

FORGIVENESS AND FORESWEARING RESENTMENT  
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When a wronged individual elects to forgive, what happens to her feelings of resentment? Does she eliminate those feelings, or does she merely no longer dwell on them? I suspect the latter is a more accurate description, but before addressing this question we should say a few words about forgiveness in general.

§1 Models of Forgiveness

There is disagreement about how best to analyze forgiveness, though many proposals overlap in broad features. Many accounts fall into one of two categories; one is an “emotion” model that casts forgiveness purely as a matter of overcoming anger, resentment, or some related negative attitude. Accounts in this category sometimes take care to specify what attitude must be overcome, and it is often suggested that the attitude must be overcome in a certain way,<sup>1</sup> and that the victim must have a certain kind of motivation in overcoming that attitude.<sup>2</sup> These details will not concern me; it will suffice to observe that most versions of the emotion model will at least hold that to forgive is to overcome anger/resentment.

A second common model of forgiveness is one we might call a “reconciliation” model. This account suggests that forgiveness cannot be analyzed by specifying how the victim feels; there must be some public change in how the victim and transgressor interact, a restoration of the relationship. Different versions of the reconciliation model may disagree about whether the victim and transgressor must revert to the relationship they had before the wrongdoing,<sup>3</sup> or whether they merely need to make some progress towards such a restoration,<sup>4</sup> or perhaps to create a relationship befitting strangers who recognize each other as fellow members of a community.<sup>5</sup> The reconciliation model stresses that forgiveness is not simply a private matter of how the victim feels – forgiveness involves publicly

observable factors in the interaction between victim and transgressor.

Many versions of the reconciliation model incorporate aspects from the emotional model as well.<sup>6</sup> If the victim were to behave towards the transgressor in a way suggesting that the wrongdoing had not occurred, but still felt significant resentment, we would most likely conclude that the victim had not genuinely forgiven the wrongdoer; we would think he was merely going through the motions.<sup>7</sup> So the suggestion that forgiveness involves an emotional shift, an overcoming of negative attitudes such as anger or resentment (and that this overcoming has to occur in a certain way, with the right motivations),<sup>8</sup> plays a role in the majority of analyses of forgiveness.

It is towards this point, that forgiveness involves overcoming resentment, that I want to direct attention. While most accounts of forgiveness do incorporate some condition resembling that of overcoming resentment, we should in addition speak of *foreswearing* resentment, and it is to this point that I will now turn.

## §2    Foreswearing Resentment

The relationship between *foreswearing* resentment and *overcoming* resentment is one that deserves exploration.<sup>9</sup> On a first pass, one might think that to overcome resentment is simply a matter of changing one's patterns of thinking and feeling – prior to overcoming resentment the victim is in a pattern of thinking regularly of a moral offense and feeling bitter about it, and after overcoming resentment she has managed to change this pattern. But as many have noted,<sup>10</sup> before we can properly term this “overcoming” resentment, we need to be more precise. If one were to develop selective amnesia, one would no longer think regularly of a moral offense, but this would surely not count as overcoming resentment. Even if one were to bring about such an outcome intentionally, such as by visiting a hypnotist, we would not consider the resentment overcome. It seems more promising to think that when resentment has been successfully overcome, one will be able to think of the moral offense, but when doing so one will not experience feelings of bitterness. So ‘overcoming resentment’ might be

better treated as a matter of how one feels rather than how one thinks. We will also require some permanence to the change in state; if one were to oscillate between periods of bitterness and periods in which one can think of the offense without bitterness, we would not say that resentment has been overcome, not even when referring to the periods in which one is free of bitterness.

Having thus clarified a little what we mean by “overcoming resentment”, we can now say a few words about how it is distinct from *foreswearing* resentment. Imagine that I have forgiven the wrongdoer, but make a point of reminding the transgressor of his having wronged me. Intuitively, the transgressor has some right to complain – once he has been issued forgiveness, he may complain, he should not have to be constantly reminded of his wrongdoing anymore. To forgive is to waive one’s right to needle the transgressor about the incident. It is thus plausible to think that part of the notion of forgiveness involves not just a descriptive claim about the wrongdoer’s feelings, but also a claim about the rights the victim may invoke.

I have claimed that it is wrong for the forgiver to persistently remind the transgressor of his wrongdoing *because* forgiveness involves waiving a right to do so. One might question this. An alternative explanation is that if the victim is still reminding the transgressor, it is because the victim is still bitter – after all, we will often take the behavior of reminding the transgressor as evidence that the victim’s resentment persists. So one might try to maintain that forgiveness really is equivalent to overcoming resentment (in the sense of a descriptive claim about a change in the victim’s feelings), and that a victim who continues to remind the transgressor is a victim who has not genuinely overcome resentment. But this confuses epistemology and metaphysics – while we might well take the behavior of reminding the transgressor as *evidence* that the victim is still resentful, we can certainly imagine a victim who no longer feels resentment but still engages in the behavior. Something seems to have gone wrong with such a forgiver, and an analysis of forgiveness simply as overcoming resentment may struggle to explain why this case does not seem like a proper example of forgiveness.

That struggle might be surmountable; there may be ways of explaining this case while still taking forgiveness to be rooted in overcoming resentment. Certainly a plausible account of forgiveness ought to incorporate some notion of the forgiver no longer having feelings of resentment – a victim who is filled with feelings of bitterness but has waived any right to demand something from the transgressor probably will not count as having forgiven the transgressor. An observer might well *think* such a victim has issued forgiveness, but it seems the situation could be better described by saying that this victim is *acting as though* she has forgiven – she is going through the motions of forgiveness without having genuinely forgiven.<sup>11</sup> So there is clearly some reason to favor an account of forgiveness that gives a role to the overcoming of resentment. Furthermore, one might wonder whether the case of the non-resentful victim who nevertheless persistently reminds the transgressor of the offense really lends any support to the claim that forgiveness is (even in part) a matter of *foreswearing resentment*. After all, the victim in this case does not *resent* the offense anymore; she is reminding the transgressor of the wrongdoing, but not feeling resentment while she does so. So why should we think the example offers any motivation for the proposal that forgiveness is the foreswearing of resentment? Because in general forgiveness is the foreswearing of victim-attitudes; when I forgive I waive my rights to be treated as a victim<sup>12</sup> (a thesis which does not imply that the transgressor cannot be punished – the transgressor has harmed someone even if the victim does not present herself as someone in need of sympathy or restitution).<sup>13</sup> Resentment is one of the most prominent victim-responses, so it is natural that we should focus on resentment in saying that the forgiver foreswears her rights as victim to demand something of the transgressor. A properly general account of forgiveness will say that resentment must be overcome and the victim must fore swear the rights accruing to her in virtue of being a victim of such an offense; the formulation in terms of foreswearing *resentment* is simply a convenient shorthand for this more careful account.

I have allowed that forgiveness is in part a matter of overcoming resentment. An individual who does not demand anything from the transgressor but still privately harbors feelings of resentment has not

issued forgiveness; part of forgiving is overcoming resentment. Is it redundant to say that forgiveness requires overcoming and foreswearing resentment? Perhaps we could say that the feeling of resentment is one way of claiming moral injury, and thus that to *feel* resentment is *ipso facto* to fail to forswear her right to present herself as a victim. If so, we might identify forgiveness with the foreswearing of resentment simpliciter. This is an alternative to the proposal that to forgive is to both overcome and forswear resentment, where there is no attempt to subsume the former under the latter. I am happier with the latter, as I think it is natural to say that forgiveness involves both a descriptive and a normative element (a change in feelings for the former, a waiver of certain rights for the latter), but there is the option to pack the overcoming of resentment into the notion of foreswearing a right to present oneself as a victim. What is critical is that an analysis of forgiveness that centers exclusively on the overcoming of resentful feelings is incomplete; we need to say something about *foreswearing* resentment as well.

We have given some attention comparing two models of forgiveness, one that focuses on overcoming resentment and the other that emphasizes foreswearing. There is an aspect of forgiveness that evokes performative utterances as well, and we might attend to this as well. In uttering ‘I forgive you’ (in the proper context), has a victim merely issued a report of a private mental event, or does the utterance *constitute* the forgiveness? One might be tempted to suggest the latter.<sup>14</sup>

Determining whether forgiveness is or is not a performative is a delicate matter. One might endorse that latter claim while also incorporating aspects of the emotional model, since one could suggest that the utterance will only count as a successful performative if the utterer has undergone an emotional change. And to say that a declaration of forgiveness is a performative utterance does not presuppose that performatively uttering ‘I forgive you’ is necessary to forgiveness – we could happily say that ‘I promise’ is a performative utterance without assuming that promises can *only* be made by performatively uttering a sentence of the right sort.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, I think we can find some reason to doubt that declarations of forgiveness are

performative utterances, though we will first need a sketch of the characteristics of performatives. Two interesting features of performatives are that they lack truth-values, and they are not reports of mental events. When a judge utters “Guilty” in the right context, her utterance has no truth-value, and her utterance is an illocutionary act – she is creating the defendant’s verdict, not merely reporting it.

The literature on performatives distinguishes between explicit performatives and primary performatives.<sup>16</sup> Explicit performatives are cases in which the utterance begins with words specifying the type of performance that is about to follow: “*I promise that ...*”, “*I dub thee ...*”, “*I hereby sentence you to ten years in prison*”. The distinction is important because there is a temptation to say that explicit performative utterances have truth-values – that they are simultaneously illocutionary acts and reports on that illocutionary act.<sup>17</sup> On this view, in uttering “I hereby sentence you ...”, the judge is simultaneously issuing a verdict and stating a report of that verdict. Not everyone agrees that explicit performatives have truth-values, but many have that intuition, and if “I forgive you” is a performative utterance it would obviously be an explicit performative. Thus a temptation to say that “I forgive you” can be uttered *truly* would not imperil the proposal that “I forgive you” is a performative utterance; it might merely support the thesis that explicit performatives are true statements in addition to being illocutionary acts.

Thus far we have not found a reason to reject the claim that “I forgive you” is a performative utterance, but problems for that view do exist. Even those who think that explicit performatives have truth-values typically say that the utterance is guaranteed to be true, so long as the utterance is made in a context that qualifies as “official”. So long as the speaker occupies the relevant social role, the utterance “I hereby dub thee ...” is guaranteed to express a truth, and this is a general characteristic of explicit performative utterances. This characteristic need not obtain for declarations of forgiveness, though; we can imagine circumstances in which a morally wronged party utters the words “I forgive you” but would not count as having issued forgiveness. The victim might have intended to forgive, and thought that she was forgiving, but if she finds that her feelings of resentment do not diminish, and she is unable to treat

the transgressor in a manner suggesting reconciliation, we might say that the wronged party did not really forgive the transgressor, in spite of the fact that she uttered the right words. An authorized utterance of “I hereby dub thee ...” always constitutes a successful naming, but an authorized utterance of “I forgive you” can occur without a successful act of forgiveness taking place.

Is it in general a characteristic of explicit performatives that authorized utterances always generate successful illocutionary acts? If so, we have a reason to think “I forgive you” is not a performative; but perhaps there are other performatives that can be uttered without constituting a successful illocutionary act. We can certainly imagine someone uttering “I hereby sentence you to ten years in prison” without actually generating that verdict. But the most obvious cases that fit these parameters are ones in which the speaker does not occupy the appropriate social role, or does not sincerely and seriously utter the sentence. The example concerning forgiveness is one where the speaker is the wronged party, and she intends to be issuing forgiveness, yet she still fails to do so. So there does seem to be a difference between “I forgive you” and the paradigm examples of performatives.

One might think that the performatives-based approach to forgiveness could be saved by imposing a further condition on what an appropriate context of utterance must be like for the act of forgiveness to genuinely take place; to felicitously utter “I hereby sentence you ...” the speaker has to be the judge in the relevant case, and perhaps we could hold that to felicitously utter “I forgive you” the speaker must not only be a wronged party, but in addition must meet further requirements concerning her emotional state, such as having overcome resentment. But to impose a requirement concerning the speaker’s emotional state as a condition on felicitous usage is to abandon the original motivation in discussing performatives – it was important to Austin that the success of a performative utterances does not depend on internal states in the mind of the speaker.<sup>18</sup> So to propose that there are emotional preconditions on a felicitous use of “I forgive you” is to cease treating the declaration of forgiveness as a prototypical performative utterance. There are some interesting insights to the treatment of forgiveness

on performative lines (the utterance “I forgive you” might be counted as a formal declaration that one is forswearing one’s rights as a victim), but it would be a mistake to think that treating declarations of forgiveness as performatives exhaust anything interesting that might be said about forgiveness.

Forgiveness takes place in the head of the victim, not in the words she utters.

### §3 Repeat Offenders

When we forgive, we overcome and forswear resentment. But what change occurs when we overcome resentment? Are the resentful feelings we once had now eliminated entirely, or are they merely set off to one side – do we retain the feelings but no longer dwell on them? In slightly different terms, when I commit to overcoming resentment directed towards event X, am I aiming to make it the case that I will never again have that feeling with respect to X, or is my aim more modest – am I committing to avoiding activating the disposition to feel that way with respect to X? This is the question I want to consider more carefully.

Pretheoretically, we might expect that to forswear resentment towards X is to commit to ridding ourselves entirely of that feeling; we eliminate the sentiment, and while X may still be said to *merit* a resentful reaction on my part,<sup>19</sup> I am ridding myself of any disposition to *have* that attitude regarding X. But while I think this is the pretheoretic way to understand the forswearing of resentment, I suspect that in practice we do something more modest. To develop the point I want to consider the example of the repeat offender.

Suppose we have been wronged once, and have to come to resent the person for having done so. But the transgressor has shown contrition,<sup>20</sup> acknowledged the wrong and done what he can by way of atonement to bring about reconciliation. Suppose that we observe all of this, and we grant forgiveness. And then after some time passes he wrongs us again in a similar fashion.

Once again, we feel anger and resentment, though now more so than we did before. Why are we more resentful this time? Because the resentment at the second offense is accompanied by rekindled

resentment at the first offense. The situation is more complicated than that; there is also resentment concerning the act of contrition offered subsequent to the first offense; at best we will think of the act of contrition as a broken promise to treat us better, and at worst we may doubt whether that act of contrition was sincere. There are thus multiple sources of resentment at the second offense. But among them, I take it, is resentment concerning the first offense.

I have deliberately avoided giving particular examples of what these offenses are, because the phenomenon seems to be quite general. For any repeatable type of offense that might provoke resentment, we can imagine that even after forgiving it we could come to feel resentment again if further offenses of that type subsequently transpired. So for any occasion on which we overcome and forswear resentment, there is the possibility that the resentment will return. And while admittedly one's feelings after the repeated offenses are quite complicated, I take it that there really is rekindled resentment over the first offense in addition to resentment over the more recent offense, the sense of a broken promise on the part of the transgressor, etc. We do not merely *remember* that we were resentful over the first offense; we feel that resentment anew.<sup>21</sup> And there is little sense that we have violated a commitment when that resentment does re-emerge.

There is something puzzling about the idea that I managed to genuinely forgive an offense, but at a later date (after encountering a second offense) I once again resent the first offense. It is tempting to think that when one overcomes resentment, that sentiment has been expunged; the fact that we can come to feel that resentment again casts doubt upon that claim. We might be able to reconcile these conflicting intuitions that resentment has been eliminated and yet that it persists. In an effort to distinguish forgiveness and condonation, some have relied on the difference between an offensive action and the person who performed it – perhaps in issuing forgiveness we continue to resent the action<sup>22</sup> while ceasing to resent the transgressor.<sup>23</sup> That distinction could be invoked here as follows: when the transgressor first performs the offensive action, we come to regard him *as* a transgressor and resent him for hurting us.

When he demonstrates contrition, we may come to see him in a new light. Our perception of the offensive action is unchanged, but we now see the author of that action as a different person than the one who hurt us. We do not resent the reformed person. But when confronted with repeat offenses, our perception of the person changes again – we revert to seeing him as a transgressor. This distinction evokes the phrase “love the sinner, hate the sin” which commends compassion towards wrongdoers, and is a common theme in some religious accounts of forgiveness.<sup>24</sup> But whatever appeal this distinction has, it does not adequately dispel the conceptual tension exposed by the repeat offender case. We should distinguish between a metaphysical and an epistemic interpretation of the proposal. In the former case, we would say that the transgressor becomes a different person in some metaphysical sense, such that the contrite person is in some sense not the same person that harmed me.<sup>25</sup> In the latter case, we would say that when the offense first occurs our evidence suggests that the transgressor is a malicious person, but in showing contrition the transgressor provides new evidence that he is not malicious.

The repeat offender case would thus be explained by saying either (on the metaphysical interpretation) that the transgressor has reverted to the person who originally wronged us, or (on the epistemic interpretation) that the latest evidence now suggests that the transgressor really is a malicious person deserving to be resented. Whichever interpretation we prefer, this way of thinking about resenting the transgressor has unsettling implications for how we think about forgiveness.<sup>26</sup> It is debated whether it is permissible or appropriate for a victim to forgive an unrepentant transgressor, but it is widely thought that forgiveness is never *obligatory*.<sup>27</sup> But whether we interpret this “love the sinner” proposal metaphysically or epistemically, it seems to suggest that we are obligated to forgive a repentant transgressor. If the contrite person is metaphysically distinct from the one who morally injured me, then to resent the contrite person would be to direct a negative attitude towards a person who has not done anything to deserve it. It is morally problematic to resent someone who hasn’t wronged me. Even on the epistemic interpretation, a contrite transgressor is someone who has now given me evidence that she is

not a malicious person – why then could it be morally permissible for me to resent her? The natural answer is to simply note that he did in fact morally injure me, but with the distinction between transgression and transgressor it no longer easily follows that it is permissible to resent the person who injured me, and if the transgressor has given me evidence that the action was out of character for her, it seems inappropriate for me to resent her. One of the conceptual truths about forgiveness that we should try to respect is that forgiveness is not morally required, and the use of the distinction between transgressor and transgression considered here endangers that thesis.

If we do not avail ourselves of the distinction between transgression and transgressor, we might explain the tension exposed by the repeat offender case as follows: in forgiving, we overcome and forswear resentment. But this is not to say that the victim has eliminated all traces of resentment. She may continue to be disposed to feel resentment over the offense, but she has committed to not *dwelling* on these resentful thoughts, so the disposition is rarely activated.<sup>28</sup> If she were to dwell on those thoughts, she would be violating a commitment she accepted in issuing forgiveness, and such a violation tends to imply that she cannot accurately be said to have forgiven the transgressor. This account will flout the intuition that overcoming resentment is anything like conquering or eliminating it; overcoming resentment on this view is more analogous to boxing up a possession and putting it in the attic than it is to ridding oneself of the possession entirely. While the account may differ from the pretheoretic conception of overcoming resentment, it explains easily how resentment can reemerge over a previously forgiven offense – the resentment was not eliminated when the offense was forgiven; it was merely shunted aside. As an additional benefit, this proposal is compatible with the view that forgiveness is not obligatory, even when the transgressor is contrite.

#### §4     Walking Away

Consider another case: the victim endures a serious moral offense, the transgressor demonstrates contrition and asks for forgiveness, but the victim finds that she can only make the following offer: she

can forgive the transgressor, but she cannot continue to have any relationship with him. Let us stipulate some points about her motivations in walking away from the relationship. She is not walking away simply out of prudential concern for her well-being, as we might imagine from an abused spouse. She is walking away because she knows that if she remained in the relationship, she would continue to feel resentment, but that if she walks away she can wish the other well and avoid feeling bitter about the offense. Knowing all of this, she tells the transgressor that she forgives him, but she does not want to see him again.

Is this genuinely a case of forgiveness? Opinions may differ.<sup>29</sup> Models of forgiveness that stress reconciliation will certainly say that she has not forgiven, since she clearly is closing the door on any restoration of the relationship. But the views that focus simply on overcoming or forswearing negative feelings do not make obvious a verdict for this case. It is true that the victim has found a way to rid herself of resentful feelings; but it is also true that she retains a disposition to have resentful feelings, and that she is making choices with the direct intention of not activating that disposition.

I am inclined to think that we should not describe this as an example of forgiveness. The victim is certainly still experiencing resentment when makes her decision, and while she may know that her feelings of resentment will cease as a result of her choice to walk away, that does not suffice to show that she has overcome resentment – if it were, then going to the hypnotist would also qualify as overcoming resentment. This case makes a point that was not evident from the hypnotist case, however; in that example it was tempting to say that the victim should not count as forgiving the transgressor because her motivations for ridding herself of resentful feelings were self-oriented – she wanted to get rid of resentment for her own benefit, not for sake of the other.<sup>30</sup> In the case of walking away, however, we can imagine the victim telling the transgressor that she does not want to be angry at the transgressor, that she knows he is a good person who does not deserve to be disparaged (and hence her motivations do concern the transgressor, not simply a desire for her own peace of mind). Nevertheless, the victim might say that

she cannot get beyond her anger without ending the relationship with the transgressor.

The obvious lesson to be drawn from this case is that we cannot assess whether a victim has overcome resentment simply by inquiring whether the victim has managed to stop experiencing feelings of resentment. The more subtle lesson is that, in light of the conclusions drawn earlier about the repeat offender case, we cannot even assess whether a victim has overcome resentment by inquiring whether the victim retains a disposition to experience resentment. The implications of the repeat offender case are that even a victim who has genuinely forgiven the transgressor retains a disposition to feel resentment. What then is the difference between the walking away case and a case of genuine forgiveness? As suggested in the previous paragraph, the difference is not a matter of whether the victim's motivations are self-oriented or other-oriented. It is more plausible to suggest that the relevant difference concerns what conditions would activate the disposition to feel resentment. In the walking away example, those feelings would manifest merely as a result of interacting with the transgressor; in a case of genuine forgiveness, resentful feelings would manifest only under more specific conditions, such as further offenses of the same type.

## §5 Conclusion

Forgiveness is not the elimination of resentment; the repeat offender case shows that a disposition to feel resentment persists even in ordinary cases of forgiveness. But in issuing forgiveness, the victim takes on a commitment to avoid exercising her rights as a victim of the moral offense, including her right to dwell on resentment towards the transgressor. The commitment to avoid exercising her rights is not equivalent to a *waiver* of those rights, however – the victim retains those rights, and as the repeat offender case suggests she may be moved to exercise them in certain circumstances.

## Endnotes

1. Amnesia would not count as forgiveness, for instance. The point that forgiveness is not mere forgetting of the transgression has been frequently observed; see for instance Boleyn-Fitzgerald (2002), Cose (2004), Griswold (2007), and Murphy (1982).
2. Many think that if the victim is jettisoning negative feelings for purely self-interested reasons, such as a desire for peace of mind, the victim is not engaging in forgiveness. See Murphy (1982) and Richards (1988).
3. Perhaps Twambley (1976) has this view.
4. See Hampton (1988), for instance.
5. See Thomas (2003), who recognizes a notion of forgiveness that fits this description.
6. See for instance Hughes (1997), Quinn (2004). We could imagine a view of forgiveness that requires behavioral change without presupposing an emotional change in the victim, however. Some philosophers (Haber (1991) and Swinburne (1989), for instance) approach forgiveness by comparison with performative utterances (see Austin (1962)). A promise delivered insincerely is nevertheless a promise, so a performative approach to forgiveness might choose not to worry about whether the victim's heart is really behind for declaration of forgiveness.
7. See Quinn (2004).
8. See Murphy (1982) for an influential statement of this point.
9. Murphy (1982) uses the phrases 'overcoming resentment' and 'foreswearing resentment' interchangeably. Some prefer the term 'overcoming': Bennett (2003), Garrard (2002), Govier (1999), Griswold (2007), Hughes (1997). The language of "foreswearing" is less common, but Butler (1722), Roberts-Cady (2003), and Shriver (1995) have all used the term in the context of forgiveness (though in some cases the verb is used with respect to *revenge* rather than *resentment*).
10. See the references in notes 1 and 2.
11. See Quinn (2004).
12. See Pettigrove (2007), Watkins (2005), and Wolterstorff (2005) on waiving one's rights as a victim.
13. The point that forgiveness and punishment are compatible has been widely noted; see for example Garrard and McNaughton (2003), Govier (1999), Murphy (1982), Thomas (2003). But it might be true that forgiving puts constraints on what might motivate our expectation that the transgressor be punished; Butler (1722) suggests that where forgiveness occurs the punishment for the offense cannot be motivated by revenge, Garrard (2002) holds that the punishment is justifiable [only?] when it is in the transgressor's best interests (as a means of rehabilitation, for instance), and Roberts-Cady (2003) makes an allowance for punishment on grounds of the victim's protection. Whether punishment is justifiable on retributive grounds when forgiveness

has occurred is less clear.

14. See for instance Haber (1991) and Swinburne (1989).

15. Downie (1965) observes that forgiveness can occur without a speech act, and suggests that this poses a problem for the performatives approach. It does seem true that forgiveness is not conceptually equivalent to a certain kind of performative utterance, but one might think that there is still some merit to the proposal that a declaration of forgiveness is a performative utterance.

16. See Austin (1962).

17. See Bach and Harnish (1979), Heal (1974), and Sinnott-Armstrong (1994).

18. To clarify, Austin wants to emphasize that the utterance is an illocutionary speech act, and is worried about the rival view that the internal mental event is the action and the statement “I forgive you” is a mere report of that internal event.

19. Assuming that it ever did – I am taking for granted that I responded justifiably in resenting X in the first place.

20. I am not presupposing that forgiveness is only appropriate if the wrongdoer has shown contrition, as argued by those hostile to the notion of unconditional forgiveness (see Swinburne (1989), Bennett (2003), Griswold (2007), Wilson (1988), Hampton (1988), Murphy (1982), Digeser (1998), Lang (1994), Smith (1997), Thomas (2003)). Those who advocate unconditional forgiveness believe that forgiveness is morally appropriate whether or not the wrongdoer shows contrition, but even they will grant that a demonstration of contrition on the part of the wrongdoer is helpful in erasing the resentment felt by the victim.

21. I would not wish to make the strong claim that everyone always resents a previously forgiven first offense when being offended on a subsequent occasion; people surely differ in how they react to such situations. I do think that the reaction I describe is a common one, however.

22. If it seems a category mistake to speak of *resenting the action*, one could say instead that we continue to find the action morally repugnant.

23. For discussion of this distinction between transgression and transgressor see Govier (1999), Murphy (1982), Read (1996), Roberts-Cady (2003).

24. More carefully, it is common in religious accounts of forgiveness to distinguish between resenting the offense and resenting the transgressor. I have described the victim as waiting for a sign of contrition before issuing forgiveness, but religious accounts in this vein typically suggest that forgiveness should be unconditional – we should forgive whether or not the transgressor is contrite. For endorsements of unconditional forgiveness see Bennett (2003), Garrard and McNaughton (2003), North (1987), Pettigrove (2004), Roberts-Cady (2003), Tutu (1999).

25. North (1987) presents Kant as formulating this sort of view.
26. See also Read (1996) for doubts that the distinction between transgression and transgressor will help in understanding forgiveness.
27. Many have held that forgiveness should be construed as a virtue: see Downie (1965), Garrard and McNaughton (2003), Holmgren (1994), Hughes (1975), McGary (1989), Murphy (1982), Potter (2001), Quinn (2004), and Thomas (2003). Wolterstorff (2005) and Griswold (2007) may think that the victim has an obligation to forgive, at least in some circumstances.
28. For a suggestion along these lines, see Boleyn-Fitzgerald (2002).
29. Cases of this sort are rarely addressed in the philosophical literature on forgiveness, but Pettigrove (2004) perhaps will count this as a case of forgiveness.
30. See Murphy (1982). McGary (1989) suggests a revision of that principle.

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