He is a withdrawn, neglected child who is frequently bullied and derided about his sexuality. His one friend, Kevin, who is confident and comfortable in his own skin tells Chiron “you have to show them you’re not soft.” The two wrestle and Kevin says “see, I knew you weren’t soft.” These words serve as a portent as ten years later, the camera focuses on the lead bully Terrell, now in high school, who mockingly asks Kevin, remember that game we used to play “knock down, stay down ?” Kevin agrees to play, and the camera circularly pans as Terrel advances on students in the yard; knocking books down like a menacing version of “duck, duck, goose.” He arrives at Chiron and jeers, “yo Kev, hit that N**;” “hit that faggot ass.” Kevin hesitates but finally punches Chiron hard in the face. Chiron goes down, but stands back up again, and Terrell goads him to hit him again. Kevin punches Chiron again in the face and as Chiron goes down, Kevin says pleadingly, stay down. Chiron gets up again defiantly glaring at Kevin. Terrell and his lackeys then stomp and kick Chiron until a school security guard breaks it up.

The scene shifts to a bandaged and bruised Chiron in the office of the school administrator who tells him “if you don’t press charges, you can’t stop this from happening.” Chiron says “you don’t know, you don’t even know.” She replies “oh I don’t? You think all this just started, boy?”
He interjects, “I ain’t no boy.” She admonishes him, “the hell you ain’t, if you were a man there
would be four other knuckleheads sitting right next to you.” Crying, he says again, “you don’t
even know.” What the school administrator doesn’t know, is not that Chiron has been bullied his
entire life but that he and Kevin had been close friends and one night before the attack when
Kevin had come upon Chiron sitting on the beach looking out at the ocean, they had shared an
intimate sexual and romantic moment.

Though justice as contrasted with revenge, may have been served if Chiron had identified his
assailants, he does not want to give Kevin up to the authorities. However, Chiron takes revenge
as contrasted with justice on Terrell, the main instigator. The scene is shot to portray
Chiron’s rage incarnate. Dressed in blue with a blue back-pack, he moves through a blurred,
bleached out white hallway, rectangular blue shapes on the walls and blue columns marking the
passage way. When he arrives in the class room the pale colorless light emphasizes the singular
focus of Chiron’s unreflective drive to inflict pain. He picks up a chair and smashes it onto
Terrell seated at his desk who then collapses onto the floor as Chiron strikes another powerful
blow before he is pulled off him.

Why is this not justice? It’s true the audience to the film is most likely gratified by the bully
finally experiencing the pain and defenselessness that he had subjected others to for years.
What’s more it may be especially satisfying that it was exacted by the abused protagonist that we
had all come to root for. But we don’t really want to return to a Hobbesian “state of nature” as a
“state of war,” at the ready to defend ourselves from attack. It may be a form of catharsis, yet,
we don’t wish to recreate its means in real life.

By the lights of retributive justice, if Terrell had died or had serious organ damage or other
permanent disabilities the disproportionality of his punishment would be underscored when
contrasted with the more transient injuries suffered by Chiron. Though the emotional injuries suffered by Chiron may be greater, they would better be assessed in criminal and civil proceedings. The scenes described reflect that Chiron was not judiciously considering what was proportionately “just.” Rather, it was more, as Butler explains in his depiction of revenge as an abuse of resentment, a desire to inflict pain. In this way, Chiron, like others who have been injured and are unrestrainedly resentful, their states of mind are enclosed in resentment which hinders or prevents them from assessing and exacting an appropriate sentence of punishment. Furthermore, in the vigilante style of justice the punishment would vary dependent on the executioner resulting in an erratic and inconsistent practice of “justice,” which is not the way we think of the application of justice, at least in the ideal, as even handed and dispassionate.

Chiron’s treatment of Kevin, on the other hand, is not driven by revenge. It is not that Chiron excuses Kevin, or engages in Strawsonian exceptions to reactive attitudes such as resentment. The defiant expression with which he faces Kevin as Kevin punches him in the face and the stone cold glower he directs at Kevin as he is being taken away by the police, after his assault on Terrell, express the resentment Chiron feels toward Kevin, though, importantly, Chiron’s resentment did not deteriorate into revenge.

Ten years later, as part III of the film focuses on Chiron’s adult life, late one night, he gets a phone call from Kevin. The two have not had contact since Chiron was placed in juvenile detention from his assault on Terrell. Kevin tells Chiron “hey man, I’m sorry about all that, all that…shit, what went down, Chiron, real shit, dawg.” He discloses that in the restaurant where he works as a cook, a man played a song on the jukebox, saying “this dude man, he just reminded me of you.” Kevin invites Chiron to his restaurant and says “I’ll cook you something. Maybe, maybe play that song for you.”

Shortly after their conversation Chiron shows up at Kevin’s restaurant. They talk a little, resuming their old dynamic before the incident to some degree. Kevin cooks him a meal and then drops some coins in the jukebox as Barbara Lewis’ song “Hello Stranger” starts to play. The poignant vocals singing “I’m so glad you stopped by to say hello to me. Remember that’s the way it used to be…Because I still love you so.”

Chiron drives Kevin home where they continue to talk making efforts to repair their relationship. Kevin explains “I wasn’t never really worth shit. Just kept on, man. Never really did anything I actually wanted to do. It was all I could do was to do what folks thought I should be doing. I wasn’t really myself.” Kevin tells him that now it’s different he has his son and his job. “..its a life you know? I ain’t never had that before.”

From his initial phone call to Chiron, and continuing with his admissions when they meet up, Kevin is portrayed as taking moral responsibility for his wrongdoing and proffering his contrition. Chiron’s drive from Atlanta to meet Kevin in Miami, demonstrates that he wants to participate in the reciprocal exchange toward repairing the relationship, and attaining personal justice and interpersonal forgiveness as opposed to the revenge he took against Terrell. Chiron resented Kevin for his wrongdoing but he did not lose all the benevolence of his humanity by expressing revenge. Chiron then makes a further overture toward reconciliation when he confides in Kevin, saying “you’re the only one, I haven’t really touched anyone since.” The two stand looking at one another. The last scene captures the two sitting near the ocean’s edge, Chiron’s head on Kevin’s shoulder while Kevin caresses his head. Revenge is not retributive justice nor is it personal justice, it does not seek the proportionate punishment of the former nor the reciprocal efforts toward reconciliation of the latter. As Butler contends, it aims at

57 Barbara Lewis, “Hello Stranger” from the album Hello Stranger, recorded 1963 Atlantic Records.
annihilation 58 which is the antithesis of forgiveness.

Revenge is also contrary to interpersonal forgiveness in the sense that it risks generating a cycle of ill-will. If an injured party chooses to retaliate against the wrongdoer, the original offender as recipient of this new injury may decide to respond in kind. Since the injuries that I am focusing on for the purposes of interpersonal forgiveness are intentional injuries, it may be considered more likely that the original offender would respond with further acts or attitudes of ill-will if the original injured party were to seek revenge. So, if the original offender intentionally injures someone, it does not seem unlikely that he will retaliate if the original injured party pursues revenge. An unending cycle of ill-will vitiates any attempt or intention toward interpersonal forgiveness.

In societies that uphold an “honor code”, revenge may be considered a form of justice. In the account that I am proposing (interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained), justice is a reciprocal realization of a personal justice, as I will develop more fully in the following chapters, that occurs through the offender’s contrition and commitment to change, and the injured party’s forgoing of revenge, relinquishing resentment, not holding the injury against the offender, and communication of forgiveness. The vengeance of the honor code is antithetical to the paradigm case of interpersonal forgiveness that I am arguing for which emphasizes moral responsibility and facilitates reconciliation.

Another aspect of revenge, which is also illustrated in the film Moonlight, that points to its irreconcilability with interpersonal forgiveness is raised by Joseph Butler who contends that revenge is an abuse of the emotion of resentment which was given to us to prevent and remedy injury.59 He claims that while resentment is given for the purpose of attaining good, its abuse as

58 Butler,” Sermon IX”, paragraph 15.
59 Ibid, paragraph 11.
manifested in revenge aims at misery, it is its objective. saying: “…this is what it directly tends toward as its proper design” ⁶⁰ He characterizes revenge as a malign form of resentment that has extinguished all of our natural benevolence. ⁶¹ Our natural benevolence is a significant feature of our humanity; to engage in an excess of ill-will in revenge that Butler sees as “extinguishing” that benevolence is to turn our backs on or even forfeit a precious aspect of our moral being. Revenge is not an appropriate substitution for justice.

The aim toward good or justice that resentment is meant to facilitate is subverted and rendered void by its abuse in revenge. From this perspective, revenge is not only incompatible with good-will but it is the annihilation of good-will and so interpersonal forgiveness as an expression of good-will in this mental and emotional landscape cannot even be conceived.

### 2. Relinquish Resentment

In addition to forgoing revenge, another condition an injured party must fulfill in order to forgive consists in relinquishing resentment. As the account I am arguing for is an interpersonal forgiveness based on the reciprocity of responses between the injured party and the offender, I am asserting that in order to forgive, the injured party relinquishes resentment only in response to the offender’s contrition. Interpersonal forgiveness is a way of addressing and recognizing the wrongful act and the intention behind it.

The presence of resentment and the conditions for its release is one way in which interpersonal forgiveness is distinguished from compassion. The relinquishing of resentment is not an element in compassion. Moreover, the circumstances in which interpersonal forgiveness extends good-will differentiates it from the good-will of compassion. In the case of interpersonal forgiveness, there is always an injury perpetrated against the potential forgiver that presupposes

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⁶⁰ Ibid, paragraph 12.
⁶¹ Ibid, paragraph 15.
the possibility of interpersonal forgiveness, whereas, in the expression of compassion, the individual extending compassion may simply be an uninvolved third-party.

Charles Griswold raises the possibility of third-party forgiveness, in a case where the agent has a close relationship with the injured party and has good reason to believe that the injured party would forgive the offender. Though, this is feasible where the primary injured party is deceased, or unable to communicate her forgiveness, I am focused in this dissertation on the possibility of forgiveness between an injured party and a wrongdoer who are both alive and able to participate in the forgiveness process.

The interpersonal forgiveness process is a reciprocal exchange between the parties specifically affected by the wrongdoing. The injured party has the authority to forgive because she has been directly affected by the wrongdoing. The ill-will communicated by the wrong is targeted at the injured party and she has a right not only to the offender’s contrition, but to have him convey his remorse directly to her. This exchange aims at a personal justice between the parties. The direct participation by the parties facilitates the evolvement of both parties toward reconciliation. A third-party cannot undergo this transformation for the injured party.

Conversely, in the justice sought in the criminal court system where the transformation of the parties and the reconciliation between the parties is not emphasized, the injured party and the offender are represented by attorneys who are third-parties to the wrongdoing, though sometimes the offender may represent himself pro-se. Accordingly, there is no counterpart to third-party compassion in the account I am proposing.

Resentment is also not an aspect of compassion because the focus is on empathizing or sympathizing with the suffering of the injured party not addressing a wrong. Unlike compassion interpersonal forgiveness is not a self-less disregard for one’s own interests. The presence of

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62 Griswold, p.119.
resentment indicates that one takes issue with the way one has been treated by the offender’s acts or attitudes. I will argue that in order for the injured party to relinquish resentment, the wrongful acts and attitudes must be redressed through the offender’s contrition.

An objection to the relinquishing of resentment only in response to the offender’s contrition is raised by an account that argues that “self-pertaining” reasons are moral reasons to forgive and relinquish resentment. Though my account is specifically focused on “interpersonal forgiveness,” the objection arising out of the larger category of forgiveness is still relevant (as will also be the case with subsequent objections that I consider in this dissertation).

Howard McGary defines a “self-pertaining reason” as: “a reason that shows concern for the self without being selfish.” A self-pertaining reason does not include attending to one’s welfare at the expense of others. However, the dissipation of resentment in the forgiving party may be the result of an appeal to self-pertaining moral reasons that are not selfish, such as ridding oneself of the destructive effects of the emotion and the enabling of one to engage with others released from the perspective-distorting aspects of resentment.

In his account of forgiveness McGary does not include conditions that the offender must meet in order to be forgiven. Moreover, he contends that even if the offender repents and has a change of heart, it may not be sufficient to engender the emotional transformation in the injured party that is necessary to relinquish resentment. Yet, he argues that overcoming resentment for self-pertaining reasons is not a form of condoning because the seriousness of the offense is not diminished nor is it a form of excusing the offender because the offender is still recognized as responsible for the injury. As I will argue in chapter 4, condonation allows the wrongful

64 Ibid, p. 345.
66 Ibid.
act to continue by not requiring the offender to proffer his contrition. In this way, the injured party condones the wrongful act as interpersonal forgiveness requires that the offender be held accountable by both parties, and so interpersonal forgiveness does not obtain.

The permanence of certain injuries is a persuasive testament to the potential unforgivability of the agent whose actions inflicted the resulting harm. In such cases though, if resentment is overcome solely for self-pertaining reasons, it seems that the forgiver is not responding to the context of the injury. For the well-being of the injured party, it may be necessary to let go of resentment, yet, if the offender is excluded from the process, a feature that I am arguing is essential for interpersonal forgiveness is missing.

I am arguing that responding to the context of the injury involves the participation of the offender.\textsuperscript{67} Contexts vary, depending on the relationships and features of the circumstances. McGary’s self-pertaining reasons for relinquishing resentment side-step the communicative messaging and the directed nature of the injury. The injured party is not responding to the offender. Instead of confronting the offender by considering his contrition or his refusal to proffer contrition, the injured party turns inward. In this way, it is similar to occasions for pursuing personal goals and projects that originate solely in the individual’s private interior world. However, the context of the injury does not reside in the injured party’s mind. The context of the injury is that the offender has intentionally wronged the injured party and therefore, the offender, his actions, and his perspective are an integral part of the context, and should not be discounted in principle.

\textsuperscript{67} I am arguing for interpersonal forgiveness as a process of moral responsibility that requires the reciprocal involvement of the injured party and the offender. Cases where there is a power differential and the worry is that the participation of the offender will exacerbate the injuries of the injured party may not be good candidates for interpersonal forgiveness, perhaps forgiveness within a context of restorative justice where community members may also participate may be more suitable. I am arguing for interpersonal forgiveness as a paradigm case that aims at reconciliation achieved through personal justice.
I am arguing that interpersonal forgiveness by design involves more than one person—the forgiver and the forgivee. In interpersonal forgiveness, with its emphasis on personal justice, if the forgivee does not acknowledge, repudiate, and regret the wrong, then the forgiver is not responding to a change in the context of the injury; forgiveness appears as an analogue of condoning or excusing. Given that forgiving for reasons of self-care excludes the participation of the offender, I am not persuaded that self-care is a reason to forgive for my account of interpersonal forgiveness which aims at personal justice for both the injured party and the offender. For interpersonal forgiveness, forgiveness is not comparable to such self-determined projects as the pursuit of educational, professional, or health goals which though they may be influenced by family, friends or mentors, still originate in the context of an individual’s mind and are primarily sought to benefit the individual, regardless if parents or others are looming as well. From another perspective, interpersonal forgiveness is not a game of solitaire, it requires two players. In chapter 4 I will advance a structural argument that supports interpersonal forgiveness as an interpersonal reciprocal process.

Additionally, relinquishing resentment and forgiving for “self-pertaining” reasons is a qualification of the good-will that is conveyed by forgiveness. The good-will associated with forgiveness is expressed by the injured party to the offender. To forgive solely for self-pertaining reasons while maintaining an attitude of indifference toward the offender does not express good-will toward the offender. Indifference may even be thought of as ill-will.68

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68 A concern may arise that forgiveness for self-pertaining reasons does not necessarily reflect indifference toward an offender in cases where the offender is unwilling or unable to show contrition. However, the indifference I am worried about arises when an offender is contrite and the forgiveness for self-pertaining reasons excludes him from the process. For interpersonal forgiveness, if an injured party seeks to forgive an offender who is unwilling or unable to show contrition, it risks condonation of the wrongdoing, defined as—to accept and allow behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive to continue. My worry that self-pertaining reasons reflect a paucity of good-will also only applies to offenders who are contrite. It does not apply to the case where the wrongdoer does not remember the injury. Additionally, this would not be a good candidate for interpersonal forgiveness. The reciprocal exchange involved in forgiveness as a process of moral responsibility cannot operate with only one cognizant party.
Though, McGary argues that “self-pertaining reasons are not “at the expense of others,”” 69 in the case where an offender is truly contrite and either the injured party is aware of his “change of heart” but refuses to take it into consideration or she is not aware of his “change of heart” because she refuses to “hear him out,” to exclude the offender from the forgiveness process by not taking his contrition into consideration is to treat him with the objective attitude as one that can’t be reasoned with. McGary’s account claims to still hold him responsible, but by not taking the offender’s contrition into consideration, it does not allow the offender to “take responsibility” himself as a moral agent and face the human being he injured by attempting to redress his wrongful action through appeal to the injured party. 70 His efforts to take moral responsibility are ignored or dismissed. The injured party may even be charged with a testimonial injustice against the wrongdoer. By refusing to take his contrition into consideration, the injured party neglects available evidence, and in this way violates the norms for doxastic deliberation in forming the belief that the offender is untrustworthy. It is a judgment that rejects him not as a source of information but as a person. 71 The offender’s undertaking of moral responsibility becomes a solitary, hermetic act. In this way it exiles him from the moral community. Letting go of resentment for purposes of health omits a feature critical to the interpersonal forgiveness process, in part because it is a unilateral act of self-care. Reasons of self-care may be relevant to interpersonal forgiveness but they are neither necessary nor sufficient to forgive for the paradigm case of interpersonal forgiveness that I am arguing for.

Another objection to relinquishing resentment in response to the offender’s contrition, that I proposed as one of the conditions that must be fulfilled by the injured party in order to forgive

69 Ibid, p. 345.
70 As I have been arguing interpersonal forgiveness is a process of moral responsibility involving the reciprocal exchange of the injured party and the offender with the objective of accountability, reconciliation, and personal justice.
may be found in Joseph Butler’s account which holds, as previously alluded to, that resentment that is not impaired by its abuse is compatible with good-will.

Joseph Butler’s account of forgiveness memorialized in his sermons at the Rolls Chapel in 1726 has provided a foundational resource for philosophical studies of forgiveness. The possibility of forgiveness arises when one is injured by intentional wrongdoing. Before forgiveness occurs, Butler argues, one feels resentment which is the natural response to injury though not to mere harm, as the former is an injustice, the result of intentional action as recognized by reason, and the latter is “occasioned by mere sensation and feeling” where the cause of the discomfort is not a malicious act. 72 As mentioned in my discussion on revenge, Butler contends that resentment is a natural feature of humankind divinely given for the purpose of preventing and remedying injury. 73

Though resentment is an appropriate response to wrongdoing, there are abuses of resentment which violate its purpose to realize good, i.e. prevent and remedy injury. Butler identifies the abuses as: imagining an injury where there is none, taking the injury to be greater than it really is, mistaking an accidental harm for intentional injury, resentment expressed disproportionately greater than the act calls for, and retaliation which Butler further describes as “when pain or harm of any kind is inflicted merely in consequence of and to gratify that resentment, though naturally raised.” 74

The abuses of resentment are a result of our “partiality to ourselves.” 75 Butler finds that the appropriate degree of resentment is manifested in indignation at the injuries suffered by another

74 Butler,”Sermon VIII”, paragraph 12.
75 Ibid.
individual that is not a close friend or family member. The fact that we have this response also supports his view that resentment is the passion given to us to prevent and remedy injustice.

He further emphasizes the role of resentment by arguing that if compassion were not balanced by resentment, often, justice would not be attained. Moreover, he claims that it is resentment and indignation that brings the perpetrator to justice not the reasoned belief that the security and peace of society require justice for wrongdoing, though the latter does produce the passage of laws.

Butler asserts that resentment and good-will are compatible; they can both be found in the attitudes of parents toward their children and in the relations of friendship. Resentment becomes excessive when it completely overtakes our natural propensity for benevolence or good-will and becomes retaliation.

I find a potential conflict in Butler’s affirming resentment as a natural response to injury, while, at the same time, recommending forgiveness. It allows for the simultaneous presence of ill-will and good-will and if resentment is not required to be entirely purged through forgiveness, one can imagine the possibility of a circular succession of good-will and ill-will where resentment may subside at one point and then rise up again, giving a place to ill-will in perpetuity.

It also seems to complicate the matter of holding these opposing views that he does not propose that the offender must perform any conditions of contrition in order to be forgiven. For, if the purposes of resentment are to prevent or remedy injury, it does not appear that the injury

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78 Ibid, paragraph 15.
80 Ibid, paragraphs 14,15.
81 Ibid, paragraph 11.
has been remedied if an offender has not acknowledged, repudiated, committed to change, or expressed regret for the injury. From this perspective, one can forgive, though, still feel resentment.

This seeming contradiction is partially explained by distinguishing the appropriate expression of resentment from the abuses of resentment, particularly where resentment has completely overtaken and replaced the natural propensity for good-will and benevolence. Moreover, since one of the abuses of resentment is the disproportionate degree of the passion, it is reasonable to imagine a mild form of resentment that may dissipate with time. Butler presents the consistency of resentment and forgiveness through exemplars of family and friendship, where he points out that good-will and resentment are compatible. Nonetheless, despite the continued presence of good-will, to forgive someone, but retain resentment, however small, seems to render forgiveness, more of a social gesture, than a heartfelt renewal. Though Butler does not discuss a concentrated effort to let go of resentment entirely, a commitment to relinquish resentment would more appropriately align itself with the tenor of forgiveness.

In the account I am proposing, the contrition of the wrongdoer is the reason for relinquishing resentment in interpersonal forgiveness. Jeffrie G. Murphy contends that in addition to the offender’s repentance reasons for the relinquishing of resentment and forgiveness can include: the offender meant well; he suffered enough; he has undergone humiliation; or for old times’ sake. I find these additional reasons to be problematic in the account I am proposing.

Jeffrie G. Murphy’s account of forgiveness emphasizes the necessity of separating the

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83 Butler, “Sermon VIII” paragraph 12.
84 Butler, “Sermon IX”, paragraph 15.
wrongful act from the offender in order to forgive.\(^86\) He offers several ways that this may be accomplished, with the primary method being the offender’s repentance. In this way, the offender demonstrates that he no longer endorses the acts and attitudes that wronged the injured party and that he joins the injured party in condemning the wrongful act.\(^87\) I shall now further consider repentance and the additional reasons that Murphy finds appropriate for forgiveness: the offender meant well; he suffered enough; he has undergone humiliation; and for old times’ sake. \(^88\)

For Murphy, forgiveness is the forswearing of resentment for moral reasons, and he determines that the aforementioned reasons fulfill this criterion. \(^89\) He further fleshes out his standard for forgiveness by requiring that the grounds for forgiveness must be compatible with “self-respect, respect for others as moral agents, and respect for the rules of morality or the moral order.” \(^90\) I find that these grounds that Murphy proposes for forgiveness are reasonable and convincing, though I will argue that except for repentance, the moral reasons he proposes as appropriate for forgiveness are not justified in terms of the criteria he sets forth.

Murphy identifies resentment as a response to the moral injury of disrespect. Some of the ways the wrongdoing disrespects the injured party include, conveying contempt for the injured party as if she has no value or she doesn’t matter, or an attitude of arrogance by the offender that he has greater value than the injured party, or by the offender using the injured party as a means for his ends.\(^91\)

Relinquishing resentment because the offender has separated himself from the wrongful act

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\(^{86}\) Ibid.
\(^{88}\) Ibid, p. 24.
\(^{89}\) Ibid, pgs. 21, 23.
\(^{90}\) Ibid, p. 24.
\(^{91}\) Ibid, p. 25.
through repentance \(^92\) is a reasonable response. It recognizes that the offender has taken moral responsibility for his wrongful act and that the offender regrets the disrespect that his action or attitude communicates to the injured party and to the moral community. In addition to affirming self-respect, letting go of resentment as a result of the offender’s repentance also shows respect for the offender as a moral agent by holding him accountable for his wrongdoing rather than treating him as one that is not capable of responsibility for reasons of immaturity, viciousness, akrasia or other. It shows respect for the moral order by emphasizing the importance of appropriate regard among members of the moral community.

Murphy raises humiliation as a fitting moral reason to forgive by associating it with the “humbling ritual of apology.” \(^93\) It addresses the injury by either lifting the injured party up or casting the offender down to compensate for the wrongdoer’s attempt to degrade or lower the injured party by his act or attitude.

A question arises as to whether apology requires humiliation. From one perspective, apology, by admission of wrongdoing and regret, renders the agent apologizing vulnerable. By opening himself up to the injured party of his wrongdoing, he risks the injured party’s refusal to accept the apology and possibly even the injured party’s continued resentment which may present itself as verbal (or other) attacks, vilification, slights and more. Yet, vulnerability need not include humiliation, the focus can be on the willingness to be accountable rather than in a lowering of status. \(^94\)

Characterizing apology as a form of humiliation and a “humbling ritual,” \(^95\) suggests more than the rebalancing of the injured party and the offender as moral agents. It focuses on the

\(^93\) Ibid, p. 28.
\(^94\) I find the premise of lowering and raising of status to be problematic. It seems to focus on punishment for punishment’s sake rather than on means to rectify and resolve wrongdoing and restore relations.
\(^95\) Ibid, p. 28.
shame of the offender; concentrating on his pain, rather than his repudiation or regret for the act. One might ask what the injured party’s response is to this seemingly dramatic representation of suffering; if she pities the offender, does this effect the recalibration of moral status? Maybe, by making him an object of pity, it brings him even lower than his initial shame, throwing off the balance.

Pity may be seen to have this effect because it has the sense that the sentiment arises from an individual who takes a superior view to the subject of pity. It differs from compassion which seems to be more a sympathetic response to another’s suffering. This contrast is emphasized in ordinary relationships where compassion is preferable to pity from the point of view of the sufferer. One may say as a prickly response to pity “I don’t need your pity,” perhaps, because it seems to lack respect for the sufferer. The offender who feels shame for his wrongful act already seeks to negate the sense of diminishment toward the injured party which is conveyed by the wrongful act or attitude. For the injured party to pity the offender, in addition to the sense of shame that he bears, seems to---in Murphy’s notion of raising and lowering of moral status---lower him further than the balance would require.

Though Murphy doesn’t discuss the injured party’s attitude toward the offender’s humiliation, it is reasonable to suggest that an injured party’s attitude of satisfaction or indifference accompanying pity encounters problems. If the injured party experiences satisfaction from the offender’s suffering, this would violate Murphy’s criterion requiring that a moral reason to forgive must respect others as moral agents. Clearly, relishing another’s suffering breaches this principle, since it violates the expression of good-will due moral agents. Considering that it is not Murphy’s intention to punish the wrongdoer, the sense that any pain

suffered by the wrongdoer is deserved and the resulting satisfaction, does not seem to reflect the state of mind of the injured party in Murphy’s account of forgiveness. Respect for moral agents demonstrates good-will, whereas—excepting the satisfaction experienced in just punishment—taking pleasure in another’s suffering is an expression of ill-will. The humiliation of a wrongdoer serving as a moral reason to forgive also does not conform to the criterion to uphold the moral order ⁹⁷ if it is based in the injured party’s satisfaction at the offender’s suffering. In this way the injured party’s gratification in the offender’s suffering constructs a role reversal so that the offender is laid abject, thereby breaching the mutual regard prescribed by the moral order.

Another problem that attaches to humiliation as a moral reason to forgive is that satisfaction in another’s suffering more closely resembles vengeance which is anathema to the moral order. What’s more, if the injured party were to respond to the offender’s suffering with indifference, the offender’s humiliation would still not meet Murphy’s criteria for a moral reason to forgive. An attitude of indifference lacks the criterion of respect for moral agents ⁹⁸ that Murphy subscribes to. Considering the issue through the lens of Kant, if his imperfect duty to help others does not necessitate alleviating the offender’s suffering, yet, alternatively, it may be argued that his mandate that every rational being be accorded respect would be violated in as much as indifference by a withdrawal of regard, falls short of the regard manifested by respect. Indifference may also exacerbate the offender’s suffering by causing him to prostrate himself further and further to penetrate the injured party’s impassive response. Indifference from this perspective may even be considered cruel, and cruelty fails to meet the criterion of respect for self, others, or the moral order.

In addition to a symbolic raising of the injured party’s or lowering of the offender’s moral

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⁹⁷ Ibid.
⁹⁸ Ibid.
status, Murphy points out that the ritual of apology may be a convention that does not express contrition but is rather more of a formality. If that is the case, then, it would violate Murphy’s requirement that the moral reason to forgive must be compatible with self-respect. If the apology is not genuine, at best, it is nothing more than a placeholder, at worst it is a cynical performance that doubles down on the original injury. In either case, Murphy’s objective to separate the wrongful act from the offender would not be achieved, so that “the ritual of apology” in this sense, also, cannot be an appropriate means of respect and cannot serve as a moral reason to forgive.

Murphy identifies the offender’s “having suffered enough” among the moral reasons that sanction forgiveness. He reflects on this condition as one that has traditionally been considered a means to redemption. He discounts it as a distinct reason to forgive, as he does humiliation, if it is a manifestation of repentance, which is its own separate reason. Similar to humiliation, he points to the lowered status that suffering yields, which he finds preserves the injured party’s self-respect, thereby providing a basis for forgiveness. However, suffering can’t be sufficient to separate the wrongful act from the offender, and Murphy recognizes this, but he finds that it is appropriate to move from resentment to pity as the predominant view of the offender as a “poor bastard.”

For Murphy forgiveness is the letting go of resentment for moral reasons honoring self, other moral agents, and the moral order, but it is helpful to remember that the objective is to separate the wrongful act from the offender. Though pity may displace resentment to some degree, if

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99 Ibid, p. 28.  
101 Ibid.  
102 Ibid.  
103 Ibid, p. 27.  
104 Ibid, p. 28.  
the intentionally wrongful act is still endorsed by the offender, it will still characterize his view of the injured party, so that whatever low state the offender is in, it does not warrant separating him from his wrongful act and it effectively precludes forgiveness.

As I argued earlier with respect to humiliation as a moral reason to forgive, pity may result in lowering the offender further; consequently, disturbing the balance of moral status between offender and injured party, violating respect for other moral agents and the moral order.\textsuperscript{106}

From another perspective, pity and a refusal to forgive may be compatible attitudes. One can care that another suffers, find no joy in it, favor its cessation, and yet remain unforgiving, so that the mere presence of pity does not exclude resentment. In this way, too, “having suffered enough” cannot serve as a moral reason to forgive, if forgiveness involves the relinquishing of resentment.\textsuperscript{107} But, more significantly, the offender’s suffering absent repentance, does not enable one to separate the wrongful act from the offender.

Furthermore, the association of the wrongful act with the offender denotes that contempt or arrogance is still conveyed by the wrongful act—despite the suffering of the offender for perhaps self-serving reasons---so that one cannot forgive and maintain respect for self. The fulfillment of Murphy’s condition of respect for other moral agents is also rendered questionable if pity for the sufferer casts him symbolically lower than the moral balance that Murphy’s account aspires to. What’s more, the moral order itself would not receive the respect that Murphy requires if either or both of the conditions for self-respect or respect for moral agents were not fulfilled by forgiving---a moral order that allows disrespect for self and/or moral agents is more an “amoral” order. Both the failure to separate the wrongful act from the offender, and the problems surrounding the fulfillment of the respect conditions, challenge the assertion that the offender’s

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
suffering can be included as a moral reason to forgive.¹⁰⁸

“He meant well” and “for old time’s sake,” are the last two reasons that Murphy designates as moral reasons to forgive.¹⁰⁹ “He meant well” distinguishes the offender’s intention to not bear ill-will from the resulting injury, and “for old time’s sake” relies on the favorability of the past relationship. Though there is a separation of the wrongful act from the offender in both these cases, I dispute that either of them is an appropriate means to forgive because forgiveness is approached as a unilateral act. As I argue in chapter 4 of the dissertation, interpersonal forgiveness is a reactive attitude that involves a response to the offender’s acknowledgment, repudiation, commitment to change, and expression of regret for the wrongful act. Though Murphy’s account represents a larger category of forgiveness than the category of interpersonal forgiveness that my account focuses on, my objection that “he meant well” and “for old time’s sake” as unilateral acts are not appropriate means to forgive is relevant within the context of Murphy’s account.

Taking a Strawsonian approach, “he meant well”, and “for old times’ sake” can be associated with species of responses that do not elicit or require the reactive attitudes. Forgiveness as a reactive attitude would not be an appropriate response to reasons in this category.¹¹⁰ “He meant well” similar to Strawson’s category of exceptions including accidental harms, does not indicate an offender with the requisite attitude of intentionality.¹¹¹ “For old times’ sake” can be considered as similar to Strawson’s category of exceptions where the offender was “not himself.”¹¹² So that the wrongful act does not comport with the injured party’s experience of the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pgs. 26, 29.,
¹¹⁰ Strawson, pgs 7, 8.
¹¹¹ Ibid.
¹¹² Ibid.
offender in the past (subsequent interactions will reveal if the offender has changed for the worse, so that the wrongful act is seen to reflect him as a person---in that case the injured party’s attitude toward the offender will be interpreted as condonation—not forgiveness). In cases such as these, resentment is not found to be appropriate and the offender is accordingly, not held as morally responsible. In effect, the offender is excused for his wrongful act---not forgiven. Put in another way, from a Strawsonian point of view, since the intentionality associated with wrongdoing is not present, there is no wrong to be forgiven.

“He meant well,” and “for old times’ sake,” along with the offender’s humiliation, and “having suffered enough,” have not been shown to be moral reasons that can support forgiveness. The offender’s repentance is the only moral reason that Murphy offers that meets his criteria for separating the wrongful act from the offender, maintaining self-respect, respect for other moral agents, and respect for the moral order, as well as the criterion of reciprocity that I will argue is a fundamental element of forgiveness as a reactive attitude.

3. Not Holding Wrongdoing Against the Offender

A third condition that an injured party must fulfill in order to forgive is to not hold the wrong against the offender. This condition may be supported, in part, by the trust and hope of the injured party that the offender’s contrition is genuine, as described in this section.

Holding a wrong against an offender may take the form of mentioning the incident after forgiveness has been communicated. After the wrongdoing has been resolved by the parties by engaging in a reciprocal process of moving toward one another and the recognition of justice attained by these efforts, if the injured party brings up the wrongdoing, it serves to remind the offender that he committed a wrongful act or attitude, it associates this act or attitude with his character, and it inflicts a punishing attitude toward him.
As I shall argue in subsequent chapters, for interpersonal forgiveness to occur the offender must fulfill conditions that include, acknowledging he perpetrated the wrongful act or attitude, repudiation of the act or attitude, commitment to change so as to not repeat or continue to treat the injured party and others in such a way, and expression of regret to the injured party for causing her pain. Since forgiveness only occurs, in my account, if these conditions are met, if the injured party brings up the subject of the injury for the sole purpose of keeping the past wrong present, or even as an unnecessary addendum to a comment, story, or statement of fact it impacts the offender as a cudgel of ill-will on his intentions and actions to repent and realize positive changes.

In the context of interpersonal forgiveness, needlessly bringing up the wrongdoing puts added pressure on the offender to maintain his commitment to change.\textsuperscript{113} If he continues with his efforts despite the injured party’s insistence on keeping the past present, he does so outside a process of reciprocity. The injured party’s claim to have forgiven him is undermined or becomes suspect. Though it is necessary for the injured party to communicate forgiveness to the offender, the mere verbalization of the words does not make it so. In accepting the offender’s contrition, the injured party indicates that she is willing to let the past acts and attitudes go in furtherance of a future of mutual good-will. Bringing up the past acts and attitudes for no legitimate other purpose than to keep the wrongdoing in the sight line, does not achieve this objective. Forgiveness becomes a hollow concept without the engagement of both parties.

\textsuperscript{113} I am arguing that the interpersonal forgiveness process which seeks a personal justice through reconciliation and accountability may be impeded or derailed by an excess of repetitive evocations of the wrong doing that may serve to grind the wrongdoer down, rather than inspire him to be a better person. In chapter 3, I argue that a commitment to change evidenced in words and actions is one of the necessary conditions that the offender must fulfill in the forgiveness process. The offender’s capacity for or progress in moral growth can be evaluated through these efforts. If the wrongdoer is a pernicious recidivist, the injured party may be better off severing the relationship. In contradistinction, forgiveness that involves governments and/or groups of people that may be viewed in a more political vein may include large numbers of people and diverse groups that have been injured. Monuments, historical accounts, programs, and other forms of media that recount the injury are necessary to ward off current or future wrongdoing and express respect for the injured parties in the greater public forum encompassing multiple generations.
Bringing up the past wrongful act or attitude may also frustrate the offender by convincing him that it is no use trying to change because he will always be stigmatized by his past acts and attitudes. In this way not only does the injured party violate the conditions of forgiveness, she contributes to the degeneracy of a moral agent. Recognizing one’s harmful or offensive acts and attitudes and dedicating oneself to change is a somewhat fragile process. Though the injured party is not expected to do the work for him, she is expected to not make it harder for him or to derail the process.

Another way the injured party can hold the wrongful act or attitude against the offender is by allowing it to change the relationship between the two. An objection may be made that it is reasonable for the injured party to protect herself by taking care in her relations with the offender. However, this renders questionable the reciprocal process that finds that interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained. In the account of interpersonal forgiveness that I am developing the injured party forgoes revenge, relinquishes resentment, commits to not holding the wrongdoing against the offender, and communicates forgiveness as a response to her acceptance of the offender’s acknowledgement, repudiation, commitment to change, and expression of regret. Letting the wrongdoing affect the future relationship between the two indicates that she does not quite believe that the contrition is genuine. If that is the case, then she should not convey forgiveness. She can be polite, even pleasant, maybe take the attitude that she has “moved on,” but if the wrong doing affects her view of the offender to the extent that she is hesitant about restoring the relationship, then she should not claim that she has forgiven the offender.

I am not arguing that interpersonal forgiveness entails that the wrong is erased and thus becomes a “clean slate.” However, the wrong should be deactivated or rendered inert, so that the
injured party does not hold it against the offender in the various ways this might be done, including alterations in the relationship that point to a lack of trust. The good-will that is extended by interpersonal forgiveness is informed in part by trust and hope.

Trust and hope do not need to figure into the injured party’s cognitive and affective framework if she decides not to forgive the offender. Yet, if she accepts the offender’s contrition and decides to forgive, there is some form of trust and hope that contributes to her recognition that justice is attained. Victoria McGeer proposes an account of trust that incorporates hope which may provide insight to address the potential forgiver’s anxieties (perhaps unfounded) about the veracity of the contrition and her absence of certainty when confronted with an indeterminate future.

McGeer articulates hope as a means to explore and extend our agential powers through recognizing our capacities and limitations.\(^{114}\) It is a reflexive enterprise that is shared by both parties. Not only does one party imaginatively see her own capacities and limitations, each party sees themselves in the other’s expectations of them.\(^{115}\) McGeer argues this “hope” enables “substantial trust” in its commitment to go beyond the evidence, and to reject a detached calculus of what evidence there is.\(^{116}\) She explains that “by these acts and expressions [of trust] we make ourselves vulnerable to them, yes but in a way that actively holds out a vision to them of what they can be or do. This vision creates for them a kind of affectively charged scaffolding empowering their own sense of potential agency with the energy of our hope and thus encouraging them to act in ways commensurate with the vision we maintain.”\(^{117}\)

One allows oneself to become vulnerable when deciding to forgive. In order to forgive, the

\(^{115}\) Ibid, p. 247.
\(^{116}\) Ibid, p. 240.
\(^{117}\) Ibid, p. 248.
injured party must believe that the offender’s contrition is genuine and his commitment to change well-intentioned but there may be worries that perhaps the contrition and commitment to change is not entirely sincere, or that it may lose its force as time goes on.

However, at the same time, the offender also makes himself vulnerable if he acknowledges responsibility for the wrongdoing, repudiates the act or attitude, commits to change, and expresses regret. The offender opens himself to the scrutiny of the injured party who may not accept or believe his heartfelt and authentic overtures.

If both parties are well-intentioned and committed to the interpersonal forgiveness process it may be necessary to feel the discomfort of one’s vulnerability without efforts to proactively reduce its effect. This requires a degree of trust in the other as well as in one’s own cognitive and affective capacities. It can benefit the parties and facilitate the interpersonal forgiveness process if the underlying motivation of both parties is generated and sustained by the type of hope that McGeer proposes. Though it is not a necessary condition for interpersonal forgiveness to obtain, a hope that recognizes in one’s actions and attitudes one’s own and the other’s capacities and limitations and includes the reflection of how each sees the other may be formative in helping to realize the mutual commitment of both parties to interpersonal forgiveness and its process.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ In interpersonal relationships where trust has been damaged by the wrongdoing, part of the process may be learning to trust again more completely which may require time and continued efforts to the commitment of reconciliation by both parties. In chapter 3 I argue for conditions that the offender must fulfill for forgiveness to obtain which include repudiation of the wrongful act and commitment to change. In repudiating the act or attitude the offender severs himself from its wrongfulness and aligns himself with the disrespected values of the injured party. In committing to change, the offender demonstrates through words and actions that he endorses the shared values between himself and the injured party. If the injured party suspects that he will repeat the wrongful act, in order to forgive she may have to give him the benefit of the doubt by trusting him to that degree, while he earns her greater trust in time. It may come to pass that she never trusts him again, in that case interpersonal forgiveness may be well-intentioned but it did not lead to a fresh start or interpersonal justice—the injured party still holds the wrongdoing against the offender and he is defined by this breach. The elements of interpersonal forgiveness may not have been realized—the wrongdoer has in fact not been forgiven.
4. Communication of Forgiveness

The fourth condition the injured party must fulfill in order to forgive is the communication of forgiveness to the offender. As previously mentioned, I am concentrating on cases where both parties are living and able to participate in the process. In a case where one of the parties dies before forgiveness has been communicated to the offender, we can speak in terms of the conditional “she would have forgiven him,” or “she was ready to forgive him” because interpersonal forgiveness doesn’t quite obtain, though it may exist as a state of affairs once possible.

Other cases that may give pause to the condition of communicating forgiveness such as a language barrier or some form of isolation keeping the parties apart could be resolved by a translator in the former example and communication through letters, email, or audio files in the latter. Unless these circumstances arise after the offender proffers his contrition, alternate means would also be necessary for the offender to convey his repentance.

In the ordinary case where there are no obstacles to face-to-face interpersonal forgiveness, where the offender has proffered his contrition, if the injured party doesn’t say the words “I forgive you,” how will the offender know that he has been forgiven? Maybe the offender can glean that he has been forgiven by the perception of the injured party’s expressions of benevolence toward him. But, if it is not specifically stated, he cannot be sure that forgiveness is what the injured party intends to convey. Perhaps, it is mere toleration of him and his actions and attitudes, or a general benevolence toward humanity, or on the darker side, it may conceal a resentment that may unfold in time. This places the offender in a precarious position. If he

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119 I am arguing that actually saying the words “I forgive you”, provides the best evidence that there is a meeting of the minds between the injured party and the offender. My argument in support of this specificity considers the problems that may result through miscommunication when the words “I forgive you” are replaced with other more subtle means of communicating forgiveness or the absence of forgiveness.
believes that he has been forgiven, his attitude toward the injured party may lack the tenor of remorse (though he is in fact regretful and is diligently working to change his injurious ways and has expressed his contrition to the injured party) further incensing the injured party and her latent resentment.

Of course, harboring a concealed resentment is antithetical to interpersonal forgiveness. To avert a misinterpretation by the offender of the injured party’s intentions she should be clear as to whether she has forgiven him or not. If the injured party has accepted the offender’s contrition, she should tell him that she forgives him.

On the other hand, if the injured party has forgiven the offender, but she has not “said the words,” the offender may not know that he has been forgiven and may make more and more efforts to convey his remorse. Efforts to change and show contrition are expected of the offender as part of the forgiveness process. However, if they are met by silence or an enigmatic response by the injured party, even if seemingly pleasant, it becomes a form of punishment and may drive the offender to jump through an ever more elaborate series of hoops, where the injured party’s tacit forgiveness becomes tinged with a sadistic edge.

The necessity for the injured party to articulate her decision to forgive by saying “I forgive you” is connected to the authority the injured party possesses to generate the particular kind of good-will that is forgiveness. Unlike gratitude which is a passive response to unexpected or unearned good-will requiring thanks and reciprocity at some unspecified time, interpersonal forgiveness is an active determination of whether to accept the offender’s contrition and commitment to change based on the belief that the offender’s demonstration of moral responsibility is legitimate and sincere.

There are circumstances that may preclude the injured party’s forgiveness based on the
untrustworthiness of the offender or his proffer of remorse. The trust and hope that permeates interpersonal forgiveness is meant to support a reciprocal process of good-will in light of our inability to attain absolute certainty. Trust and hope is not a matter of wishful thinking or fantasy, it has its basis in our affective and cognitive experiences, so a judgment that an offender is not trustworthy or morally responsible, or his contrition is not trustworthy is a decision not to forgive and not to trust.

The authority the injured party has to forgive, originating in her role as the principal party affected by the wrongdoing, and in her prospective emotional and conceptual transformation, is integral to the forgiveness process, though it can be abused by not telling the contrite offender that he is forgiven, as previously argued, by causing him undue suffering or, in the alternative, allowing him to remain blithely unaware that he has not been forgiven. It can also be abused if she obdurately refuses to forgive an offender who is truly contrite, though, because it is a determination that only she can make, she does not have an obligation to forgive a repentant offender. She may, however, expose herself to aretaic appraisal by the moral community, depending upon the egregiousness of the offense as well as the offender’s efforts to repair the wrong. If the moral community deems that interpersonal forgiveness is appropriate, though the moral community cannot forgive in her stead, the offender will be treated, by the moral community, with all the respect that moral agents are due. The moral community, in this case, will disapprove of the attitude of the injured party, in as much as, it reflects an abuse of resentment and it will likewise disapprove of the injured party’s application of the objective attitude that also serves to exile the offender from the moral community.

The obverse side of the above issue is the question, ‘can one forgive a wrongdoer who doesn’t want to be forgiven?’ As, I am arguing for a conditional form of interpersonal forgiveness, the
fulfillment of conditions by only one party violates the reciprocal structure of forgiveness. In chapter 4, I will give a more detailed analysis of this reciprocity in what I am framing as the ‘structural argument.’ However, here I will examine the motives, intentions, and effects of an effort to forgive an offender who does not want to be forgiven.

An offender may not want to be forgiven because he stands by the act or attitude and continues to endorse it. This emphasizes the point that interpersonal forgiveness in some way recognizes the ameliorative attempts that contrition represents. In the case where the offender reaffirms the wrongful act or attitude, he rejects the proffer of forgiveness because he does not repudiate the wrongful act, commit to change or express regret. He may acknowledge that he authored the act or attitude, though, he may deny that it is wrongful, or alternatively, admit it is wrongful, yet, feel no remorse.

In several arguments against unconditional forgiveness, I will claim that the injured party who forgives unconditionally, may suffer undesirable consequences such as that she may be charged with condoning the wrongful act or attitude or risk condemnation from the moral community. In the case where the offender does not want to be forgiven, the focus shifts to the possibility that efforts to forgive may even be viewed as a form of harassment---a wrongdoing in itself and anathema to justice. So not only is this not interpersonal forgiveness according to the structural and substantive requirements that I present in this dissertation, this pseudo-forgiveness can also be viewed as a wrongdoing itself. \(^\text{120}\)

Suppose the injured party says to the offender “I forgive you” and the offender says to the injured party “I don’t need or want your forgiveness,” what might the injured party be thinking?

\(^\text{120}\) In the case where the offender is remorseful, yet, considers his wrongdoing too egregious to be forgiven, he remains in the past and is not able to at this time to focus on repair of the relationship in the present and the future. Interpersonal forgiveness doesn’t obtain because the reciprocal exchange and transformation of the parties toward reconciliation doesn’t occur. Personal justice is absent because the offender doesn’t recognize that justice is attained. Perhaps, in time, he can accept that the past cannot be changed and that demonstrating his commitment to change and good-will toward the injured party in the present and the future can achieve the personal justice and reconciliation that both parties recognize.
Perhaps, she thinks that the offender really doesn’t mean what he’s saying. It is presumptuous for her to make that assumption and press on with her own interpretation of the meaning of the offender’s words when there is clear evidence to the contrary. Even if the injured party wishes the offender well, it undermines the good-will which is fundamental to forgiveness when her actions can be perceived as an attempt to subject the offender to her will by controlling the narrative, and when she displays a complete disregard for what can be considered the offender’s moral agency to determine how to conduct himself and manage his life.

The injured party neglects that interpersonal forgiveness requires uptake. The offender must understand that the injured party is offering forgiveness and in order for forgiveness to obtain, he must accept the offer. Since I am arguing for a conditional account of forgiveness, the offender’s acceptance of the offer is likely implicit to his acknowledgment, repudiation, commitment to change, and expression of regret. In the case of an unrepentant offender, acceptance of the offer of forgiveness is not present.

It may be the case that the injured party views forgiveness as a gift. Even if this is her understanding, a gift also requires uptake; it may be politely refused for any number of reasons, including expense, professional restrictions, concerns about motive, and more. Nonetheless, according to my account of interpersonal forgiveness the gift analogy is problematic. As interpersonal forgiveness is a process that involves two parties’ evolving toward mutual resolution, it is not a singular action or object, or something that can be given, as is a gift as pure ideal. Without the offender’s contribution toward the development of interpersonal forgiveness, it’s as if the injured party utters words into an empty universe, except if she persists in her efforts to assure the unrepentant offender that he is forgiven, it becomes a disruption and a form of ill-will.
Chapter 3

Offender’s conditions for interpersonal forgiveness

1. Acknowledgement of the wrongful act or attitude

A reader may wonder why I introduced the conditions the injured party must fulfill in order to forgive before focusing on the offender’s conditions, since, in the paradigm case of interpersonal forgiveness that I am proposing—interpersonal forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained—the injured party’s conditions do not take effect if the offender does not fulfill his conditions to acknowledge responsibility for the wrong, repudiate the act or attitude, commit to changing injurious habits toward others, and express regret to the injured party for injuring her.

In an effort to impress the reader that the injured party’s fulfillment of her conditions for interpersonal forgiveness is just as important as the offender’s fulfillment of his conditions, I introduced the injured party’s conditions first. I was concerned that attention might shift from the injured party to the offender with the injured party’s conditions seemingly becoming incidental if the offender’s conditions preceded the injured party’s conditions. In order to emphasize the necessity of the injured party fulfilling conditions, qualifying and exploring her authoritative standing to forgive, and foregrounding the reciprocity of the interpersonal forgiveness process, I began with the injured party’s conditions and will now examine the offender’s conditions.

The first condition that the offender must fulfill in order to attain interpersonal forgiveness is that he must acknowledge that he committed the injurious act or attitude. He must acknowledge that he committed the offense to himself and to the injured party. Since in the account that I am proposing, it is only intentional actions that are candidates for forgiveness, the criterion of
acknowledgement to self is basic.

Unintentional injuries of the type that Strawson identified as inappropriate for reactive attitudes including circumstances where there is no other option, or the injury is accidental, or mental states of psychological abnormality or immaturity \textsuperscript{121} indicate the connection between the reactive attitudes and moral responsibility.

The second criterion, that the offender must acknowledge that he committed the wrongful act to the injured party, as argued below, is rooted in his moral responsibility to admit to the injured party that he wronged her. The injured party has a right to this acknowledgment, as well as to the offender’s other conditions for interpersonal forgiveness. In this dissertation, I am focusing on interpersonal forgiveness between two people, I am not addressing the role of acknowledgement in injuries of a more political nature, so the emphasis on telling the truth involves a more personal nature.

As argued in chapter 1, there is a connection between rights which are thin value terms, that are more abstract, linked to obligation, and appear more universal---and reactive attitudes---which appear more local, subjective and less determinate. Taking a Strawsonian approach, reactive attitudes, such as resentment, regret, and forgiveness, are linked to expectations that moral agents have to be treated with a certain amount of good-will and regard.\textsuperscript{122} These expectations reflect rights not to be harmed and to be treated with respect, that we possess as members of the moral community. In furtherance of the recognition of the regard due moral agents, an injured party has a right to the offender’s acknowledgement of wrongdoing and contrition.

Intentional injuries, such as Tom Stahl’s lie to his wife and family in the film \textit{A History of}

\textsuperscript{121} Strawson, pgs.7,8.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid, pgs. 6, 10, 15.
Violence, raise resentment in the afflicted party. Though resentment is a response to wrongdoing and a demand for regard, it is also a painful emotion to experience for the injured party, in addition to the party the emotion is directed towards. A refusal to acknowledge the wrong causes further pain to the injured party.

Though the wrong cannot be metaphysically undone, taking responsibility by acknowledging to the injured party that one has wronged her, when accompanied by the other conditions required for interpersonal forgiveness, can contribute to lessening resentment by responding to her demand for regard and good-will through recognition of her as an individual and as a member of the moral community.

This initial step can help to move the parties forward in the process of interpersonal forgiveness. If the offender does not acknowledge that he committed a wrong, perhaps he feels that he is justified in some way, or that it is “no big deal,” or he shifts blame to another, he in effect, arrogates good-will to himself, endorsing a view that his actions have no consequences because either its someone else’s problem or that the injured party doesn’t matter, and her rights are not recognized as meaningful.

The interpersonal forgiveness process is deracinated or at least forestalled until the offender takes moral responsibility for his injurious actions or attitudes. An objection to the requirement that the offender acknowledge commitment of the offense to the injured party for interpersonal forgiveness to occur may be found in an argument by Christopher Cowley in support of an unconditional forgiveness devoid of an offender’s conditions. Though Cowley’s account may include a broader conception of forgiveness than I am focused on in this dissertation, his focus on forgiveness in an interpersonal context is relevant to my account.

The concept of radical electivity is proposed in Christopher Cowley’s account of
unconditional forgiveness which argues that forgiveness must be elective and unconditional. 123 The account claims that conditions that the offender must fulfill in order to be forgiven rely on the third-personal case that ‘one ought,’ rather than the practical necessity of the judgment ‘I must,’ and as a result, neglect the very personal decision that is forgiveness. 124 It seems that forgiveness for Cowley, must be unconditional to honor the personal nature of the judgment removed from normative pressures that one ought to forgive the repentant offender.

Nonetheless, Cowley argues that the decision to forgive is not subjective, the personal judgment of the “I” is an assertion of objective ethical claims based on discoveries made in the world. 125 Yet, he contends that the gap between reasons and action is the mysterious space of radical electivity; 126 third parties may disagree with the decision or try to persuade the agent to reconsider, though after the decision is made there is nothing for a third-party to do or even think. 127

In claiming it is the gap that fosters radical electivity, Cowley appeals to Bernard Williams’ notion of “practical necessity.”128 However, Williams determines that judgments of practical necessity are open to blame; character is revealed in the limits of deliberation and is even determined by the incapacities of what one can and cannot do. 129 Williams states “…if one acknowledges responsibility for anything one must acknowledge responsibility for decisions and action which are expressions of character—to be an expression of character is perhaps the most

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124 Ibid, p. 571.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid, p. 573.
128 Ibid, p. 571.
substantial way in which an action can be one’s own.” 130

Considering Williams’ notion of practical necessity in this way, an injured party’s decision to forgive unconditionally would not leave, as Cowley suggests, a third-party with nothing to do or even think. The injured party may be viewed as condoning, excusing, or justifying the offender’s wrong doing, leaving herself open to negative judgments as to her integrity and self-respect; exacerbating the injuries done as a result of the offense by suffering the condemnation of the moral community. What’s more, the injured party’s judgment to forgive the offender unconditionally may signal to third-parties that wrongful treatment is permissible---and that the concept of forgiveness is a stand-in for general terms of benevolence rather than a reciprocal process where justice is attained---thereby, contra Cowley, also giving third-parties something to do, potentially authoring further injuries upon her.

Cowley offers an example of forgiveness in the context of domestic abuse. He argues that the intimate history of a long-term relationship is essentially unknown to those outside the relationship. He identifies a possible case that can be recognized as unconditional forgiveness; a genuine case of forgiveness that is not merely excuse, justification, or forgetting, but whose “opaqueness” to those outside the relationship as well as to the individuals within the relationship speaks to the “mystery at the heart of forgiveness.”131

In order to explore the feasibility of Cowley’s notion of forgiveness, in what follows, I will examine it by the standard of “fittingness.” It is difficult to see how remaining in an abusive relationship does not amount to excusing, condoning, or justifying the actions of the offender. Perhaps it is a matter of valuing one thing over another. Maybe the injured party placed more value on the cool compress the offender applied to her head when she had fever, that one time,

130 Ibid, 130.
131 Cowley, p. 577.
rather than the public ridicule that the offender frequently subjected her to, or placed more value on the nominal roles of husband and father than she did on the physical abuse that she endured within the relationship.

However, the overall “fittingness” of the injured party’s response to value the offender or find that the offender is good which lead to forgiving the offender is not based on a reasoning process that can be considered to possess fittingness. The standard of fittingness for belief is truth, or a weaker claim may hold that as belief is concerned with matching the world, it is truth sensitive. Consider a possible reasoning progression that the injured party may engage in:

A) The injured party believes that the offender applies cool compresses to her feverish head (or is the nominal husband and father of her child), B) The injured party believes that the offender abuses her, C) The offender has value or in accordance with the fittingness approach, the offender is good. D) The injured party forgives the offender.

There is a conflict between the non-evaluative facts when they are conjoined; the belief that the offender put cool compresses on her feverish head and the belief that the offender abuses her may both conform to the standard of fittingness for belief, though the transition to the response that the offender has value or is good is not fittingness preserving. The response that the offender has value or is good does not follow from the conjunction of the non-evaluative facts and is therefore not fittingness preserving.

McHugh and Way argue that valuing attitudes come in degrees. If the offender has applied a cool compress to the injured party’s head this fact may lead to a fittingness response of attributing that the offender has value or is good, but the fact of abuse does not lead to a fittingness response that the offender has value or is good. Moreover, physical harm,

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133 Ibid, p. 604.
psychological harm, and assaults to one’s dignity comprise a far more encompassing negative effect on the injured party’s life that is not countervailed by the positive effects of the momentary solace from a cool compress on her feverish head.

The reasoning leading to the forgiveness of the offender based on determining that the offender has value or is good is not fittingness preserving, any beliefs or pro-attitudes generated by the cool compress to her feverish head do not outweigh the contra-attitudes generated by the abuse. This indicates that the personal “I must” forgive argument supported by the “mystery of forgiveness,” that Cowley proposes, undermines the optimal agency of the injured party, potentially leading to further harms to the injured party, and suggesting instead forms of agency that support psychic and physical injury.

The argument for radical electivity does not support a finding that the offender’s acknowledgement of the offense can be obviated through unconditional forgiveness. The personal necessity motivating radical electivity as the basis for unconditional forgiveness is not sufficient to quell concerns regarding condoning, excusing, or justifying the wrongful act. Though, I will discuss condonation more thoroughly in chapter 4, a basic understanding of the term can be gained by the Oxford dictionary which defines condone as to “accept and allow behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive to continue.”

Forgiving an offender who has not acknowledged the wrongful act (and fulfilled all the conditions) is not a fitting response, it is not appropriate or merited since it allows the wrongdoing to continue by not requiring its withdrawal through the offender’s contrition; it is rather a form of condonation---not interpersonal forgiveness. Interpersonal forgiveness

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requires that the offender be held responsible by both parties, when the injured party condones the wrongful act interpersonal forgiveness does not obtain.

In contradistinction to the view that radical electivity operates from a space exempt from others yet still in the world, forgiving an unrepentant wrongdoer exposes the injured party to further harm from the offender or those that have interpreted the unconditional forgiveness as condoning or excusing the wrongful act and setting a standard of permissible behavior towards the injured party. What’s more, the notion of radical electivity with regard to forgiving a wrongdoer who has not acknowledged the wrongful act (and fulfilled all the conditions), may even open the injured party up to blame, further compounding the injured party’s suffering. Cowley’s account does not mount a persuasive argument for unconditional forgiveness or rebut my argument that interpersonal forgiveness as a recognition that justice is attained is not a fitting response to unremediated wrongs.

2. Repudiation of the wrongful act or attitude

The offender’s acknowledgement of the wrongful act or attitude is the first step that must be taken for interpersonal forgiveness to be possible. The necessary subsequent steps are grounded in the acknowledgement without which the offender distances himself from taking moral responsibility leaving these acts and attitudes to persist as amorphous offenses absent origin.

The offender must also repudiate the act or attitude. He must reject it as wrong and sever himself from the ill-will demonstrated by the injurious act or attitude by taking a stand that he no longer endorses the act or attitude because it is wrong.

Repudiation of the act or attitude conveys to the injured party that he shares her values (at least with regard to identifying the act or attitude in question as wrong) and that he values her as
an individual and as a member of the moral community. He identifies what he did as wrong and as a wrong committed against her the injured party. In this way, repudiation of the wrong points to the beginnings of an immersive exchange that reflects the depth of humanity in its cognitive and affective dimensions.

Repudiation also includes an explanation, as discussed in what follows, of why and how the offender committed the wrong. To admit that the act or attitude is wrong and to reject it is essential to the interpersonal forgiveness process, though the injured party may need to understand how and why the offender committed an act or attitude that he now renounces. In the account of interpersonal forgiveness that I am proposing, an explanation of how and why the wrongdoing occurred helps to bring the two parties closer together in rebuilding bonds of trust and it provides the injured party with a more detailed factual and possibly sympathetic basis to determine whether the offender’s “change of heart” is genuine. As I argued in chapter 1, where I discuss the role of reasons in the offender’s moral responsibility in terms of “attributability,” “answerability,” and “accountability,” in the case where the offender does not have a clear understanding of his reasons for the wrongful act or attitude, further reflection and discussion with the injured party or others may help him to attain insight.

In Charles Griswold’s account of forgiveness, explanation as narrative occupies a central place in the process. It is specifically included in the offender’s conditions so that he explains how he came to commit the wrongful act, the moral sentiments, such as guilt and remorse, that followed, how the act does not reflect him as a person, and the change in behaviors and attitudes he is engendering. 135

Narrative also figures in the injured party’s conditions requiring her to reframe her view of the offender and herself as well. Griswold connects the resentment the injured party feels toward

135 Griswold, p. 104.
the offender to his view of resentment as a “story telling” passion. He points out that “resentful people create narratives about their injurers, the injury, and their victimization.” To facilitate the forgiveness process, the injured party will sympathetically enter into the offender’s account of his wrongdoing, remorse, and transformative efforts in order to reframe her view of the offender and will incorporate this narrative into her own narrative of injury and victimization, contributing to a reframing of self that is not identified by the injury. The emphasis on narrative speaks to the importance of communication between the offender and the injured party and it reflects a commitment to the future that has addressed past wrongdoings but strives to move productively beyond the breach.

Griswold’s focus on narrative provides a template for an in-depth exchange between the injured party and the offender, though, it may reflect more of an ideal encounter to draw from as the parties work their way toward interpersonal forgiveness. In the film A History of Violence, Tom Stahl’s repudiation of his wrongful act and attitude is not as cohesive and developed as Griswold recommends, though it represents an authentic undertaking in the process of interpersonal forgiveness.

Tom denies that he is “Joey Cusack”, to the gangster Fogarty and his associates, to his wife, and to the local sheriff on numerous occasions. Finally, when Fogarty and his associates show up at Tom’s house holding his son Jack captive, Tom, again, leaps into a series of defensive tactics demonstrating professional expertise. His son, now free, takes the shotgun and shoots Fogarty who has gained the advantage and is about kill Tom.

Edie confronts Tom asking him to tell her the truth “please, you can do that can’t you?” Tom tries again to deny that he is “Joey,” but Edie, who had been watching the violence unfold from a

second-story window, stops him. “I saw ‘Joey,’ I saw you turn into Joey right before my eyes.”

He finally acknowledges that he ‘was’ “Joey Cusack,” and that he ‘killed’ “Joey Cusack” and spent three years in the desert becoming Tom Stall. He tells her that he was nothing before he met her and that “I wasn’t really born again until I met you.” “I don’t believe you,” she replies. But shortly after, when the local sheriff becomes suspicious and stops by to question Tom again, saying “I think I need to hear the truth,” Edie says “Sam, you have too much time on your hands.” “Tom is who he says he is, that’s all that really matters.”

Though Edie tells Tom that she doesn’t believe him, it does not preclude the possibility of interpersonal forgiveness. She lies to the sheriff to protect Tom and his past from scrutiny, choosing instead, to keep her resentment, shock, and dismay within the family thus, suggesting that there is an opening for further conversations between the two to contribute to the interpersonal forgiveness process. This is also salient, especially considering that Tom has unfailingly been a loving husband and father and a respected member of the community for some twenty years and his unsavory past reappeared only because he bravely defended himself and his co-workers from an attack by two thugs who happened to stop by his diner, not because he was engaging in behavior that defined his criminal past. Though the in-depth narrative exchange represented in, what I interpret as, Griswold’s more ideal account is not reflected in the above scene, the efforts by both parties to address the wrongdoing is sufficient to advance the interpersonal forgiveness process.

An objection to the necessity of the offender’s repudiation as a condition for interpersonal forgiveness, may arise from an account that argues in support of an unconditional forgiveness that seeks to sever the wrongdoing from the offender without consideration of the offender’s
repetition of the wrongful act or attitude or his contrition but rather only by means of the injured party’s efforts to evaluate the offender without his participation. Though, as in all the objections that I will consider, it does not specifically refer to the interpersonal forgiveness that I am advancing in this dissertation, the context is still the type of interpersonal exchange that is represented by my account.

The account of unconditional forgiveness introduced by Michele Moody-Adams, I will argue, is inadequate for the paradigm case of interpersonal forgiveness as a process of moral responsibility that I am developing in this dissertation. I will claim that in its exclusion of the offender from the meaning making process and in the taking of moral responsibility, which is done, as I am arguing, through contrition to the injured party, it is a dehumanization of the offender in his status as a moral agent, and it may result in treating him with the objective attitude as someone who cannot be reasoned with, thereby signaling to the offender and others that he should be exiled from the moral community.\textsuperscript{137} I will further argue that by not considering the offender’s contrition in her determination of forgiveness, it may be a form of testimonial injustice in that the injured party does not consider all the available evidence in her judgment that he is untrustworthy as a person.\textsuperscript{138} Finally, I will claim that Moody-Adams’ unilateral approach risks evaluating the offender primarily from the wrongful act which contradicts her intention to separate the wrongful act from the offender.

Michele Moody-Adams proposes an account of unconditional forgiveness that focuses on an attempt to humanize the offender without condoning or excusing his action or identifying with the debased characterization conveyed by the wrong.\textsuperscript{139} The input of the offender, in the form

\textsuperscript{137} Strawson, p 9,10.
\textsuperscript{138} Wanderer, p. 156.
of conditions that he must fulfill to obtain forgiveness, is rejected as not being necessary or sufficient to produce assurance that he has in fact repented and is a changed man. Moody-Adams argues that the injured party cannot be rationally required to accept the offender’s representation of contrition because there is room for reasonable doubt that it is genuine. Though Moody-Adams does not argue that in order to forgive one must discount the offender’s contrition, she raises several objections as to its adequacy, and remarks that “indeed such interaction may distract us from the truth that forgiveness cannot be rationally compelled by a wrongdoer’s claims of repentance or promises of change.”

Yet, despite the fact that there is no rational requirement to accept the offender’s contrition and as a result, forgive him, the preclusion of an active role for the offender in the forgiveness process does not foreclose a passive participation of the offender in the process. Moody-Adams’ account utilizes an internal perspective to examine the offender’s motives and values and how they accord with his perpetration of the injurious action.

Incorporating the internal perspective involves identifying the alternatives the offender could have chosen in place of his action and rendering an evaluation of his capacity for moral growth. This appears to qualify as a condition, and as such, it jeopardizes the unconditional

141 A rational requirement that the injured party must forgive the repentant forgiver is problematic because in order to forgive the injured party must undergo a “change of heart.” If the injured party cannot relinquish resentment and/or continues to hold the wrongdoing against the offender the injured party has not had a “change of heart.” If she does not forgive because she evinces epistemic vices such as intransigence, arrogance, irrationality, or other vices, she may be subject to the aretic disapprobation of the moral community or charged with testimonial injustice toward the offender. If, however, as I argue in chapter 4, the offender, who is a recidivist or untrustworthy based on his actions and attitudes, is not forgiven because his contrition is unreliable, the injured party’s reluctance to forgive and change her heart is not deemed vicious, it is part of her normative discretion. I am arguing that fulfillment of the necessary conditions for forgiveness render the judgment of forgiveness fitting rather than rationally required. A worry may also arise that there should be a requirement for parents to forgive their children. I contend that this worry does not have to constrain my notion of interpersonal forgiveness because the particular love as care that is expressed in interpersonal forgiveness, is encompassed and expanded by the unconditional love that a parent should have for their children. And if one has unconditional love for a subject then there is no need for forgiveness as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, unconditional love is like a continuum, there is no beginning or end unlike forgiveness where a beginning and end point is identified.
142 Ibid, p. 163,164.
144 Ibid.
nature of forgiveness that the account aims to endorse.

Though the offender’s proffer of contrition may not ensure beyond a reasonable doubt that he has repented and that he will change, it still possesses value. If he at least acknowledges and repudiates the injurious act, then he holds himself out as the responsible agent, thereby inviting an assessment of his moral responsibility by the injured party and the moral community itself. This is some indication that he thinks he committed a wrongful act, or at least that he understands that others believe so. This is a moral step above, ‘I did nothing wrong’ or ‘no one can say that I did anything wrong.’

I am arguing that acknowledgement and repudiation alone do not warrant forgiveness, but it may indicate that an offender is willing to face the consequences of his injurious act. Of course, the acknowledgment and repudiation of an injurious act may not be a matter of choice. Rather, it may be for the reason that there is a witness to the act, leaving the offender no recourse but to admit and reject the act. However, acknowledgement and repudiation even under these circumstances can hold some moral merit, in that the offender could have tried to discredit the witnesses rather than take responsibility for his action. Certainly, if acknowledgement and repudiation are offered for prudential reasons, the moral imperative directing the admission that one has committed a wrongful act and must face the consequences is lacking, since it is not based on the wrongfulness of the act and how it affected the injured party, but instead, on what is in the best interest of the offender.

I challenge Moody-Adam’s account in claiming that whatever the motive is for taking responsibility for the injurious act, it is better discerned through dialogue with the offender, rather than forming a judgment of forgiveness based on a unilateral assessment of his capacity for moral growth. In a dialogue with the offender, at least some insight can be gained, as to the
veracity of his repudiation of the injurious act, his remorse at the suffering he caused the injured party, and his commitment to change. It can also reveal that the offender does not repudiate his injurious act and is non-committal about committing future injurious acts or even eager to commit future injurious acts. Surely, this admission would have an effect on the forgiveness process.

The offender’s input is critical to the interpersonal forgiveness process; to exclude his direct participation in the interpersonal forgiveness process is a dehumanization of the process and the potential forgivee. To reject out of hand the offender’s reasons for repudiation and affective outlook and how this has changed his wrongful attitude is to disparage an essential aspect of his humanity---the conceptual and emotional attributes that contribute to his standing as a moral agent, and it is a withdrawal of the good-will and trust that is shared in the moral community. Furthermore, as it may treat the offender as someone who can’t be reasoned with, a category that Strawson has indicated is assigned to young children and the psychologically abnormal, it may be a manifestation of the objective attitude, which functionally excludes the offender from the moral community, contrary to the aim of Moody-Adams’ account of unconditional forgiveness, which is to humanize the offender. Even more, a charge of testimonial injustice toward the offender may be levied against the injured party. This may result from not considering the offender’s contrition in the forgiveness process which violates the norm of doxastic deliberation by not examining all the available evidence. In this way, it rejects the offender---not as a source of information but as a person.

The offender’s passive participation in the process also challenges the coherence of the account of unconditional forgiveness in another way. One of the judgments comprising forgiveness in the account is to separate the injurious act from both the injured party and the
offender so that it does not stigmatize either of them as a permanent and defining feature of their lives. However, in cases where the injured party does not have sufficient background information of events and motives in the life of the offender, if the injured party only considers the gravity of the act itself and the possible alternatives the offender could have pursued to determine the moral capacities of the offender, then the injured party constructs a paradigm which asserts that the offender is no more than the act. The injurious act itself sets the parameters of the judgment thereby limiting the factors used to assess the potential for moral growth, and contrary to the underlying judgment in forgiveness which separates the act from the agent, the act becomes the estimate of his future behavior and with this dereliction of good-will, a disparagement of his humanity.

3. **Commitment to change**

The offender’s commitment to change supports and strengthens his acknowledgment and repudiation of the wrongdoing. Acknowledgement and repudiation of the wrongdoing alone are not sufficient to forgive. His commitment to change is manifested in words and actions. When he acknowledges and repudiates the wrong, he may say something like “I’m sorry, I won’t do that again,” these sentiments will then be reinforced in his future behavior by refraining to repeat the offensive acts or attitudes, and demonstrating his proffer of good-will further by engaging in behavior that positively affirms his commitment.

In the film *L’Enfant*, Bruno’s apology to Sonia for selling their child and his explanation that he thought they could have another child were not sufficient to begin the interpersonal forgiveness process. His retrieval of the infant Jimmy from the black-marketeers and the child’s safe return to Sonia did not assuage her resentment or her refusal to resume their relationship.

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Retrieving the child was a positive act alongside his contrition, yet it did not persuade Sonia that he could be a trustworthy partner in raising Jimmy. It is reasonable to interpret Sonia’s response as skeptical toward Bruno’s motives for his contrition and for returning Jimmy. She may have read Bruno’s contrite behavior as a reaction to her dismay, rather than any real intent to change. However, his taking responsibility for the theft of the woman’s purse instead of allowing his young accessory to take the blame and his subsequent imprisonment for the crime, were positive acts that spoke to his capacity to change and think about others and become accountable for his actions.

Whether or not the wrongdoer will repeat the offense matters to interpersonal forgiveness. In addition to the offender’s acknowledgement and repudiation the offender’s commitment to change and the positive acts that reinforce this commitment provide reasons to believe the offender’s contrition is genuine and the belief that the contrition is genuine is the primary reason to forgive.

A wrongdoer who is forgiven and then engages in the same or similar behavior disregards or takes advantage of the good-will the injured party extended in interpersonal forgiveness. Interpersonal forgiveness loses its force as a reciprocal process of good-will and the question raised earlier, “how is it possible to receive good-will for harm done?” suggests more a perverse form of gratitude than a puzzle or question in interpersonal forgiveness.

The original question is considered through examining the injured party’s conditions in conjunction with the offender’s conditions for interpersonal forgiveness. Though I have not yet taken up the offender’s regret for the wrong and the pain he has caused the injured party, which is his fourth condition for interpersonal forgiveness, the offender’s acknowledgement, repudiation, and commitment to change initiate the possibility for interpersonal forgiveness by
taking moral responsibility and recognizing the injured party as a moral agent and a member of the moral community. The offender’s contrition changes the context of the circumstances so that interpersonal forgiveness becomes a response to a reparatory gesture rather than returning good-will for harm done.

On the other hand, to forgive an offender who does not commit to change may put one in the position of returning good-will for harm done. Since the injury was intentional, by not committing to change the offender leaves open the possibility that he may repeat the wrongful act or attitude. Consequently, the seriousness of his intention to acknowledge and repudiate the wrongdoing may be viewed with skepticism. As discussed earlier, the offender’s contrition cannot guarantee that he will not engage in future wrongdoing. The trust and hope embedded in forgiveness fills this gap in certainty, yet it is not based on merely wishful thinking. The positive and negative acts associated with the offender’s commitment to change contribute reasons for the belief that his contrition is genuine.

Considering my contention that the offender’s third condition—commitment to change—is necessary to attain interpersonal forgiveness, an examination of an account that argues for an unconditional forgiveness can be read as an objection to this condition, though, the objection does apply to the other conditions that I assert are necessary for forgiveness as well. It is an account that may address a broader category of forgiveness than interpersonal forgiveness though the interpersonal context from which it arises is material to interpersonal forgiveness.

In what follows I will challenge Lucy Allais’ argument for unconditional forgiveness based on the difference between beliefs and attitudes. I will argue that the freer latitude that she proposes for attitudes such as resentment by applying the standard of “fittingness” risks condoning the wrongful act or attitude by allowing it to continue.
Lucy Allais defends a notion of unconditional forgiveness that involves separating the wrongful act from the offender as a person.\textsuperscript{146} It is a way to maintain the judgment that the act is wrong and the offender is culpable while simultaneously finding that it does not reflect the offender as a discrete human being. She contends that the injured party relinquishes retributive reactive attitudes that are a response to the wrongful act by distinguishing the act from the individual. Allais argues that the judgment that the act is wrong and the offender is culpable is still preserved because as a belief it has a different relation to the evidence than is possessed by a retributive reactive attitude.\textsuperscript{147}

Whereas a belief has an epistemic relation to the evidence, a retributive reactive attitude has a relation of “fittingness.” Furthermore, the conditions for the fittingness of retributive reactive attitudes are partly a matter of focus, unlike belief, which strives for alignment with the facts of the matter.\textsuperscript{148} As a result, though retributive reactive attitudes may be “evidentially justified,” they are not “epistemically mandated.”\textsuperscript{149}

Allais contends that the retributive reactive attitude is a response to a wrongful act, and as such, it is a form of censuring the offender through a lowering of esteem.\textsuperscript{150} More than simple resentment, it may include such phenomena as finding the offender “not worth getting worked up about,” or not trustworthy, or generating negative appraisals of character of the offender as “inconsiderate, unkind, or nasty.”\textsuperscript{151}

In order to extinguish the retributive reactive attitudes and so forgive, the injured party has to find that the wrongful act is not representative of the offender as a person. So that from this

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, p. 54.
point of view, it appears that, if the injured party determines that it does represent the offender as a person, then forgiveness would not be a fitting response.

Allais gives the reader a clearer understanding of her use of the term “fittingness” as a standard to assess whether retributive reactive attitudes are appropriate by her comments in a footnote reference.\(^1\) She notes that in a paper by Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson there is a distinction between emotions as “evidentially appropriate” from emotions as morally mandated such that “one ought to have it.”

Though there is a difference between Allais’ emphasis on the retributive reactive attitudes not being “epistemically mandated” and D’Arms and Jacobson’s focus on the relation between fitness and morality, it is helpful for her account that the moral with its obligatory features is considered as distinct from questions of fit. D’Arms and Jacobson contend that “to commit the moralistic fallacy is to infer, from the claim that it would be wrong or vicious to feel an emotion, that it is therefore unfitting.”

However, looking further into D’Arms and Jacobson’s notion of “fittingness” lends additional support for considering Allais’ application of the term. D’Arms and Jacobson argue that there are two kinds of fittingness in accordance with two dimensions of fit, so that “one can criticize an emotion with regard to its size and its shape.”

They describe an emotion’s shape by explaining that an emotional occurrence represents its object as possessing certain “evaluative features.” If these features in the object are missing the emotion would be “unfitting.” As an example, they define envy: “[it] portrays a rival as having a desirable possession that one lacks, and [it] casts this circumstance in a specific

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\(^2\) Ibid.


\(^4\) Ibid, p. 73.

\(^5\) Ibid.
negative light.” They argue that envy would be unfitting according to shape if “the cabin is primitive and you’re keen on comfort or if she really has no cabin and spends the weekends caring for a sick relative.”

The second kind of fittingness involves size. Here fit refers to the ratio of response to the source of the emotion. They point, in the case of envy, to a situation where it is unfitting because the object of the emotion is not much better than your own, so that envy is an “overreaction.”

The shape with regard to fittingness of resentment and the other retributive reactive attitudes can be understood as indicating that these attitudes respond to objects possessing evaluative features of intentional injury or wrongdoing, so that if one were mistaken as to an act or attitude that one felt was injurious, resentment and the other retributive reactive attitudes would be unfitting. In developing this shape further, one finds that the relevance of the moral is not completely absent from D’Arms and Jacobson’s account. They point out that anger has a “partially moral shape” because it is associated with moral concepts like responsibility, fault, and desert. It is reasonable to include resentment and the retributive reactive attitudes as also having a “partially moral shape.” From this perspective, the film Eve’s Bayou (1997) concerning the dynamics of the Batiste family and the impact that the infidelities of the father, Louis Batiste have on the family in rural Louisiana in 1962 can lend insight. The resentment and retributive reactive attitudes felt by 10 year-old Eve Batiste toward her father, Louis Batiste, in the film appropriately portray the evaluative features of “responsibility, fault, and desert” in addition to the intentional injury associated with the infidelities of her father. Eve’s resentment and r

157 Ibid, p. 66.
158 Ibid, p. 73.
159 Ibid, p. 74.
retributive reactive attitudes are fitting.

But in Allais’ account this is not sufficient for Eve Batiste to feel resentment and the retributive reactive attitudes toward Louis Batiste as a person. Allais argues that resentment and retributive reactive attitudes have a different relation to the evidence than belief and in part it is a matter of focus. Applying the notion of “focus” to Eve Batiste’s experience, we find that Louis’ infidelities have a significant effect on her day-to-day existence and well-being. Louis returns home late every night smelling of liquor, and Eve’s mother, Roz, is always on edge and arguing with Louis, which spirals out to Eve’s pre-teen sister, Cicely, vying for her father’s attention as a paramour. Louis exacerbates his betrayals by his flagrant and indiscriminate behaviors. He dances salaciously with a married neighbor at a party while Eve, her mother, her siblings and the neighbors look on; as the local doctor, he makes house calls and treats “some illnesses hard to put a finger on;” and he flaunts his intimate encounters with Matty Meraux in the local bar. The most egregious charge of whether Louis is molesting Cicely is left ambiguous in the film.

What else can Eve focus on to grant that it is fitting to relinquish resentment and retributive reactive attitudes with respect to her father’s infidelities? Though Allais argues that fittingness is a matter of focus, and she emphasizes the “elective” aspect of forgiveness, she deems some reasons as inappropriate to relinquish resentment and forgive.

Similar to interpersonal forgiveness, Allais excludes relinquishing resentment and other retributive reactive attitudes for “therapeutic” reasons, because it does not have the appropriate focus on the offender.161 Whereas my emphasis in interpersonal forgiveness on the reciprocal exchange between the offender and the injured party takes issue with her

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161 Allais, p. 44.
disregard for reasons, such as an “offender’s perspective,” 162 or his character and personal 
history which Allais claims serve to excuse, justify or accept the offense and have the effect of 
altering the judgment of culpability and wrongness of the offense 163—which she seeks to 
maintain. Because they do not reflect an offender’s contrition, interpersonal forgiveness also 
shares with Allais’ account the rejection of general expressions of benevolence as reasons for 
forgiveness that include: “respect for the perpetrator’s humanity,” his “intrinsic value,” his 
“possibility of change,” or as a gesture of “good-will.” 164 The subjective reason should be 
something related to the attributes of the offender if it is to support finding that the wrongful act 
does or does not represent the offender as a person.

What specific things can Eve focus on with respect to her father as a person? Would 
focusing on his work as a physician performing essential services for the community be enough 
to dissipate the resentment and retributive reactive attitudes? Put in another way, is the feeling 
“I forgive you for the injury you cause me and our family as a result of your infidelities because 
you perform an essential service for the community” fitting? That doesn’t seem right. Focusing 
on Louis’ treatment of the ill and infirm would not seem to alleviate the sense of violation that 
Eve feels from his infidelities. Perhaps, it would raise questions like, “if he cares for 
acquaintances and even strangers, why does he show lack of care for us by his infidelities?”

Furthermore, if focusing on the good works that he does as a doctor is deemed fitting for 
forgiveness, would that imply that doctors are exempt from the ordinary responsibilities of good-
will toward others that members of the moral community are expected to uphold? Alternatively, 
if Louis was employed, instead, as a sales clerk, would a focus on this work be deemed fitting, as 
well? If it is not, does that mean that only certain professionals are considered worthy of

162 Ibid, p. 46.
163 Allais, p. 36.
164 Ibid, p. 45, 46.
forgiveness? Other aspects of Louis’ character, such as that he provides a comfortable upper middle-class living for his family, his gregariousness, his intelligence, also do not seem to enable a focus that so dominates as an expression of his person that the resentment and retributive reactive attitudes are extinguished. And while these negative attitudes are still present, according to Allais, forgiveness does not occur---forgiveness is a change in feeling. What’s more if Allais considers professional responsibilities to be part of the offender’s “character” or “personal history”, then she has already excluded these categories as appropriate reasons to relinquish retributive reactive attitudes.

Allais does not question whether the attitudes in response to the wrongful act or attitude at hand are fitting. If evaluation of the person of the offender revealed that he had a number of wrongful acts of similar severity, this would appear to reinforce the feeling of retributive reactive attitudes, rather than facilitate their dissipation.

Forgiving an offender by focusing on other aspects of his person would seem to allow the wrongdoing to persist. Allowing a wrongdoing to continue unabated is a feature of condonation. If Eve forgives her father by focusing on his service as a doctor or other aspects of his person, it would seem that she condones the wrongdoing by allowing it to continue—“in Allais’ terms, the slate is wiped clean,” he is forgiven, yet, the wrongdoing continues. One might say that the feeling of forgiveness is unfitting, since its evaluative presentation, pursuant to D’Arms and Jacobson’s notion of “fittingness,” is contradicted by the wrongful act of unrepentant infidelity.

Allais is arguing for an account of forgiveness that applies to unrepentant as well as repentant wrongdoers. She acknowledges that repentance provides evidence for countering the

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166 D’Arms and Jacobson, p.73.
evidence of the wrongdoing. In the case of the unrepentant wrongdoer, the evidence at hand is that he committed the offense, the offense is wrong, and he stands by it. This would seem to contribute to an additional degree of skepticism, as to fittingness, alongside relying on focus itself as a means to determine fittingness for forgiveness. Allais contends that an advantage to her account is that “it does not give a straightforward account of when forgiving is a good thing in particular cases.”

Since Allais does not find that any reason whatsoever is sufficient to forgive, the problems raised with regard to focus are problematic for her account. The account precludes the injured party from forgiving for reasons arising from “the offender’s perspective,” or for “general humanitarian” reasons. If relinquishing the retributive reactive attitudes is a matter of focus, when faced with an unrepentant offender, it would seem the injured party would have nothing else to focus on but his wrongful act or attitude. Allais aims to separate the wrongful act from the offender through focusing on something besides the wrongdoing, however she does not provide an appropriate object of focus. Moreover, forgiving an unrepentant offender risks condonation by allowing the wrongful act to continue unmitigated by contrition. Interpersonal forgiveness requires that the offender be held responsible by both parties, by condoning the wrongful act interpersonal forgiveness does not obtain.

4. **Expression of Regret**

The fourth condition that the offender must fulfil in the interpersonal forgiveness process requires that he express regret to the injured party for the wrongdoing and the pain he has caused.

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167 Allais, p. 63.  
168 Ibid.
her. To acknowledge and repudiate the wrongdoing and to commit to change are conditions that emphasize the moral responsibility necessary for interpersonal forgiveness. The expression of regret may also be considered as a feature of moral responsibility in the sense that as members of the moral community we have an obligation to care about other moral agents.

A Strawsonian view pictures the morally responsible agent as responding to the injured party whom he has wronged with the reactive attitude of regret. The offender has wronged the injured party and has demonstrated ill-will towards her in contradistinction to the good-will that he is expected to express as a member of the moral community.¹⁶⁹

In the introduction, I raised the possibility that interpersonal forgiveness is a form of love. Though it does not represent species of love such as unrequited love, unconditional love, or romantic love, interpersonal forgiveness may be considered as its own species of love, embodying the good-will and care common to all varieties of love. As interpersonal forgiveness is a reciprocal process based in love, the offender’s regret communicates to the injured party the care and good-will that are fundamental features of the genus love. When one regrets the negative impact that one’s actions and attitudes have on another, regret includes the other, and conveys that they matter, unlike reflexive sentiments of regret involving only oneself or inanimate objects. And through these affective means, the offender’s regret, expresses to the injured party the regard and respect due a moral agent.

By undergoing and communicating regret the offender also experiences the pain of that reactive attitude. Arguably, one can stave off regret by refusing to believe one has done wrong---whether or not supported by the facts of the matter. Regret is voluntary in the sense that it is a natural consequence of acknowledging and repudiating the wrongful act. To acknowledge that what one did was wrong and to reject the act or attitude and one’s association with endorsing the

¹⁶⁹ Strawson, p. 16.
act or attitude, yet, not to feel regret diminishes the veracity of the gestures of responsibility. Perhaps, it reveals that the offender does not fully “own” the wrongful behavior as the commitment to change further claims. It may seem like a type of “going through the motions” rather than experiencing the discomforiting feeling that connects one’s actions and attitudes to the pain of another. To not feel regret but still acknowledge, repudiate, and commit to change, shifts the interpersonal notion of moral responsibility based in reactive attitudes toward a more transactional model that withholds the vulnerability that one shares and experiences in regret. The offender feels regret for committing this particular wrong against this particular person and he communicates that regret to the injured party.

In the films discussed earlier, *L’Enfant* and *Moonlight*, acknowledgment, repudiation, and a commitment to change were evident in the actions and expressions of contrition of Bruno in the former film and Kevin in the latter. However, the regret demonstrated by both wrongdoers not only served to reinforce the acknowledgment, repudiation, and commitment to change, it contributed to the taking of moral responsibility, and it manifested a state of vulnerability that connected love as care to the injured party’s pain. In the account that I am proposing, it is not that the offender deserves to be forgiven, as in retributive justice where a deserved proportionate punishment attains justice. It is instead that by a reciprocal process in the conditions fulfilled by both parties, justice is attained. Though the moral community may express disapprobation toward an intransigent injured party in withholding forgiveness to a repentant offender, forgiveness is not rationally required. The repentant offender is not entitled to forgiveness. If the injured party has not gone through the emotional and attitudinal transformation of the “change of heart,” then the offender has not been forgiven. The concept of desert fails to account for the “change of heart” as an essential
feature of forgiveness.

Glen Pettigrove proposes an account of forgiveness that includes forgiveness of unrepentant offenders. He argues that grace, defined as “an intentional act of unmerited favor,”\textsuperscript{170} is a significant aspect of forgiveness. Pettigrove offers an elegant contribution to forgiveness studies, though, I will challenge several of his arguments, particularly his application of Seneca’s definition of grace which emphasizes that it is only a favor if it is “done with reason.”\textsuperscript{171}

Pettigrove contends that conditional forgiveness is based on the “desert” of the wrongdoer, and as such excludes grace which is an important aspect of forgiveness.\textsuperscript{172} His definition of grace relies on Seneca’s concept that grace is “an intentional act of unmerited favor.”\textsuperscript{173} The premise of his argument against the notion that forgiveness must be deserved, is supported by this concept of grace. As in the other objections that I have considered, its interpersonal context is relevant to interpersonal forgiveness though it does not specifically refer to interpersonal forgiveness.

Accordingly, from this perspective, as forgiveness is unmerited, the contrition of the offender is not required. To support his argument, Pettigrove distinguishes between an understanding of merit in a “strong” sense, and merit in a “weak” sense.”\textsuperscript{174} Merit in the “strong” sense is present where an agent can make the claim that something is owed them, as contrasted with the “weak” sense where conditions make it merely permissible.\textsuperscript{175}

This distinction serves to support a scenario, by Pettigrove’s lights, where the offender does offer contrition and the notion of forgiveness employed does not consider it to be a necessary

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{171} Ibid, p. 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{172} Ibid, p. 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{173} Ibid, p. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{174} Ibid, p. 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{175} Ibid, p. 7.
\end{itemize}
response to the offender’s gesture (unlike accounts that claim it is a moral obligation to forgive the repentant offender). The repentant offender may merit forgiveness in the “weak” sense of the term but the forgiveness offered is still unmerited in the “strong” sense.

However, in the case of the unrepentant wrongdoer, taking a closer look at Seneca’s definition raises questions. Pettigrove does not resolve the issue when he addresses the seeming contradiction between Seneca’s definition of grace and the necessary element that it is only a favor if it is “done with reason,” as encapsulated in Seneca’s remarks, “reason recommends that one bypass the unworthy, and give instead to a man of integrity a man with gratitude, and straightforwardness, a kind man.”\textsuperscript{176}

In the case where the offender does not express regret or acknowledge, repudiate, or commit to change for the wrongdoing it appears that he would more likely be considered as “unworthy,” by Seneca’s lights, of the favor of forgiveness. Pettigrove attempts to satisfy this discrepancy by indicating that there are a range of “favors” and that character is important where the recipient is in the position to help or harm others as a result of the favor.\textsuperscript{177}

In the film \textit{Eve’s Bayou} (1997), an unrepentant Louis Batiste is in a position to harm his family. Forgiving him with an act of unmerited favor allows the wrongdoing to continue and as such I find, is an act of condonation not interpersonal forgiveness.

Though Pettigrove does not specifically provide examples for forgiveness, in this section of his argument, one may construe comments made in a separate section to ascertain what he means by “helps” or “harms” of a recipient in relation to forgiveness. He points to studies that indicate that “repentance and prosocial conduct” are more likely to occur where unmerited

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid, p. 8.
forgiveness is substituted for resentment as a positive result\textsuperscript{178} and indicates the potential for harm in forgiving a wrongdoer in order to bring him joy (bringing the offender joy as an unmerited favor and reason to forgive) where the joy experienced by the offender is “rooted in or dependent upon the suffering of others.”\textsuperscript{179}

Louis Batiste’s persistent and flagrant infidelities are ongoing, he is not struggling to be faithful, rather, he is thoroughly enjoying himself. Pettigrove’s example of a favor that may produce a “help” such as “repentance or pro social attitudes” is not represented in the case of Louis Batiste. He gives no indication that forgiveness will alter his activities. Nor is Pettigrove’s example of “harm”. Though Louis Batiste’s infidelities cause his family to suffer, his “joy” in his extramarital relations, is rooted in his own psychological, emotional and carnal desires, not the suffering of his family, which is more collateral damage in this scenario. In this way he would still be eligible for the unmerited favor of forgiveness. The result being that Louis Batiste’s infidelities are allowed to continue and are therefore condoned not forgiven.

Further consideration of the category of harms, the “harms” or extent of an injury are not necessarily judged by the likelihood of serial offenses to others. A singular offense may carry serious weight to an individual who expects an appropriate amount of good-will and who is entitled to redress through contrition.

Pettigrove’s consideration of the range of favors articulated by Seneca notes that an invite to dinner and not taking offense at an insult occupy the lower tier and appointment to a significant political position is on a higher tier.\textsuperscript{180} If Pettigrove includes the favor of forgiveness on the lower end of the scale, in most cases, where ingratitude may even be likely,\textsuperscript{181} his

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
application of the scale is not sufficient to distinguish innocuous behaviors or attitudes from potential harms to others. Not taking moral responsibility is a character trait that can cause injury in a variety of circumstances. It undermines the interpersonal exchange expected of members in the moral community. The offender who refuses to express regret, or acknowledge, repudiate, or commit to change for his wrongdoing takes a stand asserting that his self-interest is superior to the reciprocal duty of moral responsibility. In doing so, he compounds the original injury by doubling down on the message that he does not recognize the moral agency of the injured party who has rights that must be respected, rather, the injured party is simply instrumental to his process or collateral damage.

Perhaps, the people in the categories that Strawson recognizes as exceptions to reactive attitudes and moral responsibility, such as the first species where the offender had no other option or the injury was accidental,¹⁸² or the first subdivision of the second species where the offender “was not himself,”¹⁸³ may be appropriate recipients of grace, though not grace as forgiveness as argued by Pettigrove. As I have argued from a Strawsonian approach, interpersonal forgiveness is a reactive attitude; it is part of an interpersonal process that affirms moral responsibility through exchange between the offender and the injured party, it is not a unilateral act that is bestowed upon the offender.

Forgiveness as a state of grace does not offer a persuasive challenge to the conditional account of interpersonal forgiveness that I am proposing, nor succeed in establishing that the offender’s condition of regret is not a necessary condition.

¹⁸² Strawson, p. 7.
Chapter 4

Forgiveness is Interpersonal

The Structural Argument

If the injured party claims that she has forgiven the offender, though she does not take the offender’s acknowledgment, repudiation, commitment to change, or expression of regret for the injury into consideration, I shall argue, a constitutive feature of interpersonal forgiveness is missing. Consequently, because it is approached as a unilateral transaction, interpersonal forgiveness does not obtain. Interpersonal forgiveness is an interpersonal exchange between the injured party and the offender. An interpersonal relation involves reciprocity, a hearing out, responsiveness. The interpersonal dynamic is the structural criterion of interpersonal forgiveness and it is missing. Forgiveness is not interpersonal if the offender’s gesture of contrition is not recognized as a significant part of the process. What’s more, I have offered several arguments against accounts that propose varying forms of unconditional forgiveness. I have not been persuaded that a unilateral approach is interpersonal forgiveness; it may be unconditional love, compassion, self-soothing, or from a blame-worthy perspective, it may be considered condonation---not interpersonal forgiveness. The relationship between condonation and compassion or unconditional love may provide a subject for inquiry, though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Reciprocity is necessary for interpersonal forgiveness in order to attain a personal justice recognized by both the injured party and the offender. The moral responsibility demonstrated by the offender through his contrition conveys that conceptually, attitudinally, and emotionally he rejects the wrongful act or attitude and the harm that it has caused the injured party. Furthermore, though the past cannot be erased, the offender is committed to upholding the values
shared by himself and the injured party in his words and actions in the present and the future.

Though it is only the injured party that has been wronged in my examination of interpersonal forgiveness, justice is not attained if the injured party does not make the effort by forgoing revenge, relinquishing resentment, not holding the wrongdoing against the offender, and communicating forgiveness. She contributes to the process of attaining justice by conveying that she believes the offender’s contrition is genuine and trusts that he will follow through and embody these positive changes. The injured party’s reciprocal response to the offender is proffered by committing to letting the past go to focus on the present and future in her relationship with him, maintaining that reconciliation with the offender matters. The reciprocal engagement by both parties is a commitment to shared values and the worth of the relationship and it reflects the dedication to the expression of mutual good-will. Without reciprocity reconciliation is impaired or forestalled and justice is not complete.

Insight can be gained through extending P.F. Strawson’s reasoning with respect to the reactive attitudes, which he sees as a defining feature of the interpersonal, as he puts it “…being involved in inter-personal relationships as we normally understand them precisely is being exposed to the range of reactive attitudes and feelings…” Strawson argues that “reactive attitudes” are an inherently natural feature of human beings. The reactive attitudes indicate the good or ill-will that motivate one’s actions or intentions. Reactive attitudes are realized in three perspectives, the personal, the general, and the self-reactive attitudes.

The personal is the effect one’s attitudes have on other agents and the effect other agent’s

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184 I have discussed in previous chapters circumstances where it is reasonable for the injured party to withhold forgiveness as well as the alternate case where she may be charged with “testimonial injustice” if she refuses to hear out a repentant offender. In subsequent pages I will address further these varied occasions where the injured party refuses to forgive the offender.
185 Strawson, p. 12.
187 Ibid, p. 5.
188 Ibid, p. 16.
attitudes have on oneself. The general is how one is affected by the effect another individual’s attitudes have on other agents (as a general universal effect, one can also experience it as to general harms to oneself, i.e., indignation vs resentment). And the self-reactive attitudes are the attitudes one has as a result of the effect of one’s own actions or intentions.

The reactive attitudes including: resentment, gratitude, forgiveness, indignation, guilt, regret, and remorse reflect the natural basis of our moral responsibility. The reactive perspectives are interconnected: experiencing one perspective, say the personal, without, the general or self-reactive, indicates a moral failing. In this sense, I would characterize them as “conjoined.”

The interpersonal connection that is manifested specifically in the personal attitudes can be seen by Strawson’s conception of forgiveness which is partly a response to the wrongdoer’s repudiation of the injurious action that also indicates that the wrongdoer acknowledges that he is responsible for the injury.

I am arguing that a Strawsonian approach to forgiveness gets it right. Forgiveness as interpersonal involves the injured party’s feeling of resentment arising from the injury, the repudiation of the act by the offender, and the subsequent reaction and response by the injured party that includes the relinquishing of resentment and the acceptance of the offender’s repudiation of the act acknowledging the wrongfulness of the act and his commitment to forsaking the attitude of ill-will and wrongful behavior in the future.

In following this reasoning further, I emphasize interpersonal forgiveness as a reactive
attitude. It is a reaction to the offender’s repudiation of the wrong doing. It can be viewed as manifesting the reciprocity that is so important to Adam Smith’s moral sentiments. Though Smith is speaking specifically about sympathy and not forgiveness, it is instructive because it reflects the interpersonal exchange of emotions and attitudes that takes place. Sympathy is a reciprocal enterprise: one lowers the intensity of her sentiment and the other enters imaginatively into her circumstance in order to experience as near as possible her sentiment.\textsuperscript{196} Perhaps sympathy might still take place if the intensity of the sentiment is not lowered, but then it is not an interpersonal exchange---the one sympathizing recognizes the other and her circumstance but the individual initially experiencing the sentiment does not recognize the circumstance of the one who is in sympathy. It is less a “concord” of sentiments, as Smith portrays it, than a bestowal, which contradicts the reciprocity that is the basis of Smith’s project.

Smith does not claim that sympathy is always perfectly achieved; he contends that it is a sentiment that though it is developed further in experience, is still natural. He asserts that “in order to produce this concord, as nature teaches the spectator to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators.”\textsuperscript{197} There is this aspect of the natural in interpersonal forgiveness between family, friends, and acquaintances that I am arguing has a place in the larger field of forgiveness where reciprocity as a natural exchange may not account for a significant aspect of the experience.

Taking a Strawsonian approach in this way views the interpersonal basis of interpersonal forgiveness as grounded in reciprocity. Strawson asserts that the reactive attitudes are logically

\textsuperscript{196} Smith, p.22.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
and humanly connected. He represents two extreme cases of individuals that express some but not all of the categories of reactive attitudes---personal, general, self-reactive---as morally deficient. In the first case the individual experiences the personal reactive attitudes, though not the general, and is assessed by Strawson accordingly as a moral solipsist. In the second case, the individual does not experience the self-reactive attitudes and so is deemed by Strawson as lacking in moral sense or a “moral idiot.”

Though the examples Strawson offers to illustrate a moral deficiency are cases where an entire category of reactive attitude is absent in the individual in every encounter, it still provides a baseline that I contend, holds that a morally salutary interpersonal relationship includes all three categories of reactive attitudes. Taking a Strawsonian route, there is a potential range of reactive attitudes that operate in an interpersonal setting. At the extreme is the solipsist and the individual completely lacking in moral sense, but before reaching that outer limit, there are degrees of deficiency that are morally unacceptable.

The extreme cases delineate the absence of the reciprocity of the reactive attitude category in every encounter, but suppose, let’s say in fifty percent of the time an individual did not experience a self-reactive attitude, such as guilt, regret, or feeling responsible, in such a case the individual’s possession of moral sense and propensity for reciprocal engagement would be highly doubtful. Though Strawson’s examples seem meant to emphasize how humanly and logically connected the categories of reactive attitudes are, by the rarity of individuals who are genuinely solipsistic or totally lacking in moral sense, at the same time, it illuminates that in interpersonal relations there are degrees of deficiency. If the optimal operation of interpersonal

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198 Strawson, p. 16.
199 Ibid, p. 17.
relations always includes all three categories of reactive attitudes, then as the percentage of circumstances where one of the categories is missing increases, the gapped individual becomes closer to characterization as one of the extreme cases and so unfit for interpersonal relations (though there are circumstances with family, friends, or colleagues where individuals leaning toward this classification may be tolerated). A way to reframe this moral inadequacy is that the individual is ill-suited for membership in the moral community. More specifically, the importance of possessing all three categories of reactive attitudes is noted when considering the personal reactive attitude of forgiveness, underscoring that absent the self-reactive category that includes regret, forgiveness would be inappropriate. Regret expresses that the agent wishes that the wrongful act or attitude had not occurred. What’s more, it’s not just a wish for an erasure of the objectionable consequences, it is more of a longing that he had not committed the wrong; that the wrong weighs upon him as a person, and it matters because the injured party matters. Regret is an embodiment of responsibility that affectively connects to the injured party in mattering.

The general propensity for all three categories of reactive attitudes as an overview in terms of percentages overall, provides some material for understanding the relation between the reactive attitudes and the interpersonal, but it neglects the individual case. If all three categories of the reactive attitudes are present in fifty percent of an individual’s interactions, the interactions in the remaining fifty percent where a category is missing will be morally deficient and not representative of the reciprocity of moral responsibility which is the basis of the interpersonal relation as reflected in the reactive attitudes.

Strawson provides additional resources to evaluate the appropriateness of the reactive
attitudes to the interpersonal relation in the individual case beyond assessing one’s proximity to the extreme cases. Through the lens of the reactive attitude of resentment, which is a response to injury and a demand for regard, Strawson considers the presence of factors which render resentment inappropriate.

He distinguishes two species of exceptions with the second species divided into two subdivisions. I have introduced these exceptions in support of arguments in preceding chapters, though I think it is helpful to present them here in their entirety as they are important to the structural argument. The first species involves cases where either the agent had no other option in performing the injurious act or the injury was accidental. In cases of this type, the agent did not intentionally injure the injured party and so resentment is viewed as inappropriate for this particular injury, though reactive attitudes in general are recognized as fitting in interactions with this agent.

In the first sub-division of the second species of exceptions, in contradistinction to not finding the agent responsible for the injury because of the accidental or unavoidable nature of the injury, an injury occurs as a result of an agent who is under some great strain, precipitating acts that are inconsistent with his character, so that in these circumstances, resentment towards him for actions which are alien to his person is seen as inappropriate. The overall intentionality of the agent is not regarded as problematic, the injurious act is associated with unordinary circumstances rather than the agent himself.

In the second sub-division reactive attitudes are inappropriate due to moral immaturity, psychological abnormality, or what Strawson describes as an agent who has been

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“systematically perverted” or “unfortunate in his formative circumstances.”

Strawson points out accordingly that the reactive attitude of resentment, as a demand for regard, and accountability (moral responsibility), is deemed inappropriate in interactions with agents that fall under this sub-division; the agent can be managed, or handled, but cannot be reasoned with.

The reciprocity that I am associating with moral responsibility and personal forgiveness is not viable in encounters with an agent that is managed, handled or cannot be reasoned with.

The extreme cases represented by solipsism and the absence of moral sense emphasize the importance of all three categories of reactive attitudes for interpersonal relations. Without the reciprocity that is manifested by the conjunction of all three categories in an individual, an interpersonal relation---in the moral sense which my account is focused on---does not function as an exchange. As a result, the basic criteria for an interpersonal relation is not fulfilled, instead, it serves as a unilateral transaction. Again, as mentioned above, I am taking a Strawsonian approach in extending the understanding of the interpersonal relation as one grounded in reciprocity.

I am focusing on the reciprocity experienced within the face-to-face encounter where reciprocity is the ideal. Within this dynamic, reactive attitudes affect another person. To keep a reactive attitude to yourself, or express it in the open air or to a third party is to turn away from a moral agent. Strawson’s solipsist comes to mind in the extreme. If reactive attitudes are meant to be displayed, they are meant to be viewed. Because they’re reactive attitudes, they are naturally responding to a communicated message. There is a reciprocal exchange that recalls the rules of conversation by H.P. Grice. He asserts that every contribution to the conversation should be

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202 Ibid, p. 8-10
directed by the purpose or direction of the communicative exchange. Expanding on Grice’s notion, I contend that if each party is conveying good-will, their exchange will be directed toward expressing good-will toward the other. To deny the exchange is to suppress its communicative DNA. It may seem that reactive attitudes are merely reacting in the moment and that there is no objective which indicates some sort of coordinated plan or a norm. However, reactive attitudes respond to one another as natural human responses and under guidance of the norms in the community. So, though they are responding to the epistemic/affective material before the moral agent there is a system of norms which support the belief that a reactive attitude is appropriate and a reciprocal response is in order.

As I have noted at several points, an interpersonal relation assumes all three categories of reactive attitudes, though Strawson has outlined a series of exceptions, such as accident, or uncharacteristic behavior, where in the individual case a reactive attitude, such as resentment, is not appropriate.

In both of these exceptions the intentionality to injure, to express ill-will is not present, so the reactive attitude of resentment is not the natural response. It is not a question of the agent’s wronging the injured party due to a lack of regard, so that resentment as a demand for regard is not deemed necessary. The reactive attitudes in total are not suspended toward these individuals; the reciprocity that forms the basis of interpersonal relations has not been jeopardized by these exceptions.

In the second sub-division of the second species, the reciprocity of interpersonal relations is inhibited by either immaturity, psychological abnormality, or pernicious influences. When viewed under this sub-division, a Strawsonian approach can determine that the reactive attitude

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of forgiveness is inappropriate because the agent does not have the capacity to understand or recognize the demand for regard that resentment expresses, nor will he be moved to repudiate, take responsibility, or convey remorse for the injury. so that forgiveness as an interpersonal response is not genuinely motivated. Lacking the reciprocal exchange between the injured party and offender, the criteria for forgiveness as interpersonal are not fulfilled.  \(^{205}\)

A Strawsonian reading of the human and logical connection between the three categories raises another point. It is not the mere capacity for the three categories, or even the possession of the three categories which describes the interpersonal relation; it is the display of the interactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes as a reaction, as a response, requires expression because otherwise, they don’t give the other individual an opportunity to address the particular communication which the reactive attitudes are. Resentment that festers, and that negatively impacts the relationship, does not benefit either party. If the injured party no longer trusts the offender, or decides to avoid him, or becomes overly critical of him in her remarks to him directly or to others about him, the silence regarding the original offense serves as a staging area for further ill-will.

The failure of the injured party to take the offender’s acknowledgement, repudiation, commitment to change, and expression of regret into consideration when he does not fall under the extreme cases or any of the exceptions, not only violates the structural criterion of an interpersonal relation, in addition, by not hearing him out she deprives him of his interpersonal right to react and respond, as is the norm for moral agents in the face-to-face encounter. The right to a defense is mirrored in the law, which reflects norms of the community; if the offender merely had the right to soliloquy or discussion with third parties, his right to have the injured

\(^{205}\) Strawson includes children in his category exempting moral responsibility where reactive attitudes are not appropriate, though children are developmentally shaped to participate in the reciprocity of moral responsibility and the appropriateness of reactive attitudes as they mature.
party hear him out would not be as pronounced. Not hearing him out treats the offender as if he fell under the species of exceptions where an individual is “handled” or “managed” and cannot be reasoned with. This deployment of the “objective attitude” functionally exiles the offender from the moral community, through excluding him from the meaning making process which incorporates reactive attitudes and personal accounts.

A case that would not be subject to a charge that the offender has not been afforded his interpersonal right to respond occurs when the offender is viewed as untrustworthy as a result of his actions and/or attitudes. A rejection of an offender’s offerings of contrition by an injured party who is confronting a recidivist wrongdoer and serial apologizer would not be a case of the deprivation of the offender’s interpersonal rights to respond. The offender has tarnished the very assumption of good-will held by members of the moral community in the exchange of reactive attitudes.

If the injured party cannot believe the contrition due to the offender’s own actions and attitudes casting his character in doubt, interpersonal forgiveness would still be inappropriate because as in the case where there is definitively no regret---where regret is justifiably suspect, the self-reactive category in this instance would be missing or unreliable for engagement in the face-to-face encounter of the interpersonal relation.  

Additionally, a consideration of Strawson’s expansion of the objective attitude to include circumstances where one needs a respite from the difficulties and pressures of a relationship may be apt. Here it is applied in cases where the recipient does not have a “deep rooted psychological abnormality” or is not characterized as “he wasn’t himself” or is not morally

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206 If the offender feels genuine regret yet he cannot change, then though forgiveness may not be available for him because there is no commitment to not perpetrate future wrongdoings, the injured party may still feel compassion towards him.
207 Strawson, p. 18.
undeveloped. Skepticism as to the veracity of a wrongdoer’s contrition causes such strain and puts one at a distance from the individual; in doubt as to the other’s good-will as manifested by their actions and attitudes. Consequently, the interpersonal exchange of reactive attitudes is broken, leaving in this way too, interpersonal forgiveness as inappropriate, though, instead, the objective attitude may be warranted, due to the strain of the relation or even as viewing the offender as one who is morally undeveloped, lacking in moral sense, or “unfortunate in his formative circumstances.”

However, it is not justifiable to not afford a “hearing out” but, rather, to simply reject the amelioratory efforts of the non-recidivist offender out of hand, thereby treating him as one would an individual occupying the species of exceptions of those who lack the capacity to engage in the moral responsibility of the interpersonal relation when in fact the offender cannot be characterized as “psychologically abnormal,” or “morally undeveloped.”

That is not to say that in every case where the injured party refuses to “hear out” a sincerely contrite non-recidivist offender, that his reasoning abilities are in question as they are in Strawson’s category that includes “psychologically abnormal” and “morally undeveloped” individuals. If the injured party is engaging in some of the abuses outlined by Joseph Butler that violate the purposes of resentment to achieve “good,” she may be demonstrating a character flaw such as intransigence, irrationality, callousness, vindictiveness or other traits that may result in unfavorable aretaic appraisals. Nonetheless, it still is reasonable to say that by shutting out the offender and his reasons, the injured party erects a wall between him, herself, and the others whose reasons she does attend to, thereby exiling him from the moral community, and signaling to others that he should be exiled, though others may still treat him with the regard due a moral

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208 Ibid, 8-10.
209 Ibid.
An additional perspective reflecting the violation of the interpersonal structure of forgiveness occurs when one intends to forgive while refusing to recognize the offender’s contrition. It is an approach that only allows expression of the reactive attitudes of the injured party as relevant. This dynamic arises in cases where the injured party seeks to forgive the offender for reasons of self-care or has intentions to humanize the offender while still holding skeptical views as to his input. Without taking the offender’s account into consideration in forgiveness, the injured party does not recognize the other. By not recognizing the other, she deprives them of an opportunity to respond, defend, regret, repair…

Moreover, it may be regarded as a form of “testimonial injustice.” Interpersonal forgiveness as an interpersonal relation involves “second-person address.”\(^{210}\) By rejecting out of hand the offender’s overtures to responsibility, the injured party forms a belief as to the untrustworthiness of the offender not based on a genuine consideration of his input, thereby neglecting all available evidence and so failing to fulfill a norm for doxastic deliberation.\(^{211}\) This failure to engage directly with the offender engenders testimonial injustice not through rejecting the offender as a source of information, but by rejecting the offender himself. The offender’s acknowledgment, repudiation, commitment to change, and expression of regret is a form of second-person address that requires a response to its proffers. By not specifically responding to the representations of an offender who has perpetrated a wrong against her, the injured party may commit a testimonial injustice.

\(^{210}\) Wanderer, p. 156.
\(^{211}\) Ibid, p. 163,165
Argument against condonation

I have argued for a particular category of forgiveness that is interpersonal: it requires an exchange between the injured party and the offender. It is manifested in circumstances where a wrongdoing is committed, the offender acknowledges, repudiates, commits to change, and expresses regret to the injured party and the injured party forgives; by forgoing revenge, relinquishing resentment, not holding the wrongdoing against the offender and communicating forgiveness to the offender. Forgiveness is, in part, a response to the offender’s outreach of contrition, so that without this input by the offender, forgiveness would possess a structural deficiency. Treating the offender with the objective attitude and excluding him from the moral community and testimonial injustice can contribute to the structural deficiency in forgiveness, though these categories can also be considered as substantive deficiencies that impair the forgiveness process.

Differences between forgiveness and compassion were raised in the introduction. In subsequent chapters I have argued that if forgiveness were a direct response to wrongdoing as is compassion, it would be an issue because it reflects structural and substantive inadequacies. Condonation of the wrongdoing is another substantive flaw that may present itself in an account of forgiveness absent the offender’s acknowledgment, repudiation, commitment to change and expression of regret.

A folk psychological understanding of condone may locate the term as an approval of an action or attitude which indicates a conscious intent to endorse or affirm the action or attitude. The Oxford dictionary defines condone as to “accept and allow behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive to continue”.212 The definition possesses a tacit passivity

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more than an emphatic affirmation of the wrongdoing. If the injured party seeks to forgive the offender without his proffer of contrition, the wrongful act remains standing as the offender’s point of view representing that he endorses the wrongful act and attitude toward the injured party. The wrongful act and attitude can be interpreted as continuing in the sense that without their withdrawal, through the offender’s contrition, the behavior and attitude remain and survive as legitimate discourse. In another sense, allowing the act and attitudes to continue point to a potential outcome that without censure the offender will perpetuate more wrongful acts and attitudes toward the injured party and others as well.

I have argued in previous chapters that interpersonal forgiveness is not compatible with condonation, so that where there is condonation there is no forgiveness. As we have seen, interpersonal forgiveness requires that the offender be held responsible by both parties. In condonation, the injured party does not hold the offender responsible. Therefore, when the injured party condones the wrongful act, interpersonal forgiveness cannot occur. I have claimed in chapter 2 that self-pertaining reasons may result in condonation, and in chapter 3 that reasons of radical electivity, and attempts to separate the wrongdoing from the way the injured party feels about the offender as a person may also result in condonation----a wrongdoing where the offender is not held accountable----and therefore, no interpersonal forgiveness.

In this dissertation, I am adopting the Oxford dictionary definition of condone “to accept and allow behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive to continue.”

In what follows, I will examine several accounts of condonation in an effort to further understand its place in the philosophical literature focused on forgiveness and how it may apply

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Ibid.
to my claim that interpersonal forgiveness does not obtain if the substantive flaw of condonation is present. I will first consider condonation as it is portrayed in Aurel Kolnai’s seminal paper on forgiveness. Kolnai argues that the only reason to forgive is “a change of heart” of the offender.214 I will argue that while “change of heart” is an appropriate reason to forgive, his allowance of the “hope” of a change of heart is cause for skepticism, and violates the structural requirement in my account of interpersonal forgiveness.

In Kolnai’s account, the correct response to wrongdoing is the retributive reactive attitudes.215 He argues that in condonation the injured party “acquiesces” to the wrongdoing by withholding retributive attitudes despite “per se disapproval” of the act. 216 His emphasis on “acquiescence” has similarities to the definition of condonation that I find captures its tenor. As previously noted, that definition of condonation is “to accept and allow behavior that is morally offensive to continue.” 217 In comparison, the definition of “acquiescence” is “the reluctant acceptance of something without protest.”218 Both definitions share the features specifying acceptance of the behavior and the allowance of the behavior to continue.

Accepting wrongdoing “without protest” is an aspect of the definition of “acquiescence” that is not foregrounded in the definition of condonation that I have adopted in this dissertation. The issue of “forceful protest” will be addressed in an account of unconditional forgiveness by Eve Garrard and David McNaughton,219 and in a similar vein the issue of “abnegation of one’s responsibility to check or reprimand” 220 with regard to wrongdoing, will be considered in an account by Geoffrey Scarre. I will argue that though these notions may provide a necessary

216 Ibid, p. 95.
217 Lexico.com Condone | Definition of Condone by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com also meaning of Condone (accessed January 2021)
218 Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary, Lexico.com ACQUIESCENCE English Definition and Meaning | Lexico.com
condition to preclude condonation they do not provide a sufficient condition, and so accounts of unconditional forgiveness that rely on these notions may reflect cases that can be characterized as condonation as opposed to forgiveness.

I will also consider Leo Zaibert’s challenge to Kolnai’s account. Zaibert claims that Kolnai does not successfully distinguish condonation from forgiveness. He argues that Kolnai uses a “definitional stop” in a vicious way by conflating the definitions with the justifications, thereby rendering forgiveness as good and condonation as bad by definition. He also alleges that Kolnai’s reliance on repentance to forgive makes vicious use of the “definitional stop.” I will argue that Kolnai’s account distinguishes condonation from forgiveness by contrasting their “normative structures” without vicious use of the “definitional stop” and that Kolnai allows that some forgiveness is “objectionable”, so that Zaibert’s charge that by definition all repentance-based forgiveness is “good” is unfounded.

Geoffrey Scarre’s account was mentioned above with respect to his notion of “abnegation of responsibility to check or reprimand” in vicious condonation. Another aspect of his account that I will consider involves his argument in support of a “virtuous condonation.” I address his categories of virtuous condonation at length for the purpose of determining whether my argument that condonation is a substantive deficiency in interpersonal forgiveness should be qualified to account for instances of “virtuous condonation.” Upon examination of these categories, I do not find that they challenge my argument against condonation. I will argue that several of the categories he presents can be associated with Strawson’s species of exemptions from moral responsibility so that it would not be a case of inappropriate or vitiated

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222 Ibid, p. 312.
223 Scarre, p. 426.
224 Ibid, pgs. 419-424.
225 Strawson, p. 8.
forgiveness, since, forgiveness is a response to actions or attitudes where the offender is morally responsible. As to some of the other categories, I will argue that forgiveness would be more appropriate than “virtuous condonation,” to best afford the offender participation in the meaning making process.

The last notion of condonation that I consider is Michele Moody-Adams’ claim that “sympathetic identification” with the offender can result in condonation. Her argument is based on her critique of Charles Griswold’s employment of sympathy in his account of forgiveness. I will argue that Griswold clearly distinguishes between a sympathy of “pure contagion” where one individual in a sense “becomes the other” and a sympathy where one “imaginatively changes place with another.” His implementation of sympathy involves a process that does not result in “loss of self,” so that Moody-Adams’ concern that through sympathy the offender’s reasons for the wrongful act tend to take precedence in determining the moral responsibility of the offender and thereby they forgo the censure of the wrongful act is not found to be a valid criticism of Griswold’s application of sympathy.

In the film Closer (2004), the camera in slo-mo portrays a busy street scene capturing the pedestrian traffic as it converges from opposite directions. It focuses on a man “Dan” and a woman “Alice,” who are on opposite sides of the stream. They are noticing one another, smiling; the man’s smile is bashful, the woman’s smile is bemused, though interested. Both look away for a moment and then the camera focuses on the man’s face displaying an expression of alarm. The woman is hit by a car and crumples to the ground. He rushes over to her and she

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226 Moody-Adams, p. 164.
227 Griswold, p. 87.
228 Ibid, p. 88.
opens her eyes and says “hello stranger.” He accompanies her to the hospital where she is treated for scrapes and bandaged.

At first, they walk together in a cemetery reading the gravestone epitaphs, then board a bus toward his office where he works as an obituary columnist, learning a bit about one another along the way. She tells him that she left her boyfriend saying “I don’t love you anymore, good-bye.” He asks, “supposing you still do love them,” she replies “you don’t leave.” They say their good-byes and then he turns back and she says, “you have a girl friend?” He says “yeah, Ruth, she’s called Ruth, she’s a linguist.”

Up until this point the man and the woman have not exchanged names. He asks, “what’s your name?” “Alice,” she replies, “My name is Alice Ayres.” We learn at the end of the film that “Alice’s” real name is Jane Rachel Jones, and that “Alice Ayres” was the name of one of the decedents at the cemetery where she and Dan had strolled the day they met, a woman that had died rescuing three children.

The next frame of the film reflects that a year has passed. Dan has published a novel based on “Alice’s” life and he is in the studio of a portrait photographer who is photographing him for the book jacket. The photographer, “Anna,” asks if the book is based on someone he knows. He answers, “yes, someone called Alice.” He engages in a flirtatious exchange with Anna and then says “come here.” Anna moves closer and he says “you’re beautiful.” He kisses her gently and lovingly. She asks if he and Alice live together and when he answers yes, she pulls away. Anna then asks, referring to Alice, “why are you wasting her time?” He replies, “I’m not wasting her time she’s completely lovable, and completely unleavable.”

Alice is expected to meet him at the studio. He meets her at the door, and she notices that something has happened. Dan escorts Alice into the studio to meet Anna. Alice asks to use the
bathroom with the intention of listening to Dan and Anna’s conversation while she’s gone. After Alice leaves the room, Anna exclaims, “she is beautiful,” Dan says “I’ve got to see you.” Anna demurs saying “you’re taken.” He repeats “I’ve got to see you.” Alice returns and asks Anna to take her photo telling Dan to leave the studio so they can work. After he leaves, Alice tells Anna “when he let me in downstairs he had this look, I just listened to your conversation.” Anna says “I’m not a thief Alice.” Alice with tears in her eyes says “just take my picture.”

The next scene in the film marks that another year has passed. Dan has been pining for Anna and watching her from a distance. Alice and Dan attend an exhibition of Anna’s photographic portraits. Shortly after, Anna and Dan enter into a physical relationship and after a few months leave their respective partners for each other.

There are many nuances and themes that can be examined in the film. I am focusing on the actions and attitudes of Alice that can be interpreted as condonation of Dan’s infidelity. Aurel Kolnai’s definition of condonation as purposefully forgoing retributive attitudes in response to wrongdoing and his emphasis on the injured party’s “acquiescence” in the wrongdoing is applicable.

Kolnai, seeks to affirm forgiveness as virtuous absent the offender’s contrition arguing that if there is some hope that the offender will have a “change of heart,” forgiveness is legitimate. However if the risk is “unwise,” it can be subject to moral sanction and may be considered as condonation. Alice’s behavior can be interpreted as condonation from this perspective because the risk is “unwise.” Dan initiated the relationship with Alice when he was involved with Ruth. The fact that Alice’s possible complicity in Dan’s betrayal of Ruth

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230 Kolnai, p.95.
231 Ibid, p. 96.
233 Ibid.
may have contributed to an atmosphere where infidelity was not considered as a serious breach in the relationship, does not negate Alice’s knowledge that Dan is not a faithful man. Her doubts about Dan could have even led her to conceal her true name, instead, telling him her name is “Alice.”

Alice knows that Dan is a man, who, while in a relationship, locks eyes with a stranger on the street, rushes to her side when she is injured, accompanies her to the hospital, and spends time getting to know her, and then takes up with her. It’s not that he assisted a stranger and went on his way--- he insinuated himself into her life. Could this have been an anomaly, a romantic love at first sight fable? Possibly, but a year later, Alice intuits his latest betrayal when she meets Dan at Anna’s studio and she notices his expression and behavior. She confirms her suspicions when she overhears Dan and Anna talking together. Instead of confronting Dan, however, it is Anna to whom she turns. Alice does not express retributive attitudes, yet, she cares and is hurt by Dan’s actions and attitudes. Alice condones Dan’s infidelity in Kolnai’s terms and acquiesces to the wrongful act by her awareness of Dan’s behavior and her deliberate withholding of retributive reactive attitudes in response despite her “per se disapproval” of the act.  

Furthermore, it is unwise for her to continue along in the relationship hoping that he will have a “change of heart” and become faithful.

Kolnai’s account appears to endorse an open-ended range of possibilities represented as hope. It excuses errors in judgment, and still considers in that case, the intent to forgive as “noble and generous.” Since “change of heart” is the reason to forgive in Kolnai’s account, the account’s concentration on not extinguishing hope, though there are few signs of contrition or even the absence of contrition, may seem to support skepticism as to the imminence of a “change of

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234 Kolnai, p. 95.
235 Ibid, p. 103.
heart.” Viewing Dan’s refusal to acknowledge, repudiate, commit to change and express regret for the wrongdoing, instead, appears as endorsement of the offence and a forecast of future infidelities and it provides substantive evidence to hold that Alice engages in condonation, and in accordance with Kolnai’s account, may even require moral sanction.

Kolnai privileges the descriptors “wise,” and “calculated risk” as “highly moral,” but as the extent of risk increases, it becomes less so. 236 At some point, the risk is so “unwise” that to forgive is considered by Kolnai to be subject to the charge of immorality. If the forgiveness causes the offender to become more resentful and increases his propensity for wrongdoing, the injured party is seen as responsible for an “increase in another person’s wickedness.”237 Whether Alice contributed to an increase in Dan’s “wickedness,” is not a question I will explore in this dissertation, though, it does appear clear that her attitudes and actions served to condone his unfaithfulness.

Efforts to forgive with the hope that the offender will demonstrate a “change of heart,” even in the case possessing the least amount of risk, do not represent interpersonal forgiveness. It is flawed by the structural deficiency of a unilateral effort. However, Kolnai’s account contributes to understanding the way condonation can appear as a pernicious influence on moral responsibility and intentions to forgive.

Kolnai’s characterization of condonation is challenged in the account of Leo Zaibert. I will argue that Zaibert’s challenge to Kolnai’s notion of condonation is not persuasive, and that Kolnai’s distinction between forgiveness and condonation is convincing. Zaibert argues that Kolnai conflates the definition of forgiveness with the justification of forgiveness in his conditional account of forgiveness based on the “change of heart” of the offender. He categorizes

236  Ibid, p. 105.
237  Ibid, p. 103.
it as: “the sort of definitional stop visible in the forgiveness requires repentance views whereby all instances of forgiveness are eo ipso instances of justified or otherwise appropriate forgiveness.”

In addition to the definitional stop, where there is an amalgam of definition and justification, Zaibert claims that Kolnai uses the definitional stop in a further vicious manner in distinguishing the concept of forgiveness from condonation merely by fiat. In this way, the definition contains certain features that are meant to exclude other phenomena. He explains further that “not all definitional stops are vicious or to be avoided (if they were, then all definitions would be vicious).”

Zaibert points to an instance of this conflation where Kolnai claims that forgiveness is supposed to contribute to the “eradication of wrongdoing” while condonation is criticized as “fostering” it. Zaibert argues that this characterization does not identify a difference in the “structure of the two phenomena.”

But there is a difference in the normative structures in both concepts. Condonation fosters wrongdoing because it recognizes a wrong has been perpetrated but it allows it to persist. Kolnai, by adopting “change of heart” as the reason to forgive, argues that forgiveness recognizes a wrong has been perpetrated but it requires that it be withdrawn through repentance. In this way repentance conveys to the injured party that, yes, though I did wrong, I am sorry, I do share your values in recognizing that this is unacceptable, and it is a commitment to a future of shared values.

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238 Zaibert, pg. 328.
239 Ibid, p. 305.
240 Ibid, p. 309.
242 Ibid, p. 311.
243 Ibid,
Zaibert claims that in Kolnai’s account and other accounts that rely on repentance as a reason to forgive, if the injured party believes that the offender repents then it is forgiveness and a good thing, so the justification “that the forgiveness is good,” is built into the definition of forgiveness where one forgives if the offender repents. Zaibert asserts “thus it problematically turns out that acts of forgiveness are, as a matter of definition, good---provided that we are justified in believing that the wrongdoer really repents, we cannot be mistaken in forgiving her.” 244

Using a “definitional stop” in a vicious manner to render forgiveness by definition justified is not reflected in Kolnai’s account. Kolnai discusses cases where the injured party may “make an error in psychological judgment” or mistake and misread seemingly praiseworthy actions and attitudes of the offender following the injury. In these cases where the injured party has forgiven the offender after repentance, Kolnai states that “while it is genuine forgiveness, it may be foolish, imprudent, and objectionable.”245 Though Kolnai holds that the forgiver’s attitude in forgiving in these cases, is “far from unequivocally virtuous,” it is still “noble and generous,” “not contemptible,”246 this appraisal of the injured party’s attitude does not render forgiveness resulting from the repentance of the offender, which is characterized as “foolish, imprudent, and objectionable” justified as good by definition. Moreover, Zaibert’s assertion that his own account contra repentance based accounts “allows us to judge some instances of forgiveness are morally objectionable while others are admirable”247 is not supported by Kolnai’s repentance based account. The definitional stop “smuggling in

244  Ibid, p. 312.
245  Kolnai, p. 103.
246  Ibid.
247  Zaibert, p. 328.
justification" is not evidenced in Kolnai’s account where forgiveness can be assessed as “objectionable” or “admirable.”

Thus, I don’t find that Zaibert’s argument involving the problem of justification in definitions of forgiveness is persuasive in questioning the distinction between condonation and forgiveness.

Thinking about condonation from another perspective, it is helpful to consider Geoffrey Scarre’s account. On the one hand, if the criteria of his category of “vicious condonation” are not fulfilled, is this appropriate forgiveness? And on the other hand, as mentioned in the introduction to this section, do his categories of “virtuous condonation” challenge my argument that condonation is a substantive deficiency that precludes forgiveness so that I must amend my argument? He finds that to condone an offense is “to overlook or discount it even though one judges it to be wrong.” Unlike Kolnai, he does not contrast the senses of condonation reflected by “overlook” and “acquiesce;” he focuses on the distinction between “fault-acknowledging condonation” and “fault-denying condonation,” which he identifies as “virtuous condonation” and “vicious condonation,” respectively.

Condonation of the “vicious” sort is a consequence of states of mind that he characterizes as vice. It is odd to think of a state of mind as opposed to a character trait as a “vice,” though it seems that the “vice” is the intention expressed by the state of mind. States of mind that he sets forth as vice include “abnegation of one’s responsibility to check or reprimand” and “lack of interest in or sympathy with our fellow man.” In contradistinction to “vicious condonation,” Scarre finds that moral reasons are required to elicit “virtuous condonation.” In the aforementioned states of mind moral reasons are absent, instead, these states of mind reflect a

249 Scarre, p. 405.
“vicious condonation,” thereby rendering the injured party complicit in the offender’s guilt.  

I am arguing in this dissertation that condonation is a substantive deficiency that renders efforts toward interpersonal forgiveness invalid. Scarre introduces “virtuous condonation” as condonation that is appropriate or even virtuous in some circumstances. I find that two of Scarre’s categories of “virtuous condonation” are represented by Strawson’s exceptions to reactive attitudes. Scarre’s category of “virtuous condonation” entitled “uncharacteristic misdeeds” falls under Strawson’s second species first subdivision, “he was not himself.” And Scarre’s category of “immaturity,” falls under Strawson’s exception in the second species subdivision two, that exempts for “immaturity” as well. In the Strawsonian lineage that I have been referring to in this dissertation, the categories are exempt from reactive attitudes such as forgiveness, so that there is no conflict between “condonation” of this sort and the form of condonation that I am arguing is a substantial deficiency in the interpersonal forgiveness process and aberrant to interpersonal forgiveness.

Scarre’s category of “trivial misdeeds” can be considered as falling under Strawson’s first species of exceptions where the injury doesn’t warrant a reactive attitude, and Scarre’s categories of “bad means to good ends” and “akratic lapses,” can also fall under Strawson’s first species of exceptions which include such descriptions as “he didn’t mean to” or “I couldn’t help it.”

Strawson’s first species of exceptions include various cases where the intention is not to

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253 Ibid, p. 419.1
254 Strawson, p.8.
255 Scarre, p. 420.
256 Strawson, p.8.
257 Scarre, p. 422.
258 Strawson, p. 8.
259 Scarre, p. 424.
260 Ibid, p. 419.
261 Strawson, p. 7.
harm the injured party. In both Scarre’s categories “bad means to good ends,” and “akratic lapses” the intentions driving the behavior are not to injure but to achieve certain ends. And depending on the severity of the consequent injury, the intention not to injure may more or less excuse the offender as it appears to be the case in Strawson’s first category. Drawing from Richard Holten’s notion of “weakness of will,” as “an over readiness to abandon one’s resolutions.” I emphasize the intention or resolution not to harm which is abandoned in weakness of will or “akratic lapses.” The akratic agent may say “please help me or bear with me, I am trying to stick to my resolutions. I didn’t mean to hurt you.” From another perspective, the strain of dealing with the akratic agent may warrant Strawson’s suggestion that the objective attitude and the withdrawal of the reactive attitudes may be applied with agents where one needs a respite from the relationship though the agents are not “psychologically abnormal.” Furthermore, since Scarre noted that “serial wrongdoing” is “less likely to be condonable by the morally virtuous agent,” it would appear that virtuously condoning “akratic lapses” would have a limit.

Out of the three remaining categories Scarre has denoted as serving virtuous condonation, he has also provided arguments in two of the cases which can support a position against condonation and may be more persuasively relevant dependent on the seriousness of the wrong. Though he states that forgiveness may be more appropriate than condonation amongst friends, he lists “friendship” as a category of virtuous condonation, and he also points out that friends may be more open to receiving criticism from a friend as opposed to a stranger or acquaintance.

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263 Strawson, p.18.

264 Scarre, p. 408.

As represented in this category, condonation involves the injured party criticizing the offender. Rather than the reciprocal relation of interpersonal forgiveness where there is an exchange between parties, condonation here appears to be a unilateral endeavor leaving no voice to the offender to take responsibility and express regret. Perhaps, the offender is given a “pass” in theory, but he may not want either a “pass” or as his input is not included in the process, to be an unwitting recipient of the objective attitude in the sense that it discounts out of hand the reasoning process of an offender. In the alternative, the injured party may evince states of mind that the moral community would appraise as inappropriate. Though this category of condonation does not involve a “vicious” state of mind or reasons, it appears to be a vitiated version of interpersonal forgiveness.

“Peacemaking and reconciliation” is another category identified as appropriate for virtuous condonation, yet, Scarre asserts that the “repairing of damaged relationships” is a function of forgiveness though not condonation, as the former usually takes a more active role in the process.266 This category may be suitable for areas of human fallibility that are included in Strawson’s first species of exceptions which include cases where there are mitigating circumstances surrounding the commitment of the injury.267 As a reactive attitude is not appropriate in these cases, condonation would not encroach upon the parameters of interpersonal forgiveness.

If, however, a significant injury for which the offender is morally responsible for were to be considered for condonation, it may fall under one of Scarre’s vices, such as abnegation of one’s responsibility to check or reprimand,”268 relegating the act as one of “vicious

\[\text{266} \text{ Ibid, p. 414.} \]
\[\text{267} \text{ Strawson, p. 8.} \]
\[\text{268} \text{ Scarre, p. 426.} \]
condonation,”269 and so inappropriate to discharge, thereby not representing a problem for my argument against condonation.

The last category Scarre identifies as appropriate for virtuous condonation is “prior repentance.” 270 As this is a requisite condition for interpersonal forgiveness, to condone rather than forgive, would represent a debased version of interpersonal forgiveness that gives the offender no resolution and it violates the reciprocity inherent to interpersonal forgiveness. Though the injured party is not obligated to forgive, by her silence, similar to the problems I raised in chapter 2 regarding not communicating forgiveness to the offender, she either says that repentance is not necessary because it is not a serious injury or she keeps the offender in her debt, maintaining the injury in perpetuity as still extant.

A majority of the categories of Scarre’s virtuous condonation do not conflict with interpersonal forgiveness, as they fall under Strawson’s exceptions to reactive attitudes, including forgiveness. The remaining categories, specifically, “friendship,” “peacemaking and reconciliation,” and “prior repentance” may be more appropriately addressed by interpersonal forgiveness. If cases in these categories are driven by vice such as “abnegation of one’s responsibility to check or reprimand,”271 or other vices, Scarre’s account relegates them to “vicious condonation”272 and so they are thereby inappropriate, and do not pose as a vitiated form of interpersonal forgiveness. If, however, they are not motivated by vice and are addressing serious wrongs and not minor issues, then they deprive the offender of the reciprocity that is fundamental to interpersonal forgiveness. Without the exchange between parties, in some cases, the injured party assumes a controlling, superior role and by “passing over” the

270 Ibid, p. 421.
wrongdoer’s input, effectively treats him with the objective attitude---as someone who can’t be reasoned with since she “gives him the hand” indicating “I don’t want to hear it” and by doing so attempts to exclude him from the moral community by signaling to others that he is not a moral agent. This attitude can also be reflected in sentiments expressing that the offender is “dead to me” because it seals off the offender from the injured party and her relation with the moral community. In other cases, the injured party may have character flaws that prevent her from “hearing out” the offender such as, irrationality, or vindictiveness, or alternate traits that also engender disapprobation in the moral community.

In the film The Kids Are All Right (2010) Nic and Jules are a married lesbian couple who have each conceived a child using sperm from the same donor. Their 15-year-old son Laser, is curious about the donor, and asks his 18-year-old sister, Joni, to call the fertility clinic to arrange a meeting with the donor, The siblings are intrigued by their donor, Paul, a laid-back motor-cycle riding unmarried man who owns a farm-to-table restaurant and co-op. Paul is invited to dinner at the family’s house and charms Jules as well, offering her a landscape design job at his home. Nic is more reserved in her opinion of Paul. Nic and Jules have a good relationship but, like most relationships, there are threads of dissension---which become further strained by Paul’s involvement with their family. Not long after Jules begins work at Paul’s house, Jules and Paul enter into a sexual relationship. One night when the family is having dinner at Paul’s house, Nic sees Jules’ red hair on a hairbrush in the bathroom. She then looks in the shower and finds Jules’ hair in the drain, finally checking Paul’s bed where her suspicions are confirmed.

Applying Scarre’s notion of “vicious condonation” to examine the betrayal, it is evident that Nic’s attitude and actions upon learning of the tryst do not constitute “vicious condonation,” or possess the requisite state of mind reflecting a vice like “abnegation of one’s responsibility to
check or reprimand.” Nic immediately confronts Jules when they arrive home from Paul’s. Jules initially tries to deny that she is sleeping with Paul, but concedes after Nic sarcastically asks if she took a nap too, revealing that she had seen Jules’ hair in Paul’s bed. Nic asks Jules if she is in love with Paul and Jules shakes her head no. Jules tells Nic “I just felt so far away from you lately,” “I just needed to be appreciated.” Nic replies “oh it’s always what I’m not doing for you. Ok, here’s what I don’t do to you, I don’t work out my issues fucking other people.” Jules tells Nic “he’s not other people,” and Nic answers “no, he’s our sperm donor,” as she gets up to leave the room saying “you couldn’t have picked a more painful way to hurt me.”

Nic doesn’t condone Jules’ breach through “suffering in silence,” or giving her excuses legitimacy, or resuming their intimacies as if nothing had happened. Nic has made it clear to Jules that her behavior is unacceptable, indefensible, and that she is deeply hurt. By not “abnegating her responsibility to check or reprimand,” Nic’s actions avert the charge of “vicious condonation” under Scarre’s notion, though it is not a sufficient reason to forgive in accordance with the account of interpersonal forgiveness that I am proposing, since Jules has not yet proffered her contrition to Nic.

At this juncture in the film, Jules has barely acknowledged, not really repudiated the wrongdoing, not committed to change or even expressed regret to Nic for her betrayal. In fact, her response to Nic may even be seen as a weak defense of her wrongdoing. Furthermore, she makes the curious plea that Paul is not just “other people,” as if he is somehow an acceptable party to their intimacies. Nic through teary anger, reminds her that he is their sperm donor. It is a remark that can be interpreted in two ways, one being that he is “merely” their sperm donor, and not a member of their family, and secondly, because of the essential role this stranger had in the birth of their two children, it is that much more important to keep
the line drawn and not make this biological fact include him as part of the family they have nurtured for decades.

If Jules were to resume the relationship with Paul after her discussion with Nic, the wrongdoing would continue, so that the reprimand would not be sufficient to prevent condonation in the sense of the Oxford dictionary’s definition “allowing behavior that is morally wrong to continue.”

Furthermore, unless Jules acknowledges, repudiates, commits to change, and expresses regret for the wrongdoing, she has not withdrawn the wrong and so continues to endorse the behavior as acceptable. In this way, too, if Nic doesn’t require Jules’ contrition and instead, resumes the relationship, she condones Jules’ wrongdoing by allowing it to continue unabated. One can interpret that Scarre’s notion that it is one’s “responsibility to check or reprimand” may provide a necessary condition to avert “vicious condonation” and the consequence that the injured party is a “sharer(s) in the agent’s guilt,” but satisfying one’s responsibility to check or reprimand is not a sufficient condition to forgive. This example lends further support to my argument proposing conditions that both parties must fulfill for interpersonal forgiveness to obtain and that these conditions ward against condonation of the wrongdoing.

In his argument against “vicious condonation,” Scarre emphasizes the importance of reprimanding the wrongdoer. I have argued that fulfilling this criterion is not sufficient to avert condonation. “Forceful protest” is a different term of art that may share some aspects with “reprimanding.” Both concepts convey disapproval, though “reprimand” includes “to criticize” in its meaning while “protest” suggests “to object.” I will now consider an argument by Eve Garrard and David McNaughton to determine if their application of “forceful

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273 Lexico.com Condone | Definition of Condone by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com also meaning of Condone (accessed January 2021)
274 Scarre, p. 416.
protest” can avert the charge of condonation in their account of forgiveness. In the account of Garrard and McNaughton, they argue that unconditional forgiveness is not a condonation of wrongdoing and that a “forceful protest” is sufficient to prioritize the seriousness of the offense. 275

They contend that the wrongfulness of the action is composed of two parts, the harm done to the injured party which is something for which restitution can be sought, and the wrong done to the injured party which is considered to be the failure of respect the offense signifies. The failure of respect is what is waived in the act of unconditional forgiveness. 276

Contra Garrard and McNaughton, I find that the effort to forgive the wrong or waive the failure of respect without requiring the offender to acknowledge, repudiate and regret the wrongful action has the effect of condoning the action. To protest and condemn the wrongfulness of the action and yet, at the same time forgive the wrong, does not impress upon the offender that there are consequences for wrongful actions. It does not make clear that moral responsibility requires that one not commit wrongful acts, and if one does commit such acts then there is a moral requirement as an individual and as a member of the moral community to acknowledge that he has committed the wrong, repudiate the wrong with assurances that he will not commit such acts in the future, and express regret at the suffering that he has caused to the injured party.

Protest of the wrong alongside forgiveness of the wrong will have the effect of mere nagging or the susurration of background noise that will fail to register the seriousness of the offense. This effect can be illustrated by a scene in the film Closer. At this point in the narrative, Alice and Dan are living together for two years and for the past year Dan has been---not so covertly---

275 Garrard and McNaughton, p. 49.
276 Ibid, p. 47.
watching the photographer Anna’s comings and goings at her studio. The scene opens with Alice and Dan getting ready to attend the opening of Anna’s photography exhibition. Alice recounts a humorous anecdote from her day at work and then crosses the room and becomes serious. Transforming the punch line from the story, she tells Dan “I’m waiting for you” as the camera frames Alice’s face in the mirror beside an out-of-focus split screen image of Dan who is in the middle of shaving. He asks “to do what?” She replies “to leave me.” He spins around and says “I’m not going to leave you, I totally love you, what is this?” Another layer of the exchange is that Dan’s father has died and he is going to the funeral and will spend the night away after the art opening. Alice wants to go with him to the funeral but he insists on going alone. Alice interjects saying “I love you, why won’t you let me?” and again more forcefully, “why won’t you let me love you?” He hugs her and says that he will only be gone one night. Her downcast face looks up disappointed and suspicious.

Viewers of the film know that Dan has been unfaithful in his commitment to Alice. He has been stalking Anna, he also catfished a man on a porn website while he was posing as “Anna,” arranging to meet at the aquarium that the real Anna frequented, and now he is attending Anna’s art opening where he will say to Anna “look at me, tell me you’re not in love with me?” and it is reasonable to believe he was hoping to spend the night with Anna while he was presumably at the funeral.

However, Alice also knows that he has been unfaithful in his commitment to her. She sensed it a year ago when she met Dan at Anna’s studio and it was confirmed by what she overheard in Dan and Anna’s conversation. It seems probable that Alice may be aware of Dan’s continuing preoccupation with Anna and his stalking her. Alice’s emotional pleas to Dan while they are getting ready to attend the exhibition, can be conceived as a Garrard and McNaughtonian
forceful protest to his unfaithfulness while at the same time forgiving him. The scene portrays the depth of her anguish in the force of the emotion, and in her own way it is a forceful protest. It is the way the character expresses an adamant view.\textsuperscript{277} It’s not that she simply feels that he has stopped loving her, she is able to read his expressions of preoccupation and can recognize the signs of infidelity. She wants him to stop, but she can’t say it outright---and he would probably deny it---so she translates it in an emotional plea that says ‘stop cheating on me, love me!’ She will not leave him. As she stated in the beginning of the film, if you love them, you don’t leave and Alice still loves Dan.

She demonstrates good-will toward Dan, she does not confront him about Anna, and she does not insist that they not attend the exhibition even though she most definitely suspects that he will engage in more unfaithful behavior possibly spending the night with Anna. Since Dan is not required to take moral responsibility and face the consequences for his unfaithfulness he has no more reason not to commit future acts than he had to commit the initial act in the first place.

A further problem with Garrard and McNaughton’s account is that it seems to rely on the restitution of the harm done to support the protest of the wrong done. In this way, the offender is punished for one arm of the bifurcated wrongdoing---without this censure it is reasonable to infer that the impact of the protest is diminished. The restitution requires that the offender pay for damages to property or submit to the judicial system for appropriate punishment which has the effect of forcing the offender to take moral responsibility by at least acknowledging that he

\textsuperscript{277} The notion of a “forceful protest” can be phenomenologically distinct depending on one’s personality. One may think of it as being specifically clear as in “I object to your doing X” and delivered in a focused serious tone, but for a gentle, playful, personality that is not as confrontational, “a forceful protest” may take on a different form, perhaps like Alice’s pleas. Consider that Dan still does not know that Alice is not her real name, it is a name she came upon when they first met. To drive the point about “forceful protest” in the face of skepticism, I ask the reader to consider this point about “forceful protest” in a case where Alice specifically says to Dan, “I do not want you to see Anna”, or “I will not accept infidelity in this relationship”. Even if she was this explicit, it seems that Dan’s personality would have led him to assure her that it was not the case that she had anything to worry about, while he went about shoring up his relationship with Anna, and when it was definite that Anna would leave her husband Larry, and Anna and Dan would be together, then he would leave Alice, despite his assurances to Alice that all is well.
committed the offense and facing the consequences for the act.

As a result, the requirement for restitution operates as a “shadow enforcer” potentially coopting the attention of the offender towards the material punishment to a greater degree and to a greater effect than the injured party’s protest. Instead of the protest of wrongfulness underscoring the seriousness of the offense—which is what the forceful protest is supposed to accomplish— it is the consequences for the harm done which performs this function, thereby obviating the protest of the wrong and its claim to preserve self-respect. Moreover, as in the dynamic of infidelity as portrayed in the film *Closer* where property damage or distribution is not at issue, without the consequences entailed by the harm (generally involving restitution), a protest of the wrong, while at the same time a forgiveness of the wrong, amounts to a condoning of the wrongful act by not requiring the offender to take moral responsibility for the act.

In the account of interpersonal forgiveness that I am proposing, I have focused on condonation as a substantive deficiency in the sense that it allows wrongful attitudes or behavior to continue. As condonation, interpersonal forgiveness is defective. Aurel Kolnai has stressed the withdrawing of retributive attitudes while maintaining “per se disapproval” of the wrongdoing as condonation. Alternatively, disapproval of the wrongful act or attitude is an argument advanced by both Geoffrey Scarre and Eve Garrard and David McNaughton—though with different emphases as discussed above. Disapproval of the wrongful act, in these accounts, provides support for arguments claiming that the injured party has not condoned a wrongful act. However, though disapproval may be a necessary condition, to avert condonation, it is not a sufficient condition that can refute the charge of condonation, as it may allow the wrongful act or attitude to continue absent the offender’s contrition.

Sympathetic identification with the offender is identified as another potential feature of
condonation by Michele Moody-Adams. Moody-Adams argues that her account of unconditional forgiveness does not condone the injurious act of the offender because the account does not entail a sympathetic identification with the offender. 278

Moody-Adams argues that Charles Griswold’s account of forgiveness relies on sympathetic identification with the offender. Her objection to sympathy is based on the assumption that the offender’s reasons for the wrongful act tend to take precedence in determining the moral responsibility of the offender. As a result, the injured party forgoes the censure of the wrongful act. 279

However, Griswold makes clear in his account that the injured party and the offender remain as distinct individuals while engaged in sympathy. 280 He differentiates between a sympathy of pure contagion where one individual, in a sense, becomes the other through the experience of feeling another’s sentiments, and a sympathy that involves imaginatively changing place with the other as to his person, character, and circumstances, taking on the other’s point of view, and formulating reasons that are engendered from this point of view. 281 Griswold emphasizes that this process does not entail an emotional identification that results in loss of self. 282 Furthermore, the process also incorporates assessment of the action by distinguishing between the perspective and the circumstances, providing additional distance between the perspective of the injured party and the perspective of the offender. 283

The distinction Griswold makes between a sympathy of pure contagion which is a non-cognitive approach to sympathy and the semi-cognitive version of sympathy that imaginatively changes places with another, generating reasons from this point of view, and then assessing the

278 Moody-Adams, p..164.
280 Griswold, p. 86.
281 Ibid, p. 87.
the validity of these reasons emphasizes the scrupulousness in Griswold’s account to ascertain the point of view of the other while at the same time remaining independent. Moody-Adams’ concern that the offender’s reasons will supersede any reasons for condemnation are not well-founded with respect to Griswold’s semi-cognitive approach to sympathy. Adopting the point of view of another to understand the circumstances from this particular character and the reasons that might have thereby ensued, does not ensure approval of the act; one is not swept away by emotion, but rather, retains an independent capacity for judgment. In Griswold’s account, the intersecting narratives of the injured party and the offender as both engage in sympathy ensure full participation of both parties which is very different from the internal perspective that Moody-Adams proposes.

In contradistinction to an appeal to sympathy in the consideration of a potential forgivee’s point of view, Moody-Adams applies the internal perspective. She contends that the object of this method is to weigh the alternatives to the wrongful act that she ascertains were available to the offender and to assess the likelihood of his moral growth. The injured party must have data to assess what alternatives there may be. Where does she get this data? Is it solely what she observes? The internal view calls for the occupation of the point of view of the other, though basing the judgment on the observations of the injured party alone while rejecting the other’s articulated reasons for action results in remaining at a distance from the other’s point of view, not occupying his point of view. Even if the injured party accesses biographical data from alternative sources, without the testimony of the other, it does not amount to an occupation of a

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284 Moody-Adams argues that “A victim who seeks to forgive must thus detach his identity from the wrong he has endured, and separate his sense of his worth as a person from the wrongdoer’s assault on his worth. What is required for a victim to accomplish these tasks could not—and should not—emerge from any exchange with the wrongdoer”. Moody-Adams, *The Enigma of Forgiveness*, p. 163.
“view from nowhere”---which Moody-Adams claims is the purpose of the internal view\textsuperscript{285}---as much as it represents the injured party’s point of view. Moreover, by not including the wrongdoer’s perspective into a determination to forgive, the account is vulnerable to the charge of condonation. Forgiving a wrongdoer who is not contrite thereby allows the wrongdoing and the offender’s ill-will toward the injured party to persist. Additionally, Scarre’s vicious condonation category “lack of interest in or sympathy with our fellow man”\textsuperscript{286} may be applicable if the injured party forgives an offender who is not allowed to take moral responsibility for his actions through contrition.

After considering various notions of condonation, I conclude that the Oxford dictionary’s definition, “to accept and allow behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive to continue”\textsuperscript{287} best captures the violation of good-will and reciprocity that is advanced by interpersonal forgiveness. It emphasizes how interpersonal forgiveness absent the offender’s conditions of contrition accepts and allows the wrongful behavior to continue and may cause even further injury.

Kolnai’s employment of the term “acquiesce” is similar, though his allowance of the possibility of the offender’s “change of heart” in addition to the his professed “change of heart” enables the wrongdoing to persist. I have also argued that Zaibert did not support his position that Kolnai failed to distinguish between condonation and forgiveness by vicious use of the “definitional stop”.

Considering the feature of condonation that I employ in my account of interpersonal forgiveness of allowing the wrongdoing to continue, I contend, also does not employ a vicious

\textsuperscript{285} Ibid, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{286} Scarre, p. 426.
\textsuperscript{287} Lexico.com Condone | Definition of Condone by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com also meaning of Condone (accessed January 2021).
“definitional stop.” Though, repentance is a necessary condition in interpersonal forgiveness, there is an amount of trust that fills the gap of certainty. Perhaps the contrition is not genuine or sustainable, so the forgiveness may turn out to be inappropriate. Yet, the injured party’s intention was to not condone the wrongdoing by letting the wrongdoing continue. Condonation does not demonstrate the intention to not allow the wrongdoing to continue.

I addressed the possibility of a “virtuous condonation” by considering Scarre’s argument in support of his identification of categories of “virtuous condonation.” I found that several of his categories could be included under Strawson’s exceptions to reactive attitudes. Since these categories are exempt from reactive attitudes, they do not raise the issue that condonation as a substantial deficiency in the interpersonal forgiveness process introduces. Other categories that Scarre proposes seem more suitable for the reciprocal exchange manifested in the interpersonal forgiveness process. As a result, condonation as a substantive deficiency in interpersonal forgiveness has not been meaningfully challenged through the conception of virtuous condonation.

As I argued above, Scarre’s principle that one has the “responsibility to check or reprimand” and Garrard and McNaughton’s assertion that a “forceful protest” precludes condonation, may be necessary conditions to avert condonation, though, I maintain, that they are not sufficient conditions. I have argued that without the acknowledgement, repudiation, commitment to change, and expression of regret by the offender, the wrongdoing is still allowed to continue and may facilitate further wrongdoing as well.

I also considered whether Moody-Adams’ claim that sympathy, as examined in Griswold’s account of forgiveness, is a form of condonation. Griswold argues that in the Smithean sympathy his account recommends there is no “loss of self” and the injured party who assesses
the offender’s perspective with respect to the circumstances maintains a distance in this way too. So Moody-Adams’ assertion that the offender’s reasons take precedence in determining moral responsibility is not proved. Though I have not discussed the practice of sympathy within interpersonal forgiveness, I have referred to Smith’s account of sympathy to emphasize the natural basis of reciprocity in which both interpersonal forgiveness and sympathy are based. Moreover, the reciprocal good-will that the parties to interpersonal forgiveness express, can be fostered through sympathy, in contradistinction to the view that sympathy allows the wrongdoing to persist as condonation.

So far, I have contended that for the category of interpersonal forgiveness to obtain, conditions must be fulfilled by the offender who has perpetrated the wrong as well as by the injured party. In support of this claim I have argued that as forgiveness is a reactive attitude, it is interpersonal, so that without the dynamic of reciprocity that the conditions provide, there is a structural deficiency. I have also argued that a substantive deficiency exists in interpersonal forgiveness that is not a response to the offender’s contrition. It engages in condonation of the wrong-doing by allowing it to persist since the offender has not withdrawn the wrong, instead he continues to endorse the wrongful act or attitude. What’s more, “forgiveness” absent the offender’s contrition may serve to foster future wrongful acts against the injured party or other moral agents.

Another substantive deficiency impairing interpersonal forgiveness occurs when the injured party refuses to hear out the offender’s proffer of contrition and by doing so effectively treats him with the “objective attitude” and thereby attempts to exclude him from the moral community or convince others to exclude him by her actions, or perhaps, acts as if he is not a member of the moral community. I assert that the injured party “effectively” treats him with the “objective attitude”, because as in the category described by Strawson as including individuals
who are “psychologically abnormal,” or “morally undeveloped,”288 by not hearing out the offender’s contrition, and his reasoning, the injured party rejects him as a morally responsible agent who can be reasoned with. The objective attitude is directed at individuals who can’t be reasoned with and as such are excluded from the moral community of morally responsible agents. Furthermore, the injured party thwarts the offender’s efforts to take moral responsibility. His participation in the meaning making of the reciprocal exchange in moral agency is negated.

An alternative case where the injured party continues to blame the offender but refuses to “hear him out” may occur when the injured party possesses traits, such as intransigence, callousness, irrationality, vindictiveness or other traits that are subject to disapprobation within the moral community and these traits lead her to turn away from the offender and his reasons.

A third category of substantive deficiency in the unilateral approach to forgiveness is the charge of “testimonial injustice”. As a second-person address, the offender’s offer of contrition requires a response.289 By the injured party’s formation of a belief as to the untrustworthiness of the offender without a consideration of all the evidence, including the offender’s contrition, the injured party violates the norm of doxastic deliberation290 and rejects the offender himself---not just as a source of information---thereby perpetrating a testimonial injustice.291

**Conclusion: Forgiveness is the Recognition that Justice is Attained**

The category of interpersonal forgiveness that I am proposing---forgiveness is the recognition that justice is attained--- requires the fulfillment of conditions by both parties as recapitulated above and as I have been arguing throughout this dissertation. It is a reciprocal exchange of good-will as moral agents in the moral community. However, a question may arise as to the

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288 Strawson, p. 9.
289 Wanderer, p. 156.
290 Ibid, p. 163, 165.
291 Ibid, p. 166.
meaning of “recognition.” Recognition in this sense is an intuitive grasp by the injured party and the offender that what has transpired is justice so that the conceptual and affective elements that contribute to the forgiveness process are joined together, illuminated, solidified, and acknowledged. Recognition in this capacity functions as a success term.

In the case of the injured party who seeks to forgive an unrepentant offender, there can be no recognition that justice is attained because the offender does not withdraw the wrongful act and the disrespect that it conveys, and he continues to endorse the wrongful act, and it may facilitate future wrongful acts. Furthermore, as I have previously argued, the injured party may even be perpetrating an injustice. To seek to impress interpersonal forgiveness upon an offender who does not want to be forgiven, who reaffirms the wrongful act, is to disregard the offender’s standing as a moral agent to determine his actions and attitudes in the world---even if wrongful. The injured party’s attitude can be interpreted as condescending or superior in her efforts to commandeer the moral high ground.

In the case where the offender attempts to offer his contrition but the injured party does not hear him out, instead, choosing to forgive based on “self-pertaining reasons,” “humanizing the offender,” “radical-electivity,” “separating the wrong from the person,” or “forgiveness as a state of grace,” in addition to the difficulties that I found in the arguments based on their own criteria, justice does not attain. Personal justice involves a reciprocal process of moral responsibility and good-will towards members of the moral community. As I have argued, personal justice cannot be attained through a unilateral approach to interpersonal forgiveness. Personal justice is not recognized by the injured party or the offender if the offender’s contrition is not considered in the deliberative process. A unilateral approach to forgiveness does not allow the offender to take moral responsibility. The offender is treated as
one that can’t be reasoned with similar to those agents with “psychological abnormalities” or
who are “morally undeveloped” whom one “manages” or “handles” with the objective attitude.
This signals to others that he is excluded from the moral community of reasoning agents.
Furthermore, justice cannot be recognized when the offender’s contrition is not taken into
consideration in the forgiveness process, because an injustice is perpetrated by the injured party
in her rejection of the offender as a person by means of a “testimonial injustice.”

When the injured party communicates forgiveness to the offender she recognizes---she
intuitively grasps that the reciprocal process of the offender’s acknowledgement and repudiation
of the wrongdoing, her own foregoing of revenge, and diminishment and relinquishing of
resentment, the offender’s commitment to change, her own resolution not to hold the
wrongdoing against the offender, and his expression of regret, has culminated in a state of
personal justice. The offender takes part in the interpersonal forgiveness process and intuitively
grasps that justice is attained at the conclusion of the reciprocal process. Before the process is
completed, there is a certain amount of hope and good-will, though justice is not yet
attained and the intuitive grasp of justice attained has not yet occurred and interpersonal
forgiveness does not yet obtain---though the process is underway.

I have focused on a specific category of forgiveness, in this dissertation, which I have
identified as interpersonal forgiveness. Its significance is bound up with our valuing of
interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships matter to us. The restoration
of good-will to a relation in which one party has wronged another speaks to our capacity
as moral agents and members of the moral community to reach out to one another to
address the violation of rights and the upholding of rights through moral responsibility.
Nurturing resentment in silence, or complaining to others, or avoiding the offender,
weigh on the injured party’s well-being and sense of justice, and it takes an effort to maintain.

Through proffering his contrition, the offender communicates to the injured party that she matters. For the offender to refuse a “change of heart” indicates that arrogance and contempt are disvalues that he embraces. Is this the paradigm of relationship that he would welcome; where others dismiss his moral standing? It is based on an ugly sense of self-interest.

Interpersonal forgiveness takes a more hopeful outlook. It affirms that there is a natural basis for the norm of reciprocity and good-will. The offender proffers his contrition in response to the injured party and in turn it is reflected in the change of the injured party’s attitude and her actions when she accepts the offender’s contrition. The exchange manifested in this process of moral responsibility attains justice, which one recognizes as interpersonal forgiveness. Interpersonal forgiveness finds value in renewal of good-will in the present and the future without erasure of the past.

Though I have concentrated on interpersonal relations involving forms of betrayal, further research may indicate that interpersonal forgiveness may have value and provide insights where the violation of rights involves questions of race, gender, sexuality or other issues regarded as social. Some of these issues have been glanced upon in discussing the films Luce (2019), Moonlight (2016), and The Kids are All Right (2010). A more in depth examination of these issues may determine that interpersonal forgiveness may also be beneficial in these varied contexts.
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Filmography


*The Kids are All Right*, Dir. Lisa Cholodenko, 2010.