A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION OF FORGIVENESS: ITS ORIGINS AND POSSIBILITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation of forgiveness in both its interpersonal and political contexts. The investigation begins with a systematic analysis of accounts of forgiveness in the philosophical literature. Many accounts insist on a necessary condition for forgiveness to take place, specifically the overcoming of resentment. However, forgiveness is a concern in ordinary life and acts of forgiveness vary in their expression. Forgiveness is possible in thought, feeling, word or deed; as a change in feelings, a change in judgments and attitude or by saying, for example, ‘I am sorry’. Against accounts that focus on single aspects of forgiveness, I followed the multidimensional model that allows for affective, cognitive and socially performative acts. Notions of unconditional forgiveness, self-forgiveness, third-party forgiveness and ‘the unforgivable’ are explored.

In Chapter 2 forgiveness is then situated in a historical context, but in a way that is attentive to the concept of forgiveness. The usages of forgiveness refer to a large number of related practices in which forgiveness is not an isolated phenomenon, but is part of various networks of practices and relationships.

In Chapter 3, interpersonal forgiveness is extended to the political and the multidimensional model is applied to large-scale questions in a political context. However, the extension of personal forgiveness to political forgiveness involves a number of challenges. I discuss the objections to political forgiveness, namely that only the victims can forgive; that forgiveness cannot be unconditional; and that groups cannot forgive. I then look at some processes shared by forgiveness and reconciliation, such as the elements of truth-telling, acknowledgement and reparation, the gradual overcoming of resentment and the generation of trust and respect. Forgiveness in a society, in groups or nations may help transform intergroup relationships torn by conflict and violence through trust and respect. I end with Arendt’s theory of political relations that may generate grounds for political forgiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most famous photos (Ut, 1972) of the Vietnam War shows Kim Phuc running naked and screaming, burned by napalm in an American attack on her village. This nine-year-old girl pulled off her clothes and, with it, strips of her skin. Later she underwent 17 operations over 14 months. She now lives in Ontario, having defected to Canada in 1986, and is a UNESCO special ambassador for peace. During a speech in Washington for Vietnam War Veterans (The KIM Foundation International, n.d.), she said that, if she should encounter the pilot who dropped the bombs, she would say to him that they cannot change history, but that they can work together for peace. John Plummer, the man who coordinated the attack, was in the audience and wrote her a note: ‘I am that man’. At the end the two approached each other and fell in each other’s arms, the one apologising and the other forgiving.

Some may claim that the scene of forgiveness portrayed is misplaced and too melodramatic for it to be significant in the wider political and philosophical arenas. Until the 1980s, forgiveness was regarded as a theological concept. Scientific study of forgiveness began in the mid-1980s and has accelerated since then (Worthington, 2005:1). Against the backdrop of World War II, and given the sheer scope of present conflicts, genocide, hatred, resentment, violence, fractured lives and human rights violations, the theme of forgiveness takes on additional significance. Turning to forgiveness may contribute to contemporary political reflection and may become an important element in this new vocabulary. My thesis is that interpersonal forgiveness can be extended to the domain of politics.

My interest in political forgiveness began with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. Forgiveness, victims and wrongdoers were daily subject matter on the television and in the newspapers. I began to wonder if there were similarities between what was happening in politics and what we know as interpersonal forgiveness in everyday life. Questions arose: can interpersonal forgiveness be extended to political forgiveness, what is forgiveness, and what is the nature of forgiveness? Are there conditions to forgiving or is it unconditional? Can only the victim forgive or is third-party forgiveness possible? Are some acts unforgiveable? Can groups have attitudes and emotions and can they forgive at all? How is forgiveness related to reconciliation? Is political forgiveness attainable at all?

In the first chapter, I critically explore some systematic accounts of forgiveness in the philosophical literature. Some accounts (the Emotional Model, the Cognitive Model/Perception Model, the Relational Model, the Performative Model) focus on single aspects of forgiveness by insisting on a necessary condition for forgiveness to take place, for example the overcoming of resentment or some other negative attitude. Another account (the Multidimensional Model) is multidimensional and includes many elements, for example, acts of forgiveness manifest themselves as cognitive, affective or socially performative. These models are not mutually exclusive, but overlapping and provide us with different perspectives on forgiveness. Each account supplies us with valuable understanding of the concept of forgiveness as a moral practice. Philosophers see forgiveness as a feature of personal relationships that happens in the aftermath of wrongdoing. The wrong has caused harm and the wrongdoer is responsible for this harm. The victim seeks to protest the wrong deed and responds with resentment or other negative emotions. Should the victim decide to forgive after a process, s/he ceases to hold the wrong against the wrongdoer, while continuing to regard the deed as wrong. This implies that memories are addressed and that a new narrative has come into play in the traumatized victim. Forgiveness is distinguished from notions of excusing, justifying, condoning, accepting and forgetting. It seems that the concept of forgiveness may involve a typical scenario of a reframing of the wrongdoer, a change of heart in the victim, repentance by the wrongdoer and a corresponding change of heart in the one who has done wrong. However, we encounter less typical scenarios and less clear-cut situations that can also lead to forgiveness. It is indeed a complex concept which will become evident in the development of this research.

I next explore the limits of forgiveness and discuss types of less typical forgiveness, usually depending on the circumstances of the case, such as unconditional forgiveness where forgiveness is given to wrongdoers who are unrepentant, hostile or deceased. I also discuss third-party forgiveness where a third party attempts to forgive the wrongdoer. I look at the possibility of self-forgiveness and conclude with discussions on whether certain acts or agents are unforgivable. Forgiveness emerges as an overlapping web of moral practices, an overlapping variety of types of forgiveness that can do moral work following wrongdoing, rather than be identified by a single set of criteria. I follow the Multidimensional Model for which any number of acts, utterances and gestures can each ‘potentially qualify as an act of forgiveness, depending on the circumstances in which it takes place and whether it is taken as such by the relevant parties’ (MacLachlan, 2008:113). It seems that forgiveness cannot be derived from a single rule that collectively applies to all situations. The nature and value of forgiveness are revealed, namely its social and political value, the ability to calm anger and resentment, the prevention of revenge and vengeance and the generation of trust and compassion.

In the second chapter, I do a historical survey of forgiveness, interested in how acts of forgiveness manifested themselves in historical times. The Judeo-Christian Bible develops the Jewish traditions of the Old Testament into New Testament interpretations so as to develop the notion of forgiveness from a Christian perspective. The Hebrew Bible is full of stories of the trespassing of an entire people. In the New Testament the emphasis is more on individuals and their sins, but the main focus remains on God’s forgiveness of human sins. Receiving God’s forgiveness triggers a change of heart that will lead to the forgiving of others. Next, I look at Butler who advocates a ‘reframing’ of the wrongdoer by putting yourself at a ‘due distance’ from the offence and who was evidently concerned with a change of heart in the victim. He also speaks out against the tendency to see the whole man as monstrous. Turning to Immanuel Kant, it seems that his views on moral autonomy are in conflict with forgiveness. However, Kant’s words ‘a new man can come about through a kind of rebirth’ in his *Religion within the limits of reason alone* may have given rise to the contemporary secular concept regarding a change of heart in the victim. Friedrich Nietzsche sees forgiveness as a form of nursed anger for past injuries and a soured attitude towards life. Forgiveness becomes a cover for *ressentiment* and a wish for vengeance. It seems that the notions of reframing of the wrongdoer, a change of heart in the victim, repentance by the wrongdoer and a corresponding change of heart in the one who has done wrong were present in historical times and I found evidence of acts of forgiveness that manifested themselves as cognitive, affective or socially performative.

In the last chapter and with reference to the research done in the previous chapters, I consider the possibility of political forgiveness as a response to human rights violations. I often refer to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) experience as an example of political reconciliation and forgiveness. I touch again on the multidimensional account of forgiveness as a model for personal and political forgiveness. This account addresses both the everyday wrongdoings of individuals and the large-scale questions of political reconciliation in a single philosophical account. Forgiveness arises from the aftermath of wrongdoing. It is not just a private process and can be extended to a larger political context. However, the extension of personal forgiveness to political forgiveness involves a number of challenges. I discuss the objections to political forgiveness, namely that only the victims can forgive; that forgiveness cannot be unconditional; and that groups cannot forgive. I then look at some processes shared by forgiveness and reconciliation, such as the elements of truth-telling, acknowledgement and reparation, the gradual overcoming of resentment and the generation of trust and respect. While political forgiveness is attuned to a plurality of ways, it seems that the elements of apology, truth-telling and acknowledgement by group representatives and individuals and forgiveness by individual victims and groups are essential to the process. It takes the past into account and seeks to transcend the narratives of the victim and wrongdoer into new narratives, without forgetting the past. Forgiveness is promising in this respect, as it underlines the humanity of both the offender and victim and the meaningful reparation of social association and peace. Where victims do forgive, it is as much for their own healing as it is to the advantage of the offender and the common world they inhabit. Although interpersonal forgiveness may not face the same difficulties of political forgiveness regarding the numbers involved, the complications of ascribing accountability and the many scenarios playing out, interpersonal forgiveness is not so different from forgiveness in a larger political context. The political forgiveness that emerged from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission correlates with the elements of interpersonal forgiveness. Through truth-telling and apology or acknowledgement as apology, wrongdoers acknowledge the pain of the victims and restore the victims' humanity. The process of 'reframing' starts with taking into account possible causes of the wrongdoers' behaviour. Reframing entails coming to view the wrongdoer in context and understanding the wrongdoer as an individual with a particular personal history and particular external pressure at the time of the offence. At the same time, wrongdoers are faced with the after-effects of their deeds, underlining their own humanity. Gradually a change of heart takes place and resentment is overcome, which initiates respect and trust on both sides. Mutual respect also underlines the personal feature of the political. Through forgiveness both victim and wrongdoer acquire identities other than 'victim' and 'wrongdoer'. What forgiveness may potentially set in motion is of equal importance as the preceding circumstances, as forgiveness looks hopefully to the future and not just at the past to settle something (MacLachlan, 2008:84).

Next, I introduce three philosophers who all discussed aspects relevant to political forgiveness and added value to the discussion of political forgiveness. Firstly, Vladimir Jankélévitch (Jankélévitch, 2005) writes about the notion of forgiveness after World War II from 1947 onwards. As the world emerges from war and political violence, he defends the possibility of forgiving in a fresh way by looking into what forgiveness is not. Jankélévitch writes about forgiveness as unconditional. Unconditional forgiveness is a miracle, indescribable, a gift, an act of grace and forgives without reason. However, political forgiveness cannot rely on acts of generosity without reason. Jankélévitch's valuable contribution to the debate lies in the realisation of the importance of relations between people and the need to engage in discussion. For political forgiveness to work, victim and wrongdoer must come to an agreement on what is to be forgiven and to whom and by whom by public acknowledgement. Parties must acknowledge what has happened in the past as a way to understand the past. From that point, political forgiveness can be initiated as a process towards starting anew. In a later article, after the Holocaust, Jankélévitch (Jankélévitch & Hobart, 1996) changed his mind and said that forgiveness is conditional. His text is an effort to define the conditions that would entail a full working through of the trauma of the Holocaust.

Secondly, I discuss Derrida who writes about the question of the possibility of forgiveness at the end of a violent twentieth century. Derrida writes that pure forgiveness has no meaning, no finality, no intelligibility; it has to be mad (Derrida, 2001). If you strive to remove that, something instrumental or political will take its place. Derrida says that the purity of forgiveness is compromised when a 'third' is introduced into the process. A third may want to implement reparations, achieve peace or otherwise represent the claims of the community, but for Derrida it compromises forgiveness by the requirements and needs it represents. But precisely because we deal with radical evil crimes, the relationship between victim and community cannot be ignored. On the one hand, Derrida sees conditional forgiveness as a political strategy that uses forgiveness as a method to an end. On the other hand, a rejection of political forgiveness ignores the ways in which forgiveness can contribute to peace and the end of cycles of violence. Pure forgiveness seems to balance what the world passes off as forgiveness. In the end, Derrida (Derrida, 2001:51) is torn between a 'hyberbolic ethical version of forgiveness' and 'the reality of a society at work in pragmatic processes of reconciliation'.

From there I turn to Hannah Arendt who considers humankind from the perspective of their actions (Arendt, 1998). Arendt sees the political world as one of plurality. Plurality means that human beings are members of the same species, but are at the same time different from one another. Arendt writes that plurality is the basic condition of both action and speech. For Arendt forgiveness can be political as the political world is a world divulging commonness, shared by people with diverse and conflicting viewpoints. To live together in such a world, it is necessary to release others from their past wrongs and forgive them in order to begin something new. It means to settle the meaning of wrongdoing in the past so that it cannot determine the future. Doing this, we remain free agents who are capable of new initiatives. In such moments of forgiveness, trust is advanced and respect initiated to underpin a common world and political space. Arendt's forgiveness is an active politics of lived community in which forgiveness is vital in the political world. A culture of mutual political respect grounds forgiveness and is also a way to maintain the personal aspect of the political.

I now turn to the systematic debate on forgiveness in the philosophical literature.

CHAPTER 1: SYSTEMATIC-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF FORGIVENESS

> It is possible, of course, to imagine a world without forgiveness or any of its allied concepts. But that world would, it seems to me, be either more than human (that is, one in which no wrongs are committed or suffered) or less than human – one where resentment and vengeance would not only have their day, but would also continue to have it, day after day after day (B. Lang, 1994:115).

1.1 Introduction

Recent years' scientific research on forgiveness has increased significantly across disciplines, namely theology, literature, political science, sociology and psychology (Griswold, 2007:xiii). This trend also exists in the philosophical literature where theorists seek to clarify meanings and uses of forgiveness. However, diverse conceptualizations and competing conceptions of forgiveness exist. In Section 1.2, I critically explore some systematic accounts of forgiveness in philosophical literature. I use the division of models as per MacLachlan (2008), namely the Emotional Model, the Cognitive Model/Perception Model, the Relational Model, the Performative Model and the Multidimensional Model. These models are not mutually exclusive and independent models, but are overlapping and provide us with different perspectives on forgiveness. The different perspectives suggest the complexity of the subject but also the interrelational dynamics that exist. Some accounts focus on single aspects of forgiveness by insisting on a necessary condition for forgiveness to take place, as opposed to the multidimensional account that includes many elements. Each account provides us with valuable understanding of the concept of forgiveness as a moral practice. The modern secular concept involves a change of heart in the victim, a reframing of the wrongdoer, repentance by the wrongdoer and a corresponding change of heart in the one who has done wrong, involving a personal transformation. A cognitive-affective theory of emotion is presupposed in contemporary approaches. I conclude that forgiveness is not limited to a single set of features, but has multiple features, functions and meanings. These meanings and functions comprise the narrative of the offended person(s) and form the basis for discussion with the offender. Different cases of forgiveness will bear a Wittgensteinian ‘family resemblance’ (Wittgenstein, 1953: PI 67) to one another and I see forgiveness as a web of moral practices that can do moral work following wrongdoing and so begin to shape a new narrative in which the past no longer dominates, but is part of a grand narrative.

In Section 1.3 on the limits of forgiveness, I discuss types of ‘imperfect forgiveness’ usually depending on the circumstances of the case: unconditional forgiveness where forgiveness is given ‘without the wrongdoer’, that is to wrongdoers who are unrepentant, hostile or deceased. I also discuss third-party forgiveness, that is forgiveness ‘without the victim’ where a third party attempts to forgive the wrongdoer. Next, I look at the possibility of self-forgiveness and end with discussions on whether certain acts or agents are unforgivable. I conclude in Section 1.4 that there are no moral limits to what we can forgive.

1.2 Models of forgiveness

1.2.1 The Emotional Model

The Emotional Model is the dominant account in philosophical literature and has wide acclaim (Richards, 1988). Proponents of this model (Murphy & Hampton, 1988; North, 1987; Lang, 1994; Horsburgh, 1974; Roberts, 1995; Hughes, 1975; and others) focus on one condition for forgiveness to take place: the elimination or removal of resentment or some other negative attitude. Forgiveness is the overcoming of certain passions or negative feelings that are aroused by wrongful injury for a specific set of moral reasons. According to Newberry (2004:242), almost every definition in the philosophical literature since 1980 has defined forgiveness in terms of 'emotional change on the part of the forgiver'.

The views expressed by Jeffrie Murphy are widely acknowledged and accepted by proponents of the Emotional Model as mentioned above. In the influential book, *Forgiveness and mercy* (1988), co-authored with Jean Hampton, Murphy himself claims to be influenced by Joseph Butler, an 18th century theologian and moral philosopher. Murphy sees forgiveness as primarily an internal matter, a change of heart, a change in inner feeling more than a change in external action. He emphasizes (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:21) that '[f]orgiveness is primarily a matter of how I feel about you (not how I treat you) ….' The emotional state of the forgiver is important here. A change of heart means a move from one set of intentions to another that is deeply emotional for the forgiver. It involves a deep personal transformation for the forgiver moving from negative feelings to compassionate feelings regarding the wrongdoing. Emotional cognitivists usually refer to a change of heart in their writings. North (1987:500) writes about a 'willed change of heart' and Calhoun (1992:79-86) names her article 'Changing one's heart'.

Murphy identifies Butler as characterizing forgiveness as the forswearing of resentment - 'the resolute overcoming of the anger and hatred that are naturally directed towards a person who has done one an unjustified and non-excused moral injury' - and he sees resentment as a natural response to being wronged (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:15). Forgiveness is thus a matter of overcoming powerful emotions of resentment for Murphy. Murphy sees the overcoming of resentment as a necessary but not sufficient condition of forgiveness. Murphy's views are almost universally accepted and very few have challenged him. Hieronymi (2001:529) says that '[m]ost contributors to the discussion agree with Bishop Butler that forgiveness entails the forgoing of resentment.' Holmgren

(1993:341) also indicates Butler in this definition of forgiveness: '… Bishop Butler explicates forgiveness as the forswearing of resentment towards the offender'. Proponents of the Emotional Model (Murphy & Hampton 1988; North, 1987; Lang, 1994; Horsburgh, 1974; Roberts, 1995; Hughes, 1975; and others) adopt mostly a cognitive understanding of the affects and see forgiveness as the overcoming of resentment.

1.2.1.1 Resentment

Resentment is a proper response to personal injury perpetrated by a responsible moral agent (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:16). Resentment is directed at responsible wrongdoing and the wrongdoing cannot be excused or justified. When someone has been wronged, s/he feels resentment towards the person or persons who wronged us and resents their actions. S/he also feels angry and bitter about the misfortune or fate. Govier (2002:51) gives the example of a rape victim who may ask herself why she was attacked at home, while other women walk alone on dark streets at night. The wrongdoer's implied message is that it is all right for her to be abused. Murphy (Murphy & Hampton 1988:16) defends the value of resentment and says that resentment can serve as a kind of moral self-defence. He says that the wrong is indeed a public denial of the victim's moral worth. The wrongdoer communicates to the victim that s/he deserves nothing better. Moral injury puts the victim down and showing resentment helps defend our self-respect. Griswold (2007:39) describes resentment as an unwarranted injury that embodies a judgment about the fairness of an action, is aimed at the action's author and seeks to protest the wrongness of the action. Resentment demands that the wrongdoer shows proper respect. A person who forgives immediately may lack proper self-respect and may exhibit a servile personality that lacks respect for self and her own rights and status as a free and equal moral being.

Another form of resentment is described by Hampton (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:57). She distinguishes between those who are beyond resentment and very secure in their self-respect and those who have insecure self-respect who resent. Victims resent those who have the power to humiliate them. Resenters are vulnerable to the message conveyed by the wrongdoing, for it is a message that the victim is not valuable. She describes the fear that vulnerability creates as being made up from: some degree of belief (or doubt) that the insulter is right and that the victim is low in rank and value; a wish that the belief is not true; and an act of defiance in which the belief is false. Some people have a secure sense of worth, while others are vulnerable to implications of their worthlessness. Murphy (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:16) himself is not unaware of polarization to the opposite and unattractive side of resentment such as negativity, jealousy, anger, bitterness and vindictiveness, but he focuses more on the positive value of justified resentment.

The value defended by resentment is self-respect, says Murphy - the proper Kantian respect for self, self-defence and respect for the moral order. Forgiveness is tied to 'an individual's self-respect or self-esteem, his perception of his own worth, of what he is owed' (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:16). Deliberate harm shows disrespect for our status as a moral person and we should challenge it. Deliberate harm from the offender keeps us in low esteem. According to Watkins (2005:59), we should not allow people to 'see us as "doormats" who can be walked all over …'; rather we should have the appropriate attitude towards the offender. As Richards (1988:82) puts it, '[h]ard feelings toward the wrongdoer serve to express one's feelings about the (now completed) wrong'.

To qualify as forgiveness, the overcoming of resentment must be for moral reasons. Murphy (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:23) notes that victims cannot overcome resentment by simply forgetting the deed committed against them by taking behaviour-modification therapy. Neither can you overcome resentment by taking a pill to convert your angry thoughts or because you have become bored with being angry. The overcoming of resentment is an active endeavour for the victim of the wrong and Murphy (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:24) specifies that the forswearing of resentment must take place on moral grounds. He offers reasons that include repentance of the wrongdoer, good motives and intentions from the wrongdoer, suffering by the wrongdoer, some ritual humiliation of the wrongdoer and for the sake of old and loyal friends. Forgiveness for other reasons indicates a lack of self-respect. Richards (1988:95) points out excuses of the wrongdoer, the fact that he repents, old times' sake, the seriousness of the deed, the recency of the deed and acting in the same way oneself as reasons for forgiveness. Most of the criteria mentioned here concentrate on the actions or attitudes of the wrongdoer.

For Hughes (1993:331, 333), overcoming resentment is associated with terms that propose self-effort and activity, such as 'conquering', 'gaining mastery' and 'triumph over'. However, the resentment criteria imply that it is impossible to forgive anyone if you do not resent them first. This suggests a precondition. Here Hughes suggests that forgiveness may involve moral anger and any other forms of anger as long as you believe that you have been wrongfully harmed. Richards (1988:79) suggests that for forgiveness 'one is to abandon all negative feelings toward this person, of whatever kind, insofar as such feelings are based on the episode in question'. Richards (1988:78) gives the following example: 'Imagine that your grown son had badly let you down.' You feel angry and disappointed in him, but not moved to hatred or resentment. If you abandon these feelings, you are not forgiving your son according to the definition. So, not just resentment, but also feelings such as anger, hatred, loathing, contempt, indifference and disappointment must be overcome. Murphy (2003:59) later acknowledged that it was a mistake to define forgiveness so narrowly and proposed that forgiveness was the overcoming, on moral grounds, of the vindictive passions – the passions of anger, resentment and hatred.

1.2.1.2 Brief critical assessment of the Emotional Model

There are good reasons not to associate forgiveness with the overcoming of resentment, as described initially. First, proponents who make resentment and other negative attitudes a test for self-respect usually follow Rawls (1987:533) in elucidating resentment 'as a moral feeling that invokes the concept of right'. However, as MacLachlan (2008:86) says, 'it is not clear we can assume that resentment and anger are always straightforwardly attached to moral values, or that they are easily recognizable and expressive of our individual value'. It may also depend on how the culture we live in expresses feelings of resentment and anger. Urban Walker (2006:152) describes forgiveness as 'a variable human process and a practice with culturally distinct versions'.

Secondly, Murphy defines forgiveness as the effort to overcome or remove something. That means that within the consciousness realm as explored by phenomenology, forgiveness is loss, not gain, when viewed from a first-person perspective of the reality of a situation. MacLachlan (2008:84) points out that by insisting on resentment as a crucial element of forgiveness, an adjustment of orientation must take place before forgiving. What takes place during and after forgiveness is just as important as that which has paved the way for forgiveness. What forgiveness may potentially set in motion is of equal importance as the preceding circumstances. Forgiveness does look hopefully to the future and not just to the past to settle something because it is part of a person's life-story. Victor Hugo's *Les miserables* is a famous literary example of forgiveness that contributes to the moral rebirth of Jean Valjean. The bishop whose silver he stole forgave him and that set in motion the rest of the story. Downie (1965:133) also focuses on the gains of forgiveness, not what it obliterates. He describes forgiveness as agape, 'a loving concern for the dignity of persons conceived as ends in themselves.'

Thirdly, Murphy defines forgiveness as the overcoming of all resentment. Horsburgh (1974:271) also takes the view that forgiveness is not completed until one has rid oneself of the sense of injury. However, it is possible to forgive and still feel lingering resentment. MacLachlan (2008:88) expects that this is quite a common situation in life to have moments of resentment long after we have forgiven. We rather make a commitment to work towards the overcoming of resentment, which takes place over some time. Haber (1991:7) takes a similar position and says that we can forgive before we know that 'every last ounce of our resentment' is gone. He gives the example of the wife whose husband had an affair. She has forgiven and overcome her resentment, only to have it resurface on seeing 'the other woman' years later. Murphy's close link of resentment to forgiveness limits forgiveness because we can have lingering resentment after we have forgiven.

Reactive attitudes such as resentment and forgiveness are partly made up of beliefs and perceptions and are judgment sensitive. Proponents of the Emotional Model insist that there be no change in the original moral judgment of the offence. The original judgment may be that the act is wrong, the wrongdoer immoral, or the deed worthy of punishment. Roberts (1995:289) describes forgiveness as the letting go of anger without retracting correct judgments about the offence. Hieronymi (2001:531) endorses an uncompromising forgiveness: 'the abandonment of resentment must not compromise one's commitment' to the original judgment. A change in judgment also seems to suggest that our original judgments have been wrong and inadequate or that our forgiving judgments are equally unreasonable and wrong. The proponents of the Emotional Model separate forgiving from condoning by insisting that there be no change to the original moral judgment. Condoning means to overlook a wrong that should not be overlooked. Condonation involves accepting the moral wrong and failing to register a protest, communicating thereby that the action was permissible after all. An essential difference between forgiveness and condoning is that condonation does not involve a change of heart as is the case with forgiveness.

The focus on one aspect of forgiveness, namely the focus on the elimination of resentment or some other negative attitude as a necessary condition for forgiveness to take place, has limited the debate on forgiveness severely. Within the consciousness realm as explored by phenomenology, this means the phenomenology of forgiveness is loss and not gain. But what takes place during and after forgiveness is just as important as what has happened in the past, as forgiveness also looks to the future. Although this model does not satisfy as a model of forgiveness, it does involve the typical scenario of a change of heart - a personal transformation for the forgiver from negative feelings to compassionate feelings for the wrongdoer.

1.2.2 The Cognitive Model/Perception Model

The Cognitive Model overlaps with the Emotional Model, but also differs in that forgiveness is mainly seen as a cognitive event. Forgiveness is susceptible to rational judgment and is a matter of getting our moral judgments right. While the focus here is on the judicial and its implications from a reasoned approach, it is not so to the exclusion of the above.

When we suffer harm, we judge the act as wrong and the agent as a wrongdoer. To forgive, a change in judgment is needed. A change in judgment may take place in two ways: we may change one or all of our original judgments that an act is dishonest, the wrongdoer unethical and the deed punishable; or the change may be a succession of slight shifts in judgment which ends in a changed perception of the wrongdoer or in a ‘reframing’ of the wrongdoer.

The first way for forgiveness as a change in judgment to take place happens when victims change their original judgment about the wrongdoer and his or her wrongful deed. This can be done by trying to understand the ‘other side of the story’ or the wrongdoer’s point of view. Perhaps there is a realization that the harmful or cruel deed is uncharacteristic of the wrongdoer or a realization that the reaction to the harmful deed is unreasonable and an overreaction. Smith (1997:37) claims forgiveness to be ‘the judgement that a person’s immoral action should not be treated as proof of a grave moral defect or an irredeemably bad character’. For Hampton (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:38), forgiveness involves ‘overcoming a point of view, namely, the point of view of the other as “the one who wronged me”. … it is this judgement that the victim must “let go of”’.

Novitz (1998:311) recognizes that even though the victim may understand the point of view of the wrongdoer, s/he may fail to forgive. The victim’s feelings of ‘resentment and anger might quite properly intensify’ as s/he understands just how selfish or cruel the behaviour was. Govier (2002:55) agrees that victims can understand acts without forgiving them. She explains such acts by reference to the agent’s motives and choices and that understanding of those acts is ‘fully compatible with our holding the agent responsible for committing them’. Other times, knowledge of the wrongdoer’s character is just the sort of knowledge that will prompt victims to forgive.

1.2.2.1 Steps taken by the forgiver

The second way in which a change in judgment can take place, namely a succession of slight shifts in judgment leading to a changed perception or a ‘reframing’ of the wrongdoer, seems more plausible than the editing of the original moral judgment. In the chapter, ‘Forgiveness at its best’, Griswold (2007:53-59) identifies six necessary steps that the forgiver must take before being credited with forgiveness, described here in ideal terms. After the forswearing of revenge, the moderation of resentment and the commitment to let go of resentment altogether, the fourth step involves that there be a change in perception or a change in the victim’s belief that the wrongdoer is a bad person and reducible to his or her act. The facts stay the same; victims admit to a wrongful deed committed against them and retain a sense of protest towards the deed. They also acknowledge that perceptions are always interpretations and thus they start to incorporate other viewpoints and a self-reflective process. As moral agents, victims are capable of reflection – to feel, think and perceive and to change some of our actions. Other proponents of this perceptual aspect of forgiveness, besides Griswold, are Govier (2002) and Calhoun (1992). In Govier's (2002:59) view, 'to forgive is to overcome resentment and anger in the wake of an offense, and to reframe the offender as a person capable of doing better in the future'. It is to see the wrongdoer as a person liable to err, but capable of improvement. The victim wants to reassert values of benevolence and harmony and does not want to retain negative attitudes and behaviour. Forgiveness can be seen as a sign of faith in the wrongdoer's potential or in his moral improvement. The change of heart is more than 'letting go of the negative'; it also involves 'embracing the positive' (Pargament, 2001:302).

According to Griswold (2007:57), 'reframing' of the wrongdoer or 'seeing the wrongdoer in a new light' involves something 'like distinguishing that "part" of the self' responsible 'for the injury from the "whole person", based on his projects for reform'. For Landman (2002:236), reframing involves 'to view the perpetrator in context, understanding the perpetrator as an individual with a particular personal history and particular external pressures that were impinging on him or her at the time of the offense'. As I have shown, forgiveness is a matter of emotional importance. However, the change of heart can be a change in affect as well as in attitude or reaction towards the wrongdoer. The forgiver could decide to forgive, reflect on the situation and decide to change her attitude. Griswold's (2007) fifth step for the victim is that the victim comes to see him- or herself in a new light as well. He suggests that the victim drops any presumption of moral superiority and recognizes his or her shared humanity with the wrongdoer. As a last step, the victim addresses the wrongdoer and tells him or her that forgiveness is granted. MacLachlan (2008:90) emphasizes this emotional extent of forgiveness as a 'reflective stance we take towards our own emotions'. Victims consider if their emotions really are what they think they are and if it is fitting to keep on feeling this way? For MacLachlan, it is not a matter of first-order emotional change, but an expression of second-order attitude not to act on the feelings of resentment.

1.2.2.2 Steps taken by the wrongdoer

A significant element of this model is that the change of heart in the victim is prompted by a series of steps by the wrongdoer. In reality it cannot be neatly divided into phases as it is a complex process that is described here in ideal terms. Each step will be experienced in a different way by a variety of people. Landman (2002:238-240) labels the process as recognition that they have done wrong, experiences of other-oriented regret or remorse for the wrong, determination to reform and a process of reframing in regard to themselves, recognition of self-improvement, and the asking and accepting of forgiveness. North (1987:30) sees a process including the cognitive aspect of ‘recognising that he has done wrong, an emotional response of regret or remorse, and the behavioural process of determination to change and to make amends’. Griswold (2007:49-53) identifies a process of six steps that the wrongdoer must undertake in ideal circumstances to give the victim reasons to forgive. First is that s/he must take responsibility for the deed in question and show that s/he no longer wants to stand by herself or himself as the author of the wrong, understanding the meaning and consequences of his or her action. Second, s/he must sincerely repudiate the deed as a step toward showing that s/he is not ‘simply the “same person” that did the wrong’ and is determined to change. Thirdly, the wrongdoer must experience and feel regret and communicate it to the victim. The regret must go beyond self-pity or misery for having been caught in the act. Fourth, the wrongdoer must commit to not inflict the same injury in deeds as well as words and to become a better person. The wrongdoer must throw herself or himself into a process of self-examination and self-analysis equivalent to the reframing process of the victim. Augustine’s ‘hate the sin, love the sinner’ is mistaken, argues Griswold. An act is the work of an agent. Forgiving an act without reference to the actor is not in keeping with the phenomenology of the subject.

According to North (1987:32), a wrongdoer must ‘examine his motivations for the action, understand the context of its occurrence and analyse his own character and developmental history’. Perhaps s/he will find a serious flaw of character or an inclination to react in a certain way. S/he must then deal with these problems and gain victory over their effect on her or his behaviour if s/he is to change. Fifth, the wrongdoer must show insight into the damage done by the injury and sixth, the victim deserves answers to questions and the wrongdoer must provide some sort of accounting of how s/he came to do wrong. For example, on 19 February 2010, the champion golf player, Tiger Woods (Woods, 2010), made a public apology on American television to his fans for his extra-marital affairs. He showed humility, he admitted his mistakes, he asked for forgiveness, promised to seek counselling and he committed to become a changed person.

The renunciation of the wrong deed by the wrongdoer, as discussed above, is a step toward showing that he is not the ‘same person’ who did and supported the wrong. The wrongdoer takes responsibility for X while renouncing the self that did X. While the thesis of identity renewal is essential to forgiveness, it remains a baffling idea. Griswold (2007:50) notes that the renouncing in question actually depends on an identifiable continuity of self, otherwise the wrongdoer can say ‘it wasn’t me’ and the moral work cannot be undertaken. According to Beatty (1970:251), the wrongdoer is saying ‘both that he is and is not the man who committed the offense’. North (1987:500) puts her finger on the heart of the matter in her interpretation of the transformation of the self:

> The person who repents fully recognizes that the crime committed was his own, and that his responsibility for it continues over time, just as he does. In asking for forgiveness he wants this very same person to be forgiven, and the forgiver is required to recognize him as such.

1.2.2.3 Brief critical assessment of the Cognitive/Perception Model

The Perception Model is a gradual process for both the victim and the wrongdoer and it corresponds with the second-order reflective variant mentioned above. For MacLachlan (2008:98), this model represents the phenomenology of forgiving far better than accounting for it as a change in a single moral judgment. It is a gradual process, a succession of slight shifts in judgment leading to a changed perception of the wrongdoer. Emphasis is also placed on the remorse and repentance of wrongdoer and a following change of heart to the point of a change of identity; identity being an identifiable continuity of self. This model leads us to a changed perception or a ‘reframing’ of the wrongdoer, which means seeing the wrongdoer in a new light. The change of heart can be a change in affect as well as in attitude.

The Perception Model makes forgiveness valuable for social relations with others and is of epistemological value in that it contributes to our ability to be sensitive in our assessment of relations, our ability to imagine the wrongdoer’s situation compassionately.

1.2.3 The Relational Model

The Relational Model sees forgiveness as consequential to both the forgiver and the wrongdoer. Proponents of this model (Kolnai, 1974; Downie, 1965; Bennett, 2003; Wilson, 1988) see the change in relationship as central to forgiveness and draw attention to the intersubjective aspects of forgiveness. Hampton (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:37) remarks that forgiveness is a response ‘that is centrally concerned with the forgiver’s relationship to the wrongdoer’.

This model of forgiveness promotes or enables reconciliation with the wrongdoer in a forgiving relationship. The wrongdoer repents, apologizes; the victim forgives the wrongdoer and they are reconciled. The proponents of this model differ as to what the forgiving relationship is. While some argue that reacceptance and trust are essential (Kolnai, 2008:222), others favour restoration (Downie, 1965:133). Bennet’s (2003:142) version claims that redemptive forgiveness ‘acknowledges the wrongdoer’s redemption as a member of the moral community from which their offense alienated them’. Wilson (1988:534-5) combines these features by saying that forgiveness involves reconciliation, reacceptance and a fresh start. Forgiveness for the proponents of this model means the restoration of trust in a relationship and reacceptance into a new positive relationship or a fresh start. Reconciliation, reacceptance and restoration presuppose that the parties want to return to the relationship, that such a return is possible and that it is preferable to another alternative. The restoration of a personal relationship after real or perceived wrongdoing usually involves hugs, kisses, apologies and forgiveness (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002b:179). Reconciliation requires the restitution of trust in a healthy relationship. Naturally a married couple will have further conflicts in their marriage, but their reconciliation and the building of trust will help them handle the problems that will arise. Govier and Verwoerd says that in such a relationship there is ‘a confident expectation that the other is accepting and loving, honest and truthful, caring and non-manipulative, dependable emotionally, loyal desiring of closeness and close contact’ (2002b:193).

While the proponents of this model use forgiveness and reconciliation as interchangeable subjects, forgiveness needs to be distinguished from reconciliation. Forgiveness is a personal response to injury, while reconciliation is interpersonal. Forgiveness is the reframing of the wrongdoer, whereas reconciliation is the reconstruction of a relationship. It is clear that the reconciliation of victim and wrongdoer cannot be an essential element in forgiveness. When in a strong relationship with a person who offends, reconciliation is certainly possible. However, where there has been no previous relationship as is the case between strangers (Haber, 1991:27) or if the parties do not want to continue the relationship, reconciliation is not possible. Death also prevents reconciliation.

Forgiveness may be followed by reconciliation, but need not be. An example of forgiveness without reconciliation is where, in a chronic situation of abuse, the injured party may not want to reconcile. A woman who has been repeatedly beaten by her husband may forgive him and still decide to divorce him. For Holmgren (1993:342), this woman 'may understand why he engages in this pattern of abuse, overcome any negative feelings towards him, and continue to love him, but at the same time decide she can no longer live in this manner'. An alcoholic's wife can forgive him for hardship caused and mistreatment over the years, but can still decide that the marriage is over. Forgiveness does not mean the restoring of the marriage or the returning to an unsafe situation of mistreatment. Furthermore, forgiveness without reconciliation is a feature in many cases of crime, as there was no relationship between victim and offender to start with. Govier (2002:48) mentions the case of an elderly couple who is burgled by a drug addict who steals to support his habit. Here the crime is not disrupting an existing relationship.

1.2.3.1 Brief critical assessment of the Relational Model

The Relational Model in interpersonal relations sees the change in relationship as central to forgiveness and often promotes or enables reconciliation with the wrongdoer in a forgiving relationship. However, the outcome of forgiveness does not always lead to reconciliation in interpersonal relations and in cases of strangers where there was no previous relationship, reconciliation is not applicable. Although forgiveness may be followed by reconciliation, the central work of forgiveness is not the restoration of relationships. This model does not satisfy as a model for forgiveness and limits the debate by insisting on one aspect, namely the restoration of a relationship.

1.2.4 The Performative Model

The Performative Model overlaps with the previous model in that it places importance on the intersubjectivity of forgiveness as a socially moral act. We all need forgiveness at one time or another and as social beings, forgiveness matters to us.

Performative accounts understand forgiveness in terms of social rituals such as enacted in the words ‘I forgive you’. Haber (1991) examines this feature of forgiving behaviour as an accepted procedure that we use to forgive. Rather than providing a ‘phenomenological account of the complex attitude that constitutes forgiveness’ (Haber, 1991:5-6), he concludes that forgiveness is normally expressed as ‘I forgive you’ and that it is an attitude. An attitude refers to the judgments on which forgiveness is founded. His model is based on John L Austin’s doctrine of performative utterances. ‘I forgive you’ belongs to a class of behabitives and is an attitudinal expression. Behabitives, a term coined by Austin, are reactions, attitudes and expressions to someone else’s conduct. Forgiveness is to say the words ‘I forgive you’ under appropriate circumstances.

Proponents who acknowledge the performative dimension of forgiveness include Pettigrove (2004), Watkins (2005), and Newberry (2004). I only discuss Haber, Watkins and Pettigrove. Haber (1991:40) says that in expressing forgiveness of an agent X for his act A, S (the forgiver) represents all of the following as true:

1. X did A;
2. A was wrong;
3. X was responsible for doing A;
4. S was personally injured by X’s doing A;
5. S resented being injured by X’s doing A; and
6. S has overcome her resentment for X’s doing A, or is at least willing to overcome it.

Haber (1991) follows Murphy (1988) and emphasizes the overcoming of resentment. S is morally required to respect herself and must resent an agent who harms her. If S overcomes or intends to overcome resentment, she succeeds in expressing forgiveness. A wrongdoer is forgiven when he is told that he is forgiven. ‘I forgive you’ is something similar to a fresh start. A fresh start implies co-operation from other people as a wrongdoer cannot change his moral reputation by himself. For Watkins (2005:65, 69), ‘I forgive you’ functions as a performative phrase. It removes the wrongdoer’s guilt, restores his status and makes the need for atonement unnecessary. ‘I forgive you’ is to the wrongdoer a second-order reason to ignore the first-order reasons for atonement.

Pettigrove (2004:384-385) takes it a bit further and holds that ‘I forgive you’ can also be a commissive statement of force in that it makes a commitment to potential or calculated future behaviour. For him this account reveals the qualities of our forgiving practices. By saying ‘I forgive you’, the victim lets go of hostile acting and retaliation. When uttering the words ‘I forgive you’, victims find themselves leaning towards forgiving perceptions and attitudes. With the utterance the victim also commits herself to the well-being of the wrongdoer. The commissive approach allows the wrongdoer to anticipate that the victim will not act in a hostile manner towards him and that she will exercise goodwill towards him and will restore him to his earlier status. However, a return to the earlier status only works well in situations where the prior relationship was very ‘thin’. In relationships of greater depth, we sometimes forgive, but do not commit to the well-being of the wrongdoer. In extreme wrongdoing, the well-being towards a stranger would be insufficient.

For Downie (1965:13), the words ‘I forgive you’ do not constitute forgiveness, unless they are accompanied by the appropriate behaviour. Forgiveness differs from promising here in that saying ‘I promise’ does constitute a promise even though the appropriate behaviour is not forthcoming. A promise has been given, although a false one. For Downie, forgiveness and promising both raise certain expectations. However, even if the promise is not fulfilled, it is still true that a promise has been given, whereas an unfulfilled expectation for forgiveness means that there has been no forgiveness at all. Forgiveness is not just saying or uttering the words ‘I forgive you’. If I forgive someone but then continually remind him of his injury to me, I am exercising a superiority that is incompatible with forgiving. Control and manipulation of others are false forgiveness. Govier (2002:43) offers the example of a man that had an affair but then tries to reconstruct a relationship with his wife. After tears, apologies, hugs and kisses, she forgives him. However, in the weeks and months that follow, her actions betray distrust and resentment. She raises the issue of the affair time and again and questions his comings and goings, making it clear that she has not forgiven. She has not resolved her anger and has not finished the forgiveness journey. A person can say that she forgives without forgiving and it is also possible to forgive without saying anything. Forgiveness is not an event and cannot be reached instantly. It is a process of overcoming negative emotions and resentment; a process involving a change of heart that takes time at best.

1.2.4.1 Brief critical assessment of the Performative Model

Performative accounts of forgiveness are limited by the physical requirements of a performance. To say ‘I forgive you’ needs a speaker and an audience. For this model, it does not count as forgiveness if you have worked through the process of forgiveness and have reframed the wrongdoer but have not uttered the words. This model understands forgiveness in terms of social rituals such as enacted in the words ‘I forgive you’ in front of an audience. But making a commitment to the well-being of the other by speaking ‘I forgive you’ is limited, as the other could be a stranger. A return for the wrongdoer to an earlier status by saying ‘I forgive you’ excludes the victim who cannot bring herself or himself to trust a friend again. Just saying ‘I forgive you’ seems to violate the deep nature of hurt and suggests that forgiveness is too easily achieved. While the performing words certainly have the power to forgive and to be forgiven in certain cases, by making it a necessary condition for forgiveness the model is limited. This model also excludes the possibility of self-forgiveness.

1.2.5 The Multidimensional Model

The Multidimensional Model of forgiveness favours many dimensions of forgiveness. Forgiveness can be cognitive, affective, perceptual or socially performative or all four. Adam Morton (2012:14) says ‘forgiveness has many varieties, all of which can come about in many ways’. He names cognitive, perceptive and performative elements in his account of forgiveness. Garrard and McNaughton (2003:41) also name three factors of forgiveness: overcoming hostile feelings, reconciliation and restoration of relationships, and removal of the wrong, thereby clearly accepting affective, relational and cognitive elements.

MacLachlan (2008:110-116) takes it a bit further when she acknowledges that forgiveness has many features, but adds that it also has multiple functions and meanings. According to MacLachlan (forthcoming:4), functions of forgiveness include that it can release the wrongdoer from guilt, it can offer relief to the victim and wrongdoer and it can repair relationships and establish trust. However, every function is not equally appropriate in every situation. MacLachlan (2008:113) introduces the Multidimensional Model and remarks that ‘any number of acts, utterances and gestures’ can each ‘potentially qualify as an act of forgiveness, depending on the circumstances in which it takes place and whether it is taken as such by the relevant parties’. She falls back on O’Shaughnessy’s (O’Shaughnessy, 1967:351) caution against any *a priori* set of necessary and sufficient conditions for forgiveness. Insisting on certain elements as necessary or sufficient in forgiveness fails to recognize that different acts of forgiveness are all morally relevant acts of forgiveness.

We can forgive in thought, feeling, word or deed (MacLachlan, 2008:5, 15). Individual elements cannot lay claim to be more of a case of forgiveness than any other. In each case attention must be paid to the details of the situation, for example: Was there a prior relationship between the forgiver and wrongdoer? Is just a performative utterance or symbolic gesture enough? What are the forgiver's reasons for forgiving? The extent to which forgiveness matters to both the victim and the wrongdoer and the possible consequences of forgiveness should be taken into account. For MacLachlan (2008:3), forgiveness is a set of moral practices 'each of which may, in the appropriate circumstances, express a number of different and important moral values' such as trust, compassion and moral sensitivity. Different cases of forgiveness will be better or worse instances of morally meaningful acts. Different cases of forgiveness will bear a Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance' to one another (MacLachlan, 2008:14) instead of being identified by a single set of criteria.

Typical instances of forgiveness may take place between a victim and wrongdoer, in which the wrongdoer repents and asks for forgiveness and where the victim grants it. However, less typical instances of forgiveness can also count as forgiveness (MacLachlan, 2008:10). In the Multidimensional Model, forgiveness can be given to hostile, absent and even deceased wrongdoers. Forgiveness is not limited to the victim alone and forgiveness extends also to 'unforgivable' acts. In the Multidimensional Model, the victim is not the only one that can forgive – secondary and tertiary victims can also forgive. This model does not bracket forgiveness as conditional or unconditional or sharply divide it from other moral concepts that cannot be understood singularly (further discussed in Section 2.3, 'The limits of forgiveness'). In this model, forgiveness cannot be derived from general rules or rules that collectively count for a situation. However, reasons to forgive are subject to moral evaluation and may resort, according to MacLachlan (2008:170), in three general categories: 'the context in which the harm took place, the wrongdoer's subsequent behaviour and experiences and the victim's anticipation of future states of affairs'.

MacLachlan (2008:169-170) gives a list of good reasons to forgive, but emphasizes that it will vary from case to case:

a) The nature and extent of the harm as experienced by the victim.
b) The extent of the wrongdoer's intentions to harm.
c) The victim's ongoing suffering, and/or that of the wrongdoer.
d) The victim's ongoing vulnerability to harm.
e) The wrongdoer's subsequent behaviour.
f) The victim's assessment of how forgiveness may affect the wrongdoer's future efforts.
g) The pre-existing relationship between the two.
h) The victim's desire for reconciliation or new relations.
i) The victim's unwillingness to retain attitude and behaviours of anger, resentment and ill will.

Two features of forgiveness stand out for MacLachlan (2008:16-17) that distinguish forgiveness from other personal reactions of wrongdoing, namely, first, that wrongdoing is forgiven and the wrong confronted qua wrong. Forgiveness involves notions such as wrongful harm, responsibility and victimization. Secondly, forgiveness is morally significant as 'forgiveness achieves something, or it transforms the wrongdoing, or it is something valuable that we offer to the wrongdoer' (MacLachlan, 2008:17). Forgiveness is significant for the victim and the wrongdoer and the recorded meaning of the wrongful deed. MacLachlan (2008:142) asserts that forgiveness is able to perform moral values like moral sensitivity, moderation of resentment, self-reflection and reassessment. The nature and value of forgiveness can be seen in its social value, the ability to calm anger and resentment, the prevention of revenge and vengeance and the generation of trust and compassion.

While there is no duty or obligation to forgive, reasons to do so are in some cases so overpowering that forgiveness becomes essential. Individuals who refuse to forgive in such instances are liable to censure. On the other hand, forgiving everyone left and right without good reasons could point to low self-esteem or self-respect and is sometimes described as ‘cheap forgiveness’.

1.2.5.1 Brief critical assessment of the Multidimensional Model

In this model victims can forgive in thought, feeling, word or deed. Forgiveness has many features, functions and meanings and in each case attention must be paid to the details of the situation. The model overlaps with other models discussed above; it is not identified by a single set of criteria, but favours many dimensions of forgiveness. Even though the Multidimensional Model is broad, it is not indeterminate; elastic but not without limits. The account answers to both our ordinary usage of forgiveness and to the constraints of a philosophical account of a moral concept. The three moral theories in philosophy, namely deontological, utilitarian and virtue-ethical, are capable of giving compelling reasons to forgive and in many cases such reasons will overlap. Acts that express respect or promote the overall wellbeing or cultivate a character disposition are praiseworthy, but remaining agnostic on the level of normative theory rather strengthens this model’s moral defence of forgiveness, which sees forgiveness as morally valuable on any account while being attentive to situational particularities. Moral recommendations to forgive cannot be derived from general rules, but forgiveness is given for reasons depending on the particulars of the situation and subject to moral evaluation.

1.3 The limits of forgiveness

1.3.1 Unconditional forgiveness

As discussed above, we forgive for reasons and the repentance of the wrongdoer usually gives the victim reasons to forgive. But sometimes the wrongdoer denies that he has done something wrong or does not feel any remorse or guilt or is hostile or dangerous. If a wrongdoer does not acknowledge his wrong or does not repent and morally transform, what is the suitable attitude for the victim to take?

Holmgren (1993:342-345) suggests that ‘the appropriateness of forgiveness has nothing to do with the actions, attitudes, or position of the wrongdoer. Instead it depends on the internal preparation of the person who forgives’. According to Holmgren, forgiveness focuses on the beliefs, feelings, attitudes and decisions of the victim and is always suitable and worthwhile from a moral point of view, stemming from a respect for persons. Garrard and McNaughton (2003:52) mention human solidarity and respect for persons as reasons for unconditional forgiveness: after working through the full process of forgiveness, the victim recognizes the flawed nature of the wrongdoer, and also that of herself. Compassion involves a sense of shared humanity, regarding the other as equal. Govier (2002:63) also argues that victims should not be limited by the refusal or denial of the wrongdoer. A victim must work through her feelings and values and when she has completed the whole process of forgiveness, she ‘will be in a position to take up a more objective and compassionate stance towards the offender’. Having compassion for the wrongdoer is seeing him as a moral agent with the same status as you. However, unconditional forgiveness does not involve accepting the wrongdoer back into her life or the restoring of previous relationships. For MacLachlan (2008:193), the benefits of unconditional forgiveness remain ‘locating the wrong in the past, promoting trust and goodwill, demonstrating compassion, or alleviating her own suffering’.

1.3.1.1 Arguments against unconditional forgiveness

Philosophers have brought several arguments against forgiving a wrongdoer unconditionally. Griswold (2007:121) suggests that it will be interpreted as condonation. He says that until the wrongdoer repents, the victim endorses the wrongdoing. But, for Govier (2002:76), a person who forgives unconditionally 'does not condone, because insofar as a person condones, he or she finds nothing to be forgiven'. Govier (2002:63) adds that the victim who has fully worked through the forgiveness process, battling the negative emotions with an inner struggle, reframing the wrongdoer and herself, does not condone the wrongdoer but rather frees herself to move forward. The absence of repentance does not make the deed less serious, or excuse or condone the wrongdoing in any way. Instead, unconditional forgiveness may just inspire repentance on the part of the wrongdoer and in this way bring him to acknowledge the deed.

Another point of view is Murphy's (Murphy & Hampton, 1988:24) argument that unconditional forgiveness is incompatible with self-respect. He states that the wrongdoer has implicitly claimed that the victim lacks worth and by forgiving the unrepentant wrongdoer, the victim agrees with his claim. However, as Garrard and McNaughton (2011:101) emphasize, the implicit assumption that forgiveness amounts to an admission of the wrongdoer's view of the matter is ungrounded. Too much importance is given to the wrongdoer's beliefs. This kind of argument gives the wrongdoer undue power over the victim's self-respect. If the victim has worked through the process of forgiving, she will not feel threatened in her judgment that she is valuable and will rather realize that the wrongdoer's claim was mistaken. Forgiveness may also change the perspective of third parties and that of the moral community. Consider the example from Roberts-Cady (2003:294): A woman's car is hit by a hit-and-run drunk driver. She works through the forgiveness process, demonstrates compassion, changes her attitudes and actions and even initiates a public campaign to educate people about the dangers of drunk driving. In this case the woman forgives without acknowledgement from the wrongdoer and without that person ever knowing that he is forgiven.

Yet another argument is that unconditional forgiveness is not consistent with respect for the wrongdoer as moral agent. Haber (1991:82) holds that when we do not forgive unrepentant wrongdoers, ‘we display an attitude of regard’ for them, an attitude ‘appropriate to members of the moral community’. Minas (1975:147) claims that in the ‘absence of remorse, there may not be any basis for realigning one’s attitude towards the offender’. However, Holmgren (1993:349-350) argues that we are autonomous beings and can make our own choices. ‘As autonomous beings we are capable of assessing our actions and attitudes from a moral point of view. We are capable of adopting new attitudes and behaviours that are more in accord with our moral ideals’. The fact that we are autonomous also means that we will make mistakes because nobody does everything right and ‘by recognizing the sources of mistaken attitudes and wrongful behaviour … we can develop compassion for the wrongdoer’.

1.3.1.2 Examples of unconditional forgiveness

Having compassion with the wrongdoer means granting him equal status as yourself as a moral agent. In the movie *Anna Karenina*, adapted from Tolstoy’s novel, the previously distant and unresponsive character of Karenin forgives his adulterous wife on her sickbed. He has sympathetic compassion with her and pity her, forgives and experiences feelings of joy. Love and compassion, as expressed by forgiveness to a wrongdoer, have moral value unmoved by objections of condonation and self-respect and disrespect for the wrongdoer.

Another example of unconditional forgiveness is forgiveness of the dead where the wrongdoer is unable to repent. As forgiveness is an action directed towards another individual, this seems like a limit to forgiveness. However, the victim may want to set the wrong in the past, demonstrate compassion and alleviate her own suffering. MacLachlan (2008:192) suggests that for the psychological wellbeing of the victim, ‘forgiveness of the dead is still morally valuable’. Forgiveness of the dead can also be given in response to deathbed repentance and could also prevent retaliation on the blood relatives of the deceased person.

A famous example of unconditional forgiveness is Nelson Mandela who forgave his enemies after being jailed for twenty-seven years. He forgave without any apology or acknowledgement from the Afrikaner National Party. His forgiveness initiated the process towards inter-racial peace and became a significant aspect of his political power. His forgiveness was grounded in his respect for human beings and his belief in their worth and dignity and started the process towards acknowledgement and reconciliation. Govier (2002:72-74) offers the following example from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. Beth Savage, a black woman, needed essential open-heart surgery when wounded in a guerrilla-style attack on a Christmas party. Speaking before the TRC, she voiced her willingness to forgive the unknown man who threw the grenade that injured her.

In the context of unconditional forgiveness, the victim forgives in the absence of any acknowledgement. Forgiveness focuses on the beliefs, feelings, attitudes and decisions of the victim and is always suitable and worthwhile from a moral point of view, stemming from a respect for persons. The appropriateness of forgiveness has nothing to do with the actions, attitudes or position of the wrongdoer. The benefits of unconditional forgiveness remain placing the wrong in the past, promoting trust and goodwill, demonstrating compassion or alleviating the victim’s suffering.

1.3.2 Third-party forgiveness

The question of third-party forgiveness presents itself because we identify with victims of wrong in various degrees. A wrong done to one person affects others and so takes into consideration the communities, families or relationships in which a person may find herself. A third party may suffer indignation at harm done to another person, be angry and distressed or be deeply and personally affected by what happened, for example, to a loved one. However, philosophers' writings on forgiveness mostly claim that only the victim of a wrong can forgive. Govier and Verwoerd (2002c:97) understand this as 'the victim's prerogative'. Lang (1994:107) holds that it is the primary victim 'who is in a position to grant or to refuse' forgiveness. Lang writes that it would seem 'conceptually odd and morally wrong for one person to propose to forgive a second for something the second had done to a third'. So, Z cannot forgive X for what he did to Y.

1.3.2.1 Examples of third-party forgiveness

The victim's prerogative seems to limit the possibility of forgiveness. In everyday life there is typically more than one victim of a related wrong. Govier and Verwoerd (2002c:102) give the following example:

> '… if Ned rapes Rosita, she is the primary victim, the one who feels terror, pain, invasion and a sense of indignity. Ned rapes Rosita – not her husband and children, or her friends, extended family, or community. And yet these people in close connection with Rosita will also be affected by the wrongdoing in obvious ways … If Rosita is so traumatized that she becomes incapable of working, caring for her family, or conducting relationships, her trauma has a powerful negative impact on other people.'

It thus seems that secondary victims (family and close friends) can also be harmed and that one can also speak of tertiary victims (community and society) when there is a collective loss, for example when the primary victim had a leadership role in a group.

Govier and Verwoerd (2002c:108) emphasize that '... the relationship between the primary victim and the wrongdoer is not the only pertinent one', although it usually takes precedence. They write that forgiveness has an implied communal feature as many instances of wrongdoing have secondary victims (family and close friends) and tertiary victims (community as a whole, those whose security is threatened). Govier and Verwoerd (2002c:106) thus maintain the priority of the victim, but expand the matter of the forgiver status. They give examples that show limits to the victim's prerogative: A woman's house is burgled but the damage is minor and she recovers quickly from it. However, her mother, a frail elderly, disabled person, feels worried, vulnerable and anxious about her own security. The secondary victim here seems to suffer more harm than the primary one. As for tertiary victims, they consider the case of ethnic tension where the windows of a man's house are damaged by an opposing ethnic group. The man is harmed as an individual, but the incident can also trigger violence between opposed ethnic groups, in which case greater harm will be suffered by tertiary groups. Grounds for limiting the victim's prerogative thus include cases where the harm to secondary or tertiary victims is greater than the primary victim's harm, as well as the social dimensions of forgiveness and the need for self-forgiveness where the wrongdoer is unforgiven (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002c:97).

If the victim's prerogative holds, then consider a case where a man is murdered. On the one hand, a murdered person, the primary victim, does not feel his loss. But his family will live with the loss, for example, deprived of a provider the family may fall into poverty. On the other hand, the victim's murderer could never be forgiven even if he met all the requirements because the primary victim is gone forever. Some wrongdoers do feel remorse, do want to repent and move forward. For them forgiveness can release them and confirm their self-worth. Griswold (2007:95) describes the case of Amy Biehl, a white Stanford graduate whose adult life was devoted to the lot of black South Africans. On 25 August 1993, while she was busy registering black voters in the Guguletu Black Township for the country's first free election, a group of South African youths murdered her. The four ringleaders appeared before the TRC, acknowledged the killing and apologized to the Biehl family. After a prison service of five years, two of them met the Biehls, asked and received forgiveness and joined the Foundation that the Biehls had set up to help the poor in South Africa. Several of their daughter's murderers later joined the extended family. Clearly third-party forgiveness was possible in this case.

However, as human beings our empathy and identification with others are always unfinished and will therefore be different from the victim's forgiveness. It is also possible that third-party forgiveness may be seen as a rebuke by the victim, especially in a political context where the third party has institutional authority, for example the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the South African debate over amnesty, such issues came to the front. The TRC was seen as having a policy of forgiveness of perpetrators, which offended some primary and secondary victims. The family of murdered black consciousness leader Steve Biko, for example, expressed their unwillingness to forgive the white policemen who murdered him. They were uneasy to forgive under the generalized provisions for amnesty at the TRC hearings (Govier, 2002:72-74). Some wrongdoers will also feel that the third-party's forgiveness does not count in the same way as the victim's. MacLachlan (2008:224-225) confirms this and argues for the legitimacy of third-party forgiveness as long as it is clear that it does not replace the victim's forgiveness or is seen as identical to the victim's forgiveness.

1.3.2.2 Reasons to forgive

An inclusive account of forgiveness must therefore be able conceivably to identify multiple victims' forgiveness along with that of any third party. But not just anyone can forgive as a third party; good reasons are needed for third-party forgiveness. Griswold (2007:119) offers as one of the reasons identification with the victim by 'ties of care for the victim and reasonable detailed knowledge not only of the offender's wrong-doing and contrition, but especially of the victim'. The relevant relationship here is identification with the victim rather than as the victim, but identification may also be with the wrongdoer. MacLachlan (2008:218) qualifies that third parties can forgive only if they have good reasons to take the wrongdoing personally and those reasons include first having a 'personal connection to the harm'. MacLachlan's second reason is 'the ability to personalize through empathetic engagement', meaning to understand the harm personally through imagination and empathy.

Griswold (2007:117-119) considers cases in which the wrongdoer is unforgivable but the victim insists on forgiving, and cases in which the wrongdoer is forgivable but the victim refuses to forgive for indefensible reasons. Serious harm to the victim may sometimes influence her frame of mind in dealing with others appropriately. But lack of forgiveness or unreasonable forgiveness seems counter-intuitive. MacLachlan (2008:210) suggests that, although forgiveness is an elective action, it is also open to moral evaluation by third parties that can recognize bad decisions to forgive or irrational refusals to forgive. She holds that where forgiveness is only the victim's choice, the unforgiven wrongdoer will stay unforgiven and this would mean 'that people who commit even minor offences against those who have unforgiving dispositions' would be unforgiven. These consequences seem rather against common intuition.

We identify with victims of wrong in various degrees. A wrong done to one person affects others. While the priority of the victim is maintained, the forgiver status is expanded to secondary victims (family and close friends) and tertiary victims (community and society). Third parties can forgive, but good reasons are needed such as a personal connection to the harm. In political situations, the question of forgiveness by secondary and tertiary victims is of great importance, especially in contexts where atrocities have been committed and the primary victims are dead. To say that surviving victims should never forgive is to close the door to the possibility of reconciliation or peaceful co-existence.

1.3.3 Self-forgiveness

Self-forgiveness is philosophically complex. Can you forgive yourself for a wrongdoing against yourself? It may, for example, be possible to forgive yourself for a bad financial investment as you alone will suffer. According to Griswold (2007:125), we do use language such as having compassion with oneself, grasping one's limitations, hating or disgusting oneself or self-doubting. Against this, self-forgiveness does not seem incoherent. Nevertheless, self-forgiveness sounds dangerously easy. Govier (2002:133) writes that … 'the idea that what deceivers, betrayers, and abusers should do, first and foremost, is forgive themselves is likely to have little appeal to a morally serious person'.

1.3.3.1 Self-forgiveness for injuries done to oneself

Consider the ideal case of forgiveness that has conditions: There has to be a wrongdoing against another person, overcoming of resentment and negative emotions by the victim, acknowledgement of the wrongdoing and repentance by the wrongdoer, reframing by the victim and wrongdoer, commitment to change by the wrongdoer, forgiveness by the victim. Self-forgiveness seems to fall short of the ideal case of forgiveness for two reasons. The first concern is that there is no resentment in self-forgiveness for resentment is an emotion that one cannot feel towards oneself. Nevertheless, as Peter Goldie (2011:83) puts it, 'resentment is just one of a group of negative emotions' that we can experience. We can also experience 'other self-directed negative reactive emotions to the kind of person that we think we are', such as blame, shame and self-hatred. Reactive emotions can certainly be felt towards oneself and towards others. The second concern is that forgiveness usually takes place between two people and that in self-forgiveness one does not get the correct distanced perspective. However, for Peter Goldie (2011:87), narrative plays an important role here in explaining the identity of self through time. Narrative thinking 'involves you now thinking about you then', in effect 'seeing oneself as another'. It does not mean that there are literally two people, but that ‘you now are the very same person that you were then’, except for the changes in character. You remember what you did, have a narrative account of it, feel remorse for what you did and take an evaluative stance on it from the external perspective of narrative thinking. Engaging in narrative thinking of the future, you commit to change, determined not to repeat the wrongful behaviour. In this way conditions for forgiveness can be satisfied.

1.3.3.2 Self-forgiveness for injuries done to others

In this study I am more concerned about self-forgiveness for injuries done to others than injuries to oneself. To self-forgive, agency is required. Agency means responsibility that is central to self-reproach. Dillon (2001:60-61) remarks that agency means to hold character flaws, virtue failures, and inappropriate emotions against oneself. He gives the following examples that need self-forgiveness: ‘Putting an aged parent into a nursing home against her will …, divorcing a spouse who loves and needs one though one no longer loves or needs him, following the dictates of the family of one’s dying friend and telling her when she asks, that she is not, … backing a car over and killing a child, leaving one’s invalid mother behind to get the rest of the family to safety when murdering soldiers sweep down on one’s village ....’ Many wrongdoings can be added to this list, from betrayal to murder, and with it the self-reproachful feelings that are experienced.

1.3.3.3 Steps to self-forgiveness

For Snow (1993:76), ‘[s]elf-forgiveness for moral wrongs is essential for maintaining the capability for moral agency. After a serious moral failure, we must, to regain our bearings as functioning moral agents, be able to recognise and accept our imperfections and forgive ourselves for having them and sometimes act wrongly.’ Holmgren (1998:75-90) also gives an account of genuine self-forgiveness. She describes it as a process to be followed, although the way each individual reacts will be unique to his own circumstances. First in the process is for the wrongdoer to recover enough self-respect to realise that he is a valuable human being. Without self-respect he will not be able to move forward in the process of self-forgiveness. The second is to acknowledge the wrong and to take full responsibility for it. The third is to recognize the victim's status as a fellow human being with a status equal to his own. Fourth, when he realises what he has done and how it affected the victim, he must experience guilt, remorse and other emotions connected to the wrongdoing. Fifth, the wrongdoer has to examine the behaviour patterns and defects of character that led to the wrong. Sixth, he must make amends for the wrong by direct apology or other restitution. Self-forgiveness is for Holmgren always appropriate and desirable from a moral point of view once the process is complete.

1.3.3.4 Cases where self-forgiveness is needed

Self-forgiveness shares some similarities with third-party forgiveness, even though just two parties are involved. Griswold (2007:123) identifies three kinds of cases where self-forgiveness is needed. We need self-forgiveness when the victim is unwilling to forgive, when the victim is unable to forgive (deceased) or where the victim will forgive only if all the conditions are met. First, if the wrongdoer has met all the conditions and the victim is unwilling to forgive, self-forgiveness seems in order. Where primary, secondary and tertiary victims refuse to forgive and cultivate resentment and communicate moral superiority and a message that the wrongdoer is nothing more than a wrongdoer, self-forgiveness seems in order. Although he has done wrong, the wrongdoer still has a life to live. For Holmgren (1998:75-90) this situation allows for self-forgiveness. Second, if the victim is unable to forgive (deceased), all of the conditions cannot be met and the situation is very imperfect. The wrongdoer cannot make restitution or an apology for the wrong as the victim is dead. Still, guilt and shame at wrongdoing should not continue for ever and the permanent burden of being unforgiven is undesirable. If the wrongdoer goes through the steps described above for ideal forgiveness, self-forgiveness seems in order on the grounds that it is not the victim's exclusive right to forgive. Third, if all the conditions are met and the victim grants forgiveness, there still remains a place for self-forgiveness. The victim's forgiveness is extremely valuable, but sometimes the burden of guilt continues for the wrongdoer and there is a need for self-forgiveness to help put the past behind. Forgiveness is not just backward looking, but also forward looking to new possibilities. The wrongdoer must realise that he is worthy of respect in spite of his wrongdoing. But as Griswold (2007:126) says, 'self-forgiveness could not restore basic dignity; rather, it assumes a perspective from which the self already possesses it'.

Self-forgiveness addresses self-respect that has been shaken. It seems that genuine self-forgiveness is appropriate whether or not the victim is willing or able to forgive the wrongdoer. Guilt and shame at wrongdoing should not continue for ever and self-forgiveness helps put the past behind. It is a process which will be unique to each individual. Self-forgiveness for moral wrongs is essential for maintaining the capability for moral agency.

1.3.4 The unforgivable

Sometimes acts, agents or events are so awful that they seem unforgivable. These include murder, torture, genocide, atrocities and brutal terror and oppression. It is difficult to understand how anyone could do such things and it is difficult to make sense of such a wrongdoer as a fellow human being. The virtual impossibility to forgive stems from the shocking nature of the crimes and from the inhuman suffering of the victims. Urban Walker (2006:188) describes how these victims' senses of trust and hope are so crushed 'that the victims live with a sense of wreckage and dislocation, so angry, fearful, mistrustful, despairing, cynical, that they keep alive a sense of grievance as a protection and a defence, a kind of vigilance for their own sakes and a warning to others of the vulnerability that trust and hope create in contexts where the risk is too high'. Arendt (1998:241) describes the unforgivable as that which '… transcend[s] the realm of human affairs …' altogether. Various scholars (Arendt, 1998; Jankélévitch, 2005) tried to capture the meaning of the horrific that transcended reason and by using powerful phrases, such as Holocaust, Shoah, horrendous evil, the banality of evil, tried to capture the essence of an evil transcending normal apprehension. When these concepts are used there is no suitable polar opposite to contrast them or they prove to be inadequate to express the contrasting meaning sought.

1.3.4.1 Objections to forgiving the unforgivable

MacLachlan (2008:235-248) considers three possible objections to forgiving the unforgivable, all three of which she finds to be not sufficient to render a person or act unforgivable. The objections are that the danger of condonation is too great, that there is no appropriate punishment for atrocities and that there is the possibility that such wrongdoers are moral monsters. The first objection of condonation is based on the magnitude of the wrongdoing and states that it is unlikely that one can undergo such serious wrongdoing and still be willing to forgive. It is also based on concern for the victim. How can a victim forgive the serious wrong done to her and not thereby condone it? Until the wrongdoer repents, the victim endorses the wrongdoing. Furthermore, hideous crimes have a way of threatening our reliance on norms because we have certain moral expectations of others. However, Calhoun (1992:85) feels that a compassionate response to wrongdoing will not overturn the norms of our society. She says that this objection is empirically indefensible as 'the average person will not interpret failure to protest as condonation'. Neither does the absence of repentance make the deed less serious or condone the deed in any way. There is no logical connection between forgiveness and condonation. As Govier

(2002:76) says, '… insofar as a person condones, he or she finds nothing to be forgiven'. To insist on non-forgiveness will hinder us to move on and overcome painful memories. MacLachlan (2008:238) adds that this objection overlooks the epistemological insights of forgiveness, as forgiveness contributes to our ability to imagine the wrongdoer's situation compassionately and depends on a change of heart.

The second objection, no appropriate punishment, is based on heinous crimes that destroy the agency of the victim or are crimes committed on a huge scale. It says that some crimes are just so terrible that they cannot be punished appropriately and are therefore unforgivable. Here, legal justice enters as it responds to the extent of the harm and the desert of the wrongdoer. Forgiveness and justice are not incompatible, as forgiveness does not require that we forgo punishment or annul the crime. Forgiveness recognizes that a wrong has been done and is a personal response to one's injury. Legal justice and appropriate punishment are still required but this need not be the concern of the victim. Forgiveness does not deny that the offender deserves punishment, but involves, as part of a process, a change of perception towards the perpetrator. Punishment may even be the start of moral change. For Govier (1999:70), in situations of transitional justice, there may be an array of practical reasons not to dish out punishment for hideous crimes. The need to reach political stability, ongoing civil strife, time, court space and general distrust may lead to truth commissions that can provide a forum for discussion and even help heal victims of serious wrongs.

The third objection, that certain wrongdoers are moral monsters, is based on doubt that the wrongdoer will ever be able to reform, and if he does, that it will not be sufficient – he will remain a monster. Govier (1999:59-75) gives the example of Pol Pot of Cambodia who was responsible for the deaths of thousands of Cambodians, ranging between 500 000 and two million. Does this make him absolutely unforgivable? Govier says that there is a sense in which a person who has murdered is a murderer and someone who has tortured is a torturer. Acts of mass murders and gross tortures are seriously monstrous and are different from other wrongs such as robbing banks or lying about sexual affairs. Atrocities are not just a departure from moral principle or law, but also refer to the manner in which the act is done (burning others, disembowelling them), the huge numbers involved (hundreds and more) and the gross disrespect for human beings and relationships. But in another sense these wrongdoers are human beings, persons that can deliberate and are capable of moral change. She accentuates that it is not deeds but persons who are forgiven. Is a person in virtue of his deeds unforgivable so that there are no circumstances in which it will be morally appropriate to forgive him? Govier (1999) distinguishes between conditionally unforgivable and absolutely unforgivable. When the wrongdoer does not morally regret his deed, it is certainly morally justifiable to regard him as conditionally unforgivable. But as I pointed out previously, forgiveness is always suitable and worthwhile from a moral point of view and depends on the internal preparation of the person who forgives. Govier (1999:71) argues that no perpetrator is absolutely unforgivable as we then 'ignore their human capacity for moral choice and change, which is the very foundation of human worth and dignity'. To treat a person as if he is forever incapable of moral change is to disregard his moral and intellectual capacities. Other reasons to disregard the argument for absolute unforgivability are that it does not acknowledge the fact that there are different conceptions of forgiveness and that forgiveness can free the victim of her or his past, help to battle negative emotions and inner struggle, and free a victim to move forward. MacLachlan (2008:233) quotes Card as saying that there is no logical incoherence 'in the idea of forgiving extremely heinous offenses'. Forgiveness is given for reasons, and forgiveness depends logically on a broad spectrum of moral reasons, as discussed in the Multidimensional Model, and not on the wrongdoer's actions.

1.3.4.2 Non-forgiveness

The Holocaust is often mentioned in this regard as a uniquely horrific wrongdoing. This incomprehensible event dehumanized its victims and left them with huge resentment and without hope. *The sunflower* by Simon Wiesenthal (1997) is a book about the possibilities and limits of forgiveness. In the book a dying Nazi soldier asks deathbed forgiveness from a Jew, Simon Wiesenthal, who was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. The soldier described how he herded men, women and children into a building, threw in hand grenades and set the building on fire. He then shot the Jews who tried to escape through the windows of the building. Wiesenthal listened to the soldier, left and did not forgive him. However, he remained troubled by the incident and struggled with his unforgiveness. The latest edition of the book comes with responses by fifty-three well-known people of whom fifteen argued for forgiveness, thirteen refrained from taking sides and twenty-nine argued against forgiveness. One of the responses is from Lawrence Langer (Wiesenthal, 1997:186-190), an American author, who says he cannot see how one can repent such a monstrous deed and for him it is unforgivable in moral terms. Sidney Shachnow (Wiesenthal, 1997:241-243), a Holocaust survivor, also argues for unforgivability. What the soldier did was, according to Shachnow, the ultimate and irreversible denial of his humanity. He says the savage (soldier) stepped over the boundary where forgiveness is possible. Other respondents also argue that individuals and groups should never forgive those who have done atrocities against them.

On a much smaller scale, the ‘Modimolle Monster’ (as Johan Kotzé was nicknamed by the press) was recently in the news in South Africa. Johan Kotzé was married to Ina Bonnette, a second marriage for both. After a while they became estranged and Bonnette became involved with another man. Ina Bonnette was attacked and tortured in Kotzé’s Modimolle home on 3 January 2012. Her son from a previous marriage was shot and killed in the house on the same day. Kotzé took revenge on Bonnette by arranging her kidnapping and raping by three men while he looked on. He then tortured her by hammering nails into her breasts. In the room next door, he held her son at gunpoint while the child pleaded for his life and then shot him – all within earshot of Bonnette. Judge Bert Bam, in sentencing Johan Kotzé to two life sentences for murder and rape and twenty-five years for kidnapping and assault, said the ‘Modimolle Monster’ seemed inherently evil (Anon, 2013) and that the accused showed no sign of remorse. Bam said the victim’s assault had to be seen in a serious light as a more shocking and traumatic experience was unfathomable. The injuries were serious and the trauma and humiliation left Bonnette psychologically scarred. Should this individual be regarded as absolutely unforgivable because of the terrible deeds he committed?

1.3.4.3 Examples of forgiving the unforgivable

According to Flanigan (1998:95-105), an empirical psychologist who did work on interpersonal forgiveness, many people succeed in forgiving acts that seem unforgivable at first. Flanigan studied the unforgivable by conducting interviews, handing out questionnaires and collecting other data from just over seventy people aged between seventeen and seventy. She writes that acts are unforgivable when the victim cannot even think of ever forgiving the wrongdoer. It is however possible that the victim may overcome that point of view and this makes unforgivability a temporary condition to Flanigan. At the end of her study, almost every individual she interviewed ‘… said nothing could be unforgivable again’. Urban Walker (2006:178) agrees that the unforgivable may be ‘at a time or in a context, which might yet be forgivable at another time or when the circumstances have changed’. For every horrible act, there are examples of victims who have managed to forgive where we usually cannot even think to forgive. Urban Walker (2006:175) describes the case of Luis Perez Aguirre, a young Jesuit priest who was imprisoned and tortured for founding a human rights organization. He later encountered his torturer on the street, called him over and forgave him.

Another example (Urban Walker, 2006:175-176) is from the TRC in South Africa. Eugene de Kock (nicknamed Prime Evil), a disreputable murderer in the South African police, doped Mr Faku and blew him and colleagues up by remote control. At the TRC, de Kock made an apology to Mrs Faku who was extremely touched and overwhelmed by the gesture. She kept on nodding as a way to say I forgive you, saying that she would have liked to take his hand and show him that there is a future and a chance to change. At the TRC, de Kock confessed his crimes and asked for forgiveness. He has written his autobiography in prison and has promised all royalties from sales to his victims. When released from prison recently, he said he now wants to devote his life to the removal of land mines in Angola. Govier (2002:110) gives the example of Mariah B Nelson who had been molested by her swimming coach at the age of fourteen, experiences that have affected her whole life. Twenty-six years later he approached her and asked for forgiveness. At first she refused, but later she got to a point where she could feel a degree of compassion for this man and she forgave him. These victims mentioned above are remarkable: they suffered but still managed to forgive in some way.

Some acts, agents or events are so awful that they seem unforgivable. But for every horrible act, there are examples of victims who manage to forgive acts and wrongdoers where we usually cannot even think to forgive. The above and other examples of forgiveness in the face of grave wrongdoing make up a strong argument against branding certain types of acts, agents or events as unforgivable.

1.4 Towards a working theory of forgiveness

Forgiveness is very much a part of our everyday lives and is an interpersonal moral relation between two individuals. It is usually understood in philosophy as a personal reaction to wrongdoing. The wrong has caused harm and the wrongdoer is responsible for this harm. The victim seeks to protest the wrong deed and responds with resentment or other negative emotions. The victim has discretionary powers, s/he can choose to forgive; thus forgiveness is not obligatory. Should the victim decide to forgive after a process, s/he ceases to hold the wrong against the wrongdoer, while continuing to regard the deed as wrong.

The Emotional Model, discussed above, sees forgiveness as primarily an internal matter, a change of heart, a change in inner feeling more than a change in external action. The emotional state of the forgiver is important here. It involves a deep personal transformation for the forgiver moving from negative feelings to compassionate feelings regarding the wrongdoing. Philosophers see this change in stance essentially in cognitive-affective terms. The change involves an overcoming of resentment, undertaken for moral reasons.

However, forgiveness cannot be limited to a set of rules and it makes sense for a theory of forgiveness to take into consideration all aspects and practices of everyday forgiveness. Forgiveness is a concern in ordinary life and acts of forgiveness are also visible as a change in feelings (primarily affective), a change in judgments and attitude (cognitive) or socially performative by saying, for example, ‘I am sorry’. Acts of forgiveness vary in their expression and forgiveness is possible in thought, feeling, word or deed, depending on the particulars of the situation and if those involved see it as forgiveness. I see no one dimension as essential to forgiveness and typical cases of forgiveness will have elements of all the dimensions. Rather than preserving a core notion for forgiveness and identifying certain features of forgiveness, it is more fruitful to imagine it as an overlapping range of moral practices, and thus I follow the multidimensional model that sees forgiveness as a moral practice.

Acts of forgiveness can be better identified by their function than by certain features. Functions of forgiveness include that it can release the wrongdoer from guilt, it can offer relief to the victim and wrongdoer and it can repair relationships and establish trust. The nature and value of forgiveness can be seen in its social value, the ability to calm anger and resentment, the prevention of revenge and vengeance and the generation of trust and compassion. Reasons to forgive are subject to moral evaluation and will depend on the characters of the victim and wrongdoer, the extent of the harm and the relationship between them. In everyday life we forgive for a multiplicity of reasons, we can forgive quickly or over a long period, and the extent to which we forgive will vary. To forgive for good reasons contributes to moral values such as moral sensitivity, moderation of resentment, self-reflection and reassessment.

Typical instances of forgiveness may take place between a victim and wrongdoer, in which the wrongdoer repents and asks for forgiveness and where the victim grants it. However, for a theory of forgiveness to be comprehensive, it cannot look only at familiar kinds if interpersonal relationships between people who are equal and independent from one another, such as friends, family and colleagues. Rather a look is needed at the many types of relationships that exist, ranging from friends, family and colleagues to strangers, and that vary in importance, closeness and power. Forgiveness in everyday life refers to a large number of related practices in which forgiveness is not an isolated phenomenon, but is part of various networks of practices and relationships. The main advantage of the multidimensional approach is that less typical instances of forgiveness can also count as forgiveness from within a philosophical account: we are capable of giving forgiveness to hostile, absent and even deceased wrongdoers. Furthermore, forgiveness is not limited to the victim alone and forgiveness extends also to ‘unforgivable’ acts.

Forgiveness may arise from many types of relationships, with political relationships being one type of relationship. That means the account can be extended to large group situations where the question of forgiveness by secondary and tertiary victims is of great importance, especially in contexts where atrocities have been committed and the primary victims are dead. If conceptual space is made for descriptions of forgiveness in performative and social terms, the concept is more easily adapted to a political account, without fears of distortion of the concept of forgiveness.

In the next chapter I do a historical survey of forgiveness and deal with a range of times and places and social complexes with changeable ideas and customs. I am interested in how acts of forgiveness manifested themselves in historical situations, for example as cognitive, affective or socially performative, and in possible reasons for forgiving. The brief examination of the Hebrew and Christian Bible and the three modern philosophers serves the purposes of conceptual clarification.

CHAPTER 2: THE ROOTS OF FORGIVENESS

‘It is odd to think of there being a single correct idea of forgiveness.’ (Walker, 2006:152)

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I do a historical survey of forgiveness that is attentive to the concept of forgiveness as discussed in Chapter 1. Although different religions offer rich resources, I only look at what the Jewish and Christian religions have to offer to the contemporary debate on forgiveness. Next, I investigate the views of select philosophers from the 18th century onwards to the present. My purpose is not to write a history of reflections on forgiveness since the eighteenth century, but to explore the contributions peculiar to this research so as to continue the ongoing discourse on forgiveness through my own critical reflection on the subject.

Turning to the literature of ancient Judaism, it can be seen that the focus is often on key concepts such as atonement and repentance (Gibbs, 2001:73). Identity and personality were regarded as collective in those times and the Hebrew Bible is full of historical accounts and stories of the trespassing of an entire people. God is presented as the lawgiver and to sin is to break his law. However, God has an interest in maintaining his relationship with his people and where there is repentance, He forgives. The relationship is a divine–human one. In rabbinic literature (Gibbs, 2001; Morgan, 2012; Schimmel, 2002), some texts come closer to our contemporary sense of forgiveness, but are still set in divine forgiveness. In the New Testament the emphasis is more on individuals and their sins, but the main focus remains on God’s forgiveness of human sins (Bash, 2007). For the most part it is God that forgives humans who seek his grace. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia describes grace as meaning unmerited favour of God towards man. Receiving God’s forgiveness triggers a change of heart that will lead to the forgiving of others. This new heart of the

Christian is imbued with love for God and for their neighbour. All scripture references are taken from the Holy Bible – Revised Standard Version (2002).

Turning to the views of select philosophers, Joseph Butler (1692-1752) is often regarded as the touchstone of modern philosophical thinking on forgiveness. Contemporary philosophers credit him with the link between forgiveness and resentment (Murphy & Hampton, 1988; Downie, 1965; Haber, 1991; Hieronymi, 2001; Hughes, 1975; Holmgren, 1993). However, a closer look shows that Butler actually defined forgiveness as the checking of revenge or forbearance (Newberry, 2001; Griswold, 2007; MacLachlan, 2008). We forgive when we forswear revenge, not when we overcome resentment, as one contemporary definition states. However, he can be credited for advocating a 'reframing' of the wrongdoer. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) hardly touches the subject of forgiveness, but it seems to be in conflict with his views on moral autonomy. However, Kant's words 'a new man can come about through a kind of rebirth' in his *Religion within the limits of reason alone*, may have been the root for our contemporary understanding of moral transformation of the wrongdoer and the change of heart in the forgiver (Sussman, 2005; Konstan, 2010). Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is an advocate of a perfectionist moral outlook where the perfected soul is almost immune from doing injury or from receiving injury. Nietzsche sees forgiveness as a form of nursed anger for past injuries and a soured attitude towards life. Forgiveness becomes a cover for *ressentiment* and a wish for vengeance (Schoeman, 2007; Allison, 2001). Although Nietzsche had great insight into the potential self-destruction of *ressentiment*, it is not the resentment that is in play in the description of contemporary forgiveness.

2.2 Biblical sources of forgiveness

2.2.1 Hebrew Bible

Jewish history is full of narratives of turning away from God and returning again. According to Gibbs (Gibbs, 2001:73), the earliest Hebrew text about returning is found in Hosea 14:2 and is a command to the community: ‘Return, Israel, to the Lord, your God’. In this text, the prophet Hosea (8th century BC) speaks in the name of God to Israel as a nation to turn from the sinful direction they are taking. God will forgive if Israel repents. The Hebrew word for repentance, *teshuvah*, means returning, turn back, and for Gibbs (2001:73) it is a relational term as persons return to God and to other people.

2.2.1.1 Repentance

In Judaism much emphasis is placed on repentance as a precondition for God’s forgiveness (Schimmel, 2002:141-142; Konstan, 2010:105). Schimmel asserts (2004:12) that in many passages in the Old Testament it is the repentant person praying and confessing guilt that is forgiven, as in Jeremiah 3:12, Jonah 3:1-10, 1 Kings 8:47-52, and Psalms 51:1-4. In these passages God is described as forgiving towards the repentant sinner. According to the Zondervan Bible Commentary (2008:573), Psalm 51 opens with urgent pleas for forgiveness and describes the repentance of King David who committed adultery with Bathsheba. To take her as his wife, he arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed in frontline battle. When the prophet Nathan confronted David with his sins, he broke down, confessed his guilt and begged God for mercy.

Konstan (2010:105) argues that repentance takes the form of a return to God’s commandments with the focus on fidelity to God and that it is a forgiveness of a people that is in play. In some texts, such as Jeremiah 5:1, the Lord will accept the just and honest man; in Jeremiah 5:7 he will reject those who have forsaken him and in Jeremiah 31:34 he will redeem those who return (Zondervan

Bible Commentary, 2008:785, 801). According to Schimmel (2002:146), an example of community repentance is found in the book of Jonah: In the city of Nineveh, the residents were called to repentance because of their severe sins against God and man. God wanted to destroy the city, but decided to give them a chance to repent. He sent Jonah to Nineveh to warn the people to repent or have the city and its inhabitants destroyed. Jonah tried to get away from his mission, but ended up going to Nineveh and announced God's intention. The residents fasted, repented and were forgiven. Divine mercy responded to repentance and remorse and a change of heart.

However, there are also some cases of divine forgiveness even if Israel does not repent in the Hebrew Bible. Schimmel (2004:13) notes that Micha 7:18-20 seem to suggest that God may forgive a non-repentant Israel. Here, Israel appeals to God for mercy based on God's promise to Abraham to make Israel a great nation. Morgan (2012:140) describes another text that suggests that it is in God's self-interest to forgive an undeserving Israel otherwise God's reputation among other nations will be damaged, as in Exodus 32:9-14. Moses used this argument when God was furious after the sin of the golden calf and wanted to destroy Israel. Israel sinned by taking their gold jewellery and making it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf and bowed to it, sacrificed to it and spoke of it as their god. Another example from Schimmel (2004:13) in Ezekiel 36:22-31 suggests that forgiveness of Israel will be for God's sake. Ezekiel announces that, because of God's love for Israel, He will forgive and free them from captivity in Babylon in his own interest and not as a consequence of their repentance.

2.2.1.2 Interpersonal forgiveness

There is little in the Hebrew Bible about interpersonal forgiveness and only a few stories describe forgiveness (Konstan, 2010; Schimmel, 2002; Morgan, 2012). For Morgan (2012:143), no consistent picture of interpersonal forgiveness emerges from these incidents. Schimmel (2002:81) recounts a story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 33, where Esau does not revenge his brother Jacob's offence. Jacob swindled Esau out of his birth right by fooling their blind and aged father and then fled to Canaan. When Jacob returns, he offers gifts and an apology to Esau and in response Esau embraces him and reconciles with Jacob. The text does not mention the motive for the forgiveness and although the text does not use the language of sin, resentment, repentance and forgiveness, it suggests an act of remorse and a request for acceptance. Morgan (2012:143) remarks that the 'forgiveness' seems to involve overcoming of a certain kind of anger, but that the story is not nuanced enough to be certain what exactly is neutralized. Konstan (2010:107 n 25) supplies another example of interpersonal forgiveness, namely Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers because they envied him for being Jacob's favoured son. Joseph later became vice-regent of Egypt. In the meantime, his brothers had moved to Egypt and depended on him for their daily living. In Genesis 50:17, the brothers plead for mercy: 'Forgive, I pray you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you'. Joseph seems to have a change of heart, he forgives his brothers, perhaps out of respect for his deceased farther, perhaps because they showed some repentance and apology or because they adopted a posture of self-abasement. Again the text does not mention the motive for forgiveness. But, as Schimmel (2002:81) says: 'In these stories the forgiver is someone in power who shows mercy toward an offender whom he could have put to death. There are no instances of a powerful offender requesting forgiveness from or being forgiven by a weak victim of his, or of someone forgiving an offender no more or less powerful than the victim'.

2.2.1.3 Love your neighbour

In the Hebrew Bible there is no commandment to forgive someone who has injured you (Schimmel, 2002:83). The closest is the warning in Leviticus 19:17-18 not to conceal hatred and take revenge, but rather to love your neighbour: 'You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord'.

For Schimmel (2002:83) love 'refers primarily to compassion for the poor, to honesty and integrity in matters of money, to truth and objectivity in legal judgment, and to sensitive and ethical behaviour. To love is to act properly. It is not necessarily to forgive injuries'.

2.2.1.4 Rabbinical interpretations

Turning to rabbinical interpretations, Gibbs (2001:75) comments that ancient rabbinical interpretations developed the notion of repentance through argumentation and reinterpreted the Biblical account in the Mishnah and Tosefta. Konstan (2010:108), explains that the Mishnah is the first composition of Jewish oral tradition as a law code and was developed around the second century AD and the Tosefta is a supplement. The Gemara or Talmud from the fifth century is a kind of commentary on the Mishnah and the Tosefta. All these texts are texts for Jewish traditions.

2.2.1.4 A duty to forgive?

There are only a few passages that deal with interpersonal forgiveness in the Mishnah and the Tosefta, and care must be taken not to take them out of their narrowly legal context (Konstan, 2010:108). A much-cited text from the Mishnah is the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Rye, Pargament, Ali et al. (2001:24) describe how, in Biblical times, this day was for the offering of animal sacrifices in the Temple and also demanded fasting, rest from work and a rite of cleansing of sins. After the destruction of the Temple, prayer took the place of animal sacrifices. Even today it is still a communal holiday with confession and fasting. Morgan (2012:148) quotes the text from the Mishnah, M8:9: 'Transgressions between a human and God - the Day of Atonement atones. Transgressions between a human and his companion - the Day of Atonement does not atone until he has satisfied his companion.'

According to Gibbs (2001:86-87), this text says that on the Day of Atonement, relations with God are harmonized, but God cannot forgive until the other person is satisfied. To do this, the perpetrator must pay the victim for damages, pain, healing, insult and loss of time, as prescribed in the Mishnah. Divine forgiveness demands that the perpetrator first seeks his neighbour's atonement. The perpetrator thus has the responsibility to request forgiveness from the victim and only then can he receive divine forgiveness. Gibbs (2001:86) claims the reluctant forgiver is now compelled by a procedure. The victim is obligated to forgive the perpetrator after the correct procedure has been followed, which includes repentance, requesting forgiveness and payment of fines. In a situation where the victim refuses or is reluctant to forgive, he has failed in his duty to forgive and a certain procedure is then followed. Gibbs (2001:87) describes how Yom Kippur is a communal holiday and that even for 'private' sins, a public performance is required. The perpetrator must ask for forgiveness three times publicly in the presence of three others. This is because three witnesses represent the public and make a court according to rabbinic Judaism (Gibbs, 2001:86). The perpetrator will then be appeased by following this procedure and the publicity of the procedure serves to guard against the victim becoming arrogant. Although Gibbs (2001:76-79) sees the text from the Mishnah (M9:8) as indicating a category of human relations separate from sins against God and the invention of social ethics by rabbinical interpretation, Morgan (2012:149) says that '… the focus is on God's acceptance of the ritual acts and the repentance. The human victim of the wrongdoing, while he or she must be compensated first, is nonetheless an incidental factor in the sinner's effort to reconcile with God and to be forgiven by God'. Even the dead can be forced to forgive, writes Gibbs (2001:89) who quotes a passage from the Talmud (T87a). Through certain procedures, even reconciliation with the dead is possible. If the perpetrator follows procedure and convenes a public group of ten people and confesses before them, the dead cannot withhold forgiveness.

In a study on the duty to forgive others in Judaism, Newman (1987:160) asserts that the Mishnah ‘never proposes that one has a duty to forgive, so to speak, unilaterally, irrespective of the offender’s stance, but only as a response to an appropriate gesture of repentance on the part of the offender’. Schimmel (2002:84-86) also claims that traditional Judaism does not require of the victim to forgive someone who has not repented, compensated the victim and requested forgiveness. Interestingly, Schimmel (2002:85) mentions that there seems to have been a debate about whether to forgive an unrepentant perpetrator in two texts with different views from the Mishnah and Tosefta: M8:7: ‘Even though he [the perpetrator] pays [the victim of his insult], he is not forgiven until he requests from him [forgiveness].’ The text follows with a warning to the victim that it would be cruel not to grant forgiveness once the perpetrator has followed the correct procedure. The conflicting text is from the Tosefta 9:1 and Schimmel (2002:86) says that this text ‘teaches that the victim of an assault should pray to God to have mercy on his assailant even if the assailant has not requested that he do so’. Nevertheless, the duty to forgive seems conditional depending on the offender’s action.

A text from the twelfth century that approaches the modern conception of forgiveness but is set in divine forgiveness, is one by the Jewish philosopher and theologian Maimonides. Konstan (2010:17) describes how Maimonides, in his treatise ‘On repentance’, places emphasis on the remorse of the wrongdoer and the following change of heart to the point of a change of identity. A corresponding change of heart in the victim is also advocated.

2.2.1.5 Brief critical assessment of the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature

The Hebrew Bible has thus many stories of divine forgiveness of Israel, but as described above, it is mostly a forgiveness of a people that is at stake and the sin is infidelity to God, not against another person or another group. The focus is on Israel’s relationship to God and it is God that forgives wrongdoing. The kind of wrongdoing is a rejection of God and repentance takes the form of a religious, spiritual return to God. Forgiveness is one of a cluster of related concepts, namely law, sin, sacrifice, justice, compassion, repentance, atonement and forgiveness. In the few examples of interpersonal forgiveness, it is the person in power who forgives or shows mercy to the perpetrator. The context in which God forgives people is the context of repentance. The possibility of *teshuvah* became the centrepiece of Jewish moral life.

Turning to rabbinic literature, there is continued attention to divine–human relations, but a more nuanced realization exists of interpersonal forgiveness. A text from the Mishnah M8:7 seems to reflect a change of heart in the wrongdoer, without excusing his or her culpability. The burden of responsibility is on the wrongdoer, the sinner, to acknowledge his or her sin and return to a life according to the law. The wrongdoer is not forgiven by the victim until s/he asks for it and the victim is duty-bound to forgive once the correct procedures have been followed and request has been made. The human victim is nonetheless an incidental factor in the sinner’s effort to reconcile with God. The ritual practices of Yom Kippur are a vital part of reconciliation with the aim to repair the harms people had done to each other (socially performative).

2.2.2 The New Testament

The New Testament follows the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) and continues the Jewish tradition but in the light of the Rabbi of Nazareth and his followers. It also develops the notion of forgiveness. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and Paul are primary sources on forgiveness. According to Bash (Bash & Bash, 2004:39), reference to forgiveness is made in only five other places in the New Testament (Hebrews 9:22, 10:18, James 5:15, 1 John

1:19, 2:12), two of which refer to forgiveness in sacrificial terms connected to God's salvation and three explore how communal relationships are to be governed. Although forgiveness is central to Christianity, 'the astonishing fact is that there is relatively little about forgiveness in the New Testament' (Bash, 2007:79).

Konstan (2010:113-114) asserts that there are three words that Luke and the other Gospel writers used frequently for forgiving and forgiveness in the New Testament. The first word frequently used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures is the Greek verb *aphiemi* and its noun *aphesis*, used in the sense of 'to leave', 'release' or 'abandon'. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law from the fever she had (Luke 4:38f). Luke also used these words with reference to a persons' sin (*hamartia*), meaning 'trespassing' in the sense of 'going astray'. Through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the guilt of sin is 'released'. Those whose sins are released or forgiven become part of the kingdom of God. In secular Greek, the words *aphiemi* and *aphesis* have a juridical meaning in the sense of releasing someone from a marriage, punishment or debt (Bash & Bash, 2004:30). In Luke 6:37, Luke uses the verb *apoluo* that also means 'release'. Although the releasing of sin through forgiveness is frequently expressed in the Old Testament (e.g. Psalms 51:1, 31:5; Isaiah 55:7), Luke puts it into an eschatological context: forgiveness as a release from the present order to an eternal community. Other terms used are the verb *metanoeo* or the noun *metanoia* that means a 'change of mind', 'repent' or 'return' and *sungnômê* that means 'permission' and 'concession', but the term is rarely used in the Bible. The term points to an offence that is excusable or unintentional, as in Leviticus 4:22-31, Numbers 15:27-29 and Maccabees 8:22. Konstan (2010:117) comments that such a notion is familiar in classic Greek too, where pardon was given to offences done under coercion or somehow free of blame.

2.2.2.1 A Duty to Forgive?

The interpretative commentary on the New Testament is vast and the subject of much debate is whether forgiveness is a duty. One reason why forgiveness is not a duty for Bash (2007:104) is that forgiveness in the parables of the New Testament suggests an act of grace rather than an act of obligation. Here the idea of forgiveness as a gift to the undeserving and the gracious nature of the act are central. For Bash, a duty to forgive is in the first place inconsistent with the idea of a gift. To connect the idea that grace is unmerited and generous, Bash (2007:96) recounts the story in Matthew 18:21, where Peter asks Jesus how many times he is to forgive another and suggests that seven times may be enough. Jesus answers: '… not seven times, but seventy-seven times' (Matthew 18:22). The exact number Jesus meant by his words is taken by some scholars for seventy-seven and by others for seventy multiplied by seven, but the point of his words is that forgiveness is to be lavish and limitless. The number seven is usually taken as the perfect number and more than seven seems to imply abundance. Another reason why forgiveness is not a duty is that God is forgiving in his being and identity and humans can only strive to model God's forgiveness. The ability to forgive comes from God, and humans can never be forgiving in the same way than God and are not duty-bound to forgive exactly as God does. Humans do not have the resources of grace that God brings to forgiveness. To do something that is impossible is not a duty (Bash, 2007:94; Watts, 2004:55).

However, in two passages in the New Testament, it seems that there is a duty to forgive, according to the Zondervan Bible Commentary (2008:1393, 1414, 1473). In 2 Corinthians 2:7, 2:10 and 12:13, Paul uses the verb *charizomai* that is also translated as forgiveness. In Corinthians 2:7 and 2:10, it refers to the Corinthian community's forgiveness as obligation towards a repentant wrongdoer. In Corinthians 12:13, Paul uses it ironically to beg forgiveness for a supposed wrongdoing. Bash (2007:98) notes that generally the word *charizomai* is used for divine forgiveness and has a wider explanation than ‘forgive’, or ‘release’ or ‘abandon’, as discussed above. In Colossians 3:13, love is closely associated with forgiveness when Paul refers to love as being patient, not quick to take offence and keeping no score of wrongs. The word conveys the idea of grace, imitative of the love of God, and is used of God’s forgiveness in Christ as He deals graciously with humanity. In this context, the meaning of the text does not point to a duty to forgive.

2.2.2.2 Divine and human forgiveness

To see how divine grace shapes human relations and how people should forgive each other, Bash (2007:93) explores a parable in the New Testament. A parable is a literary form that uses a simple story to bring home the message of God and his kingdom. The synoptic Gospels make use of this literary form to express forgiveness as God’s gift to people who seek his mercy. This parable relates God’s forgiveness to human forgiveness. In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, only found in Matthew (Matthew 18:23-35), the familiar Jewish concepts of debts and debtors and cancellation of debts are used to explain the complex nature of forgiveness. In the parable a man owed a king the enormous sum of ten thousand talents. Bash (2007:93) quotes Josephus (Ant: 17.320), who was born a few years after Jesus’ execution and who was well educated in biblical law and history (Sanders, 1993). According to Josephus, the total tax in Judea came to six hundred talents a year. Although this sum owed to the king was so enormous, the king remitted the whole debt of the man when he implored him to. However, this man refused to remit the debt of a fellow servant of one hundred denarii, which comes to the wages of three months for a day labourer. Bash (2007:93-94) describes how the king, when he heard of this disgrace, reprimanded the man severely and imprisoned him until he could repay his debt. The parable apparently says that those who receive mercy must show mercy to others and those who are forgiven must forgive others.

The advice to treat others as you would like to be treated is well known. The Golden Rule of psychologist Kohlberg (Krebs, 2000:315) prescribes a principle of ideal reciprocity: behave towards others as you would have them do to you, and Konstan (2010:114) quotes the Greek orator Lysias (13.53) as saying that people are willing to agree to *sungnômê* to those who give it willingly themselves. The Golden Rule is also recorded in the Gospels of Matthew (chapters 5-7) and Luke (chapter 6). The idea in the New Testament is that those who have received forgiveness should strive in turn to practise forgiveness in other relationships.

2.2.2.3 Conditional or unconditional?

The way the analogy is drawn between divine and human forgiveness has a bearing on whether forgiveness is conditional or unconditional, says Watts (2004:56). In the synoptic gospels, forgiveness between humans is linked to God's forgiveness (Mark 11:25, Matthew 6:14f, Luke 6:37), apparently saying that those who forgive will be forgiven, making God's forgiveness seemingly conditional on human beings practising forgiveness first. These passages say that mercy and forgiveness must be shown to others. Luke 6:37 says: '… forgive and you will be forgiven'. Matthew added a commentary in Matthew 6:14, saying that if people forgive others, then God will forgive the forgivers. Mark 11:25 says that when you pray and have anything against anyone, 'forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins'. According to Bash & Bash (2004:40), this last verse is not in all manuscripts. Bash (2007:95, 104) does not agree that forgiveness is conditional and says that the implication is that if you do not show mercy or forgive, you will not receive God's mercy and forgiveness. Another implication is that God's forgiveness is given on a like-for-like basis. For Bash, this is clearly a misinterpretation as it makes divine grace subordinate to humans being forgiving. It limits divine forgiveness and suggests that God's forgiveness can be earned. Bash (2007:100) finds that the idea that unforgiving people will not be forgiven is a contradiction. If divine forgiveness is a lavish gift to the undeserving, how can it be conditional on the degree to which one person forgives another? Watts (2004:55) finds that one solution is to weaken the analogy between divine and human forgiveness. He says there are many reasons of seeing God's forgiveness as absolute and unconditional, as a gift to humanity. But to imagine human beings to display the same kind of unconditional forgiveness is arrogance, humans cannot become like God in that sense.

Against Caputo (2006:219) who argues that Jesus offered unconditional forgiveness, Ramelli (2011:30) sees forgiveness in the New Testament as conditional. For her there is much evidence in the New Testament and early Christian history and literature to support the idea that Christianity does not necessarily recommend unconditional forgiveness. The idea is that one should admit one's responsibility, repent, ask God's forgiveness and promise not to sin any more. Ramelli (2011:30) claims that nowhere in the New Testament it is affirmed that an offended person should forgive the offender even if the latter does not regret. She quotes from the Bible (Luke 17:3-4) where Jesus says the opposite: 'If your brother sins, rebuke him, but if he repents, forgive him'. Here forgiveness is conditional and depends on the wrongdoer's repentance. Ramelli (2011:31) asserts that this is in line with the final mission of the apostles in Luke 24:47 to go and preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all people. Ramelli (2011:35) says that there is also much evidence in early Christian history and literature to support the idea that forgiveness was not considered unconditional.

Another well-known passage is Jesus' prayer on the cross (Luke 23:34): 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. The text is highly controversial (Konstan 2010:120), because these words do not appear in all manuscripts of the Gospel. Ramelli (2011:32) explores this passage through many translations and concludes that modern versions translate 'forgive', while ancient versions can mean 'forgive' but also have many other meanings. Ramelli notes that the logical difficulty with Jesus' words is that he asks God to forgive his killers by affirming that they are unaware of what they are doing. This rules out culpability. Unintentional wrongdoing was provided for in Judaism, as I showed above, and Jesus' words could support this. The ignorance of the soldiers was not their crucifixion of Jesus, but their lack of understanding of what they were doing, namely the crucifixion of an innocent person who is really God's son. Konstan (2010:121) agrees, quoting Abelard (sec.112, translation in Spade, 1995) as arguing that Jesus' words can be seen as absolving the offenders on the grounds of ignorance. To illustrate another act done in ignorance, Konstan (2010:28) compares it to the reference Aristotle makes to Oedipus murdering his own farther and marrying his own mother. Raised as an orphan by the king of Corinth, Oedipus one day killed a group of men who attacked him and later married Jacosta. It turned out that one of the men killed was his biological father and that Jacosta was his mother.

Forgiveness, as an act of God and an act of humans, is so important that it forms an essential part in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus teaches his followers to pray for the forgiveness of sins both as a graceful gift from God, but also as an example and motivation for their own forgiveness of others. An example of the prayer appears in the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. Luke 11:4 reads: 'And forgive us our sin, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us'. Matthew 6:12 reads: 'And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors' (Zondervan Bible Commentary, 2008:1166, 1069). Luke uses the present tense 'forgive' pointing to a habitual action, indicating that when we receive forgiveness, we should strive to pass it on to others. In contrast, Matthew uses 'have forgiven', a tense indicating the past. Matthew used the word 'debt' and not 'sin' because he wrote for Jewish readers (Bash & Bash, 2004:35) who understood debt to mean sin. As I showed above, sin in the Old Testament is seen as outstanding debt to God, which could be compensated by repentance. Luke, however, wrote for Gentiles and he probably chose the word sin (*harmartias*) for his non-Jewish readers.

It is important to note that although forgiving and waiving a debt are connected ideas in the New Testament, remitting a debt is not the same as forgiving in the current usage. There is no offence, the debtor makes no apologies, feels no remorse and there is no change of heart. In comparison to the modern and moral conception of forgiveness, where the importance is on repentance and a change of heart, the waiving of a debt thus differs considerably. To owe someone money is not considered a sin or a wrongdoing, and waiving the debt is simply a generous gift from the lender.

2.2.2.4 Repentance

Although repentance was part of Jesus' message (Mark 1:15, 6:12), restitution and sacrifice as prescribed by the Jewish law were in his view not always necessary. Instead of strict observance to the law, it was more characterized by an inner change, usually involving faith in God. Bash (2007:87) describes, as in Luke 7:36-50, the sinful woman who went to the Pharisee's house where Jesus was having dinner. She showed her repentance by weeping at his feet and by anointing his feet with expensive perfume. He responded by telling her that her sins are forgiven. It thus seems as if forgiveness for Jesus did not always require particular forms of repentance as in fulfilling laws, but rather that forgiveness is a gift of love given in surprising ways. As Bash (2007:89) says: 'Jesus relaxed the rigor of the moral requirements so as to achieve an outcome that accorded with the end that the law sought to achieve'. In Matthew 12:9-13 (Zondervan Bible Commentary, 2008:1077), there is the example of a man with a shrivelled hand at the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus healed the man's hand on the Sabbath, an unlawful act in the eyes of the priests because it meant work and a breach of the Ten Commandments.

Bash (2007:82) describes another case where repentance does not seem to lead to forgiveness, as is evident in the story of Judas Iscariot. He betrayed Jesus for money (Luke 22:3-6, Mark 14:10f, Matthew 26:14-16), but later regretted his deed and tried to give the money back to the priests and elders who refused to take it. It is suggested that he realized that his actions were morally wrong, and according to Bash (2007:82), the verb used by Matthew (*metamelomai*) could point to the fact that in this case forgiveness did not come from repentance.

There is also an example of forgiveness that Konstan (2010:115) mentions, apparently without repentance (Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26). Some friends brought a paralyzed man to Jesus for healing. Since they could not get through the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and let the man down to be healed. Jesus healed the man and said to him that his sins were forgiven. There is no indication of repentance. Konstan (2010:121) writes of an unforgivable sin that is mentioned in Luke 12:10, Matthew 12:31-37 and Mark 3:28-30. The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is excluded from forgiveness. The New Testament refers here to those who deny that Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit to save people from their sins.

2.2.2.5 Reconciliation

The New Testament recognizes that reconciliation and forgiveness are not the same, but see reconciliation nevertheless as a purpose of forgiveness. Reconciliation is the rebuilding of a relationship and the New Testament recommends that the perpetrator actively seeks reconciliation, as Jesus emphasizes in Matthew 5:23f. According to Bash (2007:105), the fact that reconciliation follows forgiveness is shown in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-31). The son set off with his inheritance to a distant country and squandered his wealth in wild living. After going hungry and being in need, he decided to return to his father's house. The father had obviously forgiven the son long before, so that when he saw his son, he immediately expressed forgiveness and the two were reconciled.

2.2.2.6 Brief critical assessment of forgiveness in Biblical times

Forgiveness in the New Testament has to be seen in the wider social and theological setting of those time. In the New Testament the emphasis is more on individuals and their sins, but the main focus remains on God's forgiveness of human sins. For the most part it is God that forgives humans who seek his grace. Receiving God's forgiveness triggers a change of heart that will lead to the forgiving of others. Although the Hebrew Bible states that people were to love their neighbours as themselves (Leviticus 19:18), it was Jesus who led the way in his statements on forgiveness in the New Testament and who connected it with an act of love, rather than taking revenge or harbouring bitterness.

The New Testament shows some considerable insights in that Jesus recognized that forgiveness is not only what a person does (performative), but also what she or he feels and think (affective and cognitive). Jesus spoke about repentance and made the difference between inner inclination and outer behaviour noteworthy, which meant that repentance involved an element of changed judgment (cognitive). Forgiveness triggers a change of heart that will lead to the forgiving of others and is a way of showing that although the bond has been cut between people, the wrongdoer is not rejected in a final manner.

Notwithstanding this, a victim in the New Testament is not taken into account other than to forgive, and repentance before God was spiritual and before another human being it required a change of heart. There is a focus on the sinner and the significance of the victim is downplayed. However, what the New Testament did for forgiveness was to establish it as a moral virtue, although forgiveness in the New Testament was certainly not as nuanced as our contemporary conception of forgiveness.

2.3 Joseph Butler (1692-1752)

Turning to the views of selected philosophers, I first take a closer look at what Joseph Butler, the 18th century moral philosopher and theologian, says in his insightful published sermons, two of which are of relevance to the topic of forgiveness: ‘Upon resentment’ (Sermon VIII) and ‘Upon forgiveness of injuries’ (Sermon IX). Butler’s (1726) sermons were first published in a collection as Fifteen Sermons in 1726 and are available online. Sermons will be referred to in this study by sermon and paragraph number. Contemporary philosophers credit Butler with the link between forgiveness and resentment, which sets the stage for future discussions on the concept. One contemporary definition of forgiveness as the overcoming of resentment is mistakenly attributed to Butler by Murphy (Murphy & Hampton, 1988) and numerous other philosophers (Downie, 1965; Haber, 1991; Hieronymi, 2001; Hughes, 1975; Holmgren, 1993) followed Murphy. However, a closer look shows that Butler actually defined forgiveness as the checking of revenge or forbearance (Newberry, 2001:233; Griswold, 2007:33; MacLachlan, 2008:82).

For Newberry (2001:234), Butler subscribes to a feeling theory of emotions, a theory that was predominant in Butler’s day. The feeling theory holds that the feeling element is central to an emotion. Beliefs, perceptions, evaluations or judgments are the cause of the emotion, while desires with their attendant actions are the effect. According to Newberry, someone cannot be commanded to have a certain feeling or be held responsible for their emotions. However, excessive resentment is under our control and from that we can refrain. For Newberry (2001:233, 234), Butler’s forgiveness is then about avoiding excessive resentment or abuses of resentment and defined in terms of how one is to act. Newberry writes that Murphy (Murphy & Hampton, 1988) mistakenly subscribes to Butler a cognitive theory of the emotions. Newberry (2001:240) says that according to Murphy, agents can control their emotions insofar as they hold some control over their cognitive states. This means that emotions arise in response to certain beliefs and are under control of the agent. Murphy gives a list as to when the choice to overcome resentment is morally appropriate, as discussed in Chapter 1. Forgiveness, for Murphy, is more about how one feels and not so much about how one acts. Let us have a closer look at what Butler himself says about resentment and forgiveness.

2.3.1 Resentment

Butler starts the sermons by reflecting on human imperfections such as the tendency to injure others, resistance of the passions to reason, partiality to self and fallibility. He acknowledges the virtue of forgiveness, but shows the legitimacy of controlled resentment towards wrongdoers and stresses also that vindictive passions have some value. He furthermore highlights the distinction between forgiveness and justice. He writes far more on resentment and revenge than on the nature of forgiveness. Discussions include resentment and its link to hatred and anger, the desire for revenge, the demonizing of the wrongdoer and other abuses of resentment, as well as the social aspect of forgiveness.

Butler makes a case for the legitimacy of resentment in sermon VIII, ‘Upon resentment’. He examines why such a passion is part of our nature and what its role could possibly be. He contrasts ‘sudden and hasty anger’ with ‘settled and deliberate anger’ (VIII, 5). Sudden anger is an instinctive reaction to hurt, harm or pain (e.g. when you bump your toe against something) and does not desire revenge. Griswold (2007:22) calls this a ‘non-moral sudden anger’ as it helps us to prevent and defeat sudden injury. ‘Sudden moral anger’ points to blameworthiness of the cause of our pain and can prevent such injury. These sudden types of anger have a swift reaction and a brief duration. It never leads to revenge. Butler says ‘anger is never occasioned by harm, distinct from injury; and its natural proper end is to remedy or prevent only that harm, which implies, or is supposed to imply, injury or moral wrong' (VIII, 9).

Resentment is a natural passion, a reaction to an unwarranted injury and a moral defence (VIII, 7). We feel resentment towards someone who has done us harm. It can be a 'weapon' (VIII, 8) to individuals and society to deter wrongdoers and is a socially useful sentiment that stands in defence of important values. According to Butler, resentment is a weapon, because reason alone will not always prevent us from doing wrong or lead us to the correct punishment. He says that 'resentment is not inconsistent with good will … We may therefore love our enemy, and yet have resentment against him for his injurious behaviour towards us' (IX, 14). MacLachlan (2008:82) sees that as meaning that resentment must be limited 'so that it remains compatible with our prior commitment to general good will'.

Settled anger, on the other hand (VIII, 7), is a reaction to cruelty or injustice with the desire to have it punished. It is deliberate resentment, malice and revenge and is sustained over time. Butler supplies a list of the possible abuses of resentment: being consumed by resentment is dangerous or when resentment becomes excessive and destructive or when it acts unjustly to trivial affronts. Resentment can thus be abused when it is sustained over time, when it is an extravagant kind of resentment and when it is felt towards others who innocently cause pain and inconvenience only. Deliberate resentment can be misinformed about the wrongdoing and the injury, can feed on itself and grow out of proportion and consume everyone and everything. As Griswold (2007:29) says: 'Revenge seeks to change the past by punishing the agent who made the relevant aspect of the past painful and injurious'. Revenge can also lead to retaliation on a bigger scale, for example as in conflicts over honour. The partiality of the victim due to his or her emotions and perspective is a great abuse of resentment and it can lead to revenge as the victim wants to inflict harm on the wrongdoer (VIII, 11-12).

We have a general obligation of benevolence toward mankind and Butler indicates that we are to love our enemies. Others are not to be treated unjustly. It is clear that revenge or the abuse of resentment provides no basis for the assessment of punishment where the wrongdoing is of a certain sort. Butler argues that resentment's useful purpose is to defend the moral and legal order (VIII, 14). He thus commends the usefulness of resentment as it helps prevent injury, but speaks out against revenge. He further holds that defence against injury is not to be confused with the cool consideration of reason, laws and sentencing. As Griswold (2007:32) says: the victim can express proper resentment 'in punitive action when and as judged appropriate by independent agents, in accordance with established principle'. Here Butler makes a distinction between justice and moral relations. This is in line with the standard account of forgiveness that it is a process between individuals; the victim can forgive, but the wrongdoer can still be judicially punished.

2.3.2 Forgiveness

In addition to his sermon on resentment, Butler's sermon 'Upon forgiveness of injuries' describes forgiveness as an inner practice and a moral virtue that involve the overcoming of certain vindictive passions that arouse naturally when we are wronged by others. Butler does not say that refraining from abuses of resentment, as mentioned above, is forgiveness. Neither does he say that forswearing resentment is forgiveness. For him, forgiveness is essentially the overcoming of revenge and then other abuses of resentment. Revenge is the most dangerous abuse of resentment, as it wants to injure the wrongdoer; it wants to cause misery and retaliate. To forgive someone is 'to be affected towards the injurious person in the same way any good men, uninterested in the case, would be; if they had the same just sense, which we have supposed the injured person to have, of the wrong, after which there will yet remain real good will towards the offender' (IX, 20).

Butler thus actually defined forgiveness as the checking of revenge or forbearance and not the overcoming of resentment (Griswold 2007:33). MacLachlan (2008:82), claims that forgiveness for Butler is 'a corrective to partiality; it demands that we refrain from revenge, that we attempt to perceive the wrongdoer without partiality and … that we moderate … our resentment …'

Turning to Butler's description of forgiveness quoted above, let us take a close look to what it means to be 'uninterested' in a case. Uninterested does not mean an exoneration of the wrongdoer because he could not help what he did or acted involuntarily. Rather, the wrongdoer is seen as a responsible blameworthy agent. For Griswold (2007:35), uninterested does not mean without interest; it rather means 'from a theorist standpoint' or from a disinterested view. Forgiveness brings an impersonal perspective to the case from an objective standpoint or a 'due distance' (IX, 23). In short, Butler advocates a 'reframing' approach as we moderate our reaction toward the wrongdoer. The forgiving person overcomes his initial resentment for an attitude of goodwill towards the wrongdoer. There is the recognition that others are not to be treated unjustly. In contemporary literature, this is referred to as 'reframing' of the wrongdoer. Landman (2002:236) provides a useful description: Reframing is a 'crucial cognitive element of the process by which a victim comes to forgive the perpetrator. Reframing entails coming to view the perpetrator in context, understanding the perpetrator as an individual with a particular personal history and particular external pressures … at the time of the offence. In essence, reframing is a process of attempting to understand the perpetrator as a whole …' Butler insists that the emotion should be proportionate to the offence (IX, 24), preferably the informed objective standpoint quoted above. Forgiveness thus functions to check revenge and to keep it within bounds. Revenge usually has the tendency to see the wrongdoer as totally monstrous (IX, 24), a totalizing tendency to distort perspective, to dehumanize and demonize the wrongdoer. The wrongdoer is reduced to his behaviour and is nothing but a wrongdoer and a monster. Butler thus denies that there are ‘moral monsters’, as discussed in ‘The limits of forgiveness’ in Section 1.3, and speaks out on the tendency to see the ‘whole man as monstrous, without any thing right or human in him’. For Butler, forgiveness refrains from seeing the wrongdoer in this way, but rather recognizes his humanity.

2.3.4 Brief critical assessment of Butler

Some contemporary philosophers misrepresent Butler’s thoughts on the relationship between resentment and forgiveness. Butler’s definition of forgiveness is first and foremost the forswearing of revenge and other abuses of resentment. Revenge may be sweet, but Butler wants to limit the desire for vengeance. We forgive when we forswear revenge, not when we overcome resentment. Resentment is a natural passion, a reaction to an unwarranted injury and a moral defence, and a moderate level of resentment is compatible with forgiveness.

Butler can be seen as an antecedent of the contemporary approach to forgiveness in terms of his perspective of a ‘due distance’. It involves recognizing crooked judgments and rebalancing them, recognizing inflated preoccupations and dealing with them (cognitive and performative). Butler is concerned with the victim’s conduct and his reframing techniques aim to widen the perspective of the victim so the actions of the wrongdoer are placed within a new framework. It is concerned with the aspect of forgiving which generates positive feelings towards the wrongdoer (affective). Through his sermons, the goal of forgiveness is social harmony, as revenge can lead to endless retaliation. Butler was evidently concerned with a change of heart in the victim and his views on reframing of the wrongdoer prefigure contemporary accounts as he speaks out against the tendency to see the whole man as monstrous. As Griswold (2007:34) puts it, Butler infers with this that nobody is in principle unforgivable.

2.4 Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Immanuel Kant hardly touches the subject of forgiveness, probably because forgiveness presents some difficulties for him. Forgiveness seems to be in conflict with Kant’s view of our moral autonomy and with his strong retributivism. However, Kant’s (1996, 92:6.47) words ‘a new man can come about through a kind of rebirth’ in his *Religion within the limits of reason alone,* may have been the root for our contemporary understanding of moral transformation of the wrongdoer and the change of heart in the forgiver.

In Kantian ethics, reason is the source of morality and also the measure of the moral worth of an action. Kant places importance not in learning or the cultivation of our intellectual powers but ‘to have the courage and resolve to be self-directing in one’s thinking, to *think for oneself’* (Wood, 2005:13). Furthermore, one is to emancipate oneself from tradition and every form of authority that offers us the security of letting someone else do our thinking for us. Wood (2005:2) adds that this is a spirit that questions in a radical manner and brings every human activity before a court of reason. And this spirit applies to every area of live, the sciences, politics, morality and religion.

Because we are rational beings, we can act morally. Wood (1970:61) notes that morality applies to all rational human beings, and a moral action is determined by its motive or the reason behind the action. We do not just act, but reflect first and then decide how to act. To determine the worth of the motive behind a moral action, Kant takes a closer look at the universal applicability of the motive. Wood (2005:135) notes that an action is moral for Kant only if it embodies a maxim that we could will to be a universal law. A maxim is a subjective principle of action determined by reason.

At the heart of Kant's moral theory is the position of reason as the highest of the human faculties and our autonomy. Wood (2005: 141) remarks that we act autonomously only if we act in accordance with a law dictated by our own reason. Human actions are morally praise- or blameworthy in virtue of our autonomy. Furthermore, says Wood (2005:139), rational beings must always be treated as ends in themselves and never as just means to an end. That means respecting their rationality and never using or manipulating them for our own purposes.

2.4.1 Forgiveness

Kant is very silent on forgiveness, especially when considering the moral accountability, he advocates. Sussman (2005:85) quotes Kant (TL, AA 06:460s) saying that in the *Metaphysics of morals*, Kant only makes some sketchy remarks such as '[i]t is therefore a duty of human beings to be forgiving' … because a human being has enough guilt of his own to be greatly in need of pardon' … because 'no punishment (…) may be inflicted out of hatred'. What Kant is saying is that we have a duty to forgive but he does not specify the content of this duty. He goes on to warn us against the excesses of forgiveness, namely that to be too forgiving indicates a failure of self-respect and can be considered a vice of servility. When you forgive too easily it means that you do not respect your own person or the humanity in your own person. Sussman (2005: 88) quotes Kant (TL AA 06:461): 'But this [duty] must not be confused with meek toleration of wrongs … for then a human being would be throwing away his rights and letting others trample on them, and so would violate his duty to himself.'

Although Kant has not much to say about human forgiveness, he writes a great deal about God's grace in his *Religion within the limits of reason alone.* Allan Wood (1970:239-248) is clear that Kant maintains throughout this writing that the person of good disposition may put his trust in God's grace and that God's grace is something rational. Sussman (2005:86) also holds that Kant's conception of grace is based on rationality. However, Sussman (2005:86) turns this around and places forgiveness in the middle of interpersonal relationships when he writes:

> … we should note that for Kant, God serves as a kind of moral archetype – the personification of the law-giver and judge that has its real basis in our own rational nature. If so, then perhaps the grace of God similarly serves as the kind of moral archetype for the kinds of morally transformative and restorative relations that might, in various imperfect ways, be within the realm of human possibility.

Moral improvement thus rests on human effort alone; we are always responsible for the wrongs we do and we must make amends for our wrongs. Not even God can, in his capacity as Divine Judge, undo the deed. With or without prayers we will receive our just deserts and will now be judged by the human individual. As Konstan (2010:157) says: we are now ‘to be judged not by God but by the person who has been wronged, who must make the almost superhuman effort to see the offender as newly virtuous and hence worthy of forgiveness’.

For Kant, human nature is deeply informed by the idea of original sin, which means the human being has a propensity to evil. Kant (1996, 83:6.37) introduced the term ‘radical evil’ to refer to the propensity not to do what duty requires, not to follow the moral law. Kant thinks that through repenting and through making amends for sins, a change of heart can take place in a person, relating to guilt originating from an evil propensity. For Wood (1970:248), this repentance is true repentance, ‘a laying off of the old man and putting on of the new’, not something done out of self-loathing. Sussman (2005:96) points out that attaining our true nature then, is not ‘so much a matter of self-development, but of radical self-transformation’.

2.4.2 Transformation of the old person into a new one

Kant suggests in *Religion within the limits of reason alone* that repentance can transform an old person into a new one. The old person he once was will be punished for the wrong, while the new person he has become will not. In Kant's (1996, 92:6.47) own words: '… and so a "new man" can come about only through a kind of rebirth, as it were a new creation ….'

The wrongdoer repents and renounces the wrong deed as a step toward showing that he is not the 'same person' who did and supported the wrong. The wrongdoer takes responsibility for X while renouncing the self that did X. He undergoes a moral transformation and is no longer judged by God, but by the victim, the human individual. The victim 'reframes' the wrongdoer, which means seeing the wrongdoer in a new light and worthy of forgiveness. For Konstan (2010:157), Kant's theories on the moral autonomy of human beings and the incompleteness of our virtue laid the foundation for the contemporary secular concept that involves a change of heart in the victim, a reframing of the wrongdoer, repentance by the wrongdoer, a corresponding change of heart in the one who has done wrong, involving a personal transformation.

While the thesis of identity renewal is essential to forgiveness, it remains a baffling idea. Kant appeals to the biblical motifs of 'rebirth' and 'new creation', which suggest on the one hand, two different moral agents, a fallen and a redeemed one. On the other hand, Michalson (1990:87) adds that 'morality's noumenal [sic] insulation from the effect of time suggests just one moral agent'. According to him, the resultant problem is that of personal identity and he wonders how the regenerated agent can be the same as the guilty one. North (1987:500) also identifies problems of personal identity in Kant's writings and puts her finger on the heart of the matter:

> The person who repents fully recognizes that the crime committed was his own, and that his responsibility for it continues over time, just as he does. In asking for forgiveness he wants this very same person to be forgiven, and the forgiver is required to recognize him as such. When we do speak as a person as "becoming a new man" through his repentance we must remember that this phrase is used metaphorically, suggesting a spiritual transformation from bad to good, but not implying his literal re-creation … I suggest that far from removing the fact of wrongdoing, forgiveness actually relies upon the recognition of this fact for its very possibility. What is annulled in the act of

> forgiveness is not the crime itself but the distorting effect that this wrong has upon one's relations with the wrongdoer and perhaps with others (North, 1987:500).

2.4.3 Brief critical assessment of Kant

It seems that the theories of Kant on the moral autonomy of the individual and the treatment of human beings as ends in themselves paved the way for the modern notion of forgiveness. A notion of interpersonal forgiveness, in which remorse and the inner change it presupposed were directed to the fellow human whom one had wronged, is present. It involves repentance and a moral transformation of the wrongdoer. The modern sense of repentance does so in a spirit of self-reform and alters the person's life thereafter. It has to do with a transforming moment that releases us from the grip of the present and opens up the future in a way that makes possible a new beginning. It leads the victim to a changed perception or a change of heart and a 'reframing' of the wrongdoer, which means seeing the wrongdoer in a new light, although the crime or wrongdoing is not annulled at all (cognitive, affective, performative). It seems that Kantian morality can satisfactorily accommodate forgiveness.

2.5 Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Friedrich Nietzsche was an advocate of a perfectionist moral outlook where the perfected soul, sometimes portrayed as the *ubermensch*, is almost immune from doing injury or from receiving injury. Unlike the contemporary standard view that sees forgiveness as the overcoming of resentment, for Nietzsche, forgiveness becomes a cover for the suppression of feelings termed *ressentiment* and a wish for vengeance (Nietzsche, 2000:472). The French term signifies deep feeling in response to an offence and includes motives such as envy, spite, malice and cruelty. Although Nietzsche had great insight into the potential self-destruction of *ressentiment*, it is not the resentment that is in play in the description of contemporary forgiveness.

2.5.1 Master and slave morality

Nietzsche’s (2000) theory of morality is worked out properly in *On the genealogy of morals, Essay 1*. He investigates the origin of the terms ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and their reversal by slave morality to the terms ‘good’ and ‘evil’ by a historical linguistic genealogy as he observes them in his own society. ‘Powerful’ or ‘masters’ share a root with ‘good’. Nietzsche (2000:463-465) says positive moral terms reflect the positive attributes of the higher aristocratic class and negative moral terms reflect the qualities of the lower social class. Master morality comes from the aristocratic class, the strong, who saw their own power, strength and wealth to be good and the poverty and weakness of those they rule over as bad. The masters then perceive ‘pathos of distance’ (Nietzsche, 2000:462) between themselves and the lower class. Traditional aristocratic values become transformed with the Judeo-Christian tradition and Nietzsche calls this the ‘slave revolt’ (Nietzsche, 2000:472). The transformation from aristocratic ‘good’ to the slave’s ‘evil’ is the key to the slave revolt. From the view of the slave, the aristocratic morality of ‘good’ becomes devalued into ‘evil’, and what was seen as ‘bad’ in aristocratic morality is now seen by the slave morality as ‘good’. Resentment is turned into self-righteousness, which produces morality. Nietzsche (2000:472) coins the term *ressentiment* to sketch a scenario in which morality comes into view as a trick of the weak that remains contemptible in their weakness as they envy the noble. The French term signifies deep feeling in response to an offence and includes motives such as envy, spite, malice and cruelty. Slave morality is negative and reactive and this inversion takes place as an act of *ressentiment* against the ruling class. Nietzsche thus sees forgiveness as part of a morality that empowers the weak. This morality of pity and passivity results in conformity or a ‘herd’ attitude (Nietzsche, 2000:471).

2.5.2 ‘Ressentiment’

The master and slave moralities have different perspectives. Masters create the good and see themselves as good. Masters are noble and proud, they act out of nobility, and they have self-respect and self-mastery (Nietzsche, 2000:465,469). They are immune from doing injury or from receiving injury. They have no need for forgiveness because they do not feel *ressentiment*. Nietzsche writes that the truly noble person does not experience *ressentiment* and feelings of remorse or guilt:

> R*essentiment* itself, should it appear in the noble man, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore it does not poison: on the other hand, it fails to appear at all on countless cases on which it inevitably appears in the weak and impotent. To be incapable of taking one’s enemies, one’s accidents, even one’s misdeeds seriously for very long– that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget (a good example of this in modern times is Mirabeau, who had no memory for insults and vile actions done him and was unable to forgive simply because he – forgot (Nietzsche, 2000:475).

In contrast, the weak forgive because they cannot avenge themselves or vent their anger or retaliate. Their forgiveness is nothing but a brooding resentment and the slave morality hostile to action and the active life. In Nietzshe’s words:

> … the man of *ressentiment* is neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself. His soul squints; his spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors, everything covert entices him as his world, his security, his refreshment; he understands how to keep silent, how not to forget, how to wait, how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble (Nietzsche, 2000:474).

2.5.3 Forgiveness

Schoeman (2007:27) argues that forgiveness is an expression of resentment for Nietzsche and that it is so entwined with resentment that they become inseparable. For Nietzsche, forgiveness promotes resentment instead of overcoming it. Forgiveness is not overcoming anger and resentment, but keeping resentment at slow boil. Forgiveness is associated with guilt and remorse and with the moralism of the weak, as can be noted in the following passage quoted by Schoeman (2007: 27) from Nietzsche's *Will to power*. Remorse or repentance is a form of self-deception, cowardice and hypocrisy:

> Against remorse – I do not like this kind of cowardice toward one's own deeds; one should not leave oneself in the lurch at the onset of unanticipated shame and embarrassment. An extreme pride, rather, is in order. After all, what is the good of it! No deed can be undone by being regretted; no more than by being "forgiven" or "atoned for". One would have to be a theologian to believe in "guilt": we immoralists prefer not to believe in "guilt". We hold instead that every action is of identical value at root – and that actions that turn against us may, economically considered, be nonetheless useful, generally desirable actions … (Aphorism 235 ((Spring-Fall 18887; rev Spring-Fall 1888).

Nietzsche sees forgiveness as a form of nursed anger for past injuries and a soured attitude towards life. Forgiveness becomes a cover for *ressentiment* and a wish for vengeance. Forgiveness is a wrong, arrogant act and an insult, especially where the wrongdoer does not believe that the act was wrong. A person who values himself will not be in need of defence.

Allison (2001:205) comments that a distinction between resentment and *ressentiment* parallels the distinction between noble and slave. Comparing resentment and *ressentiment*, the first would be a reaction to one's hurt followed by an attempt to deal with it. Allison (2001:302) says the action is against the agent who inflicted the pain or suffering. One wishes to hurt the other to restore one's loss or honour. In the case of revenge, it will mean acting upon it. In Nietzsche's eyes simple revenge is positive and disappears when action has been taken. *Ressentiment*, however, is a poisoning of the mind. Allison (2001:205) quotes Max Scheler (1961:45-46) to define *ressentiment* as:

> a lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions and affects which, as such, are normal components of human nature. Their repression leads to the constant tendency to indulge in certain kinds of value delusions and corresponding value judgments. The emotions and affects primarily concerned are revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract and spite.

From Nietzsche's perspective, resentment prowls within the heart of forgiveness.

2.5.4 Brief critical assessment of Nietzsche

Resentment, in contemporary literature, is an unwarranted injury that embodies a judgment about the fairness of an action, is aimed at the action's author and seeks to protest the wrongness of the action. Nietzsche sees *ressentiment* as a seething anger that has no outlet, is forced into sublimation, is harmful and has the potential of self-destruction. *Ressentiment* is a far subtler way of retribution than simple resentment or revenge. Rather than engaging with the wrongdoer or acting in revenge, Allison (2001:211) says that *ressentiment* 'instead subverts the value of the object in question, in this case, the source of one's distress'.

For Nietzsche, then, forgiveness becomes a cover for *ressentiment* and a wish for vengeance. Victims resent an existence in which not all harm can be repaired and find someone or something responsible for their situation to resent. Forgiveness develops *ressentiment* and the practice of forgiveness stirs the pot of *ressentiment* and enables victims to feel moral superiority over those who wronged them. For Nietzsche, there is no possible positive value in forgiveness or reconciliation, as forgiveness is always part of the Judeo-Christian inversion of values in which the strong are portrayed as morally bad.

To deny moral accountability for wrongdoing is unjust for Nietzsche and so is restoring relationships without addressing the wrongdoing. Forgiveness without justice can be limp, giving force to Nietzsche's view that (unconditional) forgiveness is a sign of weakness. He regarded this kind of forgiveness as a sign of impotence because victims were unwilling to seek revenge or do something about the wrongful deed. For Nietzsche, then, forgiveness becomes a cover for *ressentiment* and a wish for vengeance.

2.6 Investigation into historical forgiveness

Investigation into the historical background of a notion such as forgiveness may help shed light on the different uses and senses of the term on the conceptual, moral, social and political backdrop against which it got its meaning. In this chapter I have dealt with a range of times and places and social complexes with changeable ideas and customs.

I have looked at concepts of forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament and how they developed in the Jewish tradition and in the New Testament, and at the work of Butler, Kant and Nietzsche. I wanted to not just give an account of forgiveness in historical times, but to do so in a way that is attentive to the concept of forgiveness as discussed in Chapter 1. I have looked at ways in which acts of forgiveness manifested themselves, namely as cognitive, affective or socially performative. I found forgiveness as a word spoken, an action performed, a feeling felt and a commitment to a way of practices. Forgiveness included eradication of resentment, seeing the wrongdoer differently, uttering appropriate words and restoring relationships. Cases seemed to involve a kind of self-reflective assessment, a kind of reframing, seeing the wrongdoer in a different light and making a fresh start.

The variety of complex, rich reasons to forgive became obvious. Reasons to forgive ranged from unconditional forgiveness grounded in God’s unconditional forgiveness of people, conditional forgiveness in Christianity, a duty to forgive in Judaism once the wrongdoer has performed certain rituals, Kant’s imperfect duty to be forgiving in disposition, but not to forgive in all cases and Butler’s respect for others and concern for suffering. Forgiveness seemed to involve notions such as wrongful harm, responsibility and victimization. Against Nietzsche who sees forgiveness as a part of a moral system that must be rejected, forgiveness seemed morally significant as forgiveness achieves something, or it transforms the wrongdoing, or it is something valuable that we offer to the wrongdoer. The usages of forgiveness discussed here referred to a large number of related practices in which forgiveness is not an isolated phenomenon, but is part of various networks of practices and relationships.

Contemporary discussions of forgiveness are secular and focused on respect for persons. What the Jewish tradition shows is that forgiveness should not be treated independently of the relationships within which wrongdoing takes place. In Judaism the relationship is a divine–human one, but in modern secular venues, it would be communal, social and cultural. Although forgiveness is an interpersonal phenomenon, the effects resonate at social and political levels as well, particularly through the encouragement of social tolerance and mutual respect. Society is a crucial part of the context for the practice of forgiveness between individuals and, vice versa, the practice of interpersonal forgiveness influences forgiveness in society. As an interpersonal and social process, forgiveness allows individuals, groups and societies to move on from the past and offering hope for the future.

Recent years have seen a growing recognition in societies of the significance of forgiveness and a need to reconstruct the events that caused the offence. Deeply divided societies are looking for ways to come to terms with their past and forgiveness may become a turning point and a new way of thinking about the offence or trauma that occurred. In the next chapter, I look at of forgiveness in a society, in groups or nations and how forgiveness may help transform intergroup relationships torn by conflict and violence. Forgiveness arises in the aftermath of wrongdoing and I show that it is not just a private process, but can be extended to forgiveness in a larger political context.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICAL FORGIVENESS

'… the willingness to forgive invites the other to politics.' (Schaap, 2003:85)

3.1 Introduction

Against the backdrop of World War II, genocide, hatred, resentment, violence, fractured lives and human rights violations, societies have emerged looking for new moral discourses to deal with their pasts. Worldwide debates are currently ongoing on how societies, despite past atrocities, oppression and intergroup murder, may get to mutual tolerance by way of forgiveness. Janover (2005:223) writes that the theme of forgiveness takes on additional significance in international conditions of state breakdown and wars, nationalism, displacement and exploitation of people. Given the sheer scope of present conflicts, turning to forgiveness may aid contemporary political reflection and become an important element in this new vocabulary.

In this chapter, I first discuss the possibility of political forgiveness and refer to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) experience often as an example of political reconciliation and forgiveness. I touch again on the multidimensional account of forgiveness as a model for personal and political forgiveness. This account addresses both the everyday wrongdoings of individuals and the large-scale questions of political reconciliation in a single philosophical account. Forgiveness arises in the aftermath of wrongdoing and is not just a private process, but can be extended to forgiveness in a larger political context. However, the extension of personal forgiveness to political forgiveness involves a number of challenges. I discuss the objections to political forgiveness, including that only the victims can forgive; forgiveness cannot be unconditional; and groups cannot forgive. I then look at some processes shared by forgiveness and reconciliation, such as the elements of truth-telling, acknowledgement and reparation, the gradual overcoming of resentment and the generation of trust and respect. The process of political forgiveness initiates a new beginning, which allows trust and respect to develop and releases us to proceed onwards and start anew. Political forgiveness initiates the process of political reconciliation.

In the next sections, I present three prominent, influential philosophers who wrote on forgiveness in the 20th century and whose work reflects interest in the significance of forgiveness as an idea and experience. All three authors discuss aspects of potential relevance to political forgiveness and I explore to see what value they add to the practices and experiences of political forgiveness as discussed in this chapter.

Jankélévitch’s (2005) understanding of forgiveness is fresh, but provocative, as true forgiveness is for him an act of grace; it represents a theoretical limit point and is beyond reason and the dictates of justice. However, his contradictory notions of unconditional and conditional forgiveness are problematic for political forgiveness. He sees forgiveness as a faculty on its own terms and overlooks the benefits of integrating forgiveness under instrumentalist accounts that emphasize the possibility of ending cycles of vengeance and restructuring a fractured polis.

In a startling statement, Derrida (2001:32) asserts that ‘forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable’. For Derrida, pure forgiveness has no meaning, no finality, no intelligibility; it has to be mad. If you strive to remove that, something instrumental or political will take its place. Derrida gives some reasons why forgiveness exceeds politics, namely instrumentalization, conditionality and the intervention of a ‘third’. He separates forgiveness from the rest of the empirical and moral world and does not consider any theoretical connections between other moral concepts and forgiveness. Derrida seems to be torn between an ethical ideal of unconditional forgiveness without sovereignty and political manipulation and the reality of a society at work in pragmatic processes.

For Arendt (1998), the political world is one of plurality. Plurality is ‘the basic condition of both action and speech’ (Arendt, 1998:175). It is a world divulging commonness and shared by people with diverse and conflicting viewpoints. To live together in such a world, it is necessary to release others from their past wrongs and forgive them in order to begin something new. It means taking part in discussions with a former enemy to settle the meaning of wrongdoing in the past so that it cannot determine the present and the future. In such moments of forgiveness, trust is advanced and respect initiated to underpin a common world and political space.

3.2 Political forgiveness

In the world of international human rights, the development of lawsuits and prosecution stand honoured. The Nuremberg war crime trials following World War II and the domestic trials brought against former Nazis, such as Adolf Eichmann, further utilized the insight of human rights, required by law. Law enforcement can educate and set the record straight. However, after mass atrocities, even the most refined and seasoned justice system is inundated. It is one of the reasons that such societies have to find other solutions. In the introduction to her book, Minow (1998) says that punitive justice and prosecution are not the only options after mass atrocities. Many conflicts have not been resolved by the rule of law to prosecute wrongdoers of political atrocities. Violent conflict tends to return in a vicious cycle of revenge and thus new discourses are sought to deal with societies emerging from human rights violations. In answer to this, Gobodo-Madikizela (2002:11) suggests that legal models should incorporate procedures that will ‘affirm victims’ and give them control over their trauma and psychological healing, procedures such as forgiveness and apology. The benefits of political forgiveness may include the reconciliation of former enemies, social and moral reintegration and the ending of cycles of violence. In fact, as Digeser (2001:5-10) claims, political forgiveness may be a supplement to justice, as it can moderate a relentless pursuit of justice.

The duty to prosecute is not the only option, as a whole range of institutional responses to atrocities are available, which will vary widely from community to community and state to state and will depend on the context in which these atrocities occurred. Approaches as diverse as trials, truth commissions, restorative justice and reparations may be exercised. Debates are ongoing all over the world on how to arrive at a politics of mutual tolerance by way of recognition and apology, remembrance and forgiveness of past crimes. Janover (2005:222) says that there is 'little doubt that questions and institutions of reconciliation, amnesty, apology and reparation – only shades apart and never entirely cut-off from considerations of forgiveness – are now questions and proceedings in numerous politics and political conflicts across the globe'. He writes that political forgiveness takes on additional significance in international wars, the displacement and the exploitation of people. The result is that the term 'political forgiveness' is now frequently used to describe conversions to stable democracies after mass atrocities.

Colleen Murphy (2010:2-5) remarks that to a large extent, the intense global interest in political forgiveness and reconciliation comes from the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): 'During its historic transition from apartheid to democracy', South Africa put the issue of forgiveness and reconciliation at the 'centre of the global peace making agenda'. South Africa held its first democratic elections in 1994, after more than forty years of apartheid. During apartheid, the black South African population was oppressed and had no political rights. They were also subjected to discrimination on social, economic, educational and legal levels. The African National Congress (ANC) came into power in 1994, when Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa. Following other transitional societies, the South African Parliament established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a temporary body with the mandate to investigate gross human rights violations and to promote national unity and reconciliation. The TRC was conducted in public and included the possibility of amnesty for wrongdoers. Furthermore, the African notion of ubuntu emphasized the possibility of reconciliation. Ubuntu means ‘humanity to others’ (Tutu,1999:34f) and the goal of ubuntu is social harmony. The chairman of the TRC, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, also publicly promoted forgiveness and reconciliation. In his speech on the first day of the TRC hearings, Tutu (1999:91) said: ‘Forgiveness will follow confession and healing will happen, and so contribute to national unity and reconciliation’.

3.2.1 Different views on political forgiveness

Many philosophers who write on political forgiveness have large-scale cases of forgiveness in mind (Shriver, 1995:9), and there are indeed many cases of political forgiveness that are cases of collective forgiveness. According to Amstutz (2007:565), political forgiveness is an interactive process in which the effects of collective wrongdoing are repaired through truth-telling, remorse and repentance, the renunciation of vengeance and the mitigation or cancellation of a deserved penalty. However, to equate political forgiveness with collective forgiveness would be to exclude counterexamples where individuals seek forgiveness insofar as they represent a larger community. One such example is the prime minister of Japan who apologized and asked for forgiveness for atrocities committed in China and Korea (see Section 1.3). The prime minister of Japan is the spokesman for a community who recognizes the acts performed by their leader to participate in the forgiveness. As all members cannot individually repent and forgive, the prime minister speaks on their behalf. MacLachlan (2008:264) adds another reason for not equating political forgiveness with collective forgiveness, namely that collective forgiveness could be among members of a family or colleagues in a workplace. Furthermore, many cases heard by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) also involved hearings of wrongdoings of an individual against another individual or individual wrongdoing against a community.

Some writers go so far as to say there is no place for political forgiveness at all. They argue that personal and political forgiveness must be kept separately. According to Griswold (2007:59-71), forgiveness belongs in the interpersonal sphere and not the public one. He argues along the lines of the Emotional Model and says phrases such as ‘we apologize’ or ‘we regret’ are speech acts aiming at a different purpose than forgiveness and that the force of political apology is independent of sentiment. Furthermore, says Griswold, the same argument does not go for ‘we forgive’ as forgiveness is connected to the sentiments. It seems that Griswold does not want to allow for psychological concepts to enter the discourse on public matters and that his objection is made within the framework of the Emotional Model, as discussed in Section 1.2. However, as Nieuwenburg (2014:378) says, ‘the whole language of politics in the Western world has been permeated with terms and expressions that derive from non-political contexts’. We talk of ‘friendship’ between states, legal ‘persons’, and votes of ‘no confidence’. He further writes that we speak of ‘heads’ and ‘members’ of an organisation as if they were ‘organs’. ‘Forgiveness’ is not foreign to the language of politics.

Digeser (2001:3), on the other hand, argues for an independent political account of forgiveness. According to him, personal forgiveness is ‘so burdened with psychological and religious assumptions that their connection to politics is occluded’. Instead he argues for debt relief forgiveness. He says ‘to forgive means to release what is owed, either financially or morally’ (Digeser, 2001:4). However, Digeser discounts the role of sentiments and attitudes too readily as gestures of acceptance; respect and contrition can play an important role in international relations. Since World War II, there have been many different gestures by parties on both sides of the conflicts to apologize and repair war crimes and injustices on a large scale. MacLachlan (2008:276) comments that such a restricted notion of political forgiveness as Digeser's account could account for collective amnesty or policies of pardon, but cannot explain practices of truth-telling, reconciliation, institutional apologies or political forgiveness.

3.2.2 Extending forgiveness to the political

Forgiveness is very much a part of our everyday lives and is an interpersonal moral relation between two individuals. It is usually understood in philosophy as a personal reaction to wrongdoing and is usually characterized in cognitive–affective terms. However, for a theory of forgiveness to be comprehensive, a look is needed at a wide variety of interpersonal relationships (friends, family, neighbours, colleagues, strangers), while realizing that these relationships differ in importance to the persons involved. These relationships also differ in closeness, affection, knowledge of the other and power. MacLachlan (forthcoming:5) remarks that forgiveness emerges from within many different types of relationships, with political relationships being one type among these. Govier and Verwoerd (2002b:187) name relationships between friends, families, small groups, small communities, larger communities, substantial professional or occupational groups, religious or political groups and community groups as all types of relationships from which forgiveness may arise.

Interpersonal forgiveness is not so different from forgiveness in a larger political context. Although forgiveness has a private character and occurs between a victim and a wrongdoer, a differentiation between interpersonal and political forgiveness is questionable as forgiveness is something wider than just between individuals and the consequences resonate at social and political levels as well. Verdeja (2004:38) says that 'forgiveness is something broader than its immediate articulation between two individuals' and 'that forgiveness has an impact on the relevant communities that goes beyond the specific bounds of its two interlocutors'. Govier and Verwoerd (2002a:68) claim that significant wrongs affect not only the relationship between the wrongdoer and the victim, but the wider social web in which the participants are enmeshed. Furthermore, acts of forgiveness vary in their expression and forgiveness is possible in thought, feeling, word or deed depending on the particulars of the situation and if those involved see it as forgiveness. Ross Meyer (1999:1515) describes acts of forgiveness as visible as a change in feelings (primarily affective), a change in judgments and attitude (cognitive) or socially performative, by saying for example ‘I am sorry’. Rather than preserving a core notion for forgiveness and identifying certain features of forgiveness, it is more fruitful to imagine it as an overlapping range of moral practices. If conceptual space is made for descriptions of forgiveness in performative and social terms, the concept is more easily adapted to a political account, without fears of distortion or corruption of the concept of forgiveness. The potential political value of forgiveness is not incompatible with their moral value, say Govier and Verwoerd (2002a:79), namely ‘benefits of moral reform for the wrongdoer, benefits of moral recognition to the victim and positive ripple effects to the broader community’. Reasons to forgive are context dependant and include the relationship between the various parties.

MacLachlan (2008:259) asserts that acts of forgiveness are rarely without political dimensions. She says that in ‘a given political society, any two individuals stand in a political relationship to one another as well as whatever personal relationship they have’. She argues that forgiveness arises in the aftermath of wrongdoing and injustice and that the reasons we have to forgive are dependent on the relevant context, which means the political position of the forgiver and the wrongdoer must be taken into account. Linda Ross Meyer (1999:1515-1518) supports the idea that ‘forgiveness is neither just personal, “merely” emotional, nor only private, but forgiveness grounds the basic trust that makes community possible’. Indeed, for her ‘the individual victim’s experience of being wronged is formed in part by public norms ….’ Because a victim is part of a community, she becomes a victim when another community member has violated the expectations and trust of that community. Individuals cannot be understood without association to their relationships and groups and a group cannot be seen as distinct from its members. Relationships exist ranging from individuals to those between communities, to larger groups and between nations.

3.2.3 Political relationships

Typical political relationships include relationships between states, between a government and citizens or between groups. Such relationships thus include the structure and governance of a society; the formal structures and the effects on the individuals of that society. For MacLachlan (2008:259), political relationships also include 'questions of power, most issues of social disadvantage, injustice and inequality, unequal distribution of material sources and systemic discrimination'. For the purpose of this study, I understand the 'political' to include relationships between states, between a government and its citizens, between collectives, between groups, for example ethnic groups, minority groups and political organisations, between individuals presenting a larger community and between individuals whose relationship is politically charged. The crime that is dealt with in this chapter is crimes against humanity, crimes by political groups, collectives and individuals against members of groups or groups itself. As MacLachlan (2008:256-p264) says, political forgiveness may occur between politically defined collectives, in collective acts of amnesty, between individuals taking political roles representing a group and the process of making political society possible. This is in line with a claim by Hannah Arendt (1998:237) that forgiveness is a political faculty in that political activity always concerns itself with the conditions of its own possibility. Instances of forgiveness in the examples above can reasonably be described as political. It is usual procedure in philosophical discussions to separate forgiveness from political pardons, but there are certainly possibilities for the two to overlap; however, that falls outside the scope of this study.

That forgiveness is not only a private process between victim and wrongdoer was seen on the public stage of the South African TRC, where victims and wrongdoers engaged with each other and transformed forgiveness into a social process. Gobodo-Madikizela (2008:332) writes that as a process, ‘forgiveness allows individuals, groups and societies to engage with the legacy of memory and all its historical and psychological complexities in a way that seeks to uncover the truth (i.e., ‘truth’ as acknowledgement); but instead of truth and memory rekindling old hatreds, forgiveness transcends old hatred and awakens emphatic bonds’. The political forgiveness that emerged correlates with the elements of interpersonal forgiveness. Through truth-telling and apology or acknowledgement as apology, the wrongdoers acknowledge the pain of the victims, restoring their humanity. Wrongdoers are faced at the same time with the after-effects of their deeds and their own humanity is underlined. Gradually a change of heart takes place that initiates respect and trust on both sides. Through forgiveness both victim and wrongdoer acquire identities other than ‘victim’ and ‘wrongdoer’. Mutual respect also underlines the personal feature of the political. The regeneration of trust and respect takes place gradually, but if the political sphere can hold on to common respect and maintain appropriate political relationships, then such respect is ground to forgive others. Gobodo-Madikizela (2008:335) says ‘bringing wrongdoers and beneficiaries of oppressive regimes together for sustained dialogue about the past is the only action that holds promise for the repair of brokenness in post-conflict societies’. Truth commissions are perhaps the kind of public forums Arendt had in mind in her vision of democracy and action in political life (see Section 3.5).

3.2.4 Objections to political forgiveness

The extension of personal forgiveness to political forgiveness involves a number of challenges. Some of the objections include that only the victims can forgive; forgiveness cannot be unconditional; and groups cannot forgive. Firstly, the most vocal objection to political forgiveness is that only victims can forgive, also named ‘the victim’s prerogative’. Lang (1994:107) holds that it is the primary victim ‘who is in a position to grant or refuse forgiveness’. As I have shown in Section 1.4, this objection has some weaknesses and therefore it is useful and meaningful to make a distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary victims. To summarize, we identify with victims of wrong in various degrees. A wrong done to one person affects others. While the priority of the victim is maintained, according to Govier and Verwoerd (2002c:108), the forgiver status is expanded to secondary victims (family and close friends) and tertiary victims (community and society). Third parties can forgive, but good reasons are needed, for example a personal connection to the harm (Griswold 2007:119; MacLachlan 2008:218). In political situations, the question of forgiveness by secondary and tertiary victims is of great importance, especially in contexts where atrocities have been committed and the primary victims are dead. To say that surviving victims should never forgive, is to recommend non-forgiveness; it can haunt communities that have the desire to keep the memory of the victims alive. It is to close the door to the possibility of reconciliation or peaceful co-existence. Govier (2002:94) notes that ‘to restrict all forgiveness to primary victims is, in effect, to recommend non-forgiveness and enduring hatred and resentment, for the many large-scale political offenses characterized by killing’. Furthermore, public figures, political actors and spokespersons for groups as elective representatives can forgive as primary, secondary or tertiary victims. Nelson Mandela, for example, forgave his jailers as primary victim and then spoke on behalf of black communities who suffered under the apartheid regime. Forgiveness by an official institution has authority that other third-party forgiveness may not have and so political leaders have the appropriate authority to forgive as secondary or tertiary victims for an entire group. Indeed, political bodies may make gestures of forgiveness and give or receive official apologies.

Another objection to political forgiveness is that it cannot be unconditional in the sense that there is no calculation toward a reward or benefit. Some writers, such as Jankélévitch (2005:156), assert that true forgiveness is unconditional and has no limitations, even when a crime cannot be justified, explained or understood, even when the wrongdoer shows no remorse and even when the wrongdoing is very grave. True forgiveness is for him an act of grace; it represents a theoretical limit point, is beyond reason and the dictates of justice. Jankélévitch (2005:117) sees it as a miracle, indescribable, a gift and an act of grace. This means that the victim may forgive without the wrongdoer even knowing. However, unconditional forgiveness may not address the pain and suffering of victims after atrocities nor acknowledge what had happened. Gobodo-Madikizela (2008:339) says that in the light of post-conflict human rights violations in the present generation, unconditional forgiveness seems no longer realistic. Vandevelde (2013:270) finds that, while this kind of forgiveness can work between two individuals, it can seal the fate of political forgiveness. If a community forgives, ‘it needs to decide to do so and thus must engage in a discussion, evaluation, agreement and anticipation of risks and benefits for the community. For political forgiveness to work, the parties must come to an agreement on what is to be forgiven and to whom and by whom’. Conditionality is one of the constitutive elements of political forgiveness. It is based on conditions and makes some demands. In the aftermath of serious wrongdoing, many victims may be dead and there will be secondary and tertiary victims that may be harmed. When a community leader is harmed, for example, his family and the broader community are also affected; they are secondary and tertiary victims.

A third objection to political forgiveness is that groups cannot forgive. Bash (2007:115) says one cannot speak of groups forgiving or being forgiven. Groups do not exist with the same markers and attributes of personal identity as human beings and ideas of personal moral agency and responsibility are integral to forgiveness. Govier (2002:85-92) counters this by saying that, because groups are composed of individuals, there are ways in which individual attributes may support group attributes and she also explores the issue of group forgiveness. Govier claims a group can be thought of as having a certain quality distributively in so far as most of its members share that quality. She uses the example of the Dutch, as a group, that will be tolerant if all or most Dutch individuals are tolerant. There is not a logical difficulty in attributing qualities to groups in this distributive sense. However, group dynamics and history can influence those attributions. All qualities of individuals are not purely individual; beliefs and attitudes of individuals are usually developed in a social context, for example The Netherlands has a history of tolerance going back centuries. Furthermore, not all attributive qualities of groups are distributive; some attributions are collective. Govier (2002) uses the example of a larger group that has a ten-member executive that enables it to make decisions and undertake actions on behalf of the group. The executive decision is a group decision, not the decision of an individual, and is attributable to the larger group because of the authorized institutional status of the executive. From the deliberations of the executive emerge actions, decisions and policies that characterize the whole. The authorized leader's actions and statements are representative of the group and can be ascribed to the whole group in a non-distributive way.

3.2.5 Group forgiveness

To turn to the idea of group forgiveness, it is necessary to establish that groups can be agents responsible for wrongdoing; groups can suffer wrongful harm; and groups can have feelings, attitudes and beliefs about various matters. First, Govier (2002:85-92) argues that some actions cannot be explained solely as the actions of individuals. She quotes May (Govier, 2002:87-88) who asserts that in groups people are related to each other, which gives the group a capacity to act. May (in Govier, 2002) underlines the idea that organised groups can act, but so too can unorganised groups such as mobs. Despite the fact that a mob is not organized, such a group is a random collection of individuals with a common purpose. Some acts are not individual acts; they are group acts and cannot be explained in terms of the action of an individual. No individual can perform some actions alone, for example storm a building or free some prisoners. Govier claims that if collective action can be attributed to a mob, so much more it can be attributed to more structured groups. She says: 'The actions of groups are performed by individual members related to each other in various ways so that what they do can constitute group actions' (Govier, 2002:88). Groups can act.

Secondly, Govier establishes that groups can be harmed. Individuals can be harmed, but often an individual may be harmed because of group membership, for example bad treatment or discrimination. If an individual is harmed in this way, other group members may fear the same treatment. Govier (2002:89) argues that 'one does not have to be personally harassed, looted or beaten to be harmed', but one may be harmed by what happens to other individuals in the group, for example the killing of Tutsis in the Rwanda genocide on the ground that they are Tutsis. She remarks that we can talk of collective harm in cases where collective land or buildings or artefacts are destroyed. Clearly, groups can suffer harm.

Thirdly, because groups can act, they can have beliefs, feelings and attitudes in the light of their acts and decisions, for example the boycott from Muslims worldwide because of the Mohammed cartoons in Norwegian newspapers. They are distinguished as a group of people, namely Muslims, from the acts they have performed. Because of the nature of the act, various beliefs and attitudes are attributed to it without which the action would not make sense.

Govier (2002) finds that these actions are justified as explaining the decisions and policies that the group has collectively undertaken. Groups can remember harms done to them and they can respond with rage. Groups can experience anger, hatred and revenge towards other groups. If negative emotions and attitudes such as rage can characterize groups, so can positive attitudes such as compassion and trust. If groups can act and suffer harm, surely they can accept apologies and forgive?

While political forgiveness is attuned to a plurality of ways in which its meaning may reverberate, it is clear that groups do deliberate about policies, actions, what to believe and what attitude to adopt. Above, I claim that an institution or collective, as a group, can be responsible for wrongdoing, can be harmed and can have beliefs and attitudes. Groups can act through their policies and practices and may harm others in such a way. Groups can also have positive attitudes such as compassion, trust, respect or forgiveness and act thereon. Thus, it seems logically possible for groups to forgive and that there is no objection to political forgiveness that holds. However, in the framework of individuals, groups and forgiveness, it should not be inferred that where there is forgiveness between individuals, there is forgiveness between groups. Nor that where there is insufficient forgiveness between individuals that there is an absence of forgiveness at group level. Two nations could forgive each other for violent conflict through their leaders, but it is not to say that all the individuals of the one nation forgive all the individuals of the other nation. An example is the political forgiveness of the Americans and the Japanese after World War II. However, this does not mean that all the Japanese are forgiven for the surprise attack on the US Pacific fleet at the Hawaiian naval base named Pearl Harbour in 1941. The Japanese attack prompted the United States to formally enter World War II and ended with the Japanese surrender after the utter devastation of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This also does not mean that all the Americans are forgiven for the bombings. Nevertheless, individuals cannot be understood without association to their relationships and groups. Neither can a group be seen as distinct from its members. Govier and Verwoerd (2002b:192) write that ‘every individual has a location, a background culture, and a network of roles and relationships within which he or she has shaped his or her identity. Although the individual and group levels are importantly distinct, they are also significantly interconnected’.

3.2.6 Forgiveness and reconciliation

With the objections against political forgiveness cleared, a brief look is needed at the rich relationship with another concept, namely political reconciliation. Both these linked concepts can further social reconstruction in the aftermath of human rights abuses and can possibly cancel estrangement between erstwhile enemies. In fact, it may be impossible to separate the two concepts in the political arena, as political forgiveness seems to be closely connected to some processes of political reconciliation. Elements such as truth-telling, victim acknowledgement, the reparation and restoration of human dignity, trust and respect are crucial to political forgiveness and reconciliation. There exists a vast literature on political reconciliation and although there is no consensus about what political reconciliation is, it is generally thought upon as the rebuilding of political relationships and the moral reconstruction of individuals and collectives through processes that may involve truth-telling, the acknowledgement of guilt, restoring of human dignity and compassion, including arbitration and negotiation. It is a process that occurs over a long time. Moon (2004:186) notes that political reconciliation ‘seeks to shape the political imagination of transition, governing the “moral reordering” of national communities in the wake of conflict by addressing gross violations of human rights perpetrated against civilian populations by, mainly, the state and its agents’.

Verdeja (2004:39-42) defines reconciliation as ‘the successful reintroduction of former enemies into the same social, political and possibly moral spaces, where interactions are ruled by norms of tolerance and respect rather than violence'. He includes two dimensions in his definition. The first has a quasi-legal component that includes negotiation, arbitration and decision-making in such a way that political enemies become political opponents. The second element deals with active engagement with normative issues of accountability, truth-telling and victim acknowledgement. Verdeja suggests four levels of reconciliation as ideal types, namely political, legal, civil society and personal levels. The normative issues must be addressed at each level for reconciliation to take place. All this is, of course, on an ideal level. He gives the example of truth commissions and tribunals that address issues of victim recognition, factual accounts of the past and accountability at a legal level, but do not exhaust all the demands for reconciliation. Society elites, civil society actors and political elites may influence public discourse, prevent closure of debates and challenge accounts of the past. In practice, reconciliation does not develop smoothly at all levels. Its complex character means that development at one level may be insufficient for success at another level. Verdeja (2004:40) calls it a 'disjunctured and uneven' process that does not unfold harmoniously.

3.2.7 A model for forgiveness

In her book, *A moral theory of political reconciliation*, Colleen Murphy (2010:1) writes that 'political reconciliation … is one of the most important challenges for societies attempting to democratize following periods of repressive rule or civil conflict characterized by widespread and systematic human rights abuses'. However, she resists linking reconciliation to forgiveness as she takes the road of the Emotional Model of forgiveness, which sees forgiveness as the overcoming of reactive negative emotions (Murphy, 2010:9-13). For her, forgiveness depends on a willingness to overcome resentment and hurt and to trust that the wrongdoer is not the sum total of his deed. According to her, the primary emphasis of political reconciliation should be the ending of violence and the conditions that make violence possible. Political reconciliation is equal respect for individuals and a ‘reciprocal sharing of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation; and an institutional structure that is based on the rule of law and political, economic and social institutions …’ (Murphy, 2010:190). Murphy’s objection emerges from theoretical reliance on a picture of forgiveness from the Emotional Model (Section 1.2.1) as being not applicable to political situations. With this she dismisses forgiveness and procedures that will ‘affirm victims’ and give them control over their trauma and psychological healing, which are first steps that could lead to groups of people living and working together in a nation-state with common goals.

On the other hand, the Multidimensional Model of MacLachlan, as discussed in Section1.4, is useful for its political application. This model has many advantages of analysing forgiveness in the aftermath of human rights abuses. The biggest benefit is that it can address both the everyday wrongdoings of individuals and the large-scale questions of political reconciliation in a single philosophical account. The Multidimensional Model allows for varied acts of forgiveness that can manifest as affective, cognitive and/or socially performative. However, it is not without limits. The context in which an act of forgiveness arises, namely the characters of the victim and wrongdoer, their relationship and the extent of the harm done will determine the nature of a particular act of forgiveness. As McLachlan (2008:258) remarks, ‘we forgive for a multiplicity of reasons’ that are drawn ‘from the context of the harm, the wrongdoer’s subsequent behaviour and the forgiver’s anticipation of future states of affairs’. Forgiveness usually takes place between a victim and a wrongdoer, but the multidimensional account also allows for less typical scenarios (discussed in Chapter 1), for example forgiving unrepentant, absent or hostile wrongdoers. I have further indicated that in the Multidimensional Model, the victim is not the only one that can forgive, but also secondary and tertiary victims can forgive. The model extends also to accounts of the unforgivable. This model does not bracket forgiveness as conditional or unconditional or sharply divide it from other moral concepts that cannot be understood singularly.

3.2.8 Elements of political forgiveness

In the aftermath of violent conflict, groups come together to agree to cease such activities as looting, bombing, shooting, burning, raping and torture. Traditional UN Peacekeeping sometimes facilitated such non-violent co-existence. However, Govier (2002:141-144) comments that non-violent co-existence 'is not sustainable if past wrongs are unexamined' (Govier, 2002:143); the groups will have to be managed and some kind of trust and respect must be established. Where there is no forgiveness, if the past is not acknowledged and there is no truth-telling, memory of the wrongdoing is feasible to end up in unending cycles of violence, as such alienated groups live close to each other but do not work together or have common goals. An example is the Macedonians and Albanians who lived together in non-violent co-existence (as described by the New York Times of 30 May 1999 and quoted by Govier, 2002:142), but a year later, there were Albanian guerrillas seen performing in Macedonia, escalating the danger for conflict. In such a situation every action and statement will be seen as deceitful and underhanded and will lead to violence. Groups will be distrustful towards each other, bitter and resentful, which will hamper joint undertakings.

People living together in a nation need more than just co-existence. They need to be able to work together for a common future. This requires overcoming their fear and distrust of each other. Linda Ross Meyer (1999:1520) says basic public trust is 'the necessary beginning for any human interaction – buying a cup of coffee at McDonald's, walking across a street on a green light … basic public trust is necessary for simply leaving the house in the morning'. By trusting each other we presume others' 'competence and basic decency' (Murphy, 2010:81). As essential elements of political forgiveness (Amstutz 2007:566, Griswold 2007:29), acknowledgement of the past and truth-telling can be a major step towards forgiveness, commitment to reform, trust and cooperation, without forgetting or condoning the wrongdoing. Political forgiveness needs the past to be remembered and acknowledged, but excludes seeking revenge against previous enemies while groups come together to continue discussing conflicting events. Resentment to wrongdoing is a natural response and some groups may remain angry for some time. It is not uncommon to grant forgiveness when there is still some resentment (Neblett, 1974:270). Schaap (2003:79-80) suggests that a letting go of resentment as well as a willingness to forgive ‘creates a space for truth-telling’. In truth-telling, the wrongs done are set in a biographical context and ‘this leads to a kind of understanding that confirms our perception of the past and the injury perpetrated against us’.

3.2.9 Truth-telling

To examine past wrongs is difficult and complicated. Victims get the chance to voice the ‘unspeakable’ and wrongdoers are faced with the after-effects of their deeds, with the pain and suffering they have caused. By acknowledging what they did to whom, wrongdoers are re-humanizing the victims and at the same time restoring their own humanity. Wrongdoers cannot undo the deed, but their acknowledgement can help victims heal. Gobodo-Madikizela (2002:23) suggests that wrongdoers’ acknowledgement of the victim’s pain transforms the image of the victim as object to the victim as human other. Acknowledgement of what happened can be a way to healing. As Norval (1988:259) notes: ‘The past is recalled so that it becomes possible to leave the past behind’. It does not mean that the past means nothing, but it is a way in which to make sense of what happened.

Murphy (2010:144-166) says that remembering is also a way in which a community expresses self-understanding and that the narrative of victims can detail the circumstances of the abuse and can reveal the grievances of social groups. Murphy suggests that the larger political community is then able to see and understand the reasons why victims experienced anger and indignation. The past is obviously not directly reacquired because our memory is influenced by a range of personal factors. Blustein (2000:9) says memory ‘does not reside solely in the memory of a person’, but also ‘in the memory of those with whom he or she has come into contact and is in this sense a public phenomenon’. We need other people to help us construct what happened. In hearing the narrative of the different parties, attempts can be made to form a coherent narrative of the past.

Truth-telling does not need a unitary account of the past or seek to unify different perspectives on the past or close off debate or plurality. In truth-telling, the actions of the wrongdoers are made ‘intelligible’ by an understanding of where they come from. Ricoeur (2004:30) says memory consists ‘… in a duty not to forget’. Truth-telling is then not about forgetting what went before or condoning it, but ‘engaging with the collective meanings and narratives by which our former enemy might have made sense of his life as, for instance, a freedom fighter rather than a terrorist’ (Schaap, 2003:80). By engaging in collective meanings, common ground may be found in a world of diverse perspectives. Forgiveness is given meaning through this engagement with others and the plurality of ways of the involved parties. As Schaap (2003:85) says: ‘… the willingness to forgive invites the other to politics’.

Truth-telling and acknowledgement are inevitably made in public for a public record and may have legal implications. It is of course difficult to establish how much truth is enough for political forgiveness. Truth-telling may be partial or shady or defensive. Acknowledgement and apology do not mean that wrongdoers are no longer guilty. If wrongdoers try to downplay or cover up the deed, it could be a second injury to the victims. Some testimonies given at the TRC were very evasive, for example the testimony of Mandela’s former wife Winnie who was linked to the murder of Stompie Seipei was very murky and not expressed with sincerity. In this regard, Crocker (1999:49, as cited in Digeser, 2001:144) makes a useful distinction between ‘forensic truth’ that deals with ‘information about whose moral legal rights were violated, by whom, how, when and where’. He also mentions ‘emotional truth’ that deals with the ‘psychological and physical impact on victims and their loved ones from rights abuses and the threat of such abuses’. The importance of the plea is that it publicly acknowledges wrongdoing and also human dignity and helps victims to get rid of burdensome emotions.

3.2.10 Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement is especially valuable in reaching forgiveness after mass atrocities (Chapman 1999:247), as it makes it easier for the victims to forgive. Govier and Verwoerd (2002a:74) see acknowledgement ‘as the basis of moral apology’. A person acknowledges wrongdoing and the apology ‘presupposes moral agreement’ on the wrong act between the wrongdoer and the victim (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002a:70). Apology and acknowledgement may include gestures of respect, acknowledgement of ill treatment or responsibility and expressions of regret. Govier and Verwoerd (2002a:69-73) identify three dimensions of acknowledgement. First, the wrongdoer acknowledges responsibility for the act or for the group that he represents. Second, s/he acknowledges the human worth of the victim. Third, s/he acknowledges legitimate feelings of anger and resentment in the victim. Govier and Verwoerd show how the TRC process illustrated all three dimensions. More than 70 000 alleged violations were reviewed and more than 20 300 victims gave their statements of the wrongdoings against them (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002a:80). Issuing apologies as acknowledgement for moral wrongs featured strongly at the South African TRC. The victims said that ‘public announcement that they have been violated was an important step in the restoration of their human dignity’ (Govier &Verwoerd, 2002a:70).

Govier and Verwoerd (2002a:80) explain that acknowledgement as apology is not the only way to express acknowledgement. It may also be expressed in other ways, for instance by memorials or by actions undertaken to benefit victims, but accompanied by no apology.

3.2.11 Moral and practical amends

Govier and Verwoerd suggest that acknowledgement as apology is sometimes more important than compensation, especially in cases of insult, defamation and loss of status. Other cases before the TRC suggest that moral amends are closely related to material amends, for example practical ways and concrete measures to undo the damage to the victims, which may include material amends or improved attitudes. Govier and Verwoerd (2002a:73) write that '[a]n apology in which there is no willingness to undertake any practical measures of reparation is likely to seem insincere or hollow'. They quote Rev. Mpambani's parable of the bicycle as an example (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002a:72) that forgiveness or reconciliation do not cancel the crime and that sometimes restitution is necessary:

> There were two boys living opposite each other. John stole a bicycle from Tom and then after a year John came to Tom and said: "Tom, I stole your bicycle and what I need now is reconciliation". Then Tom looked at John and said: "Where is my bicycle?" He said: "No, I am not talking about your bicycle now, I am talking about reconciliation".

For Govier and Verwoerd (2000a:73), practical gestures include efforts to improve attitudes and relationships.

3.2.12 Emotions in public

Truth commissions have been a source of truth-telling and acknowledgement over the last decades. Institutional apologies are usually made in public and for the public record and norms of public behaviour call for low emotionality in public space. It is thus not necessary for acknowledgement to include any form of emotion, but sometimes public ceremony does include truthful tearful gestures and sometimes insincere gestures. However, most of the time political forgiveness takes place without any public emotions being displayed. MacLachlan (forthcoming:17) says ‘public “personal” displays are, at best, a distraction from the real political work to be one and, at worst, a strategic ploy for “cheap grace” or an easy exit strategy’.

3.2.13 Examples at the TRC

The amnesty in return for full disclosure in South Africa was a way of ‘reckoning with the past rather than wiping the slate clean’ (Schaap, 2003:77). At the TRC, survivors and wrongdoers could come forward and give full statements. Not all victims were willing to forgive and to let go of anger and hatred and in some cases victims wanted to forgive, but did not know who to forgive, for example Babalwa Mhlauli who testified before the TRC about her father’s murder. Sicelo Mhlauli, one of the Cradock Four, worked against injustice in a rural community. The police detained, tortured and murdered them. Mhlauli was stabbed 68 times and acid poured on his face. Babalwa gave her testimony and then wanted to know who killed her father. She said that she wanted to forgive, but did not know who the wrongdoer was. In many other cases where the victims’ sufferings were acknowledged, forgiveness was communicated. An example is the two widows whose husbands were killed by Eugene de Kock - nicknamed Prime Evil - who received instruction from his superior. During his TRC testimony, de Kock requested a private meeting with the widows where both parties’ lawyers were also present. Afterwards the widows described the meeting as a touching experience because de Kock made a moving plea for forgiveness and they, in tears, nodded their forgiveness. Although de Kock was granted amnesty for most of his crimes, he was handed a life sentence for the other crimes (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2002:17). He was recently released on parole.

Acknowledgement of the wrongdoing goes a long way to recognizing the victim’s humanity. At the TRC, forgiveness was based on acknowledgement in the form of public confessions and a variety of gestures of acceptance. Victims may accept or reject the apology and, where a group may not have official leadership, outstanding persons with less formal positions may accept or reject for the group. In the case of pseudo-forgiveness, it is usually a scheme to gain power over others by displaying moral superiority. Sometimes a victim may be so angry that s/he keeps a sense of grievance alive as a defence and decides not to forgive. Other barriers to forgiveness may be fear that the transgression will be repeated, fear of appearing weak, loss of the benefits of victim status and the belief that justice will not be served (Exline & Baumeister, 2001:144-147).

3.2.14 Disadvantages and advantages of the TRC

Did the TRC succeed in developing a history of the past as the basis for a shared future? A major question was whether findings reached their intended audience. The TRC opted for a narrative rather than legal or analytical approach and held public hearings throughout South Africa, which enabled them to break through the former ‘culture of silence’ (Chapman, 1999:250). The benefits were the extensive media coverage of the abuses that gave dignity to many victims and also the social impact of the process of public testimony. The disadvantage is that the TRC report is a more descriptive account than an in-depth effort to characterize the abuses that went on, draw conclusions and make recommendations. However, Chapman (1999:254) quotes Simpson, director of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, as saying it would be a mistake to judge the TRC on its final report as it would not, under the best circumstances, be able to reflect the full complexity of thirty-five years of apartheid.

The South African TRC has been criticized that it sacrificed justice for reconciliation, but in fact the TRC did not prevent some of the apartheid perpetrators from being prosecuted and at the same time offered healing to individuals, human relationships, and even entire societies through political forgiveness. Political forgiveness seems to be able to address situations in which the limits of justice are reached.

Other limitations include the assumption by the TRC that the amnesty provisions would motivate wrongdoers to come forward voluntarily. Chapman (2007:51, 56) writes that top civil servants did not come forward and apparently destroyed incriminating evidence. Some wrongdoers were reluctant to acknowledge their wrongdoing or to offer compensation to victims, while the victims sought truth about the human rights violations and the perpetrators and wanted reparations. Chapman (1999:252) says that not as much truth was revealed as they expected and that, at the close of the TRC process, the award of reparations was still pending. Simpson, as quoted by Chapman (1999:254) asserts that the great value of the TRC was its process rather than its end product. In the final analysis, the TRC's legacy may depend as much on future developments in South Africa as on its own contributions.

On the negative side, South Africa does not appear to have the resources or commitment across communities to grapple effectively with the legacy of racism and poverty, or to undertake profound social and economic restructuring to overcome divisions and inequalities. The high crime rate is also worrisome. On the positive side, South Africa has held two multi-party democratic elections and now functions under a constitution that recognizes fundamental human rights and the rule of law. Jones (1999) recommends that careful attention be paid to the formation and education of the next generation of South Africans.

3.2.15 Brief critical assessment of political forgiveness

Recent years have seen a growing recognition in societies of the significance of forgiveness and a need to reconstruct the events that caused the offence. Deeply divided societies are looking for ways to come to terms with their past and forgiveness may become a turning point and a new way of thinking about the offence or trauma that happened. Although forgiveness is an interpersonal phenomenon, the effects resonate at social and political levels as well, particularly through the encouragement of social tolerance and mutual respect.

While political forgiveness is attuned to a plurality of ways, it seems that the elements of apology, truth-telling and acknowledgement by group representatives and individuals and forgiveness by individual victims and groups are an essential part of the process. Forgiveness is promising in this respect, as it underlines the humanity of both offender and victim, and the repair of social association and peace as meaningful. Where victims do forgive, it is as much for their own healing as it is for the advantage of the offender and for the common world they inhabit. Individuals, groups and societies can forgive, but the uncertain process is made more likely when there are acknowledgement and truth-telling, trust, respect, commitment to reform and, in some cases, implications for restitution or legal liability.

Reflection on acts of forgiveness and relationships that is appropriate to the political, reveals that acts of forgiveness are rarely without political dimensions. Forgiveness arises in the aftermath of wrongdoing and injustice and the reasons we have to forgive are dependent on the relevant context, which means the political position of the forgiver and the wrongdoer must be taken into account. These reasons are applicable to public life as well, taking into account that political decisions are almost always strategic and usually a calculation of agendas and interests. Political decisions appeal to power and control and thus lack the quality of some interpersonal reunions. The particular political relationship does perhaps not produce the thoughtful reasoning as an interpersonal relationship.

While reasons to forgive sometimes accommodate political strategies, for example, when the former apartheid regime of South Africa handed over power in exchange for amnesty, forgiveness nevertheless seems morally significant as forgiveness achieves something, or it transforms the wrongdoing, or it is something valuable that we offer to the wrongdoer. The process of political forgiveness initiates the reconciliation of former enemies, social and moral reintegration and the ending of cycles of violence. It also assists in the rebuilding of a political community and is favourable for the social and political health of communities.

The regeneration of trust and respect is a gradual process, but if the political sphere holds on to common respect and maintains appropriate political relationships, then such respect is ground to forgive others.

3.3 Vladimir Jankélévitch (1903 – 1985)

Turning to the views of selected philosophers, I start with Vladimir Jankélévitch who has written about the notion of forgiveness after World War II. As the world emerged from war and political violence, he started dealing with the ontology of evil and ethics in many of his books. In his book, *Le pardon*, of 1967 (translated in 2005: *Forgiveness*), Jankélévitch defends the possibility of forgiving in a fresh way, but is wary of offering a substantive theory of forgiveness. Forgiveness resists standard attempts at elucidation and Jankélévitch (2005:5) sees such attempts as missing their mark, identifying actions that may appear to be forgiveness but in the end amount to no more than a kind of superficial pseudo-forgiveness. Consequently, a big part of the book discusses what forgiveness is not. For Jankélévitch (2005:5), only a negative analysis of forgiveness is possible: ‘Indeed, the more that forgiveness is impure and opaque, the more that it lends itself to description. As a matter of fact, only an apophatic or negative philosophy of forgiveness is truly possible.’

3.3.1 A negative analysis of forgiveness

He is careful not to connect forgiveness to a set of necessary and sufficient conditions or to set a criterion for forgiveness. He writes about how certain responses to wrongdoing, for example forgetting, excusing, understanding (intellection), and reconciliation bear resemblance to forgiveness, but are just ways to deal with certain situations and are not forgiveness. Forgiveness is for him quite separate from forgetting, and forgetting is not a reason to forgive wounds and affronts that were received (Jankélévitch, 2005:27). What Jankélévitch says is that the old cliché of 'forgive and forget' is unrealistic as forgiving certainly does not mean to literally forget. The passing of time may influence passions such as resentment, but 'time cannot get rid of the having done' (Jankélévitch, 2005:42). After some time has passed, the victim may say 'enough is enough' (2005:58), but according to Jankélévitch, that is not forgiveness, as forgiveness is not an instrument to achieve certain goals, for example the overcoming of bitterness.

Jankélévitch (2005:93) says: 'excuses only what is excusable'. The excuse exonerates the guilty person due to the fact that it understands. When the facts are understood, the rational excuse recognizes the offender as innocent, that there is nothing to forgive, and the offender is exonerated (Jankélévitch, 2005:159). Excusing the wrongdoer is saying that he is innocent of the wrongdoing. Forgiveness, on the other hand, presupposes guilt and recognizes the wrongdoer as a free agent who is responsible for the offence. If a person has done nothing wrong or cannot be held responsible for what he did, we cannot forgive him. All excuses, however, do not exonerate, sometimes they only mitigate. Jankélévitch (2005:159) says that forgiveness becomes important in those circumstances where there is no valid excuse for the wrongdoing, when the inexcusable and the unforgettable are forgiven without reasons. Understanding the circumstances of the wrongdoing will sometimes provide mitigating excuses, but does not justify the wrongdoer's actions. With mitigating excuses, the supposed wrongdoer's responsibility is diminished to some extent. In the case of exculpatory excuses, it is eliminated. Consider an insult from your boss. If the insult happened because the boss was under huge stress, because he was going to be audited the next day or because his child was in hospital, there is a mitigating excuse for what he did. If, however, he did not know what he was doing due to new medication that he was taking, he would not be responsible for his deeds.

For Jankélévitch (2005:65), to understand is not to forgive, because that would imply that forgiveness is the automatic result of comprehension. The old cliché ‘to understand all is to forgive all’ does not hold. He (2005:88) says that forgiveness is a much stronger act than comprehension, a more offering and sacrificial decision than knowledge. Jerome Neu (2002:27) writes that sometimes we forgive precisely because we do not understand, but warns that the path from not understanding to forgiveness is scattered with problems. He quotes Feinberg (1970, as cited in Neu, 2002) who asserts that the old saying of ‘to understand all is to forgive all’ is turned around where crime cannot be explained in terms of ordinary motives, for example a well-to-do man shoplifting women’s brassières, repetitive exhibitionists, and non-violent child molesters.

In the same way, if forgiveness is given merely as a means to reconciliation or rehabilitation, true forgiveness is not the issue, but simply reconciliation or rehabilitation (Jankélévitch, 2005: xxii). After World War II and its political violence, truth commissions investigated crimes, perpetrators were put on trial and debates were run at political levels. Formulations of forgiveness that make reconciliation a fundamental goal (such as Desmond Tutu's *No future without forgiveness*) or make rehabilitation a fundamental goal measure the value of forgiveness on some external metric. Jankélévitch emphasizes that such formulations are just a pragmatic response to a legacy of violations. Forgiveness is not directed at some end or to achieve a certain goal.

3.3.2 Forgiveness is relational, an event and memory

Jankélévitch (2005:34) puts the ethical relationship between victim and wrongdoer at the centre of his theory of forgiveness and holds that true forgiveness ‘is a gratuitous gift and a personal relationship with the other’. To just overcome the hatred for the wrongdoer is not true forgiveness, but is only overcoming of hatred. True forgiveness means that the misdeed and the wrongdoer are forgiven. It is ‘total or not at all’ (Jankélévitch, 2005:153). One’s view on the subject of the wrongdoing has not changed, but the relation with that person is changed and no form of restitution is required; hatred is altered into love (Jankélévitch, 2005:152). Forgiveness is a dialogue for Jankélévitch. Through forgiveness, the relationship between the victim and the wrongdoer changes as it breaks through the wall of guilt and allows the possibility of a future relationship (Jankélévitch, 2005:122). Reconciliation requires giving reasons, but then it is no longer a gift or forgiveness.

Jankélévitch (2005:35) describes forgiveness as an instantaneous event and an act, not a mind-set, ideology or an attitude. He (2005:27) says ‘time is irreversible succession and continual innovation’, but also ‘conservation and perpetuity’. He believes that time involves a duration that is punctuated by the instant and he relates forgiveness to this idea of the instant. Friendship develops over time, but love and forgiveness only occur in the instant. These events do not come from reason, deliberation or time to occur. He (Jankélévitch, 2005:153) writes: ‘Forgiveness itself forgives in one fell swoop and in a single, indivisible élan, and it pardons undividedly; in a single, radical, and incomprehensible movement, forgiveness effaces all, sweeps away all, and forgets all. In one blink of an eye, forgiveness makes tabula rasa of the past, and this miracle is for forgiveness as simple as saying hello and good evening.’

Forgiveness is not a process that matures with time; rather it just happens spontaneously and sudden. It does not forgive up to a certain point or up to a certain date (Jankélévitch, 2005:154), but is total and definitive. Jankélévitch

(2005:117) sees it as a miracle, indescribable, a gift and an act of grace. For him, forgiveness falls into the same category as other spontaneous acts such as love, courage and charity. Forgiveness is an active moral choice; it occurs without reasons, outside the dictates by justice or utilitarian calculation. To demand retributive justice is in conflict with love and forgiveness and this is an irresolvable tension. Forgiveness is certainly compatible with the forgetting of minor wrongs of slight importance such as stepping on someone's toe or interrupting someone's meal, but when a more serious injustice is suffered, it is seldom wiped from consciousness. Memories are powerful things; it is reasonable to feel hurt and anger when negative things happen to us and memory of the offence does not just decay. Jankélévitch (2005:56) writes '… in order to forgive, it is necessary to remember'.

Concerning the limits of forgiveness, Jankélévitch leans towards the idea of absolute forgiveness in his book *Forgiveness*. He asserts that true forgiveness is unconditional and has no limitations, even when a crime cannot be justified, explained or understood, even when the wrongdoer shows no remorse and even when the wrongdoing is very grave. Caputo, Doodley and Scanlon (2001:7) describe this forgiveness as 'infinite, endless and ongoing'. According to Jankélévitch (2005:156), something can be inexcusable, but not unforgivable: 'Forgiveness is there to forgive precisely what no excuse would know how to excuse: for there is no misdeed so grave that we cannot in the last recourse forgive it'. He says that even the inexcusable and the incomprehensible are not unforgivable. The forgiveness of an atrocity is 'the supreme recourse and the ultimate grace … the only thing … that there remains to do' (Jankélévitch, 2005:106). What Jankélévitch says here is that there is no unforgivable and that forgiveness defies reason as it plays a role precisely in those situations where 'evil' is incomprehensible, unjustifiable and unintelligible. 'Such is the miracle' (Jankélévitch, 2005: xxii). He speaks of a 'hyperbolic ethics', an ethics that is above laws and norms.

3.3.3 A change to conditional forgiveness

In a later article, Jankélévitch (Jankélévitch & Hobart, 1996) rejects unconditional forgiveness and puts a condition on forgiveness. Vandevelde (2013:270) writes that despite Jankélévitch's inspired description of forgiveness as infinite, he now argues that some acts cannot be forgiven. Jankélévitch refers to forgiveness in the frame of the Nazi genocide and crimes against humanity. He claims the death of forgiveness in an article, 'Pardoning died in the death camps' (Jankélévitch & Hobart, 1996:567). In the article he protests against the French parliament that debated the possibility of declaring the German crimes prescriptible. Kaposy (2005:219) describes an imprescriptible crime as eternally prosecutable and a crime that exceeds history – for Jankélévitch the Shoah is such a crime against humanity. For him, some crimes are unforgivable, and he says that the Germans cannot be forgiven for two reasons. The first reason is because their crimes are crimes against humanity. 'Crimes against humanity are imprescriptible, that is, the penalties against them cannot lapse; time has no hold on them' (Jankélévitch & Hobart, 1996:556-557). The crimes are against the human essence and to pardon them will equal forgetting. His second reason is that the Germans never asked for forgiveness; there are a lack of remorse and an absence of gestures of repentance (p567). He says that to be pardoned, the Germans must first admit that they are guilty, but they have acknowledged no mistakes, feel in no way responsible for what happened in the Holocaust and they have never asked for forgiveness. Jankélévitch asserts that forgiveness is only possible when the offender confesses his guilt and this makes it a conditional understanding of forgiveness. To him, certain conditions have not been met. He was not insisting that individual Jews could not forgive their German neighbours or even Germany. Rather, his text shows that nothing can restore equilibrium after such monstrous evil (Caputo, Dooley & Scanlon, 2001:7).

3.3.4 Brief critical assessment of Jankélévitch

Jankélévitch’s understanding of unconditional forgiveness is provocative. Verdeja (2005:1-2) describes it as ‘a wholly unique intervention into the present, not dependent on certain criteria (remorse, repentance, etc.), nor directed toward some goal (reconciliation, overcoming anger, moving on, etc.). It is, in other words, neither conditional on the perpetrator's subsequent actions nor an instrument to achieve certain goals’. True forgiveness is for Jankélévitch an act of grace, representing a theoretical limit point, and is beyond reason and the dictates of justice. This forgiveness seems unreachable and takes a turn to a miraculous act of grace, thereby absolving the individual and community of responsibility for the work of forgiveness and making it difficult to execute in the world. Gobodo-Madikizela (2008:339) says that in the light of post-conflict human rights violations in the present generation, unconditional forgiveness seems no longer realistic.

Especially Jankélévitch’s refusal to allow instrumentality poses a problem when looking at crimes against humanity. For him, instrumentality undermines forgiveness and includes cases where forgiveness is given publicly. Verdeja (2005:2) suggests two ways to avoid this problem. The first is that forgiveness should avoid public expression because publicity is an invitation to instrumentality. This makes forgiveness secret-like, given anonymously, so not even the receiver knows about it. However, this undermines the relational nature of forgiveness that is central to Jankélévitch’s theory. The second way is to allow total erasure of memory, but this is problematic for Jankélévitch’s theory as he wants memory to be maintained after forgiveness: ‘Nothing could be more evident: in order to forgive, it is necessary to remember’ (Jankélévitch, 2005:56). As I have discussed in Section 3.2, forgiveness is not a totally isolated faculty, but bears rich connections with other moral concepts such as retribution, reconciliation, transformation and memory. These concepts are rooted in cultural, religious and legal discourses in society, and where crimes against humanity are concerned, the relationship between community and victim cannot be ignored.

The value of Jankélévitch’s account of forgiveness to the debate on political forgiveness is that this account directs our attention to the importance of relations between people and the need to engage in discussion. Against the background of human rights violations, unconditional forgiveness can indeed seal the fate of group or communal forgiveness, as discussed in Section 3.2. If a community forgives, ‘it needs to decide to do so and thus must engage in a discussion, evaluation, agreement and anticipation of risks and benefits for the community. For communal forgiveness to work, the community must come to an agreement on what is to be forgiven and to whom and by whom’ (Vandevelde, 2013:270). Public acknowledgement of the wrong must be done. Parties must acknowledge what has happened in the past as a way to understand the past. From that point, political forgiveness can be initiated as a process towards political reconciliation without the past ‘constantly weighing in’ (Digeser, 1998:716). However, for Jankélévitch, whenever forgiveness is directed toward some end, it is subservient to something outside itself.

Jankélévitch’s change to conditional forgiveness is a point of departure for Jacques Derrida’s analysis of forgiveness, as discussed in Section 3.4. Derrida (2001:37) accuses Jankélévitch of inconsequence and says that Jankélévitch moved from his notion of unconditional forgiveness to a judicial logic of forgiveness, writing that people cannot forgive what they cannot punish. He says Jankélévitch now looks at forgiveness from within a system of laws and ethics and not as an instantaneous, gracious act.

3.4 Jacques Derrida (1930 - 2004)

At the end of a violent twentieth century, Jacques Derrida writes about the question of the possibility of forgiveness in his essay ‘On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness’ (2001). Derrida does not offer an exhaustive philosophical, conceptual or linguistic analysis of the concept of forgiveness, but is more interested in the significance of the idea of forgiveness, and this involves thinking against accepted concepts and inherited meanings.

In the interview-turned-essay, Derrida begins by examining forgiveness in relation to the events of the twentieth century and the emergence of ‘crimes against humanity’ or ‘radical evil’. First, Derrida (2001:28) establishes a globalization of the concept of forgiveness, a notion which is frequently used in recent political discourse as politicians employ the language of forgiveness on behalf of their organizations or states. Derrida is sceptical about the theatricality of these requests (Derrida, 2001:28):

> In all the scenes of repentance, confession, forgiveness, or apology which have multiplied on the geopolitical scene since the last war, and in an accelerated fashion in the past few years, one sees not only individuals, but also entire communities, professional corporations, the representatives of ecclesiastical hierarchies, sovereigns, and heads of state ask for “forgiveness”. They do this in an Abrahamic language which is not (in the case of Japan or Korea, for example) that of the dominant religion of their society, but which has already become the universal idiom of law, of politics, of the economy, or of diplomacy: at the same time the agent and symptom of this internationalization.

When referring to Abrahamic language, Derrida means language from the three global monotheisms, namely Judaism, Islam and Christianity, where forgiveness has some of its roots, as discussed in Section 2.2. This larger heritage, however complex, led to the recent use of forgiveness on different stages and so to a universalization tendency. Derrida then emphasizes a tension within this heritage, namely that the logic of the concept of forgiveness has a double structure which ‘confirms and contradicts the Abrahamic tradition’ simultaneously (Derrida, 2001:34).

Derrida (2001:34, 35) writes:

> It is important to analyse at its base the tension at the heart of the heritage between, on the one side, the idea which is also a demand for the unconditional, gracious, infinite, uneconomic forgiveness granted to the guilty as guilty, without counterpart, even to those who do not repent or ask forgiveness, and on the other side, as a great number of texts testify through many semantic refinements and difficulties, a conditional forgiveness proportionate to the recognition of the fault, to repentance, to the transformation of the sinner who then explicitly asks forgiveness.

For Derrida, these two logics are contradictory, dissimilar, completely heterogeneous, 'irreconcilable but indissociable' (Derrida, 2001:45). They are opposed in character, but are also necessarily connected. These two concepts of forgiveness are what Derrida calls unconditional or pure forgiveness and conditional forgiveness. They are inseparable in practice.

3.4.1 Unconditional forgiveness

He says that, on the one hand, unconditional forgiveness is 'a gracious gift without exchange and without condition' (Derrida, 2001:44) as it does not require moral transformation or a change of heart. It further places no burden on the perpetrator and no restitution to the victim is required. Forgiveness is very much like an unconditional gift, which excludes conditionality. Unconditional forgiveness is pure forgiveness and has a logic of all or nothing. It has nothing to do with 'salvation … reconciliation, redemption, atonement …' (Derrida, 2001:36). It must be outside the world of pardons and amnesty and must 'never amount to a therapy of reconciliation' (Derrida, 2001:41). Pure forgiveness is not affected by other concepts or sets of concepts and is not part of an economy of exchange. If forgiveness is given to seek reconciliation, for example, then it becomes reconciliation and is not pure forgiveness any more. For Derrida, the concept of pure forgiveness is not coextensive with other concepts. He does not deny that there is the unforgivable. However, pure forgiveness is not reasonable and Derrida wants us to take responsibility and face the perplexing difficulty – the forgiving of an unforgivable act. Although such forgiveness cannot be justified, one must struggle and question oneself and face an impossibility to reach a decision to forgive. Derrida declares that the only thing to forgive is the unforgivable (2001:32-33): '… forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. One cannot or should not, forgive; there is no forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable. That is to say that forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible'.

3.4.2 Conditional forgiveness

Conditional forgiveness is for Derrida the opposite of pure or unconditional forgiveness. He contests conditional forgiveness that can only be considered once the repentant has asked for forgiveness and transformed morally, which means that forgiveness would be dependent on repentance or transformation. He (Derrida, 2001:34) says:

> I would be tempted to contest this conditional logic of the exchange, this presupposition, so widespread, according to which forgiveness can only be considered on the condition that it be asked, in the course of a scene of repentance attesting at once to the consciousness of the fault, the transformation of the guilty, and the at least implicit obligation to do everything to avoid the return of evil.

Whenever forgiveness is given for some reason other than pure forgiveness, it is not forgiveness. Only when we think of forgiveness outside of these transactions of economy, can we conceive of a pure forgiveness. Even language itself seems to impose on a pure forgiveness (Derrida, 2001:49):

> As soon as the victim "understands" the criminal, as soon as she exchanges, speaks, agrees with him, the scene of reconciliation has commenced, and with it this ordinary forgiveness which is anything but forgiveness. Even if I say "I do not forgive you" to someone who asks my forgiveness, but whom I understand and who understands me, then a process of reconciliation has begun; the third has intervened. Yet, this is the end of pure forgiveness.

3.4.3 Jankélévitch's forgiveness

Derrida (2001) discusses Jankélévitch's unconditional forgiveness and the later essay by Jankélévitch (Jankélévitch & Hobart, 1996) where Jankélévitch argues for a conditional understanding of forgiveness. Jankélévitch holds that the perpetrators first have to ask for forgiveness before it is granted. The deeds of the Germans in the Shoah are unforgivable to him and he says that the Germans must admit that they are guilty and ask for forgiveness. Derrida takes this inconsistency to be symptomatic of the tension within the concept of forgiveness. Derrida, however, is against a forgiveness that lays down conditions or any burden or debt on the perpetrator. Derrida affirms that forgiveness only starts at this point of unconditional forgiveness and extends even to the Shoah. ‘It furnishes it with discourse and legitimation’ (Derrida, 2001:30). Because a crime against humanity is so difficult to forgive, it is the material for pure forgiveness. Derrida (2001:39) maintains that ‘an act of forgiveness worthy of its name … must forgive the unforgivable …’

3.4.4 Reasons why forgiveness exceeds politics

Derrida (2001:42) gives three reasons why forgiveness exceeds politics. Firstly, he says that the purity of forgiveness is compromised when a ‘third’ is introduced into the process: ‘… forgiveness must engage two singularities: the guilty (the “perpetrator” as they say in South Africa) and the victim. As soon as a third party intervenes, one can speak of amnesty, reconciliation, reparation, etc., but certainly not of pure forgiveness in the strict sense’. For example, justice and law in a society require more than two persons, but when a third (i.e. the law) intervenes it corrupts pure forgiveness for Derrida. Verdeja (2004:34) argues that a third may want to implement reparations, achieve peace or otherwise put the needs of the community above the relationship between victim and wrongdoer. A third can thus also represent the claims of a community, but for Derrida a third compromises forgiveness by the requirements and needs it represents. He wants to separate forgiveness from punishment, penance and expiation and holds that forgiveness must exceed the institutions of law, society and politics (Derrida, 2001:54). When forgiveness becomes an economy of exchange, it becomes meaningless for Derrida.

Secondly, Derrida is worried about the instrumentalization of forgiveness as just a tool to take advantage of certain situations. He is troubled by the harmful, improper use of forgiveness, for instance when heads of state forgive for an improper reason to ‘re-establish normality’ (Derrida, 2001:32) or with another ulterior motive such as reparation of the national unity. He questions if it makes sense to speak of forgiveness in this context. He mentions the example in France, of Cavaillet who voted for the law of amnesty in 1951 to overcome the perceived threat of communism to national unity (Derrida, 2001:40). Such forgiveness is impure as some concepts such as excuse and amnesty are often confused with forgiveness but are not the same and do not signify forgiveness. The same is true for clemency, amnesty and pardon. Derrida gives the example of President Clinton who pardoned the Puerto Ricans who were jailed for terrorism to help Hillary Clinton win her senator’s campaign in New York, where many Puerto Ricans live (Derrida, 2001:47). He further distinguishes forgiveness from any legal and juridical concept such as reconciliation that was used in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, where some perpetrators were relieved from blame, but not forgiven. Derrida tells of a black woman who came to testify before the Commission as her husband had been tortured and killed by police officers. She said that a public institution cannot forgive; only she can eventually (Derrida, 2001:43). Derrida sees all of the abovementioned political examples as political strategies that use forgiveness as a method to an end. For forgiveness to become effective, concrete and historic ‘if one wants it to *arrive*, to happen by changing things, it is necessary that this purity engage itself in a series of conditions of all kinds (psycho-sociological, political etc.). It is between these two poles, *irreconcilable but indissociable*, that decisions and responsibilities are to be taken’ (Derrida 2001:45). Conditional and pure forgiveness are thus inseparable in practice, but are irreducible to each other; they are incompatible with each other, but also necessarily linked. Dooley (2001:145) writes that the desire for pure forgiveness serves to prevent conditional forgiveness to become a forgiveness given only ‘on the condition that the accused appeals for clemency or *gives* of his time, or shows signs that he has repented’. In the end, Derrida remains torn between ‘a “hyberbolic” ethical version of forgiveness’ and ‘the reality of a society at work in pragmatic processes of reconciliation’ (Derrida 2001:51).

Thirdly, Derrida makes a sharp distinction between forgiveness and other moral concepts, such as reconciliation, clemency and pardon, transformation, personal and historical memory. The link between forgiveness and other concepts is mentioned here because it is relevant to what Derrida calls instrumentality. Derrida (2001:40) dismisses these concepts as unacceptable to pure forgiveness as they can be used to ignore past events and can be abused. Verdeja (2004:34) disagrees and says this ‘creates an artificial distinction between forgiveness and other moral faculties’ and fails to illustrate how ‘already existing social understandings of forgiveness inform any given act of forgiveness and the normative impact this has on the larger community’. Following Arendt (1998:256), Verdeja notes that forgiveness may be seen as not a completely isolated faculty, but instead as containing a basic structural similarity with retribution as both aim to end cycles of violence.

At the end of the book, Derrida (2001:59) says: ‘What I dream of, what I try to think as the “purity” of a forgiveness worthy of its name, would be a forgiveness without power: unconditional but without sovereignty. The most difficult task, at once necessary and apparently impossible, would be to dissociate unconditionality and sovereignty.’ Through the repentance of the wrongdoer, the victim is placed in a position of sovereignty and forgiveness is reduced to an economic exchange.

3.4.5 Brief critical assessment of Derrida

Derrida (2001:42) says that the purity of forgiveness is compromised by introducing a ‘third’ into the process because when a third (i.e. the law) intervenes it corrupts pure forgiveness for Derrida. Pure unconditional forgiveness is removed from mediation through the institutions of law, society and politics. Institutional structures must remain unblemished by exchanged relations and forgiveness as just a mechanism for winning votes and allies. Introducing a third may want to present the needs of a community or implement reparations. But precisely because we deal with radical evil crimes, the relationship between victim and community cannot be ignored. Forgiveness does not take place between two individuals only, but takes place in a larger world with communities, a world of human plurality. Verdeja (2004:36) names but a few communities:

> the community to which the victim belongs, the perpetrator’s community, the broader polis to which they both may belong (and may very well include the morally compromised category of bystander) and ever increasing ‘broader communities’ ending with the category of humanity - it is here, … where the crime against humanity as a radical evil gets its peculiar ontological status, for it is seen as a crime noxious to all humans and not simply the affected groups.

Verdeja (2004:37) quotes studies by Staub and Pearlman on forgiveness after the mass atrocity in Rwanda; studies which show how forgiveness always contains a distinctly communal element. The researchers found that victims reached an understanding of forgiveness through discussion with fellow victims and references to communal understandings of the faculty. This is not to say that forgiveness is a strictly public action; it has a private character as individuals forgive wrongdoers, but the consequences of forgiveness are for the community as a whole.

Derrida makes a sharp distinction between forgiveness and other moral concepts. However, forgiveness is not a totally isolated faculty, but bears rich connections with other moral concepts such as reconciliation. Both aim at ending cycles of violence and the reconstruction of social relations. In addition, reconciliation is aimed at the undoing of estrangement between enemies. The link between forgiveness and reconciliation is mentioned here because it is relevant to what Derrida calls instrumentality. Derrida (2001:40) dismisses these concepts as unacceptable to pure forgiveness as they can be used to ignore past events and can be abused. However, it is possible for forgiveness to serve other aims without becoming their mere instrument. It can help to narrow the gap between victim and wrongdoer and it can become a means towards wider reconciliation while still maintaining its transcendent nature. It transcends present circumstances and determines future relations. Forgiveness allows victims to exceed the injury and undo the hold of the past on the future. In this sense it remains transcendental.

The value of Derrida's account is that he draws our attention to the tension between unconditional and conditional forgiveness. Caputo, Dooley and Scanlon (2001:8) say that on the one hand, forgiveness for Derrida is moved by a force to present itself in existing institutions by becoming practically effective, and on the other hand, it is moved by a force of 'hyperbolic becoming', a desire to keep these structures open-ended. On the one hand, Derrida sees conditional forgiveness as a political strategy that uses forgiveness as a method to an end. On the other hand, a rejection of political forgiveness ignores the ways in which forgiveness can contribute to peace and the end of cycles of violence. Pure forgiveness seems to balance what the world passes off as forgiveness.

In a round table discussion on forgiveness (Kearney, 2001:58), Derrida says that 'if we want to embody an unconditional forgiveness in history and society, we have to go through the unconditional and conditional'. The unconditional must always pass through conditions and we are constantly negotiating the distance between them, negotiating 'the best response in an impossible situation'.

3.5 Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)

Arendt writes after World War II and the atrocity of the Holocaust. In *The human condition*, Arendt (1998) proposes three fundamental human activities: labour, work and action. Labour corresponds to the biological life of man; work corresponds with the artificial world of objects man lives in and the unnaturalness of human existence; and action corresponds to our human plurality, to ‘the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world’ (Arendt, 1998:7).

This world is a common world for those who are now in it, but also for those who will come after. According to Arendt, humans can act in the sense of beginning something or starting something new, but anchored in everyday doing and living. As human beings we can act and as human beings we can reasonably expect the unexpected (Arendt, 1998:178). There is a miracle in new beginnings; new people are being born into the world continually, each capable of new action. Arendt (1998:178) writes: ‘The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.’

Arendt reminds us of human natality and says action as beginning ‘corresponds to the fact of birth’ as the ‘actualization of the human condition of natality’ (Arendt, 1998:178). Of the three human activities mentioned above, action has the closest connection with natality as it is concerned with new beginnings and the capacity of beginning something new: ‘To act means … to take an initiative, to begin, to set something in motion’ (Arendt, 1998:177). Arendt also connects freedom with natality as humans are free to act and to begin something absolutely new. However, this freedom is non-sovereign as we do not have control over the consequences of our actions (Arendt, 1998:235). This is because we live in a human world of plurality, a world where others share the capacity for setting things in motion. We start something new, but the consequences of our actions are boundless and it is a ‘predicament of unpredictability’ (Arendt, 1998:235-236). It is unpredictable because of others acting in a plural society, others with different interests and initiatives than ours. Arendt (1998:237) names another predicament namely the ‘predicament of irreversibility’. Action cannot be taken back and has consequences; action is unable to be undone. We have a lack of control over the effects of our action and it can turn out differently from what we intended and we cannot reverse it. Our ability to act can harm another and our ability to begin something new needs the other. Interestingly, the redemption from the predicament also rests on the actions of others: others can forgive us. This predicament of non-sovereign freedom lays grounds for forgiveness in politics. For Arendt then, forgiveness plays an enormous role in political life and depends on plurality.

3.5.1 Forgiveness

Forgiveness is one of two political faculties for Arendt. The other is our ability to make and keep promises. These abilities give us the ‘… will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking …’ in a political society (Arendt, 1998:246). Promise is a remedy for unpredictability and puts up safe places in the ‘ocean of uncertainty’, that is the future (Arendt, 1998:237). By making promises, we try to bring order to the future and make it predictable. Forgiveness, the other political faculty, is the ‘possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility’ (Arendt, 1998:237), allowing us to leave cycles of resentment and revenge behind. Forgiveness helps us to give up resentment of past wrongs and leave it in the past: ‘Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer’s apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell’ (Arendt, 1998:237).

In the irreversibility of public action, Arendt sees political potential for forgiveness along with the capacity to make and keep promises: it implies freedom for political action as it releases the political actor from responsibility of unforeseeable consequences, which enables us to act in a public fashion. Forgiveness can be given with the promise of a better shared future. Arendt sees forgiveness and promise as proper political action and not sentimental at all. In fact, nowhere in her description of political forgiveness can Arendt be linked to the Emotional Model, as discussed in Section 1.2.

3.5.2 The past and the consequences of the deed

An important aspect of forgiveness as an action is that it helps us to undo what has been done (Arendt, 1998:237). Of course, deeds cannot be undone in a literal sense and the wrongdoing cannot literally be removed from the past. Indeed, forgiveness always presupposes a wrongdoing; otherwise there is nothing to forgive. Through forgiveness, the original judgment is not barred, but the judgment that the other is one’s enemy is suspended. As Schaap (2003:82-83) writes: ‘forgiveness undoes the meaning of an original wrong’ … by ending ‘the story that continues to implicate the other in an original transgression’. Forgiveness breaks with the logic of revenge and is not a reactive action, but is a commencement of a new and free action, a surprising and unexpected action. It is not just a reaction to the wrongdoing. Arendt (1998:241) says herself: forgiving ‘is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven’. A willingness to forgive makes room for a platform where past wrongs can be contested. Arendt affirms that forgiveness is not just meaningful for the forgiver, but also for the forgiven. Through forgiveness, trust and respect are established as victim and wrongdoer see each other as living in a common world. According to Schaap (2003:84), ‘forgiveness affirms our shared potentiality to act anew’.

As quoted above, Arendt says forgiveness ‘releases’ us from the consequences of what we have done (1998:237). Forgiveness is the logical correlate of the fact that action cannot be undone. Release is like voiding or annulling a contract. It releases the wrongdoer from his deed, without declaring him of unsound mind. As long as the wrongdoer is connected to the consequences of the wrongdoing, he cannot act anew. Forgiveness frees the wrongdoer to engage in action again. We commit wrongs against each other on a daily base and it is only by forgiving that we can release each other and make it possible for life to go on. Only through repeated mutual release can we ‘remain free agents’ (Arendt, 1998:240). However, the release is not a rescue from the wrongdoing; the wrongdoer stays accountable for his deed just as in punishment, which she calls the alternative to punishment, ‘but by no means its opposite’ (1998:241). A common factor to forgiveness and punishment is that both put an end to cycles of violence.

Through the release in forgiveness, the gradual diminishment of resentment and hostilities are initiated and trust and respect are invited. Through forgiveness, the victims commit to future action not determined by the wrongdoing. Arendt (1998:243) says that respect, ‘because it only concerns the person, is quite sufficient to prompt forgiving of what a person did, for the sake of the person’. The release that forgiveness offers puts the meaning in the past so that it cannot regulate the present. Without forgiveness, all our actions in the future would be linked to the misdeed and its consequences. For Arendt, this does not concern only the future of the wrongdoer, but also that of the victim. Victims and wrongdoers are inhabitants of a common world and need to mutually see each other as such. The wrongdoer is not seen as the sum total of the wrong deed without hope of ever recovering from that deed. Through forgiveness both victim and wrongdoer can acquire identities other than ‘victim’ and ‘wrongdoer’. Schaap (2003:83) comments that ‘this common sense of the world is fragile because it depends on our speaking and acting in public for it to be brought into being’. She

(Arendt, 1998:241) says: ‘Forgiveness and the relationship it establishes is always an eminently personal (though not necessarily individual or private) affair in which *what* was done is forgiven for the sake of *who* did it.’ The disclosure of ‘who’ somebody is, is seen in everything that person does or says. The ‘what’ somebody is, is that person’s qualities, gifts, talents and shortcomings (Arendt 1988:179). In this, forgiveness shares the revelatory quality of action.

Many transitional societies seek to formulate a new constitution, which is certainly an important step, but insufficient to sustain the network of relationships and understandings needed to shape and sustain a shared future. Calling forth Arendt in the context of transitional societies after mass atrocities, Moran (2013:292) quotes Van Marle (2009) as cautioning that a society overwhelmed by law, human rights and constitutional discourse can reduce freedom to commercial and instrumental considerations. This will be far from the active politics of lived community in Arendt’s world.

In transitional societies, something else is needed, namely political forgiveness to start anew. In Arendt’s view, collective responsibility is political. She (Arendt, 2003:149) asserts that two conditions have to be present for collective responsibility: ‘I must be held responsible for something I have not done’ because of my ‘my membership in a group (a collective) which no voluntary act of mine can dissolve’. A government can, for example, accept responsibility ‘for the deeds and misdeeds of the past’. Although they are not guilty of past actions, they accept responsibility. Guilt is about inner attitude, but responsibility is about attitude in the public space. This responsibility that is taken upon ourselves, is the ‘price we pay for the fact that we live our lives not by ourselves but among our fellow men, and that the faculty of action, which, after all, is the political faculty par excellence, can be actualised only in one of the many and manifold forms of human community’ (Arendt, 2003:158). Taking responsibility for one’s past is not done in isolation; we need others whose opinions matter in the process. We struggle to act if we are not forgiven and according to Arendt, we cannot forgive ourselves. We need others to forgive us.

3.5.3 Respect

According to Arendt, Jesus of Nazareth taught the power of forgiveness (see Section 2.2) and claimed that it was not the sole prerogative of God, but that humans could also forgive each other (1998:239). She makes reference to Christian texts, key words from the Greek New Testament and passages from the New Testament to explain forgiveness, but her usage is non-theological and original. In the light of the 'release' that forgiveness brings, it is interesting that *aphiemi* means to send forth, discharge, abandon or dismiss. *Metanoein* means 'change of mind' and 'trace back one's steps' (1998:240, note 78). Caputo (2006:19) gives a more upbeat translation of 'being of a new heart'. Arendt sees forgiveness then as especially a human power and the logical consequence of the fact that only humans have the power to act in contrast to animals that have no power to forgive and to act. Arendt remarks that forgiveness is often seen as a Christian concept used only in personal relationships, but for her it is a secular and political concept. She takes forgiveness out of the 'narrowly circumscribed sphere' (1998:242-243) of love – 'only love can forgive' and associates it rather with respect. Love destroys the space needed between people to create a plurality of politics, while respect allows the necessary distance that prompts forgiving when it comes to political situations. Respect is for her on the same level as Aristoteles's *philia politike*, a kind 'of friendship without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us' (Arendt, 1998:243). If the political sphere holds on to this common respect and maintains appropriate political relationships regarding our personhood as speaking and acting beings, then such respect is ground to forgive others. MacLachlan (2008:295) describes Arendtian respect as 'the willingness, however grudgingly, to continue to share an intersubjective, political world'.

3.5.4 The unforgivable

The unforgivable and the limits of forgiveness arise in Arendt's work and she points out that certain acts cannot be relieved by forgiveness: 'we can neither punish nor forgive' acts that are 'radical evil', as they 'transcend the realm of human affairs and the potentialities of human power' (Arendt, 1998:241). Arendt writes after World War II and the atrocity of the Holocaust, and as seen in the literature on forgiveness, the Holocaust has become something against which to measure the unforgivable. She asserts that deeds that are not punishable can also not be forgiven: 'men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish and that they are unable to punish what has turned out to be unforgivable' (Arendt, 2003:241). Radical evil cannot be punished, for punishment will not restore what has been done and no punishment will ever be enough. Radical evil can also not be forgiven because of the enormity of the act that is outside conventional categories of crime and because we cannot access the meaning of forgiving such acts.

Arendt later discusses the crimes at the Nuremburg trials, trials which later became the basis of judicial concepts dealing with crimes against humanity. Arendtian commentator, Pettigrove (2006:487-488), recounts how Arendt writes on the evil motives and intentions of Eichmann, the Nazi concentration camp commander, and describes his deeds as the desk murderer who followed Nazi orders. Before the trial, she focuses on radical evil that could not be explained from human comprehensive motives, but later comes to the conclusion that Eichmann committed these terrible deeds with the thoughtlessness of evil intensions. Arendt found an explanation for the existence of (radical) evil that did not need formulation in moralistic terms. Eichmann merely complied thoughtlessly to his job, with monstrous results. She writes about the controversial notion of 'banality of evil', the unspeakable acts against fellow human beings, and says that it is ordinary human beings who commit these crimes against humanity. According to Gobodo-Madikizela (2002:18-19), the phrase 'banality of evil' has come to represent the complicatedness and entanglement that lead humans to commit unspeakable acts. One cannot simply say that ‘evil deeds are unforgivable’ as it does not ‘capture the complexity of the social contexts within which gross human rights abuses are committed’. Pettigrove (2006:487-488) suggests that Arendt’s contemplation on the Eichmann trial raises the question ‘whether, in the end, she thought there were any real instances of willed evil’ and whether there really are moral monsters.

3.5.5 Brief critical assessment of Arendt

According to Schaap (2006:627), Arendt gives three reasons why forgiveness is an inherently political faculty. Firstly, forgiveness presupposes plurality, the presence of equal but distinct others. Secondly, forgiveness shares with political action its initiatory character. Thirdly, forgiveness has the revelatory quality of action.

It is in politics that the human being finds itself in a predicament of non-sovereign freedom that requires forgiveness. For Arendt, forgiveness is a way of dealing with this predicament without recourse to morality or the institution of sovereignty. Through action, individuals distinguish themselves and reveal who they are and it is this quality that is shared with forgiveness since ‘*what* was done is always forgiven for the sake of *who* did it’ (Arendt, 1988:241).

Arendt’s account shows that the Emotional Model fails to capture our understanding of forgiveness. What is offered in forgiveness is not a report of recent or future emotional conditions, but a commitment to a future course of action that is not determined by the wrongdoing, as wrongdoers are released from the consequences of their actions.

For Arendt, forgiveness can be political as the political world is a world divulging commonness and shared by people with diverse, conflicting viewpoints and competing interpretations. To live together in such a world, it is necessary to release others from their past wrongs and forgive them in order to begin something new. What is attractive about Arendt’s view is that by breaking this cycle, forgiveness creates the possibility of a new future not determined by the past. Doing this, we remain free agents who are capable of new initiatives.

In such moments of forgiveness, trust is advanced and respect initiated to underpin a common world and political space. Arendt’s politics is an active politics of lived community and for her, political forgiveness is vital in the political world. A culture of mutual political respect grounds forgiveness and is also a way to maintain the personal aspect of the political.

According to MacLachlan (forthcoming:22), Arendt’s conception of politics is ‘highly agonistic’. She says political citizens live with one another, but not for one another. That means forgiveness does not symbolize political closure, as that would mean the end of politics. Rather, ongoing involvement in politics is what drives political forgiveness in the first place. As Moon (2004:195) says political debate ‘is a difficult, restless and unceasing negotiation’.

CONCLUSION

Forgiveness is very much a part of our everyday lives and is an interpersonal moral relation between two individuals. It makes sense for a theory of forgiveness to take into consideration all aspects and practices of everyday forgiveness. As a concern in ordinary life, acts of forgiveness vary in their expression and forgiveness is possible in thought, feeling, word or deed depending on the particulars of the situation and if those involved see it as forgiveness. Rather than preserving a core notion for forgiveness and identifying certain features of forgiveness like the Emotional Model, it is more fruitful to imagine it as an overlapping range of moral practices. Thus, I follow the Multidimensional Model that sees forgiveness as a moral practice and offers a workable option for political forgiveness. If conceptual space is made for descriptions of forgiveness in performative and social terms, the concept is more easily adapted to a political account, without fears of distortion of the concept of forgiveness.

Typical instances of forgiveness may take place between a victim and wrongdoer, in which the wrongdoer repents and asks for forgiveness and where the victim grants it. However, for a theory of forgiveness to be comprehensive, a look is needed at the many types of relationships that exist. Forgiveness may arise from these many types of relationship, with political relationships being one type of relationship. That means the account can be extended to large group situations where the question of forgiveness by secondary and tertiary victims is of great importance, especially in contexts where atrocities have been committed and the primary victims are dead.

The extension of personal forgiveness to political forgiveness involves a number of challenges. Some of the objections include that only the victims can forgive; forgiveness cannot be unconditional; and groups cannot forgive. Having argued that there are no unanswerable philosophical objections to forgiveness as a political concept, I reflect on acts of forgiveness that are appropriate to the political. I understand the ‘political’ to include relationships between states, between a government and its citizens, between collectives, between groups - ethnic groups, minority groups and political organisations - between individuals presenting a larger community and between individuals whose relationship is politically charged in the process of making political society possible. This is in line with a claim by Hannah Arendt (1998:237) that forgiveness is a political faculty in that political activity always concerns itself with the conditions of its own possibility.

Acts of forgiveness are rarely without political dimensions. Forgiveness arises in the aftermath of wrongdoing and injustice and the reasons to forgive are subject to moral evaluation and will depend on the characters of the victim and wrongdoer, the extent of the harm and the relationship between them. To forgive for good reasons contributes to moral values like moral sensitivity, moderation of resentment, self-reflection and reassessment. Reasons we have to forgive are dependent on the relevant context, which means the political position of the forgiver and the wrongdoer must be taken into account. These reasons are applicable to public life as well, taking into account that political decisions are almost always strategic. Political decisions appeal to necessity, negotiation, power and control and thus lack the quality of some interpersonal reunions. The relevant political relationship does perhaps not generate the thoughtful reasoning as an interpersonal relationship. While reasons to forgive sometimes accommodate political strategies, for example, when the former apartheid regime of South Africa handed over power in exchange for amnesty, forgiveness nevertheless seems morally significant as forgiveness achieves something, or it transforms the wrongdoing, or it is something valuable that we offer to the wrongdoer. The nature and value of forgiveness can be seen in its social value, the ability to calm anger and resentment, the prevention of revenge and vengeance and the generation of trust and compassion.

I have argued against any simplistic, unitary accounts of necessary and sufficient concepts for political forgiveness. While political forgiveness is attuned to a plurality of ways, it seems that the elements of apology, truth-telling and acknowledgement by group representatives and individuals and forgiveness by individual victims and groups are an essential part of the process. Forgiveness is promising in this respect, as it underlines the humanity of both offender and victim and the repair of social association and peace as meaningful. Where victims do forgive, it is as much for their own healing as it is for the advantage of the offender and for the common world they inhabit. Individuals, groups and societies can forgive, but the uncertain process is made more likely when there is acknowledgement and truth-telling, trust, respect, commitment to reform and, in some cases, implications for reparation or legal liability. The process of political forgiveness initiates the reconciliation of former enemies, social and moral reintegration, the ending of cycles of violence and agreements to power-share. It also assists in the rebuilding of political communities and is favourable for the social and political health of communities.

For Arendt, forgiveness can be political, as the political world is a world divulging commonness and shared by people with diverse, conflicting viewpoints and competing interpretations. To live together in such a world, it is necessary to release others from their past wrongs and forgive them in order to begin something new. By breaking this cycle, forgiveness creates the possibility of a new future not determined by the past. Doing this, we remain free agents who are capable of new initiatives.

In such moments of forgiveness, trust is advanced and respect initiated to underpin a common world and political space of verbal and not-violent disputes. Arendt's politics is an active politics of lived community and for her, political forgiveness is vital in the political world. A culture of mutual political respect grounds forgiveness and is also a way to maintain the personal aspect of the political. If the political sphere holds on to this common respect and maintains appropriate political relationships regarding our personhood as speaking and acting beings, then such respect is ground to forgive others.

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