Glen Pettigrove. *Forgiveness and Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780199646555 (cloth). Pp. xvi + 174. £32.50.

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Glen Pettigrove is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, and the author of numerous articles in moral philosophy, political philosophy, and philosophy of religion. This appears to be his first book, and it contains two things: a descriptive analysis of what forgiveness is, especially in its relationship to love (chapters 1-5); and a normative analysis of the conditions under which forgiveness is permissible, and of what makes it admirable (chapters 6-8).

Pettigrove's purpose and method are standard for anglophone analytic philosophy. That is, he aims at an understanding of forgiveness by appeal to the range of ways in which we talk and think about it. When that range is chaotic and resists clarity and order (the usual thing), some stipulative moves are made in order to clarify the conceptual terrain. Thought-experiments, in the form of mini-narratives, are the principle device used to support the stipulative clarifications. Andrea arranges to meet Reuben for coffee, but he is late and doesn't acknowledge the fact; what should we say about the conditions under which he merits forgiveness? Or, James is offended by what he takes to be Clarice's lack of respect for him, and expects an apology; is he right to do so, and what ought the apology to bring about? And so on. If the understanding so produced is fit for the purpose, the philosopher may go on to argue a normative position from it, and Pettigrove is certainly interested in doing this. He is concerned not only with what the phenomenon is, but also with how forgiving may contribute to human flourishing; and he would like to convince his readers of what he takes to be true about these things, or at the very least that the account he offers is more adequate to what we say and do in this sphere than are its rivals.

Pettigrove's account of what someone who forgives is doing involves the following elements: first, the absence on the forgiver's part of "hostile reactive attitudes" towards forgivee-as-wrongdoer, together with a commitment that those attitudes will remain absent in the forgiver's future thoughts, feelings, and actions directed toward the forgivee; second, commitment by forgivers to the well-being of their forgivees; and third, the cultivation of positive attitudes toward them. Forgiveness can be understood as an act, emblematically present in the utterance, 'I forgive you'; but it may also be understood as a matter of character, an inclination of a more-or-less habitual sort, to forgive in the sense indicated. Further, forgiveness does not require that the forgivee has wronged the forgiver directly: one can, on Pettigrove's understanding forgive someone for wrongs done to others. And, forgiveness does not require, though may often involve, the thought on the part of the forgiver that the forgivee deserves or merits forgiveness (apology from the forgivee is not required, for instance); rather, forgiveness may be offered gracefully, as an act of love, whether the forgivee knows about it or not, likes it or not, responds to it or not.

Pettigrove's account of forgiveness is intimate with his account of love. Love, at least ideal-typically, yields forgiveness, because lovers attend to their beloveds, noticing them, appreciating them, and wishing what is good for them. Forgiveness does all this gracefully (without attending to merit) when the beloved is thought to have done some wrong, whether to the forgiver or to another. Love, therefore, sits well with and ought yield forgiveness; and while forgiveness need not rise to love, it can perhaps be thought of, on Pettigrove's account, as an under-laborer in love's service.

There are some controversial elements in this account of forgiveness, elements that place Pettigrove at odds with much of the anglophone literature on the subject.

Principal among these is the question of standing. Most philosophers who have written about forgiveness during the last generation or so assume that only a victim, one to whom a wrong has been directly done, has standing to forgive the perpetrator, and it's certainly true that much of our unconsidered language about forgiveness assumes this. If you have besmirched my reputation, stolen my money, or beaten me, it seems odd for someone else to forgive you for these things. What's it got to do with them, after all? But Pettigrove rightly points out that we do sometimes speak and think of forgiving someone for something they did not to us but to another or others. I can forgive you, perhaps, for insulting my friend; or for the expression of unjustified hatreds or angers directed toward some group to which neither of us belongs. An understanding of forgiveness ought be capacious enough to accommodate this kind of thing, and that offered by Pettigrove certainly is. I rather think, however -- and it's not clear to me whether he would agree -- that instances of this sort all in fact involve (perceived) injury done to relations between me and the one I'm forgiving, even if the offence that occasions the forgiveness wasn't directly aimed at me. I'm much less likely to forgive you for insulting someone else's friend than for insulting mine, for instance.

Another point of disharmony between most accounts of forgiveness currently in play and Pettigrove's is the question of merit, and considering this takes us beyond Pettigrove's description of forgiveness, and into his normative account. Is it permissible (proper, defensible) to forgive someone who doesn't deserve it, someone, for instance, who hasn't apologized for the offence in question, and who consistently refuses to do so? Such people aren't, on Pettigrove's account repentant; they don't, as a theologian would say, exhibit contrition. May they be forgiven? Pettigrove thinks they may, which is the same as to say that the central elements in the act of forgiving may, for him, be performed unilaterally. This position requires him to make a careful distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation: assimilating the two would require a bilateral account of both, and since reconciliation is unambiguously bilateral, Pettigrove must keep forgiveness separate from it. He must also defend himself against the charge that forgiveness of the uncontrite implicitly condones what they have done, or that it is, in some more relaxed way, imprudent.

The heart of Pettigrove's account of forgiveness is evident in the way he meets these charges. He accepts that forgiving the uncontrite may condone and may be imprudent; he accepts, too, that such forgiveness ought not be encouraged as a matter of general principle -- it can too often be damaging to the forgiver. But he does not accept that such forgiveness is always wrong, and the principal reason for this is that forgiveness as an act expresses a moral judgment about the offence forgiven independently of the forgivee's response to it. Pettigrove writes, "Had there been no wrong, there would be no cause for forgiveness. Forgiveness expresses the victim's rejection on moral grounds of the wrongdoer's moral failing, indicating that it is the kind of moral failing that stands in need [of] forgiving" (120). This is important. Forgiveness, on Pettigrove's unilateral model, is a means for expressing not only the forgiver's renunciation of ill-will toward the forgivee, and so on; but also the judgment that a wrong has indeed been committed. Forgiveness, even when ignored or spat upon, expresses the forgiver's understanding of what has happened, and in that way it can preserve the victim's self-respect in the face of being wronged.

It's worth contrasting Pettigrove's account of forgiveness with that implied by what, for the West, is the event that displays the fundamental grammar of forgiveness. I mean what is said and done in what Catholics call the rite of penance or the rite of reconciliation. This is worth doing as a matter of general principle; but there are particular reasons for doing it in the case of Pettigrove's book, because it displays evidence of theological learning. Paul and Augustine and Aquinas are all quoted, and some of Pettigrove's language, especially his emphasis on (human) forgiveness as an act of grace, has direct theological antecedents of which I am sure he is aware. In the rite, penitents confess their sins, express contrition and the resolve to amend their lives, receive absolution, understood as the forgiveness of sins, and a penance, something to be done after the rite is over. If the contrition is absent or the penance left undone, the forgiveness offered is not received because the confession has not been a genuine one. On this understanding, forgiveness (what God preveniently and always does) and reconciliation (effected by the penitent's imploring and receipt of what God does) are bound intimately together. And the extent to which one will feel uneasy about the particulars of Pettigrove's account is the extent to which the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation are bound in one's mind as they are in the rite. It would be an offence against the grammar of the rite to say that the penitent's sins are forgiven if she isn't contrite: contrition is among the conditions of the possibility of forgiveness.

Many, though not all, of our ordinary ways of speaking and thinking about forgiveness are closely linked to a bilateral understanding of this sort. That is why it often sounds odd, even offensive, to say that forgiveness can occur unilaterally. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Pettigrove is right that there are, in the human sphere, goods proper to a unilateral expression of a kind of love that judges a wrong to have been done and that nonetheless intends the removal of resentment for it now and in the future, together with a commitment to the wellbeing of the wrongdoer. And I suppose 'forgiveness' is as good a word as any for this sort of act.

Pettigrove's is a fine, lucid, carefully-argued book. It exhibits care not only for precision in thought and expression, but also for human well-being: the book is passionate, in an understated way, about the transformative good that forgiving, properly understood, can effect. This means that it is not only those concerned to understand forgiveness who will benefit from reading it, but also those concerned to forgive well, to themselves be good forgivers. The second class, I should think, has considerably more members than the first.