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I have come to find it odd to think of there being a single correct idea of forgiveness, in the way that there is a correct theory of the structure of DNA. Forgiveness is a variable human process and a practice with culturally distinctive versions – Margaret Urban Walker (2006; p. 152)

Deconstructed Black Forest Cake: ‘The elements of Black Forest Cake—chocolate cake and pudding, cherries, whipped cream, and kirsch—are reimagined as sensuous, separate bites and sips’ – www.epicurious.com

Forgiveness—An ordered pluralism

The philosophical literature on forgiveness displays a puzzling schism. There are those who conceive of forgiveness as necessarily *earned*, normally through remorseful apology; and there are those who conceive of it as fundamentally non-earned or unconditional—a *gift*.¹ I shall label the two broad conceptions ‘Moral Justice Forgiveness’ and ‘Gifted Forgiveness’ respectively. It is startling how different they are, both psychologically and normatively. Psychologically speaking they are poles apart. The first involves a stance of significant moral demand, while the second precisely does not—

¹ For the former view, see for instance Hampton and Murphy (1998), Hieronymi (2001), and Griswold (2007). For the latter view, see for instance Calhoun (1992), Garrard and McNaughton (2004), Pettigrove (2012), and Allais (2013). For explicitly pluralist positions see Walker (2006); and Bennett (2003), though the pluralism he argues for there is not designed to include what I am calling Gifted Forgiveness.

its non-demandingness is its distinctive psychological and ethical feature. Normatively speaking too they appear to be polar opposites. Whereas the first issues forgiveness only on condition of remorse (typically requiring this to be made explicit in apology, with some accounts adding further requirements along the way), the second self-consciously suspends this condition wholesale, forgiving for free. Granted that both conceptions offer life-like portraits of something called forgiveness, we face an intriguing philosophical puzzle: how can they both be convincing likenesses of moral practices that rightfully go by the same name? This is the puzzle I aim to solve.

It is a feature of many social practices, and I would contend some moral practices too, that the meanings operative in the basic form of the practice tend to become implicit and compacted, entering our spontaneous second nature as to how we understand our world. These taken-for-granted meanings may then be more passively and discreetly operative in any new, hermeneutically parasitic practices that evolve to serve essentially the same social or moral purpose but in modified form. Take, for instance, culinary practice: only once we already have the idea—the gustatory institution, so to speak—of *black forest gateau*, might we be able to ‘reimagine’ and comprehend its elemental ingredients of chocolate cake, cherries, whipped cream, and kirsch served in ‘deconstructed’ form as ‘sensuous bites and sips’ artfully distributed on a restaurant plate. The deconstructed version only makes proper sense if it is intelligible as a novel iteration of some prior version of itself—perhaps the familiar seventies classic, or the original German *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte*.

It is in our nature as cultural beings to innovate, and one suspects that the evolution of many social-cultural practices from the silly to the sublime arise this way—the very idea of a spoof movie, for example, or the development of the unreliable narrator in modernist fiction, or perhaps even the historical progression from representational to abstract painting. In all these cases, the intelligibility of the newer practice is at least implicitly dependent upon on meanings operative in the original one: you cannot make sense of a spoof spy movie unless you already get spy movies; you cannot understand what is going on in unreliable narration unless you read it as playing on a prior habit of reliability; and appreciating abstract painting may similarly depend upon seeing how it can be satisfying to some of the same aspects of sensibility as a traditional painting. The key is in sensing how one practice is derived from another, the meanings at work in the original becoming embedded and merely implicit in the later, derived variation.

But regardless of what one may think of this as a purportedly general cultural phenomenon, I shall only be arguing along these lines very specifically in respect of the two radically different conceptions of forgiveness identified above. The resultant picture will be one that resolves their differences by integrating the two varieties of forgiveness into a single explanatory order, so that one variety is represented as the explanatorily basic or (as I shall call it) *paradigm* case, in relation to which the other variety is explained as the derived, essentially parasitic and more contingent iteration. Though admittedly ambitious given the schism, I believe that some such unified picture is achievable, and can deliver an integrated and philosophically satisfying account—one with the advantage of any pluralism, namely that it begins from a stance of everyday

truthfulness about the manifestly diverse forms of forgiveness that are practised here and now, let alone elsewhere and at other times, but which also has the advantage that it has more explanatory musculature than any mere acknowledgement of plurality could hope to build. Most importantly it can explain how on earth two such dramatically different responses to wrongdoing are rooted in one and the same moral kind, so as to both belong to the moral genus *forgiveness*.

To preview: In the first section I shall explain my method of paradigm-based explanation, representing it as a more straightforward and transparent way of achieving the very same explanatory pay-off that certain well-disciplined State of Nature stories are designed to achieve. In section 2 I shall hypothesise Moral Justice Forgiveness as the paradigm case of forgiveness—not merely in the sense of being a canonical case of forgiveness but, crucially, the *explanatorily basic* case. In section 3, now standing back from its interpersonal psychology to consider forgiveness rather as a moral-social practice, I will propose a conception of the most basic point and purpose of Moral Justice Forgiveness; after which I will go on in section 4 to ‘test’ the hypothesis of its explanatory primacy by seeing how far the practice of Gifted Forgiveness—apparently a very different moral formation—can be convincingly represented as a contingent cultural iteration of Moral Justice Forgiveness, our candidate paradigm case. On the face of it, a positive result would be most surprising, given that the two kinds of forgiveness appear as polar opposites. But I believe that the proposed paradigm-based method will prove capable of revealing the second as a somewhat disguised variation on the first—as will become clear once we grasp two things: first, that the most basic moral-social role played by the two

practices can be seen, when viewed from a distance, to be the same; and second, that the moral meanings at work in Gifted Forgiveness are directly parasitic on those at work in Moral Justice Forgiveness. The first reveals their common function; the second reveals their order of conceptual and genetic priority.

The resulting account will thus achieve two main things. It will explain our puzzle, namely, how it is that the apparently starkly disunified formations of forgiveness represented by Moral Justice Forgiveness and Gifted Forgiveness respectively are in fact fundamentally unified. Moreover it will do this in a manner that preserves a desirable pluralism at the level of interpersonal moral psychology regarding the nature of our actual practices of forgiveness. And, second, it will show that certain key values or purposes that are clearly served by forgiveness—and which are therefore quite rightly focused on in much of the philosophical literature—can only be so served in virtue of the fact that the more basic role is already being played, and without which these other, secondary, values could not be realised except in deteriorated form. I shall postpone stating the hypothesis about what that most basic role is until I have set the scene methodologically.

1. Paradigm-Based Explanation

A philosophical method that is expressly designed to reveal the point or role of a given concept or practice is State of Nature story telling. Such story telling is a species of

genealogy—it is the kind of genealogy that posits ‘origins’, as opposed to the kind that aims to show that there are none, on the grounds that all is history and contingency. Foucault claims ‘History is the concrete body of a development...; and only a metaphysician would seek its soul in the distant ideality of the origin’ (Foucault, 1984; p. 80). But that is not true. It is not only a ‘metaphysician’ who might seek for necessity in the idea of an origin, for there are other kinds of necessity besides metaphysical necessity. She who posits origins need only believe there are some basic features of our practices that are (more or less) a direct expression of human nature—a direct upshot of human needs perhaps, or a manifestation of primary patterns of human emotion. There is nothing of Foucault’s ‘metaphysician’ at work, for instance, in either of the two State of Nature explanations from which I take my initial inspiration: Edward Craig’s *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, and Bernard Williams’ *Truth and Truthfulness*.²

There are admittedly other worries besides Foucault’s. Anyone might justifiably raise an eyebrow, after all, at the proposition that a creative fiction of a social setting that never existed, albeit reassuringly laced with a few realistic evolutionary pressures, should issue in a philosophical explanation of one of our actual conceptual or moral practices. I think there is plenty to say that would lower the eyebrow; but it is not the present task to say it. Rather than defending State of Nature explanation *per se*, my immediate purpose is to show that there is a closely related alternative method that can deliver what Craig calls ‘practical explication’ more transparently than a tale from the State of Nature, since it can

² Craig (1990); Williams (2002).

do so without the fictionalising that puts some critics off. Thus *paradigm-based explanation*.³

In order to present my proposed paradigm-based explanation, we must first achieve an explicit account of how the State of Nature method is supposed to work. Only then will it become evident that we can achieve the same explanatory result by other, more transparent means. The key is to see that in this kind of State of Nature story (the kind employed by both Craig and Williams) what is claimed about the State of Nature—for instance, that it contains a concept or practice with such and such features—is really a claim about what is *basic* (or ‘core’) in our *actual* concept or practice.⁴ The narrative

³ For the same methodological proposal in respect of blame, see Fricker (2014). For another, closely related, methodological approach to forgiveness, see Warmke and McKenna (2013), though they are not focused on the point and purpose of forgiveness but rather on identifying ‘exemplar’ cases which they regard as enjoying ‘explanatory privilege’ in the sense that they are the key to understanding other cases (see esp. p. 203). Charles Griswold also employs the notion of a paradigm case of forgiveness in relation to which other kinds may be understood, but he uses ‘paradigm’ to indicate an *ideal* kind of forgiveness, with other kinds figuring as more or less pale approximations (Griswold 2007).

⁴ Craig was entirely clear about this in the 1990 book, but a particularly explicit subsequent comment is nonetheless helpful: ‘I had to maintain that the circumstances that favour the formation of the concept of knowledge still exist, or did until very recently, since otherwise I would have had no convincing answer to the obvious question why it

dimension of the fiction tends to mislead in this regard, because it encourages one to mistake a deliberately fictional (or part-fictional) genealogy of X for a slap-dash attempt at a real history of X.⁵ More precisely, what tends to mislead us is that such a story can seem as if it purports to tell us how we actually came to have a practice of X with this or that feature, when really it is an attempt to do something quite different: it is an effort to substantiate a philosophical claim about *which* features of our actual practice are more or less *necessary* and which features are increasingly *contingent*. The ones posited as

should have remained in use, nor any support for my thesis that the method reveals the core of the concept as it is to be found now' (Craig, 2007; p. 191). Williams too—whose approach was more historical in emphasis—was committed to the idea that there was something necessary at the core of what had been shaped and re-shaped by different moments of history. In his account the object of these contingent re-shapings was the human value of truthfulness, and at its core are the proto virtues of Accuracy and Sincerity, as created by basic social pressures in the State of Nature.

⁵ We must resist exaggerating, however, the difference between a scholarly real-historical account and a historical genealogy, for, as Philip Kitcher observes, even the most disciplined real-historical account will have to present itself as a 'how-possibly' rather than a 'how-actually' explanation, given that parts of the story are so remote that we have too little evidence to go on (Kitcher 2011; pp. 11-12).

necessary are thereby posited as still present in the actual practice, though possibly suppressed, concealed, or displaced within it.⁶

It is important to appreciate that ‘necessary’ here does not mean metaphysically necessary (Foucault’s mistake). Rather it means necessary in one of a range of qualified senses that should be made explicit by whoever is telling the story. In Craig and Williams it means ‘practically’ necessary in the manner of basic survival needs plus some further social pressures that grow directly out of them; but it might equally be closer to a claim about human emotional nature—something conceived as ‘humanly necessary’. That is how P. F. Strawson conceives the status of our natural ‘reactive attitudes and feelings’ towards each other when we feel, among other things, disapprobation or indignation for a wrong done, or indeed forgiveness for one repudiated.⁷ (Such a ‘humanly necessary’ kind of necessity is the one I shall go on to exploit here for purposes of explaining forgiveness, though not in relation to a State of Nature.) How shall we dispense with the State of Nature itself? The trick is to be transparent about the claim of necessity, and unabashed at its being hostage to empirical fortune regarding the possibility that an extraordinary anthropological case might emerge as a counter-example—we might be quite happy to

⁶ As Williams makes clear, there can also be purely historical genealogies, which, I take it, would not be committed to any kind of necessity. But most philosophical genealogies are curious hybrids of ‘historical’ and ‘imaginary’. See Williams, 2002; ch. 2.

⁷ The phrase ‘humanly necessary’ is from a paper that predates ‘Freedom and Resentment’, however. (See Strawson, 1961.)

settle for *nearly* humanly necessary after all.⁸ We should be unabashed too about the possibility that some of the features we find deep in human nature might not be remotely desirable—they may need suppressing or containing (like violence), controlling or tempering (like retaliation), balancing or civilizing (like power). For a pattern of emotional reaction to be identified as deeply rooted in human nature entails exposing it to potentially critical attention, and to the possibility that it needs special efforts of remoulding in moral culture.⁹ In sum, instead of telling a tale of origins, paradigm-based explanation tries out an explicit hypothesis as to what particular form of the practice is functionally basic, partly with a view to clear-eyed critical reflection on how far that practice makes a desirable and progressive contribution to shared moral life.

Furthermore, such a hypothesis causes us to be explicit about something that is sometimes only implicit in State of Nature stories: that the contrast between what is allegedly necessary and what is contingent is also, and more importantly, one between the formation of a practice that is *explanatorily basic* and other formations of the practice which are best explained as derivative—as contingent cultural iterations of the basic paradigm. Whereas in genealogies that are purely historical the idea of genealogical priority can only indicate a causal-historical priority; in (what Williams calls) imaginary

⁸ Strawson was entirely aware that the fact of moral diversity should make one ‘chary’ of advancing any features of moral psychology as essential or universal, and allowed that his own depiction of the moral reactive attitudes might unwittingly carry some contingent cultural inflection (see Strawson 1974; p. 24).

⁹ I thank T. M. Scanlon for pressing this point in correspondence.

genealogies, genealogical priority is largely a metaphor for *explanatory priority*, regardless of what actually (in historical time) came first. The hoped for philosophical pay-off, therefore, will always be of the generic form ‘the fact that we have a practice of X *is explained by* this practice being present in, or derived from, the practice of X that human beings have in the State of Nature’—which means the practice of X that human society is bound to develop given certain basic aspects of human nature and need. This claim of explanatory priority is therefore the lynchpin of the more transparent version of the method I want to offer, a method designed to deliver the explanatory pay-off but without all the fictionalising. Here is the proposal. We present a hypothesis about what the paradigm practice of X is like—i.e. the form of the practice that we hypothesise as displaying its most basic point and purpose—and we then test out the hypothesis by seeing if we can plausibly represent other, non-paradigm forms of the practice as derivative. They may, for instance, display the same distinctive point and purpose—play the same basic role in moral life—but in a dependent, and perhaps deceptively obscured form.

In other work I have employed this paradigm-based method in relation to blame, and I argued that the paradigm case of blame is Communicative Blame—where, if you wrong me, I react by communicating to you that you are at fault, and where my communication is charged with some kind of blame-feeling.¹⁰ We then ask what the point or role of the paradigm case is: what’s the point of Communicative Blame? And the answer given is that Communicative Blame aims to inspire remorse understood as pained understanding

¹⁰ See Fricker (2014).

of the wrong one has done. Since I must here merely impose this conception of blame's basic point as a hefty premise to what follows, let me alleviate its weight a little by pointing out, first, that its substance is a version of a commonly accepted everyday conception; and furthermore that in accepting it, if only for argument's sake, we are in good company historically, for it is the view taken by Adam Smith:

The object...which resentment is chiefly intent upon, is not so much to make our enemy feel pain in his turn, as to make him conscious that he feels it upon account of his past conduct, to make him repent of that conduct, and to make him sensible, that the person whom he injured did not deserve to be treated in that manner... To bring him back to a more just sense of what is due to other people, to make him sensible of what he owes us, and of the wrong that he has done to us, is frequently the principal end proposed in our revenge, which is always imperfect when it cannot accomplish this (Smith, 2009 [1759]; Part II, Sect. III, Ch. I; p. 115).

Blame may take many forms, and some of them we would be better off without, but for purposes of argument let us agree that the role played by Communicative Blame in our moral relations is *to bring the wrongdoer and the blamer into an aligned moral understanding* of what has gone on between them, their understandings being naturally inflected with emotions appropriate to their role as either subject or object of the wrongdoing. Communicative Blame is thus seen to be driven by a morally constructive energy whose purpose is shared moral understanding, where the culprit's side of this shared moral understanding will be constituted by remorse.

With this claim about the basic point of blame now on the page as a premise to what follows, we are equipped to apply the method of paradigm-based explanation to forgiveness.

2. Moral Justice Forgiveness—the candidate paradigm case

Let us begin with the ‘humanly necessary’—the ‘reactive attitude and feeling’ of forgiveness:

Besides resentment and gratitude, I mentioned just now forgiveness... To ask to be forgiven is in part to acknowledge that the attitude displayed in our actions was such as might properly be resented and in part to repudiate that attitude for the future...; and *to forgive is to accept the repudiation and to forswear the resentment.*¹¹

¹¹ Strawson (1974); p.6, italics added. For empirical reassurance that it is sensible to regard not only blame but also forgiveness as having deep roots in human nature, see Michael McCullough’s case for the view that ‘The human capacity for forgiveness, like the human capacity for revenge, solved critical evolutionary problems for our ancestors, and it’s still solving those problems today’ (McCullough 2008; p. xviii). See also McCullough et al. (2013); and Petersen et al. who argue for a similar view, that ‘the mind

If we accept that this (or something very close to it) is a description of a humanly necessary reactive attitude of forgiveness, then we should accept it as a prime candidate for an explanatorily basic form of forgiveness—our candidate paradigm case. But claims of necessity are not to be made lightly, even when self-consciously made for philosophical purposes from the armchair. We should briefly press the question whether every aspect is plausibly built in to human moral nature. There are two aspects of Strawson's description that are worth subjecting to some pressure.

First, casting the repudiation in terms of an attitude towards not only the past deed but also towards future conduct might strike one as something of an optional extra, introducing a suspicion of contingency. Must the repudiator also be making a guarantee as regards future conduct in order to be forgiven in this basic manner? Of course some such firm intention to reform is generally to be hoped for, given the two parties are to remain in each other's lives; but perhaps (one might think) we should not build it into the picture of what is being claimed as a humanly necessary moral reactive attitude.

However, a closer inspection of what is already at stake in any 'repudiation' of a bad action (or, as I shall tend to put it, in any genuine feeling of remorse) reveals that the future is already implicated.¹² For any repudiation of an action of type X looks oddly

contains evolved programs that deploy both punitive and reparative strategies to deal with transgressors' (Petersen, Sell, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2010; p. 75).

¹² I am grateful to Jeremy Waldron for urging me to see this point in terms of the very grammar of emotions and attitudes such as remorse and repudiation.

freeze-framed if we separate it off from the generalized attitude towards actions of that type; and any such type-directed attitude commits the subject to a certain consistency across logical space and time, so that it applies other things equal not only to the particular token in the past but also to possible tokens in the future. Thus the future-oriented aspect of Strawson's characterisation proves not to be overloaded, and remains apt as a description of a basic reactive attitude.

Second, we should also pause to reflect on the normative dimension to Strawson's description. Are we sure it is necessary? The notion he uses is the *forswearing* of resentment as a response to the wrongdoer's repudiating what she did, and that is a more normatively loaded construction than the alternative, more plainly descriptive construction that would simply emphasise an observed tendency to relinquish resentment as a response to the repudiation. Would this less explicitly normative construal be the better candidate for our paradigm case? In order to answer this question, we need only scrutinize the tendency to relinquish resentment towards a wrongdoer who now repudiates what she has done. We find that our very tendency is explained by a normative fact—the fact that the repudiation is at least a *pro tanto* reason to relinquish the resentment. And so we discover that the normativity is built in to the tendency from the start. Therefore there *is* no simpler, 'merely descriptive' construal that is not already normatively structured, and it perhaps makes little odds whether in describing the

reactive attitude of forgiveness we use an explicitly normative word such as ‘forswear’ or a merely descriptive word such as ‘relinquish’. The normativity is already built in.¹³

There is furthermore an outstanding reason to favour an explicitly normative term, for it strikes a note of self-discipline which rightly flags up the fact that even in the most basic psychological formation there is an ever-present risk that the blame-feelings of those who are morally wounded (I shall generally talk of ‘blame-feeling’ rather than the more problematic ‘resentment’¹⁴) will over-reach themselves in some way, perhaps by

¹³ Victoria McGeer makes this point in connection with a neighbouring concern (about blame’s regulatory function) directing our attention to Strawson’s own clarity on the point (2013 pp. 177-8). For a fully elaborated account of the normative aspects of reactive attitudes, see Darwall (2006). Although his focus is not on forgiveness, there is a brief discussion of its second-personal character at pp. 72-73.

¹⁴ It is worth remembering that Strawson uses ‘resentment’ only in characterising the pre-moral attitude, and switches to ‘moral indignation’ or (more weakly) ‘disapprobation’ for the vicarious, moral analogue (Strawson, 1974; p. 14). For my part I am using the umbrella term ‘blame-feeling’ in order to stay neutral about exactly what emotion(s) constitute feelings of blame, what the relation might be to vengeance or retribution, and indeed whether there is in fact a diverse range of emotions, including plain sorrow or pity or disappointment, that might play a proper affective role in blame (conceived as finding fault), as I have argued in Fricker 2014. Glen Pettigrove has argued that forgiveness need not be the forswearing specifically of resentment, because other emotions may be in play, though he

lingering beyond the time or context in which they are justified, or by being more intense than is justified by the wrong. Perhaps part of the explanation why blame-feeling tends towards excess if left unchecked is that, as Jean Hampton candidly suggests, it is pleasurable: ‘I suspect that we enjoy it not only because we enjoy asserting what we wish our own worth to be, but also because the emotion encourages the belief that the wrongdoer is “morally worse” than his victim’ (Hampton 1988, p. 60).¹⁵ This proneness of blame-feeling to over-reach itself means that even in the basic case there is a self-discipline operative in our blaming moral responses, and hence a self-discipline in the effort of relinquishing such feelings when they are no longer justified—the effort of so relinquishing them is well described as ‘forswearing’. What Strawson’s use of the term aptly implies is that while it is natural to let resentment go when we recognize it is no longer justified, it is equally only natural to fail to let it go. The normativity that permeates blame-feeling is what makes it the case that a wrongdoer *earns* forgiveness through their remorseful acknowledgement of what they have done: other things equal, their remorse makes it appropriate to forswear the corresponding blame-feeling. What we find thus encoded in our moral human nature is the entirely familiar normative structure

admittedly mentions only a narrow class of rather belligerent alternatives such as anger, rage, hatred, loathing, scorn, and contempt (Pettigrove 2012; p. 29). Jeffrey Blustein has argued that the emotions that forgiveness overcomes need not be retributive (Blustein 2014; ch. 1). See also Roberts (1995); and Pereboom (2013).

¹⁵ On this point, enlarged as a warning about institutionalized ‘atonement’, see Trudy Govier: ‘People enjoy an elevated status when someone else is marked as a wrongdoer’ (Govier, 2009; p. 19).

that is definitive of Moral Justice Forgiveness: blame-feeling is justified after wrongdoing only until appropriate remorse is forthcoming. Our reactive attitudes, it seems, are already attitudes of a simple interpersonal moral justice. I therefore propose Moral Justice Forgiveness as our candidate paradigm case of forgiveness—the explanatorily basic case, as delivered in Strawson’s description of the reactive attitude.

The hypothesis that Moral Justice Forgiveness is the paradigm case entails two commitments: first, that the most basic moral-social role of Moral Justice Forgiveness will turn out to be also that of Gifted Forgiveness, doubtless in heavily disguised form; and, second, that our investigation will ultimately determine that Moral Justice Forgiveness is the parent practice—exhibiting features that reveal it as prior and Gifted Forgiveness as parasitic or dependent.

3. The Most Basic Point of Moral Justice Forgiveness

Now that the hypothesis to be tested is on the table, namely that the paradigm case of forgiveness is Moral Justice Forgiveness, we can ask: what is the basic point and purpose of that kind of forgiveness? Once we have an answer, we can look and see how far that basic role is discernable in the *raison d’être* of Gifted Forgiveness too, and go on to assess how far it is plausible to see gifted formations as contingent cultural iterations of the basic moral justice formation. In order to bring the basic point of Moral Justice Forgiveness into view, we need to go back a step so that we start from the point of

Communicative Blame, as previously introduced. We accepted the premise that the point of Communicative Blame is to inspire remorse in the wrongdoer as a matter of aligning both parties' moral understanding. Now this has a direct bearing on the point of Moral Justice Forgiveness, for once the point of blame is achieved, if it is achieved, then continued blame-feeling can serve no further moral purpose, but merely threatens to fester if it is left unreleased from the individual's psychology, or indeed thereby left churning without movement in the moral social system. Once the communication of blame has achieved *its* point, then continued blame-feeling becomes redundant; and continuing to harbour blame-feeling that has been made redundant in this way is merely to prolong ill-feeling to no purpose, risking corrosive effects on both parties and possibly on other relationships into the bargain. All sides are better off without it, and the moment of redundancy ushers in Moral Justice Forgiveness. The forswearing of blame-feeling that has been made redundant by the wrongdoer's remorse *is* Moral Justice Forgiveness. Thus, I propose, the most basic (though not the only) point of Moral Justice Forgiveness can be encapsulated as the forgiver's *liberation from redundant blame-feeling*. That is, liberation from blame-feeling that can serve no moral purpose—in this case, because it has already done its job.

The idea that we need liberation from our feelings of blame when they are morally redundant does not commit us to the puritanical idea that such redundant blame-feelings are *necessarily* bad or corrosive. I am ready to accept that some of us can, frankly, harbour quite a bit of residual blame-feeling with no intention of communicating it or

expelling it in any other way, and it does us no harm at all, nor anyone else.¹⁶ Perhaps some of the most generous-spirited individuals are best placed to contain such spikes of unspent blame-feeling. An edge of unresolved resentments might make a person more interesting, more funny, more morally aware, or more likeable—a touch of defiant vulnerability worn on the sleeve might be decidedly preferable to the blandness of an unremittingly resolved psyche. What the thesis about the point of paradigm forgiveness does commit us to, however, is the view—which is hardly controversial—that on the whole blame that lingers without the catharsis of communicative interpersonal expression tends to corrupt the relationship in question, perhaps other relationships too, and indeed the character and happiness of the blamer. Harboring redundant blame is not always bad; but it does tend to be. And this fact explains why human beings need to cultivate moral practices that shape their natural moral reactive attitudes so that on the whole we succeed in liberating ourselves from such potentially corrosive redundant blame-feelings. That, as Hannah Arendt sagely observes, is how we consign our moral injuries to the past.¹⁷ Blame-feeling, on the proposed picture, is not to be thought of as intrinsically toxic. Rather, it is like salt: excess is bad for you (sometimes very bad), and deficiency is bad for you (sometimes very bad); but there is a quantitative range that allows it to play an essential role in the organism. On the view I am hypothesizing, Communicative Blame

¹⁶ I thank Lucy Allais and John Greenwood for each making this point in discussion.

¹⁷ Although Arendt makes the point by way of other notions I would not wish to make use of, such as men needing forgiveness in order to act freely, still the fundamental idea that without forgiveness we cannot truly *get past* wrongs done to us seems exactly right. See Arendt (1998/1958; pp. 238-43).

introduces blame-feeling into the moral interpersonal system; and forgiveness expunges the surplus which would otherwise tend to compromise the moral body.

4. Gifted Forgiveness as Moral Justice Forgiveness with one element displaced

Earlier I said the claim that Moral Justice Forgiveness is the paradigm case depends upon our being able to convincingly represent other kinds of forgiveness as derived from it—as contingent and perhaps hard-to-recognize cultural iterations of the basic practice. I believe there are in fact many varieties of forgiveness (not all of them morally useful), but I shall focus here exclusively on two formations of the broad kind I am calling Gifted Forgiveness. So our question now is: can one or other formation of Gifted Forgiveness be convincingly represented as a derivative cultural iteration of basic Moral Justice Forgiveness? I think the answer is yes, and in effect I am asking us to think of the ingredients of Moral Justice Forgiveness as being served up in one or other rearranged form, rather as a restaurant might serve ‘deconstructed’ dishes whose elements are not combined in the usual way, but instead arranged on the plate in unfamiliar order, perhaps with all elements separated, or, as it might also be, with a key element at one remove from the rest, so that had the diner not paid much attention to the description on the menu, he might not initially recognize the cherries, kirsch and chocolate cake set out

before him as a variation on Black Forest Gateau—and yet, after a few bites, it will surely dawn on him that these elements are together meeting the same gustatory brief.¹⁸

I remain entirely neutral as to whether deconstructed Black Forest Cake tastes as good as the traditionally constructed original; but there is philosophical method in this gastronomic frivolity, as I gestured at the outset. The culinary innovation is just one of many possible examples of a deep and quite general creative tendency in human culture to innovate and develop through the re-arrangement of elements: to compose variations on a theme, to play on the techniques and meanings at work in an existing literary, artistic, or moral form thereby creating something new, to achieve similar effects or utilities of a social practice by different, sometimes more efficient, sometimes more elaborate means, and quite generally to allow the meanings inherent in a practice to play on each other and create a new way of doing an old thing, often with new layers of meaning and value accruing. Such innovations are a matter of cultural evolution, and that is essentially what I am proposing as our explanatory conceit in relation to the initially baffling plurality of forgiveness: the non-paradigm formations of the practice of forgiving, when looked at in the light of the basic point of the paradigm case, will ultimately reveal themselves as normatively rearranged moral responses that work to the same underlying moral brief—namely, to free the wronged party from blame-feeling that

¹⁸ From <http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/deconstructed-black-forest-cake-231450> The account of deconstructed recipes in general given there is ‘TREND: Deconstructed desserts (breaking down a dish into its essential, components, then serving the parts as a whole)’.

is redundant in that it can serve no moral purpose. Accordingly I hope to show of two formations of Gifted Forgiveness that, contrary to appearances, when considered in abstraction from the distinctive interpersonal moral psychology of non-demand, we can discern at a deeper level of their function and meaning that they are both cultural reinventions of Moral Justice Forgiveness—its signature normative precondition of aligned moral understanding being repositioned at one remove in time, or in social space, or indeed both.

Temporal remove—Proleptic Gifted Forgiveness:

The first formation of Gifted Forgiveness on which I shall focus is, I propose, exemplified in an emblematic and widely cited literary example drawn from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.¹⁹ The Bishop forgives Jean Valjean, even covering for him to the police, for betraying his trust and stealing the silver from the rectory, despite the fact that Valjean at the time expresses no remorse and shows no other sign of appreciating the moral significance of his misdeed; and yet the Bishop's generosity later comes to mark a turning point for Valjean. This is an archetypal case of Gifted Forgiveness, but (here's the point) we can only make sense of it by thinking of it as the Bishop's giving Valjean something that *normally* needs to be earned through remorseful moral understanding but on this occasion *isn't*. Instead the Bishop moves swiftly to forgiveness (perhaps even bypassing blame altogether?)—this seems entirely possible if the Gifting habit is sufficiently internalised) as a matter of moral gratuity—something on this occasion given, startlingly, for free. Therein lies the genuinely distinctive moral meaning and value of

¹⁹ See, for instance, Griswold (2007); p. 121 n.5.

Gifted Forgiveness—something for nothing—and it is clearly parasitic on the moral meaning and value of Moral Justice Forgiveness, which fixes the proper price, giving nothing for nothing as a matter of principle.

That the notion of something gifted is parasitic on that of something paid for or otherwise earned amounts to a conceptual dependence. And inherent in this conceptual dependence are two distinct relations of priority, namely, the priority of the moral *meaning* of earned forgiveness in relation to gifted forgiveness, and the priority of the moral *value* of earned forgiveness in relation to gifted forgiveness. But, more surprisingly, we also confront an unexpected implication of a rare but familiar kind in philosophy. The conceptual priority of Moral Justice Forgiveness in relation to Gifted Forgiveness delivers a real-historical implication that we can discern from the armchair as an item of synthetic a priori knowledge. The pure conceptual priority entails that a practice of Gifted Forgiveness could not have come first historically, for the meaning and moral value inherent in Gifted Forgiveness are parasitic on those delivered in Moral Justice Forgiveness. As with the quite general notion of something gifted (free stuff), the meaning and value of Gifted Forgiveness depends heavily on the fact that something for which one must normally pay is, on this occasion, being handed out for free. That is what makes this kind of forgiveness extraordinary, and also what makes it on occasion so moving. It is precisely the shock of gratuitous generosity from someone you have wronged that can sometimes exert more transformative motivational power than the negative affect involved in the

moral demand for remorse, which carries a greater risk of merely entrenching moral hostilities.²⁰

The conceptual derivativeness is true of both formations of Gifted Forgiveness that I shall discuss. But there is a further dimension of derivativeness to the kind exemplified by the Bishop—Valjean case, which leads me to label it *Proleptic Gifted Forgiveness*. For if we look closely at how such cases of forgiveness play out, and what renders them formations of forgiveness at all (something denied in Charles Griswold’s classic account, for instance²¹) rather than a mere failure to hold the culprit responsible, we see that the interpersonal mechanism is a proleptic one, and thus involves a certain curious displacement in time. If we stand back from the distinctive interpersonal psychology of this kind of forgiveness to focus instead on what underlying moral purpose the practice serves, we can see that it is well designed to achieve the same point as Moral Justice Forgiveness, but in a *temporally displaced* manner. In order to see how, we must scrutinize how the prolepsis works.

Let me again start briefly with blame. The idea of a ‘proleptic mechanism’ is raised in connection with blame in some remarks of Bernard Williams’ about how blame may function productively even in cases where the wrongdoer does not recognize the reason

²⁰ Relatedly, Glen Pettigrove discusses the ‘transformative power’ of what he calls gracious forgiveness, which is forgiveness appropriately bestowed on someone who has however done nothing to ‘merit’ it (see Pettigrove 2012; p. 140).

²¹ See Griswold 2007, p. 121.

she is (at least in the blamer's eyes) culpable for having failed to act upon.²² Blame may function proleptically in such cases so long as the wrongdoer has at least some residual respect or care for the blamer, so that she is moved by his protestations. What happens in proleptic blame is that the blamer treats the wrongdoer *as if she already* recognized the reason in question, and then, in virtue of her residual respect or care for the blamer, she is caused in some measure to recognize the reason after the fact.²³ How does this sort of temporal displacement work in the case of forgiveness? My suggestion is that here, in the example from *Les Misérables*, we see a similarly temporally extended interpersonal mechanism played out to rearrange forgiveness in time. In forgiving the unremorseful Valjean, the Bishop effectively treats Valjean *as if he were already* remorseful, thereby displacing the normal precondition of forgiveness (the culprit's remorseful understanding) into the future as a hoped for outcome. And in so doing, given a basic residual respect for the Bishop on Valjean's part so that he is moved by the Bishop's act

²² Williams (1995); and I have tried to develop the idea in Fricker (2014).

²³ Williams—who holds that a condition on possessing any practical reason is that it be related by a 'sound deliberative route' to some motivation that the subject either has or would have, absent errors of fact and of reasoning—naturally talks in terms not of 'recognizing' the moral reason in question, but rather of *having* it, or not, as the case may be. For him, morally bad people really don't have the moral reasons we wish they did—therein lies their moral badness. His view of moral reasons as 'fundamentally first-personal', and therefore partial in the first instance, also implies that there will be times when even morally all right people will not have the reasons we wish they had—therein resides their freedom.

of forgiveness, the Bishop may thereby cause Valjean to come to remorse after all. (The proleptic forgiveness appeals to the culprit's 'better nature', as we sometimes say, by freeing it up front from the attempted coercions of moral demand.) Here, then, my suggestion is that we see this exemplar of Gifted Forgiveness as performing the same basic role as our paradigm, Moral Justice Forgiveness. For the Bishop is engaging in a practice that, by way of a socially trained psychological shortcut, directly produces the same immediate end that Moral Justice Forgiveness produces: namely, the forgiver's freedom from blame-feeling that is morally redundant.

Of course the blame-feeling that the Bishop could have justifiedly felt and communicated is only *redundant* if it is in fact redundant. But is it? Not in the sense that it has already done its job of prompting remorse in the culprit Valjean—obviously not. That is the whole point; we are to imagine Valjean as not remorseful (not yet). Rather, any blame-feeling on the part of the Bishop is redundant simply because it is not needed—*it has no moral job to do*. For the Bishop, the communication of blame is redundant either because Valjean is a hopeless case as regards the point of blame (castigating him will only harden his heart), and/or because there is a better chance of bringing him to see the error of his ways if one rises above the justificatory cue for blame-feeling and instead moves directly to forgiveness. Being forgiven when you've done nothing to deserve it brings a special kind of moral shock, as we have already remarked, and one that tends to prompt remorse. This is what renders the would-be blame-feeling on the part of the Bishop redundant from the start—no job to do. Thus the underlying and basic point of the practice of Gifted Forgiveness in which he is engaged is, in a manner concealed by the proleptic temporal

displacement, the very same as Moral Justice Forgiveness. Both kinds of forgiveness are premised on the idea of a causal and normative connection with the culprit's remorseful appreciation of what he has done. But whereas Moral Justice Forgiveness demands the remorse up front as a justificatory condition on the forswearing of blame-feeling, Gifted Forgiveness forgoes any attempt at control-through-moral-demand. Instead the Gifting Forgivee takes up a stance of non-demand, evincing the (passive yet sometimes powerfully effective) hope that the culprit will come to remorsefully acknowledge the moral meaning of his actions at a point in the not too distant future.

In sum, provided Gifted Forgiveness is prone to produce the same remorseful alignment of moral understandings as Communicative Blame aims to produce, then to put it bluntly there is no need for the Bishop to actually experience the blame-feeling reaction at all, for *gifting* the forgiveness can do the same job—indeed in some cases, where the expression of blame-feeling would only entrench matters, it will do the job more reliably.²⁴ And this multi-tasking capability of Gifted Forgiveness to perform the job of Communicative Blame into the bargain is what makes the Bishop's blame-feeling redundant from the start, so that through a fully internalised habituation to the Gifting ethos he may forswear

²⁴ Glen Pettigrove, in his illuminating discussion of what he calls 'gracious' or unmerited forgiveness, points to work in psychology which indicates 'that most people are inclined to reciprocate a favour that has been done to them. While an angry response to injury commonly provokes additional hostility in the person who caused it, a forgiving response is more likely to encourage positive future relations between them' (Pettigrove, 2012; p. 140).

justified blame-feeling before it even takes a hold—a possibility which represents a maximally complete freedom from redundant blame-feeling. All this reveals proleptic Gifted Forgiveness as a highly compacted moral response to wrongdoing, capable of doing the jobs of both Communicative Blame and Moral Justice Forgiveness all in one magnanimous reaction: it *presupposes* blameworthiness rather than standing on the ceremony of actually communicating the blame, and it liberates the forgiver from redundant blame-feeling from the outset, rather than waiting until its original justificatory condition is actually met. The blame-feeling is redundant insofar as it is not needed to prick the culprit's conscience, for the gifting of the forgiveness itself is already apt to do that.

Thus proleptic Gifted Forgiveness therefore manages to speed us through the more plodding moral-emotional exchanges that Communicative Blame followed by Moral Justice Forgiveness would bump us through—and which we normally need for an authentic interpersonal progression. From a moral economic point of view (not that there is such a thing), one might say that Gifted Forgiveness in its proleptic form is extraordinarily morally efficient—it has built into it the sort of psychological and normative streamlining that one might hope to see in a culturally evolved re-modelling of Moral Justice Forgiveness. As an aside, however, it is also worth noticing that this very moral-emotional virtuosity—specifically in its reliance on the spontaneous overcoming of natural and justified blame-feeling—equally helps explain why Gifted Forgiveness is peculiarly prone to passive-aggressive deformation and related brands of bad faith. The deformation comes from something internal to this kind of forgiveness, namely the

forswearing of blame-feeling that is in fact still justified. As we noted before, forswearing blame-feeling is no guarantee that one ceases to feel it, and the passive-aggressive deformation comes when the effort collapses into simple self-deception: the wishful denial of blame-feelings that really remain as powerful as ever. In such cases the would-be forgiver cannot pull it off and winds up in a mere charade of gifted forgiving.

On the picture I have been presenting, then—a picture not of our moral motivations but only of the rationale or logic of the moral practices in which we are engaged—proleptic Gifted Forgiveness is revealed as a *temporally displaced* rearrangement of the elements that compose the explanatorily basic practice of Moral Justice Forgiveness. Whereas Moral Justice Forgiveness demands the remorseful alignment of moral understanding *before* any forswearing of blame-feeling, Gifted Forgiveness takes its chances, lobbing the hoped-for shared moral understanding into the future with a view to inspiring it after the fact. Thus the culprit's remorseful understanding of what she has done, which in Moral Justice Forgiveness figures as a psychological cause and normative precondition, is seen in the Gifted case to have metamorphosed into a psychological effect and retrospective rationale. The element of remorseful understanding is deferred, and hoped for, rather than demanded in the now.

The practice of Gifted Forgiveness thus emerges from our overall explanatory scheme as a moral-cultural achievement, all the more precious for its historical contingency. Our moral culture, after all, might have developed in a way that did not contain such a practice. It might have stuck with formations of forgiveness that insisted it was earned

through the culprit's remorse before forgiveness could be appropriately forthcoming. But instead, a certain generous-spirited alternative to the moral accountancy of justice has developed for us to sometimes engage in as we may, diversifying our repertoire of moral responses to wrongdoing, and reminding us that active engagement in the economy of moral justice is not compulsory across the board—not even as regards the achievement of the same morally progressive effect.

It is, without question, of fundamental importance in moral life that we generally blame each other for bad things done and thereby hold each other in relations of moral demand, because moral justice is fundamentally important in personal life as in institutional practices. Without Communicative Blame we could not keep learning and re-learning what matters to each other, and what subtle forms of moral hurt we may be thoughtlessly, even innocently, engaged in. But it is a significant moral boon to have the option, at least in some contexts, of stepping back with a sense that all things considered, this time there is no need to 'go there'. Or perhaps even, as it may have been with the Bishop and Valjean, to step back and self-consciously judge that the only thing that can save him now is his own conscience pricked by the gratuitous generosity of others.²⁵ As others

²⁵ In cultures influenced by Christian thinking, the formations of Gifted Forgiveness are likely to be descended from the teachings of Jesus and the theological notion of Grace. But this is not the only source, for ancient traditions of mercy, and of what Pettigrove distinguishes as the ethical notion of grace, are also in the background: 'This ethical notion which has received so little attention in contemporary philosophy was quite frequently discussed in Greek and Roman philosophy. Cicero, Seneca, and Chrysippus,

have noted²⁶, *all* forgiveness is attended by hope, and manifestly Moral Justice Forgiveness already contains hope—hope that your moral demand will be met, hope that the wrongdoer will feel sorry and see things more from your point of view, and so on. But in proleptic forgiveness the hope element is far more exposed, because it is undefended by interpersonal moral demand. The armour of anger or indignation is never donned (or if it is, it is swiftly removed), which is why the gifting forgiver can appear bewilderingly vulnerable and passive, and why her stance can look like mere condonation or some other failure of moral nerve to those who would insist on engaging moral justice in the face of every wrongdoing.

It must be said that some writers on forgiveness are decidedly suspicious of the Gifted formation. Charles Griswold talks briefly of what he sceptically labels ‘prospective forgiving’, dismissing it in deliciously sardonic tones:

One could argue that an excellent way to encourage the offender to repent is precisely to forgive her even if she is unrepentant; bestowing this ‘gift’ opens a moral door for the offender and leads the way through it. Now, it is possible that the offender will see the light streaming in through that door, and that the conditions for true forgiveness will be enacted backwards, as it were. One can

for example, each devoted considerable attention to what the Greeks called *charis* and the Romans *gratia*. When we look at this older tradition, an important moral—as opposed to theological—quality emerges’ (Pettigrove 2012; p. 125).

²⁶ See, in particular, Walker 2006.

imagine conditions under which ‘prospective forgiving’ is based on a reasonable hunch about the person’s ability to change, if shown the way. My claim is that whatever it is that the injured party is doing proleptically, it is not forgiving, but something else that seeks to become forgiveness but has not yet crossed the threshold as defined’ (pp. 121-2).

But ‘the threshold as defined’ refers to his definition which makes it a requirement of forgiveness that the wrongdoer at least try to meet certain conditions of meriting forgiveness that involve, in one way or another, appreciating that he has done wrong. This completes the line of reasoning only to make a circle. If one defines forgiveness so as to require (something like) remorse, then it follows that there can be no Gifted Forgiveness of any kind; but so much the worse for the definition—it will have merely limited its own capacity to help us understand our actual practices of forgiveness, which plainly include cases of something normally called forgiveness in relation to wrongdoers who are not, or not yet, remotely sorry for what they have done.

Social Remove—Distributed Gifted Forgiveness:

What about the second dimension of remove from the structure of Moral Justice Forgiveness that may be exhibited in a case of Gifted Forgiveness? Is Gifted Forgiveness sometimes not (or not only) displaced in time but rather socially displaced, so that the wronged party may look to her community rather than to the culprit for the requisite shared moral understanding? Many authors discuss striking, indeed sometimes bewildering cases of Gifted Forgiveness in which someone forgives a horrifying wrong,

such as the torture and murder of a loved one, regardless of whether the culprit is likely ever to be remorseful, but where the forgiveness takes place in a social context of some significant moral solidarity.²⁷ Lucy Allais has discussed real-historical cases of this kind—cases involving horrifying brutality and hatred—from the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (Allais 2008). One may well wonder at how forgiveness in such a case is even possible. But I believe we can render it less bewildering, and indeed bring its normative structure into view, if we look once again at where the crucial hoped-for element of shared moral understanding has been displaced to. In proleptic cases we saw that the shared moral understanding was displaced in time and deferred as a hoped-for prospect in the future. But the element of shared moral understanding can also be displaced across *social space*—hence the label *Distributed Gifted Forgiveness*. This is evidenced in many of the cases discussed by philosophers as exemplars of Gifted Forgiveness, for they tend to involve a strong social, even institutionalised structure of solidarity and shared moral understanding from which the victim may draw strength and moral meaning. It is explicitly and formally so, I take it, in the examples of forgiveness drawn from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where the perspective of the moral community is institutionalised in the public hearings. But of course it can be achieved more informally in any circumstances where the victim has her own moral community (friends, colleagues, family) from which to draw the moral

²⁷ See, for instance, Eve Garrard and David McNaughton's discussion of Gordon Wilson's 'unconditional' forgiveness of the Enniskillen bombers (Garrard and McNaughton 2002); and Lucy Allais' discussion of two cases of 'elective' forgiveness from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Allais, 2008).

affirmation of shared understanding that she might otherwise expect, as per Moral Justice Forgiveness, to source in the remorseful understanding of the culprit.

That it isn't the culprit who is feeling bad for the victim, and that the emotion attending the shared moral understanding cannot therefore be remorse but rather some correlative form of affirming sympathy, comes to be less important to the potential forgiver if she has this kind of support from third parties. Such multi-lateral third-party alignments of moral understanding can be a powerful collective proxy for the wrongdoer's remorse. The power of solidarity of this kind is written about in different ways by various theorists.²⁸ Walker, for instance calls a lack of moral solidarity and alignment in one's moral community 'normative abandonment':

This explains a common phenomenon in the testimonies of victims: they often experience as much or more rage, resentment, indignation, or humiliation in response to the failure of other people and institutions to come to their aid, acknowledge their injury, reaffirm standards, place blame appropriately on

²⁸ See, for instance, Walker (2006), and MacLachlan (2008). Pamela Hieronymi too specifically mentions the possibility of extending her account of forgiveness as justified by apology to the territory of Gifted or 'unilateral' forgiveness: 'Once can start to see how the account might be extended to cases in which apologies are not offered. Perhaps unilateral forgiveness (forgiveness of the unrepentant) is possible in cases in which the one offended receives strong community support' (p. 552-3).

wrongdoers, and offer some forms of solace, safety, and relief, as they experience toward the original wrongdoer (Walker 2006; p. 20).

What we see, I suggest, in cases of Distributed Gifted Forgiveness is once again a displacement of the crucial precondition to Moral Justice Forgiveness—namely the alignment of moral understandings—but this time across social space. Whereas in cases of Moral Justice Forgiveness that alignment is required between victim and remorseful culprit, in cases of Gifted Forgiveness it may be achieved between victim and a moral community to which she belongs. This can do essentially the same job of affirming the victim’s moral status and so enabling her, if she wishes, and if she can, to forgive the unremorseful wrongdoer without collapsing into condonation or a mere failure to hold him responsible. She may thus free herself of morally redundant blame-feeling towards the wrongdoer for what he did, but sourcing the element of shared moral understanding from elsewhere. That a moral culture should have cultivated such a practice to render this kind of forgiveness both psychologically possible and normatively intelligible strikes me, once again, as a moral boon—an enrichment in our repertoire of responses to wrongdoing. It liberates the wronged party from redundant blame-feeling, and it immediately shores up social-moral solidarity—which might be viewed as the lion’s share of the value of getting any individual culprit to be remorseful anyway.

The principle idea put forward in this paper has been that the redundancy of blame-feeling is the core rationale for forgiving, where this redundancy is paradigmatically brought about by the alignment of both parties’ moral understanding; but that in cases

where the culprit's remorse is not forthcoming, the redundancy might equally (sometimes more effectively) be brought about by alignments of moral understanding that are displaced in time and/or social space. Thus Gifted Forgiveness has emerged as one or other kind of partially displaced or 'deconstructed' Moral Justice Forgiveness. However, it is no part of my intention to encourage the idea that the most important or most *valuable* thing that forgiveness does is to be found in its most basic role; not at all. Forgiveness, like most human practices, surely serves a family of purposes or functions, and the question of the relative value of this or that function remains an open question. Indeed the purpose of homing in on the most explanatorily basic function is precisely to help us understand by what means forgiveness may perform distinct functions and thereby achieve distinct related values. What comes into view is the range of other valuable things that forgiveness can do for our shared moral life in virtue of fulfilling its more basic and immediate function.

The most obvious secondary value served by forgiveness is the release of the culprit from being the object of redundant blame-feeling. In freeing myself of redundant blame-feeling towards someone who has wronged me I may also liberate *them* from the unpleasant sense of being its object. Some might be inclined to see this as simply part and parcel of liberating myself from redundant blame-feeling, but that cannot be right. The value of forgiveness for the culprit is not automatic, since it can only be realized if the forgiveness is communicated; whereas the significant prior value of liberating myself from redundant blame-feeling may be achieved in private, and in relation to a wrongdoer whom I choose not to tell, or who is dead or otherwise unreachable. I think this first-

personal, non-relational value of the basic function of forgiveness is not remotely surprising, as we clearly have what David Owens has called a ‘remissive interest’ in being able to forgive.²⁹ We can support the general point with some testimony from figures whom history has tragically burdened with considerable personal authority on the subject of forgiveness. For example Eva Kor, who survived the tortures of Mengele’s experiments on her and her twin sister in Auschwitz, has written ‘Forgiveness is really nothing more than an act of self-healing and self-empowerment’ (Cantacuzino, 2015; p. 47), and she teaches others who wish to forgive grievous wrongdoing that they can ‘take a piece of paper and a pen and write a letter to someone who hurt them’, but she issues the firm plea: ‘Please do not mail it to that person. It’s for you to know that you forgive, and you can go on with your life without the burden and pain that the Nazis or anybody else ever imposed on you’ (New England Public Radio, May 24 2015).³⁰

²⁹ See Owens (2010) pp. 59-60. On his view our interest in being able to forgive is ultimately grounded in a more basic alleged interest in being able to render blame and guilt inapt, where this is in turn conceived as partly constitutive of the value of friendship (p. 58). By contrast, in the view I advance here, our remissive interest in being able to forgive simply derives from the burdensome, potentially corrosive, nature of harbouring blame-feeling that can serve no morally progressive purpose.

³⁰ Another personal testimony—one of many recounted in Cantacuzino’s book to present forgiveness as primarily an act of self-liberation—is Bud Welch’s story of ultimately forgiving Timothy McVeigh for his part in the Oklahoma City bombing in which Mr Welch’s 23-year old daughter, Julie Marie, was killed: ‘About a year before the execution I found it in my heart to forgive Tim McVeigh. It was a release for me rather than for him’ (Cantacuzino 2015; p. 60).

Besides the value to the culprit that comes from communicated forgiveness, there are three other secondary (as I would have it) values served by forgiveness which tend to be focused on by philosophers. Thus Walker reminds us: ‘three features of forgiveness that are commonly argued or assumed in philosophical discussions of forgiveness to be the “key” or “essential” elements. Philosophers speak of “overcoming resentment,” “restoring relationship,” and “setting a wrong to rest in the past” as essential marks of forgiveness’ (Walker 2006; p. 153). Indeed they do; and they are not wrong. But something I hope to have shown by applying the paradigm-based method to forgiveness is that all three of these values are functionally secondary in that they can only be properly served in virtue of the first—the liberation of the wronged party from *redundant* blame-feeling. The forgiver’s liberation from such blame-feeling is conceptually and psychologically the more basic achievement of forgiveness—the condition of any further liberations or values that may flow from it. Let us briefly review Walker’s list of three marks of forgiveness commonly regarded as essential, so that we come to see that in each case the forgiver’s liberation specifically from redundant blame-feeling (and not blame-feeling *per se*) either *is* the proper way to view it, or else constitutes the precondition. First, in the case of ‘overcoming resentment’ (or overcoming blame-feeling) we see it can only be the forgiver’s liberation from *redundant* blame-feeling that constitutes the appropriate kind of ‘overcoming resentment’—for the overcoming of resentment that still has a progressive moral job to do would inevitably be forgiveness of a premature kind. Second, as regards the purpose of restoring relationships in a morally progressive manner as opposed to merely resuming them through the denial or suppression of hurt, once again it is only the expunging of *redundant* blame-feeling that can do the progressive

restorative work, since expunging non-redundant blame-feeling could only be premature. And, third, as regards the process by which a moral injury may be properly consigned to the past rather than merely repressed or forgotten, once again it is only *redundant* blame-feelings that can justifiably be left behind precisely because they are, or have become, lacking in moral purpose. In all three cases, were the blame-feelings not yet redundant, they would still have moral work to do, so that jettisoning the blame-feeling would merely be to forgive prematurely or perhaps fail to forgive at all, slipping instead into sheer denial or forgetting.

Thus the various good things that forgiveness may do for us are all dependent upon the prior fulfilment of the most basic point of both Moral Justice Forgiveness and also, I have argued, the socially and temporally displaced formations of it that constitute our practices of Gifted Forgiveness. What we have seen, in my depiction of Gifted Forgiveness, is the continued presence of the normative precondition for Moral Justice Forgiveness (shared moral understanding on the part of the wrongdoer) but in deceptively concealed form owing to its temporal and/or social displacement. The resulting picture is, I hope, an explanatorily satisfying *ordered pluralism*: two main kinds of forgiveness—one cast as (more or less) humanly necessary and explanatorily basic, the other cast as a cultural creation and contingent variation on the basic theme—each of which is respected as importantly different from the other at the level of moral psychology and moral meaning, and yet both of which are revealed, if we step back to survey the moral-social system, as fundamentally playing the same basic role in regulating how we respond to wrongdoing: the primary and unifying purpose of our two very different varieties of forgiveness, then,

is to liberate morally wronged parties from the corrosive tendency of redundant blame-feeling—for redundant blame-feeling can do no good.³¹

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³¹ I have given different versions of this paper in a number of places—CUNY Graduate Center, University of Connecticut, Dublin, Fordham, Glasgow, Oxford, the Dickson Poon School of Law, King’s College London, Princeton, Sheffield, Vermont, Yale, and the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard—and I am most grateful for all the very helpful comments I received on those occasions. I also had the opportunity for lengthy focused collective discussion on the written paper at the Legal, Political and Social Philosophy Seminar at NYU, where I benefited immeasurably from the many comments and questions that were raised, and especially from the rich and constructive comments of my host commentators, Samuel Scheffler and Jeremy Waldron. I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for its support of this work as part of a Major Research Fellowship.

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