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## John Lippitt, LOVE'S FORGIVENESS: KIERKEGAARD, RESENTMENT, HUMILITY, AND HOPE

Robert C. Roberts

Baylor University, robert\_roberts@baylor.edu

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is question-begging, and that two of the stated rationales for Baker's version of the ontological argument do imply Meinongianism.

Thomas D. Senior, in "Constitution, Persons, and the Resurrection of the Dead," discusses Baker's account of the resurrection of the dead. The doctrine of the resurrection is part of Christianity, yet it is hard to make sense of unless dualism is true. Baker offers an account of persons in terms of constitution, but Senior argues that it doesn't accommodate the resurrection any better than dualism does.

Mario de Caro, in "Putnam and Baker on Naturalism," compares Putnam's liberal naturalism with Baker's quasi-naturalism. One difference between them is that the latter is officially neutral on whether there are supernatural phenomena as well as natural phenomena.

Finally, Louise Antony, in her "Naturalism and "Robust" Subjectivity: A Critique of Baker," defends a version of naturalism against Baker's arguments. The version she defends is *continuity naturalism*, which is the view that anything that can be known by human beings is confirmationally interconnected. Antony also argues that a certain version of functionalism, the computational-representational theory of the mind (CRTM), can explain all that needs explaining with respect to the first-person perspective. Antony argues that the CRTM can, contra Baker, provide a reductive account of the first-person perspective.

The editors have produced a high-quality volume. As the summaries above hopefully make clear, this is a rich and varied collection of essays that will be of wide interest to metaphysicians, philosophers of mind, and philosophers of religion. (I thank Leigh Vicens for helpful comments on this review.)

*Love's Forgiveness: Kierkegaard, Resentment, Humility, and Hope*, by John Lippitt. Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 256. \$77.00 (hardcover).

ROBERT C. ROBERTS, Baylor University

*Love's Forgiveness* is a rich, fairly comprehensive resource for thinking through the various aspects and complications of the concept of forgiveness and an excellent guide to the literature on forgiveness, including some of the most recent. One of the many merits of Lippitt's book is concreteness: the use of historical, biographical, and fictional narratives to test and refine our intuitions about forgiveness. The book is deeply informed by Lippitt's sustained and close reading of Søren Kierkegaard, in



particular on the topics of love, humility, and hope. Though one focus of his reflections is the virtue of “forgivingness” — the trait of being a forgiving person — he is psychologically realistic about what can be expected from us human beings. He offers a threshold view of forgivingness: the forgiving person is far enough along on a continuum of excellence in forgiving to be “good enough.” She need not be completely without a disposition of resentment toward the wrongdoer and his wrong. Though wiping is underway, the slate need not be utterly clean for forgiving to have occurred.

Bishop Butler seems to be the source for making resentment the attitude that is forsworn, overcome, transcended, or eclipsed in forgiveness, but Butler himself seems to have little interest in sorting out the nuances of resentment from its neighbors, anger and indignation. Resentment becomes (a little awkwardly, I think) a generic category of “retributive” emotion, and perhaps non-retributive as well (see below). Lippitt notes that Butler notes that resentment is not a bad thing in itself, not something ideally to be erased from the human emotion repertoire since, when warranted, it is a way of registering heartfelt protest against injustice.

Following Kierkegaard, Lippitt argues that forgiveness can be a “work of love,” and following Nicolas Wolterstorff, that the kind of love in question is “care agape,” a love that incorporates justice, insisting on justice for the loved person. But he resists Wolterstorff’s conclusion that to take justice into consideration implies that forgiveness must be conditional on the repentance of the wrongdoer. Forgiveness presupposes justice in that the very notion of a wrongdoer implies it: without the demands of justice, the forgiver would have nothing to forgive. But care agape allows forgiving to be not conditional on the wrongdoer repenting or being willing to make amends. As a work of a love that appreciates the worth of *every* human being, regardless of his moral history, forgiveness is free to anticipate and *bring on* repentance — in Kierkegaard’s phrase, it may “love forth love” in a not yet repentant wrongdoer. It can also avoid the legitimate worry that to forgive the unrepentant may be to condone the wrong: a really loving attitude, one in which the forgiver, as bearer of the virtue of forgivingness who cares about the wrongdoer’s real good, wouldn’t slight rightness by condoning his wrongdoing. To the objection that love for someone runs the risk of willful blindness to that person’s faults, Lippitt answers that love also brings on epistemic advantages — for example, making the forgiving person sensitive to the fundamental worth of the wrongdoer, though admittedly and virtuously it does blind her in a certain sense: she hides the wrongdoer’s sins “behind her back” in such a way that, without ceasing to know about the wrongdoer’s sins, she keeps herself from “seeing” them.

Another objection sometimes levied against forgiving without repentance is that it jeopardizes the forgiver’s self-respect. Lippitt points out that jeopardy is not the same as damage, and quotes Margaret Urban Walker to the effect that some people’s character (she mentions Nelson

Mandela) is such that they can forgive an unrepentant violator without damaging their self-respect. If a person like Mandela is a paradigm of forgivingness, perhaps we can conclude that this virtue shows the compatibility of forgiveness with justice.

Another kind of forgiveness, on which Lippitt lays little stress, that is even more obviously not a work of love is the therapeutic “forgiveness” promoted by some self-help gurus. For example, they point out that unforgiveness can perpetuate hate, anger, and resentment, causing anxiety and costing you sleep, headaches, back spasm, high blood pressure and even heart attack. Dr. Phil writes, “Forgiveness is about doing whatever it takes to preserve the power to create your own emotional state. It is a gift to yourself and it frees you. ...Do it for yourself” (<https://www.drphil.com/advice/dr-phils-ten-life-laws/>). People who forgive as a work of love may reap these benefits, but they don’t forgive *for* them.

Against theorists who think that forgiveness requires forswearing all “negative” emotions, and not just retributive ones like anger, resentment, and indignation, Lippitt holds, plausibly, that after forgiving someone for an offense against me, I may remain sorry that he committed it, disappointed by his unfaithfulness, and grief-stricken about the losses that he occasioned me. It seems that the emotions that are in tension with forgiveness are the ones that involve alienation from the wrongdoer in the “blaming” mode. This is not to deny that the forgiver continues to “blame” the wrongdoer in the sense of holding him accountable for the wrong. But Lippitt seems to give credence to an “expanded sense [of ‘resentment’] that merges with sadness and disappointment” (149). I wonder whether this expanded sense is an artifact of philosophical imagination. Whether or not this is so, I think Lippitt is right that continuing to feel some “negative” emotion “may be a crucial part of continuing properly to appreciate the wrongness of what was done” (149). To become indifferent about the wrong or the wrongdoer seems to undermine the forgiving attitude as a kind of love. Perhaps it is in the expanded sense that I can be said to resent the Chinese treatment of the Uyghur population of Xinjiang Province.

Some people feel that only the victim of a wrong has standing to forgive its perpetrator. Lippitt endorses the idea of third-party forgiveness, the possibility that A might forgive B for B’s wrongful act against C. Helen Prejean, in *Dead Man Walking*, recounts her ministry to death-row prisoners. She narrates her relationship with Patrick Sonnier, a self-confessed wanton murderer of a teen-age couple. Prejean is appropriately horrified by what Sonnier did, yet in acting as his spiritual advisor she befriends him so warmly that he becomes sensitive, repentant, and deeply grateful to her for a kind of redemption. Does her openness to his humanity despite the horror of his action amount to forgiveness? Lippitt thinks so, but admits (48, footnote 24) that not everyone will be convinced. I think the reason for holding out would be the felt impropriety

of Prejean's going to Sonnier and telling him that she forgives him. Lippitt acknowledges that in doing so Prejean wouldn't be forgiving Sonnier on behalf of the victims. That would be presumptuous. So she must be forgiving him on her own behalf. But what she's forgiving him *for* is no wrong that he did against her, but what he did to the victims, and that may still seem presumptuous: who is *she* to forgive him for murdering *them*? The similarity to standard cases of forgiveness is that Prejean "manages to transcend her feelings of revulsion toward his actions to offer him...a respect—indeed, a love—based in the belief that he too is a child of God," and she is able "to 'reframe' him so as to see [also] ... the potential in him as a specific individual" (120). So while it would not be proper for Prejean to pronounce her forgiveness on Sonnier, Lippitt thinks the attitude she takes is similar enough to the attitude of a forgiver to be called forgiveness. I won't here take a side in this dispute, but just note that one of the benefits of recognizing the virtue of forgiveness as a member of the conceptual family is that it offers a way out. Indisputably, Helen Prejean is a forgiving person and exemplifies this trait in her attitude toward Sonnier. So even if it is improper to say she forgives him, it cannot be improper to say that her attitude toward him is a forgiving attitude.

Forgiveness as a virtue presupposes or incorporates several other virtues. Lippitt notes, as we've seen, that forgiveness makes no sense apart from justice; the forgiving person will be just. Forgiveness is a kind of generosity — a disposition to give "freely" what the recipient does not strictly merit; so in a matter where it is perhaps unusually hard to give up what is one's own — a grudge, a right to be angry — the forgiving person is generous. Forgiveness incorporates humility in the form of unself-righteous awareness of one's own moral fallibility and failures. And it incorporates a disposition to hope the best for the forgiven one, to hope for her moral restoration and improvement. Lippitt devotes chapters 7 and 8 to humility and hope respectively; this is another place where Kierkegaard is an important source. And, of course, forgiveness belongs to love as care-agape: it is *love's* forgiveness. Yet it would not be fitting to think of forgiveness as dispensable if only a person is just, generous, humble, hoping, and loving, because it meets a major criterion for being a distinctive virtue: it has an important function in the moral life that is not specifically shared by any other virtue: the overcoming of alienation of persons from one another that is generated by truthful blaming (warranted resentment).

*Love's Forgiveness* is an impressive work of philosophical exploration. It is a compelling argument that paradigmatic forgiveness is based on the kind of love that the New Testament calls *agape*. And it shows once again the richness of Søren Kierkegaard's thought as a philosophical and theological resource for the exploration of concepts of contemporary moral psychological interest.