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Book Section:

Byerly, T.R. (2017) Virtues of Repair in Paradise. In: Byerly, T.R. and Silverman, E.J., (eds.) *Paradise Understood: New Philosophical Essays about Heaven*. Oxford University Press . ISBN 9780198794301

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Virtues of Repair in Paradise

It has already been observed in one contribution to this volume that reflection upon the excellent quality of life in paradise can easily generate philosophical conundrums when it comes to determining which virtuous traits of character will be possessed and exercised by paradisiacal inhabitants.¹ For example, on the one hand, it would seem that courage is an admirable quality of character suitable for or even required of paradisiacal inhabitants if they are to live the most excellent sort of life. Yet, on the other hand, it would appear that paradise is unfit for exercise of courage, as the proper exercise of courage requires danger, and danger is out of place where the almighty God sovereignty and intimately dwells with his people, the very hairs of whose heads are all numbered by him.

The present essay continues reflection upon this theme, but with a focus on what would seem to be a particularly challenging category of virtues—what I will call virtues of repair. These are virtues that equip their possessors to respond excellently to moral wrongdoing. Candidates would include the virtues of forgivingness and contrition. Where forgivingness enables its possessor to respond excellently to wrongs done to her or, more controversially, to victims to whom she is appropriately related, contrition enables its possessor to respond excellently to wrongs done by her or, more controversially, by perpetrators to whom she is appropriately related. The question with which I will be wrestling is whether such virtues of repair have any place in paradise as traditionally conceived in theistic religious traditions. I will argue that there is significant reason to favor a positive answer. More specifically, there is significant reason to believe that any worlds such as our own in which the human inhabitants of paradise are either themselves victims of wrongs or are appropriately related to victims of wrongs are also worlds in which these inhabitants will possess and exercise virtues of repair throughout their heavenly tenure.

While I believe my arguments have application to all virtues of repair, my focus in the following pages will be on the virtue of forgivingness. I begin, accordingly, in section 1 with some further comments about the nature of this trait. Then, in section 2, I offer a fuller presentation of the conundrum I am supposing arises regarding the possession and exercise of forgivingness in paradise. I argue in this same section that, at least in worlds such as ours, inhabitants of paradise can expect to possess forgivingness. In section 3, I turn to the question of whether forgivingness will be exercised in paradise. I consider a variety of proposals for how and why forgivingness might be exercised in paradise, and ultimately conclude that it will indeed be exercised routinely, despite the absence of wrongdoing in paradise. My hope is that this treatment of forgivingness in paradise will not only illuminate the nature of life in paradise, but will also illuminate the nature of forgiveness and forgivingness in the here-and-now.

¹ See (Lu MS).

1. The Nature of Forgivingness

The character trait of forgivingness, as it is commonly called, is typically understood in terms of forgiveness.² The person who possesses forgivingness is disposed to forgive with excellence—forgiving appropriate objects of forgiveness, in excellent ways, and for excellent reasons. Thus, philosophers have sought to illuminate the trait of forgivingness by attending to the nature of forgiveness, and by considering what makes instances of forgiveness excellent.

There has been quite a lot of discussion of the nature and norms of forgiveness in recent philosophical work with characteristically widespread disagreement. I cannot hope to do justice to all of this work here. But, I will offer some modest and tentative proposals for how to understand excellent forgiveness, and so forgivingness, which are in keeping with a leading contemporary approach to the topic.

Following McNaughton and Garrard (2014), we can divide contemporary philosophical accounts of forgiveness into two broad types: those which fit the clean-slate model and those which fit the good will model. On the clean-slate model, when a paradigm instance of forgiveness is offered and accepted, the result is, as far as possible, restoration of the relationship between the offender and the victim. Forgiveness aims, so far as possible, at a return to the status quo ante—a wiping clean of the moral slate. Views fitting this model characteristically propose that forgiveness involves some combination of “the cessation of any demand for punishment, reconciliation with the offender and . . . his readmission or re-certification as a worthy member of the moral community (252).” As such, views of this sort characteristically propose that one norm governing forgiveness is that it not be unconditional. The wrongdoer must make some kind of reparation in order for forgiveness of the clean-slate kind to be properly offered. It is morally problematic to wipe the moral slate clean if there has not been a relevant moral change in the offender.³

By contrast, the good will conception focuses on transformation in the victim. It proposes that forgiveness is to be understood as a transformation in the victim away from feelings of ill will toward the offender. When human persons are wronged, they naturally respond with a panoply of negative feelings and attitudes toward their offenders. Some of the feelings and attitudes involve willing ill—willing bad to the offender for its own sake. This may be the case with feelings of hatred, vengefulness, disdain, or scorn. By saying that such feelings or emotions involve ill will the advocate of the good will conception needn't be understood as claiming that these feelings or attitudes are entirely volitional or that they even literally involve willing. They may be only indirectly volitional or even involuntary, and they may involve a weaker attitude than willing, such as hoping or wishing that a bad for its own sake will befall the perpetrator as a result of the wrong done. More exactly, then, what is required for “ill will” of the sort in view here is some

² This has been so following the locus classicus of contemporary discussions of forgivingness in (Roberts 1995).

³ One very clear example of the clean-slate model is (Swinburne 1989).

kind of positive orientation toward bads for their own sake befalling a perpetrator as a result of his offense. It is such a positive orientation that is overcome when one forgives.

Notably, there may be other negative feelings or attitudes that do not involve willing ill. For example, a kind of outrage over the wrong done, even a demand for apology or reparation or punishment, needn't manifest ill will. For, if a bad is willed to the offender here, it needn't be willed for its own sake. As such, it is more common for advocates of the good will conception of forgiveness to propose that unconditional forgiveness is acceptable or even laudable. Because one can overcome ill will toward an offender without wiping her moral slate clean, advocates of the good will conception can maintain that forgiveness where there has not been a relevant moral change in the offender is not morally problematic. That, of course, is not to propose that unconditional forgiveness is a moral requirement. Indeed, forgiveness, much less unconditional forgiveness is typically regarded as supererogatory by advocates of the good will conception of forgiveness.⁴ At most, an advocate of the good will conception might maintain that there is an imperfect duty to forgive; that one is required to forgive some of one's offenders given sufficient opportunity, but that one is not required to forgive any particular offender.

I do not think we have to choose between the clean-slate conception and the good will conception. Each conception may answer perfectly well to a wide variety of our talk of forgiveness, and each may identify a practice with a value deserving of our theorizing. There may be more than one valuable variety of forgiveness, in other words.⁵ Yet, for reasons I will discuss in section 3, my focus in this chapter will be on the good will conception of forgiveness rather than the clean-slate conception. So, my question will be whether the disposition to display excellent good will forgiveness will be possessed and exercised by the inhabitants of paradise. But before turning to defend an answer to this question, I wish to propose three refinements of the preceding outline of good will forgiveness.

First, I propose that forgiveness needn't require a transition in the forgiver. More specifically, it needn't require that the forgiver once possessed feelings of ill will toward the offender. To see this, simply suppose a person was to acquire the disposition to refrain from bearing ill will toward her wrongdoers. Perhaps at times past, when acquiring this disposition, the person sometimes struggled to refrain from bearing ill will, and so did experience a transition in instances of forgiveness. Yet, now she has so strengthened her tendency to withhold ill will that when confronted with a wrong, she is able to withhold ill will without first bearing ill will. It would be a mistake, I think, to propose that one who possessed the disposition to refrain from ill

⁴ For a defense of the view that forgiveness is never morally required, see (Galmund 2010). I don't mean to endorse this strong view here, but only to point to it to illustrate the pervasiveness of the view that forgiveness is at least typically not morally required.

⁵ For similar affirmations concerning varieties of humility, faith, and trust, see (Byerly 2014), (Kvanvig MS), and (Simpson 2012).

will and exercised it in this way could not have forgiven her offender. And, indeed, this refinement has been anticipated by others.⁶

Second, I wish to propose, as some others have, that in order for the good will conception of forgiveness to be worthy of its name, forgiveness must involve not only cessation of ill will but the cultivation of good will.⁷ The trick here is to say exactly what kind of good will is required. To this end, I propose the following novel account of the good will constitutive of forgiveness. When S forgives R for O, S wills that O leads to a good for R. This account nicely parallels the account of the ill will that is overcome in forgiveness, and fits with our experience of the most excellent instances of forgiveness. As we saw above, the ill will that one overcomes in forgiveness is willing that some bad come to the offender for its own sake because of the offense. The person who forgives overcomes such ill will and replaces it with good will: she wills that some good come to the offender as a result of her offense. The good needn't be an outweighing good or even a justifying good—one that makes up for or would justify the permission of the offense. In some cases, the forgiver may not even have a specific good in mind that she wills to come to the offender. What is required is only that she be positively oriented toward the offense contributing to a good for the offender. By way of illustration, in many cases the good that is willed to the offender will be a good of recognizing his offense for what it was, learning from it, cultivating habits that will avoid future similar offenses, and so on. In this way, the practitioner of the most excellent sort of forgiveness exhibits concern for the moral repair of her wrongdoer.

One might wonder whether it is going too far to require this kind of good will for a person's change of heart to count as an instance of forgiveness. Certainly we appear to apply the language of forgiveness to cases which fall short of this requirement.⁸ I answer this concern in common with other writers on the topic who are happy to distinguish between paradigm cases of forgiveness and other genuine cases of forgiveness that resemble without exactly duplicating the paradigm (e.g., Griswold 2007). In paradigm instances of forgiveness, the forgiver will not only overcome ill will, but will also will that the offense be for a good to her offender. Persons who overcome willing ill to their offenders on account of the offense can still be appropriately described as having forgiven the offense, though their forgiveness only resembles and does not exactly duplicate the paradigm. As Griswold (2010) puts it, when cases of forgiveness do not

⁶ See, e.g., fn 13 of (McNaughton and Garrard 2014).

⁷ As it happens, there are some writers whose views of forgiveness would otherwise fit the good will model but who do not develop an account of such a positive element in forgiveness. It might be more accurate to call their views non-ill-will views rather than good will views. See, e.g., (Richards 1988) and (Roberts 1995). Yet, recent authors have voiced discontent with these views precisely because they lack such a positive element, and have made proposals about how to understand this positive element. See, e.g., (Szigeti 2014).

⁸ One interesting case to consider is a case where the offender dies committing the wrong, and there is no afterlife. Here the victim presumably cannot will that a good comes to the offender as a result of the wrong and so the most excellent sort of forgiveness cannot be extended. I think this is the correct result. For, we must remember that forgiveness aims at repair, and in such a case forgiveness is precluded from completing this work. So, its most excellent form cannot be manifested.

duplicate the paradigm of forgiveness because they lack certain elements of that paradigm, we would still wish that those elements were included—or at least that they will be in the future if this is possible. This idea that there are more and less ideal instances of forgiveness, corresponding to how well they approximate the paradigm of forgiveness, is the third refinement I wish to propose (or, rather, accept, since it has been proposed by others).

I conclude by briefly commenting that exhibiting good will in addition to overcoming ill will is not the only way in which an instance of forgiveness can more closely approximate paradigm forgiveness. For, as commented at the outset of this section, forgiveness can be practiced toward more or less appropriate objects, for better or worse reasons, and in better or worse ways. Thus, I propose that when a person S exhibits forgiveness of the most excellent kind toward person R for offense O, S refrains from willing that R experience ill for its own sake on account of O, and S wills that R experience a good as a result of O, where R and O are appropriate objects of S's forgiveness, where S's forgiveness is offered for excellent reasons, and where S's forgiveness is offered in an excellent way. In the discussion below, particularly in section 3, I will have more to say about these latter requirements of excellent forgiveness. For now, I simply conclude that forgivingness, as a virtue, will be the disposition to display excellent forgiveness so understood.

2. Possessing Forgivingness in Paradise

We can now state the philosophical conundrum of paradisiacal forgivingness in more detail. The conundrum arises because there is significant reason both to affirm that forgivingness will be possessed and exercised in paradise and to deny that forgivingness will be possessed or exercised in paradise. On the one hand, the conception of the best kind of life for human persons as the life in which those persons acquire and exercise all the virtues over the course of a complete life is quite attractive. This conception of the good life for human persons extends back at least to Aristotle and has exerted considerable influence on the ethical reflection of Christians, Jews, and Muslims over the centuries. Moreover, it has surely also been a central thesis about life in paradise as it is traditionally conceived that the human inhabitants of paradise live the best kind of life for human beings. Their life is often described as happy, blissful, beatific, and the like. They are said to be of excellent moral quality—impeccable, even.⁹ Thus, it would appear to follow that they must possess and exercise all the virtues throughout their tenure in paradise. And, since forgivingness is a virtue, the human inhabitants of paradise will possess and exercise it throughout their tenure.

On the other hand, however, there is pressure to conclude that forgivingness has no place in paradise. For, forgivingness is properly exercised only toward wrongdoers. And, as we have just seen, there will be no wrongdoers in paradise, as all persons in paradise will be impeccable. As

⁹ The impeccability of the human inhabitants of paradise is discussed further in three contributions to this volume: (Boeninger and Garcia MS), (Pawl and Timpe MS), (Tamburro MS).

such, there is reason to think that forgivingness would never be exercised by the human inhabitants of paradise. And, if it will never be exercised, one wonders what the point would be in possessing it at all. Possessing it wouldn't enable its possessor to navigate the world any better than not possessing it. Moreover, without opportunity to exercise forgivingness, one worries that this disposition itself would naturally atrophy. Thus, just as some have concluded is true of other virtues such as faith and hope, there is considerable pressure to conclude that forgivingness is a virtue that is only fit to be possessed and exercised this side of paradise.¹⁰

What shall we say in response to this conundrum? I will begin a response to the conundrum in this section by arguing that theists should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness. In the next section, I argue that theists should also affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will exercise forgivingness. My concern in each case will primarily be with worlds such as our own in which the human inhabitants of paradise either have themselves been victims of wrongdoing or have been appropriately related to victims of wrongdoing to have standing to forgive. However, I will also briefly comment in this section on whether the human inhabitants of paradise might possess forgivingness in worlds that differ from our own in this respect, suggesting that they indeed will.

I will offer two arguments for the conclusion that theists should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness in worlds such as our own. The first argument claims that it is part of the nature of paradise that its human inhabitants possess all of what I will call personal virtues that are not badly entangled, provided they can possess these virtues. Yet, forgivingness is a personal virtue that can be possessed in worlds such as our own, and it is not badly entangled. Thus, in worlds such as our own, the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness.

In order to defend this first argument it is necessary to clarify the concepts of personal virtues and badly entangled virtues. By a personal virtue, I simply mean a feature of character that makes its possessor better as a person, other things being equal. It is a feature of character which is such that, for any person who does not possess it, if she were to gain it and otherwise remain exactly as she is (whether this is possible or not), she would be better as a person. A personal virtue is badly entangled if it is such that in order for the human inhabitants of paradise to possess it, it must be either that some other good-making feature is lacking in paradise or some other bad-making feature is possessed in paradise. A personal virtue might be badly entangled, for example, if it is such that in order for a human inhabitant of paradise to possess it, she would also have to possess some other bad-making quality of character, or one of her paradisiacal compatriots would have to.

¹⁰ Aquinas is a clear example of one who denied that faith and hope would continue to be possessed in paradise. See the discussion of this view in (Lu MS).

Given the foregoing accounts of personal virtue and badly entangled personal virtue, I can now offer a more thorough defense of this first argument that theists should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness. Start with the first premise, the claim that the human inhabitants of paradise possess all personal virtues that are not badly entangled. This premise is supported by the motivations which favor the claim about the nature of paradise already discussed in the conundrum above: that human persons in paradise will live the most excellent kind of life for human persons. For, given that personal virtues make one better as a person, a person who possesses all of those personal virtues that are not badly entangled will be better as a person, and so achieve a better quality of life on the whole, than one who does not, and she will do this without posing any danger to the quality of life of her fellow human inhabitants of paradise.

Notably, however, the claim that the human inhabitants of paradise possess all not badly entangled personal virtues is potentially a weaker commitment about the nature of paradise than the commitment affirmed in the conundrum above that the human inhabitants of paradise live the most excellent kind of life for human persons. For, depending upon how one individuates kinds of lives, this latter claim might be understood to imply that all human inhabitants of paradise live the very best life they possibly can. After all, if the very best life a human person can possibly live is a distinct kind of life, then this will be the uniquely most excellent kind of life for human persons. Yet, if the human inhabitants of paradise are all to live the best life they possibly can, this will imply that there can be no variation in the quality of excellence between the life of one human inhabitant of paradise and another. However, both the claim that all human inhabitants of paradise live the best life they can, and the claim that there is no variation between the quality of the life lived by one human inhabitant of paradise and another, have been denied by recent authors, including Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe in this volume (MS).

Retreating to the weaker claim that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess all not badly entangled personal virtues provides an attractive way to respect the motivations favoring the potentially stronger claim about the nature of paradise above while avoiding these potentially problematic consequences. For, one who maintains that all members of paradise possess all not badly entangled personal virtues can still maintain that there is variation between the human inhabitants of paradise concerning the degree to which they possess the not badly entangled personal virtues, and that not all human inhabitants of paradise possess these to the maximum degree. In fact, roughly this model for respecting the motivations favoring the stronger claim above about the nature of paradise is affirmed in the essay in this volume by Pawl and Timpe.

There is a second attractive feature about the claim about the nature of human persons in paradise affirmed here, namely, that it does not conflict with the motivations that tend to lead certain authors to deny that some virtues will be possessed by the human inhabitants of paradise. For, those authors who deny that certain virtues are possessed by the human inhabitants of paradise tend to deny this on the basis that these virtues are either not personal virtues or that they are badly entangled virtues. This, for example, seems to be the reasoning of some in the

Thomistic tradition who deny that faith or hope will be possessed in paradise. On the one hand, these virtues may not be personal virtues: they don't make their possessors better as persons, but only better as sojourners journeying to their homeland of paradise. Or, on the other, while they make their possessors better as persons, other things being equal, other things are not equal in paradise. For, these virtues are badly entangled. For example, faith might be badly entangled with the absence of the beatific vision. The claim that all not badly entangled virtues will be possessed by paradisiacal inhabitants does not conflict with this important motivation for denying that some virtues will be possessed by the human inhabitants of paradise.

Accordingly, while the stronger claim that the human inhabitants of paradise will live the best life they possibly can could be employed to defend the claim that forgiveness will be possessed in paradise, the weaker claim employed here is even more attractive. And, as I will now argue, it can also be employed to defend the conclusion that forgiveness will be possessed in paradise.

Move, then, to the second premise—the claim that forgiveness is a personal virtue that can be possessed in paradise, and that is not badly entangled. We can see that forgiveness is a personal virtue by attending to simple, imaginative thought experiment. If we were to compare two supreme beings each of whom possessed all virtues other than forgiveness, but only one of whom also possessed forgiveness, I submit we would be inclined to regard the one that possessed forgiveness as a better person. And this is so regardless of whether the beings in question ever have opportunity to exercise forgiveness. The being that possesses forgiveness is intrinsically better as a person than the being that does not possess forgiveness. For, being disposed to refrain from ill will and disposed to cultivate good will toward one's offenders is simply a better way for a person to be than to not be, other things being equal.

Nor is forgiveness a personal virtue that is badly entangled. It is not a virtue which is such that, in order for it to be possessed by a human inhabitant of paradise, or even by all human inhabitants of paradise, it must be that paradise either lacks some other good-making feature or possesses some other bad-making feature. The best candidate for a feature with which forgiveness might be badly entangled is the bad-making feature of possessing wrong actions. In other words, the most plausible story about how it might be that forgiveness is badly entangled is that, in order for forgiveness to be possessed by human inhabitants of paradise, there must be wrong actions in paradise. This is in fact exactly the motivation offered in the conundrum above for denying that forgiveness will be possessed by inhabitants of paradise. Yet, as I will now argue, there are several plausible ways in which forgiveness could be possessed by the human inhabitants of paradise without this requiring that there are wrong actions in paradise. Accordingly, it will be plausible that the second premise above will be true: forgiveness is a personal virtue which can be possessed in paradise and which is not badly entangled.

A first way of defending the conclusion that forgiveness can be possessed without requiring wrongdoing in paradise appeals to my arguments in the next section that human persons in

paradise will exercise forgivingness without there being wrong actions in paradise. For, notably, these arguments, if successful, will also support the claim that, in worlds such as our own, human persons in paradise will routinely behave in the ways characteristic of the person who possesses forgivingness, without this requiring that there be wrong actions in paradise. Yet, if one routinely behaves in the ways characteristic of the person who possesses a virtue, one will either thereby cultivate or maintain that virtue. That is, either one already possessed it and one reinforces, deepens, strengthens, and refines it through exercise, or one did not already possess it but through practice one comes to possess it. Either way, if the human inhabitants of paradise routinely act in ways characteristic of the possessor of forgivingness despite the absence of wrongdoing in paradise as I will argue, then their possession of forgivingness in paradise is possible without this requiring wrong actions in paradise.

A second way the human inhabitants of paradise might possess forgivingness is by routinely practicing indiscriminately willing that all kinds of things that others do be for good to them. If I practice indiscriminately willing that things that others do be for good to them, then I may thereby cultivate or maintain a disposition in myself to will that a wrong a person does to me or to victims to whom I am appropriately related be for a good to her. For, after all, my practice of willing that what others do be for good to them was not based on discriminating whether the acts done were wrongs or rights or supererogatory acts or whatever; it was only based on the fact that they were acts done by others. Willing indiscriminately that the acts of others be for goods to them is an admirable practice for paradisiacal persons, plausibly an expression of love, as is forgiveness. So, it would be perfectly appropriate for human persons in paradise to cultivate or maintain forgivingness by practicing such acts. And their doing so does not require the presence of wrong acts in paradise. In fact, their doing so does not require that there be wrong acts outside of paradise, either. Thus, this second way of arguing that forgivingness could be possessed in paradise may furnish a way for forgivingness to be possessed in paradise in worlds that differ from our own in that the human inhabitants of paradise, in these worlds, have neither been victims of wrongdoing nor appropriately related to victims of wrongdoing to have standing to forgive. It may provide a way, in fact, for the human inhabitants of paradise to possess forgivingness in worlds which contain no wrongdoing at all.

Notably, both of these first two approaches to explaining how it could be possible for persons to cultivate or maintain forgivingness in paradise without there being wrongdoing in paradise can accommodate a restriction some may wish to place on the account of forgivingness sketched in the previous section (cf. Walls 2011). The restriction is that the willings or refrainings toward which the person who possesses forgivingness is disposed be free willings or refrainings of a libertarian sort—most saliently, that they either are not causally determined or that they are only causally determined by previous willings or refrainings of the agent that were themselves not causally determined.¹¹ The reason the previous two proposals can accommodate such a

¹¹ For more on this division between two sorts of free acts—sometimes called ‘derivatively free’ and ‘non-derivatively free’ acts, see (Kane 1996).

restriction is that, on the first proposal, it could be that it is on account of free acts of forgiveness that the persons in question cultivate or maintain forgivingness; and, likewise, on the second proposal, it could be that forgivingness is cultivated or maintained by free acts of indiscriminate good will. The free acts of forgiveness or indiscriminate good will may themselves not be causally determined or they may be causally determined only by previous free acts that were not causally determined.¹²

A third proposal for how forgivingness might be possessed in paradise without there being any wrongdoing in paradise is more difficult to reconcile with the foregoing libertarian restriction, though such reconciliation may still be achievable. On this approach, forgivingness would be directly infused by God into human persons in paradise in much the way that, on the traditional Thomistic picture, the theological virtues are infused. Efforts aimed at refining this third approach so as to accommodate the libertarian restriction will end up making this third approach bear a significant resemblance to the other two approaches. One might propose, for example, that the infusion of forgivingness is a divine response to freely chosen acts of indiscriminate good will, which are not (pace the second approach) sufficient on their own to secure forgivingness. Or, one might propose that forgivingness is divinely infused in response to freely offered prayer for its infusion. Alternatively, one could adopt this approach without attempting to reconcile it with the libertarian restriction. Again, all three of these variations of this third proposal could also be employed to show that forgivingness can be possessed in paradise in worlds that differ dramatically from our own in that the human inhabitants of paradise have neither been victims of wrongdoing nor appropriately related to victims of wrongdoing to have standing to forgive. Indeed, they could be employed to show how the inhabitants of paradise in worlds containing no wrongdoing at all might possess forgivingness.

There are, then, quite a variety of ways in which one might maintain that forgivingness can be possessed by the human inhabitants of paradise without this requiring that there be wrong actions in paradise. Forgivingness is therefore not badly entangled with wrong actions. Since entanglement with wrong actions is the best candidate for explaining how forgivingness might be a badly entangled personal virtue, it is plausible that forgivingness is not a badly entangled personal virtue. And thus, since it is a personal virtue that can be possessed by human inhabitants of paradise in worlds such as our own, this first argument will lead us to conclude that it is plausible that forgivingness will be possessed by the human inhabitants of paradise. Indeed, we have even seen above some reason for thinking that forgivingness will be possessed by the human inhabitants of paradise in all possible worlds.

¹² The idea that persons in the afterlife might act freely out of a settled character that was formed through previous free decisions has been much discussed in literature concerning both free will and heaven, free will and hell, and free will and purgatory. Two papers in this volume engage with some of this literature: (Pawl and Timpe MS) and (Boeninger and Garcia MS).

Move now to a second argument for the conclusion that theists should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness. This argument aims to show that theists should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness because affirming this is to their strategic advantage. The reason it is strategically advantageous for theists to affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness is that, by affirming this, it is possible for the theist to strengthen her theodicy for moral evils. For, if the theist affirms that the human inhabitants of paradise possess forgivingness, she can argue that their possession of this forgivingness provides a contributing reason for God to permit the moral evils of our world. That is, whatever other reason God has to permit the moral evils of our world, the theist can argue that God has additional reason to permit them if she affirms that the human inhabitants of paradise possess forgivingness.¹³

To see how a theist who affirms that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness can argue that God has additional reasons to permit the moral evils of our world, consider the following three theses, all of which are defensible given this affirmation. First, for each moral evil in our world, that evil is freely forgiven by at least one person who ultimately inhabits paradise. One might worry here that if some moral evils are not committed against paradisiacal inhabitants, then these moral evils won't be appropriate objects of forgiveness, and so it can't be that they are forgiven by at least one person who ultimately inhabits paradise. Yet, in response, we should observe that all moral evils are committed against persons who are, or will be, loved by someone if not everyone in paradise. And those who love victims are appropriately positioned to offer forgiveness to those who wronged these victims. Thus, it is plausible that all moral evils are appropriate objects of forgiveness for some, if not all, persons who will ultimately inhabit paradise. Thus, if the theist maintains that all inhabitants of paradise possess forgivingness, it will not be implausible for her to maintain that each moral evil is forgiven by at least one inhabitant of paradise, if not by them all.

The second thesis is that all cases in which a moral evil is forgiven by a person who ultimately inhabits paradise, that person's forgiving that evil contributes to her acquiring, maintaining, strengthening, or refining the virtue of forgivingness. This thesis is defensible because this is simply how character formation works. When a person freely performs the acts characteristic of a virtue, her doing so tends to contribute to either her acquisition, maintenance, strengthening, or refining of that virtue. If she ultimately possesses that virtue, then her freely exhibiting behaviors characteristic of that virtue will have contributed to her formation of that characteristic.

The third and final thesis is that virtue which is acquired, maintained, strengthened or refined through free actions characteristic of that virtue on the part of its possessor is more valuable than virtue that is acquired, maintained, strengthened or refined in some other way. This thesis is an expansion of the basic value intuition central to the well-known soul-building theodicy of John

¹³ The proposal here requires that God can permit evils for multiple reasons. For a defense of a stronger view that God does all that God does for all the good reasons there are to do it, see (Pruss 2013).

Hick (2001). According to Hick, virtue that is acquired via free acts characteristic of that virtue on the part of its possessor is more valuable than virtue acquired in some other way. Here I am simply proposing to expand this basic value intuition to cases of virtue maintenance, strengthening, and refinement.

Given these three defensible theses, the theist who affirms that the human inhabitants of paradise possess forgivingness can argue that God has additional reason for permitting the moral evils of our world that God would not have if the human inhabitants of paradise did not possess forgivingness. For, each of these moral evils, or a comparable moral evil, was necessary for one or more of these paradisiacal inhabitants to acquire, maintain, strengthen, or refine her forgivingness through her own free acts characteristic of forgivingness—i.e., her acts of forgiveness. Yet, the forgivingness acquired, maintained, strengthened, or refined through these free acts is a great good. So, in addition to whatever other reasons God had for permitting this moral evil, God will have had the additional reason that permitting it or a comparable evil was necessary for achieving the great good of these paradisiacal inhabitants possessing forgivingness that was acquired, maintained, strengthened, or refined through their own free actions of forgiveness.

Moreover, the more paradisiacal inhabitants the theist maintains possess forgivingness, the better is the advantage she has with respect to providing additional reasons for God to have permitted the moral evils of our world. For, increasing the number of paradisiacal inhabitants who possess forgivingness increases the number of candidates who can have acquired, maintained, strengthened, or refined their forgivingness through freely forgiving evils of our world. And, the more persons there are who have acquired, maintained, strengthened, or refined their forgivingness by forgiving an evil, the greater additional reason God has for permitting this evil, over and above whatever reason God had independent of the possession of forgivingness on the part of paradisiacal inhabitants.

There are, then, two arguments for the conclusion that theists should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness. First, they should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise will possess forgivingness because forgivingness is a personal virtue they can possess that is not badly entangled. Second, they should affirm that the human inhabitants of paradise possess forgivingness because, by doing so, they can strengthen their theodicy for the moral evils of our world.

3. Exercising Forgivingness in Paradise

What, though, of the exercise of forgivingness in paradise? I believe the answer to this question turns on whether there are appropriate occasions for forgiving in paradise. If there are appropriate occasions for forgiving in paradise, then persons in paradise will exercise their forgivingness; if there are not appropriate occasions for forgiving in paradise, then persons in

paradise will not exercise forgivingness. This is not to assume that every inhabitant of paradise will of necessity exercise forgivingness at every appropriate occasion. Exercising forgivingness is and remains supererogatory or at most an imperfect duty. It is just that, given sufficient opportunity, those living the best kind of life for human beings will often exhibit forgivingness. Accordingly, I will in this section evaluate three proposals for how there could be appropriate occasions for forgiving in paradise. In all three cases, the occasion is provided despite there not being any wrongs committed in paradise.

On the first proposal, actions in paradise that fall short of moral ideals, despite not being wrongs, furnish appropriate opportunities for forgiving. A person in paradise fails to perform a supererogatory action, say. Perhaps, for example, a human inhabitant of paradise takes a rest from contemplating the sublime. She realizes that in doing so she has fallen short of the ideal, not displaying as perfect perseverance as she might have, and so she is aware of an occasion in which she can appropriately forgive herself. Having acquired the disposition of forgivingness, she refrains from willing ill to herself for its own sake on account of her imperfect perseverance, and instead wills that this imperfect display of perseverance be to her for a good—say, that remembering it next time she contemplates will motivate her to display greater perseverance.

Odd as it may at first glance seem, one might argue that this proposal is somewhat in keeping with what has sometimes been maintained about the exercise of other virtues in heaven. The central thought is that quite a number of the virtues, including the cardinal virtues, will not cease to exist in heaven but they will be transformed, and transformed in such a way as to be directed toward different objects than those toward which they were typically directed in earthly life. The transformation, it will be claimed, yields an even greater version of the virtue than that which was possessed on earth.¹⁴

This first proposal raises a number of important questions. One question, relevant also for other proposals to be discussed below, is the question of whether it is possible for human inhabitants of paradise to possess and display less than fully ideal virtue, such as the imperfect perseverance referenced in the example above. Put differently, the question is whether it is possible for human inhabitants in paradise to grow in virtue.¹⁵ Here I believe the answer is positive. Briefly, this is because fully ideal virtue requires that one be in full control of oneself. But, full control of oneself is something only available to the omnipotent God, who by virtue of possessing all powers, possesses complete power over himself.¹⁶ Finite, non-omnipotent persons, by contrast, will at best eternally asymptotically approach full self-control. They will eternally expand the range of circumstances in which they are able to exercise virtue via control of themselves. This needn't imply any danger of serious moral stumble or threat to their impeccability. It is just that

¹⁴ See the fuller discussion of this strategy in (Lu MS).

¹⁵ This question is the topic of another paper in this volume: (Pawl and Timpe MS).

¹⁶ For further discussion of divine power and control and how this secures both divine freedom and impeccability, see (Byerly forthcoming).

their impeccability will always be ensured in part through divine providence—through God’s so orchestrating circumstances that they do not face situations in which their lack of complete self-control will lead to serious moral danger.¹⁷ Nor does the fact that there are possible circumstances in which their dispositions would not lead to the most morally desirable sorts of outcomes show that the inhabitants of paradise do not possess virtue, as some have emphasized in response to the situationist challenge to virtue ethics.¹⁸ Rather, the inhabitants of paradise do possess virtue, though not fully idealized virtue, and they will forever more closely approximate the latter. I do not, then, think that this first proposal is sunk by the fact that it requires the possibility of less than ideal displays of virtue in paradise.

Nonetheless, neither do I think this first approach offers an attractive account of how forgivingness of the good will sort might be exercised in paradise. The central concern I have with this proposal is the following. By contrast with the way in which this transformation idea is applied to other virtues such as courage or temperance, it appears that when applied to forgivingness what we get is not an enhanced or glorified version of forgivingness, but a weakened or diluted version of it. The test of forgivingness isn’t whether its possessor can will good rather than ill to those who fall just short of the ideal, but whether one can will good rather than ill to those who fall miserably short—to those who commit the most heinous of wrongs. As Jesus might put it, “even the pagans exhibit that sort of forgiveness”—a sort that is directed toward failures to perform supererogatory acts. Indeed, this may explain why one of the few points of convergence amongst those working on forgiveness today is that forgiveness must be directed toward wrongs. Forgivingness of the good will sort cannot be transformed into a trait concerned only with acts that fall just short of the moral ideal.

The foregoing arguably marks a significant contrast between good will forgivingness and clean-slate forgivingness—especially in its more extreme varieties. According to these more extreme versions of clean-slate forgivingness, the possessor of forgivingness is disposed to display acts of forgiveness that require full reconciliation with the offender and full reinstatement of the offender to her status quo ante the offense. Such acts of forgiveness, as we saw in section 1 above, are appropriate only when there has been an adequate moral change in the offender. But, as such, such acts are easily seen as simply acts of justice: of giving what is due to those to whom it is due. But, then, the idea that forgivingness of the clean-slate variety might be transformed in paradise and redirected toward non-wrongs is not as problematic as the idea that this might be the case for good will forgivingness. Clean-slate forgivingness is a manifestation of the more general disposition of justice, and can be exercised toward failures to perform supererogatory acts just as well as toward wrongs, supposing there has been an appropriate moral change in the doers of these deeds. The fact that clean slate forgivingness can be transformed in

¹⁷ The somewhat neglected topic of the role of divine providence in securing the impeccability of the redeemed is addressed in another contribution to this volume: (Tamburro MS).

¹⁸ See, e.g., (Sosa 2009).

this way is one reason I have chosen to focus on good will forgivingness in this essay, as I am especially interested in those virtues that enable their possessors to respond excellently to wrongdoing. Finding the transformation proposal unsatisfying for good will forgivingness, I turn to two further proposals for how good will forgivingness might be exercised in paradise.

A second and more promising proposal for how there might be appropriate occasions for exercising forgivingness in paradise is that the inhabitants of paradise might exercise this disposition toward wrongs committed by persons in hell. On many contemporary models of hell, persons in hell are offered opportunities to be reconciled with God and to enter the paradisiacal community.¹⁹ At least some of them reject these opportunities, thereby committing genuine wrongs. Human inhabitants of paradise are appropriately positioned to forgive these wrongs—to refrain from willing bads to the perpetrators for their own sake because of the wrongs and instead will goods to come to the perpetrators from these wrongs. For example, the inhabitants of paradise might will that the refusal of reconciliation will lead to a further future opportunity for reconciliation, including an opportunity to be reconciled for the wrong constituted by the previous refusal. Thus, the wrongdoings of persons in hell furnish opportunities for forgiveness in heaven, despite there being no wrongs done in heaven.

There are several ways one might object to this second proposal. First, one might argue that it is not true that human inhabitants of paradise are appropriately positioned to forgive hellish perpetrators. For, it would seem that the one who is, at least most immediately, wronged by the refusal of divine overtures toward reconciliation, is God himself rather than other paradisiacal inhabitants. Yet, some have maintained that only those who are the victims of wrongs are appropriately positioned to forgive wrongs.²⁰ In other words, as we saw in section 1, for forgiveness to be excellent forgiveness, it must be directed toward appropriate objects; but, the appropriate people to whom to offer forgiveness are only those who have wronged you. So, human inhabitants of paradise cannot appropriately offer forgiveness to hellish resisters of divine reconciliation.

I don't myself find this objection persuasive for three reasons. First, it is not clear that human inhabitants of paradise are not wronged by hellish perpetrators. For, by refusing divine offers of reconciliation, the hellish perpetrator denies the paradisiacal community an additional member. Moreover, if the hellish perpetrator wrongs God, he wrongs someone that human inhabitants of paradise love. And, by wronging the beloved, one arguably wrongs the lover. Thus, hellish perpetrators may very well wrong human inhabitants of paradise. Second, it has actually been quite a point of contention in the literature on forgiveness whether only the victim of a wrong can forgive that wrong. Linda Radzick (2010) notes quite straightforwardly, for instance, that "people who are neither direct nor indirect victims of a wrong frequently feel moral anger over injustice. The choice to foreswear or overcome such moral anger is subject to most of the same

¹⁹ For a review of some leading examples of this kind of model of hell, see (Walls 2009).

²⁰ E.g., (Griswold 2007).

sorts of considerations as victims' choices to forgive (66).” To use the terminology employed here, even the bystander has a choice to make concerning whether she wills good or ill to perpetrators of wrongs, and how she responds can reflect more or less valuable character traits. Human inhabitants of paradise might make precisely such a choice to will good rather than ill to hellish wrongdoers, thereby exercising forgivingness. Finally, even if one grants that excellent forgiveness or paradigm forgiveness requires that the forgiver be a victim, and one grants that human inhabitants of paradise are not victims of wrongs committed in hell, one may argue that human inhabitants of paradise offer to hellish perpetrators a kind of forgiveness that, while not perfectly duplicating ideal or paradigm forgiveness, is still valuable. Indeed, it has been a point of emphasis in recent work on forgiveness, especially amongst feminist thinkers, to emphasize the value of practicing non-ideal forms of forgiveness.²¹

My own concern with this second proposal is not with whether it could underpin legitimate and continued opportunities for inhabitants of paradise to exercise forgivingness, but simply with the fact that it could only accomplish this in worlds in which not all human persons go to paradise. If there were a world, for example, in which human persons committed wrongs during earthly life, but all repented, sought, and received reconciliation with God and were granted eternal communion with God in paradise, the present proposal could not account for how such persons could continually exercise forgivingness in paradise. So, I turn to a final, third proposal which can.

On the third and final proposal, inhabitants of paradise exercise forgivingness toward wrongs committed during earthly life. Persons in paradise routinely reflect upon and deepen their understanding of wrongs committed during earthly life, especially wrongs which were done by them, to them, or to others to whom they are appropriately related so as to be in a position to forgive. Possessing forgivingness, they are disposed to respond to these wrongs by refraining from ill will toward their perpetrators and by cultivating and maintaining good will—willing that the wrongs done be for goods to their perpetrators. Routinely the inhabitants of paradise will exercise this disposition and thereby forgive the wrongs in question.

Objections to this third proposal will argue that it is not appropriate for persons in paradise to forgive earthly wrongs. The most persuasive way to argue for this, I think, is to argue that at a certain point, whether prior to entry into paradise or afterward, persons who go to paradise will have already forgiven all the earthly wrongs they were in a position to forgive and so they cannot forgive them again in the future.²² Once the wrongs have been forgiven, there is no more forgiving to do.

²¹ See, e.g., (Gheaus 2010) and (MacLachlan 2009).

²² Another, in my view less persuasive, objection would be that it would be bad for persons in paradise to consider these wrongs, perhaps because it would be psychologically painful or because it would distract from communion with God, which is more important. In response to the concern about psychological pain, it is important to emphasize three facts. First, forgiveness of all past wrongs is not mandatory. Second, wrongdoers who are

Objections of this type can take various forms. Some will permit that persons in paradise will forgive earthly wrongs for some period of their tenure. The period, however, will only be long enough for them to have forgiven at most all of these wrongs once. While this period could be lengthy, it will not last for the person's entire tenure in paradise.

Another form the objection might take is for its proponent to argue that all human exercises of forgivingness will take place prior to paradise. Some have argued, for example, that any human wrongdoers who have not made adequate reparations to their human victims by the time of their deaths must make such reparation after their deaths but before entry into paradise if they are to enter paradise.²³ The idea here is that so long as such reparation is not made, a wrong is committed. And wrongs cannot be permitted in paradise. Similarly, one might argue that the perpetrators and victims of earthly wrongs must be reconciled to one another prior to entry into paradise. For, so long as they remain unreconciled, a wrong is perpetuated, and wrongs cannot be permitted in paradise. Reconciliation, however, requires forgiveness. So, all earthly wrongs will be forgiven by those who go to paradise prior to entry into paradise.

Whatever form this objection takes, I think it is unpersuasive. This is because it is false that once a wrong has been forgiven, there is no longer any more work of forgiveness to complete toward it and its perpetrator.²⁴ Indeed, quite the opposite. The excellent forgiver is continually forgiving her perpetrator, continually refraining from ill will on account of the wrong done and willing good to come to the perpetrator as a result of the wrong. Moreover, she continually works toward perfecting her forgiveness by refining its objects, forgiving in more excellent ways and for more excellent reasons. Szigeti (2014) has recently confirmed this idea with the following example:

Imagine a victim of [a war criminal] who finds it in her to forgive him. As the inclination to forgive the offender solidifies, it not only causes lasting changes in the victim's behavior towards the offender, it also becomes easier and easier to refocus the crime and its perpetrator from the perspective of forgiveness. . . . when the victim remembers, say, the scenes from the war or the prisoner camps, etc., and sets these memories against the present image of the repentant offender she can re-experience the moving feeling of forgiveness again and again (222).

inhabitants of paradise will have made reparation for their past wrongs, making it psychologically easier for their victims to forgive. And, third, a paradisiacal person's recollection of a past wrong will be a recollection of it within the larger story of the cosmos to which it contributes [on this point, cf. Rogers's discussion (MS) of her awareness of the whole of her dog's life in paradise]. In response to the concern about distraction from communion with God, I direct the reader to literature defending an inclusive account of the summum bonum, where it includes both communion with God and with others in communion with God—e.g., (Bradley 1997).

²³ Cf. (Himma 2010). Note that Himma proposes that, in addition to or instead of reparation, the wrongdoer might undergo punishment.

²⁴ I think there are other ways to respond to the objection, as well. For instance, I do not share the view that if reparation is not made, a wrong is perpetuated. Rather, I think that if reparation is not made when there is an opportunity for it then a wrong is perpetuated. Thus, I think reparation could be made in paradise. Similarly, I do not think that if reconciliation has not occurred a wrong takes place.

I propose that this practice of forgiving “again and again” will be exhibited in paradise. It is rather uncontroversial that in paradise persons will continually grow in their understanding of the glory and goodness and love of God. But, at the same time, this will deepen their appreciation of the gravity and ugliness of human wrongdoing. As they continually better appreciate the gravity and ugliness of human wrongdoing, they are better positioned to rightly understand that which they are forgiving. And so their forgiveness is refined, because it is directed more accurately toward the right object. Moreover, inhabitants of paradise may march toward improvement with respect to the way in which they forgive. Where forgiveness was once a struggle, it may become second-nature, and increasingly become part of how they understand their identity. Likewise, persons in paradise may continuously improve the reasons for which they forgive. They will learn to forgive for all the good reasons there are to do so. An impressive range of such reasons has been identified in the literature, including reasons pertaining to prudential value and intrinsic value.²⁵ And, similarly, they will expand the range of goods they will to accrue to and continue for wrongdoers as a result of their wrongs.

This last element is especially pertinent when it comes to forgiving wrongdoers who themselves become members of the paradisiacal community. For, as we have already seen, the victim who forgives her wrongdoer in an excellent way takes an interest, even a responsibility, in her wrongdoer’s moral repair and growth. Forgiveness, when offered and received, as it would commonly be amongst inhabitants of paradise, is productive of a relationship aimed at moral growth. The goods of such a relationship in earthly life are profound, but in paradise they are endless. And so those who possess forgivingness in paradise can continually will that such relational goods come to their wrongdoer as a result of his wrongdoing, thereby continually exercising forgivingness. And all this despite the absence of wrongdoing in paradise.

The conclusion is that there will be ample opportunity for exercising forgivingness in paradise in any world such as our own in which those who go to paradise either themselves suffer wrongs or are appropriately related to others who suffer wrongs. In any such world, forgivingness will not only be possessed in paradise; it will be exercised, and that in perpetuity.

4. Conclusion

This paper has argued that, despite the absence of wrongdoing in paradise, paradise will be filled with forgivingness and exercises of it. I would propose that similar arguments could be offered to show that the same is also true of other virtues of repair, such as contrition. These arguments teach us something interesting about what life in paradise might be like. But, they also teach us something about the nature of virtues of repair in there here-and-now. One important lesson that has emerged from the present discussion, for example, is that excellent forgiveness is not a once-and-done affair. The excellent forgiver embarks on a committed moral journey with her offender

²⁵ On the prudential value of forgiveness, see especially (Ingram 2013).

wherein she continually displays forgiveness. The object, reasons, and ways in which she forgives are continually refined. For those bound for paradise, such forgiveness will accompany them forever.

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