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Abstract: The philosophical literature on forgiveness has ignored a distinction that has a profound bearing on the ethics of forgiveness. The distinction in question is between attitudes and practices. Most authors who write on forgiveness focus on the attitudes that are called for in the aftermath of wrongdoing. And they attempt to derive their account of the ethics of forgiveness directly from the ethical profile of those attitudes. However, attitudes underdetermine what one ought to do. I argue that assessing what one should do also requires one to consider practices. Although I focus on forgiveness, the argument generalizes to a number of other areas of ethics. Taking the distinction between attitudes and practices seriously will change the way we approach not only the question, 'When should one forgive?' but also, for example, 'When should one be grateful?' 'When should one blame?' 'When should one honour?' or any other activity that includes an attitude as a defining feature.

Philosophers have an attitude problem. No doubt our colleagues in other disciplines have thought so for a long time. However, the problem they have in mind and the ones that interest me are different. They are concerned with the contents of our attitudes. I am troubled by their form and ethical significance.

The immediate catalyst for my puzzlement is Miranda Fricker's lovely paper, 'Forgiveness – An Ordered Pluralism,' in which she seeks to explain the 'practice' of forgiveness. She borrows her paradigm of the practice from Peter Strawson's description of the 'reactive attitude of forgiveness.'¹ However it is not entirely clear what either an attitude or a practice is, which makes it difficult to determine how they might be related or how they might bear on forgiveness. My aim will be to shed light on four questions: 1) What is an attitude? 2) What is a practice? 3) How are they related? 4) What can reflecting on the relation between attitudes and practices teach us about the ethics of forgiveness? The answer offered to the last of these questions challenges the approach standardly adopted in the philosophical literature on the ethics of forgiveness. I extend the argument to a range of other activities in which attitudes play a central role, as well.

I. Attitudes

Attitudes are all the rage. A scan of recent publications will reveal lively discussions of reactive, fitting, pro, con, propositional, and non-propositional attitudes. It would be nice if these discussions were all talking about variants of the same fundamental type, namely, attitudes. It would reduce the likelihood of philosophers talking past one another. The other terms – reactive, fitting, propositional, etc. – could then be used to group together instances of the type that share features with one another they do not share with other members of the set. However, a quick look at the literature makes a unified account of attitudes seem unlikely. Bertrand Russell, for example, presents belief as a paradigmatic case of an attitude, whereas Charles Leslie Stevenson defines 'attitude' in contrast to 'belief'.² It appears more likely that Stevenson employed the term for one purpose, Russell another, A.C. Ewing a

¹ Fricker, 'Forgiveness,' 13.

² Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (George Allen and Unwin 1940) 21; C.L. Stevenson, 'The Nature of Ethical Disagreement' (1941), reprinted in *20th Century Ethical Theory*, Steven Cahn and Joram Haber, eds (Prentice Hall 1995) 140.

third, and P.F. Strawson a fourth. The literatures that grew up in response to these works carried on using the term in ways best explained by their different origins, rather than by a basic sense they all share. Nevertheless, there is a way in which we might impose a measure of order across these different conversations, picking out a core sense of ‘attitude’ that can do the work most of those employing the term would have it do.

Since the attitudes with which Fricker is concerned are reactive attitudes, let us start with them. What is a reactive attitude? Strawson provides examples – resentment, hurt feelings, forgiveness, gratitude, love – but not a definition.³ However, R. Jay Wallace, offers one on his behalf.

[T]o hold someone to an expectation is essentially to be susceptible to a certain range of emotions in the case that the expectation is not fulfilled, or to believe that the violation of the expectation would make it appropriate for one to be subject to those emotions.... Emotions that are constitutively linked to expectations, in this sense of holding someone to an expectation, are the reactive attitudes....⁴

If, as Wallace proposes, reactive attitudes are emotions concerned with holding one another to various expectations then, removing ‘reactive’, we might take ‘attitude’ to be a synonym for ‘emotion’.

One problem with this proposal is that, although it fits ‘reactive attitudes’ like resentment quite well, it fails to cover some of Strawson’s other central cases. For example, Strawson says, ‘To ask to be forgiven is in part to acknowledge that the attitude displayed in our actions was such as might properly be resented and in part to repudiate that attitude for the future ... and to forgive is to accept the repudiation and to forswear the resentment.’⁵ Accepting someone’s repudiation of a past attitude is not an emotion. If the repudiation comes in an apology and its acceptance is an acceptance of that apology, it might not look much like an attitude either. It might look more like an action within a culturally-defined context of social interaction. (We shall return to this issue in Section III.) Foreswearing resentment also looks like an action. Or perhaps more accurately, it looks like a series of actions. Resentment often doesn’t disappear in an instant, so foreswearing will require an ongoing commitment to rooting it out or refusing to nurse it when it pops up again. Although this involves something with a felt dimension, it does not look like an emotion, so it does not appear to fit Wallace’s mould.

A second problem with taking ‘attitude’ to be synonymous with ‘emotion’ is that it fails to make sense of the conceptual map within which Strawson situates reactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes are a subset of what he calls ‘participant attitudes’, which he defines in contrast to ‘objective attitudes’. Participant attitudes are attitudes ‘of involvement or participation in a human relationship.’⁶ One is susceptible to attitudes like resentment and

³ Strawson, ‘Freedom and Resentment’ (1962), reprinted in *Free Will*, Gary Watson, ed. (Oxford 1982) 62.

⁴ Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Harvard 1996) 21.

⁵ Strawson, 63.

⁶ Strawson, himself, is not entirely sure whether he wishes to speak of a single participant attitude which is distinguished from a single objective attitude or of a range of participant attitudes and observer attitudes. Sometimes he speaks of ‘the participant attitude’ and at others of ‘participant attitudes’ (Strawson, 66-67). I have opted to speak of attitudes (plural), both because it is nearer to ordinary language – which takes fear, repulsion, pity, gratitude, and anger to be distinctive attitudes – and because it requires less tinkering with Strawson’s text to make his usage internally consistent.

gratitude because one is involved in and cares about a personal relationship with (at least some) others. Objective attitudes, by contrast, are paradigmatically those of the detached, the uninvolved, the non-participant. They are the attitudes that result from adopting an objective stance toward some feature of the world. For instance, the therapist hears her client's outburst not as a personal affront but as a symptom of an unresolved neurosis. The politician sees immigrants not as persons in need but as a faceless population whose movements must be managed. Even if all participant attitudes were emotions, the same could not be said for objective attitudes. What is distinctive of the latter is that they are, to some degree, disengaged. That is not to say they might not be 'emotionally toned'.⁷ The politician's impersonal stance could be coloured by disgust. The therapist's detachment might be supported by feelings of superiority. But they need not be emotionally toned. In many instances they are distinguished by a lack of emotion.

Together, these observations give us compelling reason not to construe attitudes as emotions. We need a broader category that includes emotions but is not exhausted by it. How much broader? We might follow Bertrand Russell's lead and go very broad, indeed. Russell writes,

There is another very important class of words ..., namely such words as "believe", "desire", "doubt", all of which, when they occur in a sentence, must be followed by a subordinate sentence telling us what it is that is believed or desired or doubted. Such words, so far as I have been able to discover, are always psychological, and involve what I call "propositional attitudes".⁸

As Russell construes it, a propositional attitude is any psychological state that can take a proposition as its object. An attitude might, then, be construed as any psychological state that can take an object.⁹ I want to suggest that this casts the net too wide. But before I do, it is worth noting that it at least succeeds in limiting attitudes to psychological states, which is more than can be said for some. Willard Quine, for example, omits the psychological dimension of propositional attitudes, including actions like saying, urging, and endeavouring among their ranks: 'The constructions "believes that", "says that", "wishes that", "endeavors that", "urges that", "fears that", "is surprised that", etc., are what Russell calls expressions of propositional attitude.'¹⁰ Having recognised that a feature of Russell's theory of language generalises to various other grammatical constructions, Quine fails to notice that a number of things that share this grammatical feature are not only not attitudes, they aren't even psychological states. If we are looking for an insightful way of tying together the vast territory philosophers call attitudes, it seems best to avoid eliding basic distinctions between language and mind.

Let us return, then, to the suggestion that attitudes are psychological states that can take an object. The problem is that, at least as we use the term in ordinary language, I can have a thought without having any attitude toward its object whatsoever. Consider the thought 'Dunkin Donuts was first opened in 1948.' The thought can occur to one without one's being amused or dismayed, puzzled or alarmed, and without believing, doubting, or even

⁷ Strawson, 66.

⁸ Russell, 65.

⁹ This appears to be how Arthur Prior uses 'attitude' in *Objects of Thought* (Oxford 1971) 116.

¹⁰ Quine, *Word and Object* (MIT Press [1960]/2013) 136.

conjecturing as to its truth. Perhaps under ordinary circumstances, such a thought would be accompanied by an attitude. If I knew that the first Dunkin Donuts opened in 1950 in Quincy, Massachusetts, I might reject the thought. If all I remembered was that it was founded in the middle of the last century, I might wonder whether the thought was right. Perhaps the attitude it triggers is one of fondness, given the years I lived in Boston. What these clear cases of attitudes possess, but the simple thought lacks, is valence. There is some sense in which we are for or against these attitudes' objects.

Let me propose, as a starting point for unifying the diverse field of things philosophers call attitudes, the claim that an attitude is a valenced mental state. This is Stevenson's view: 'The term "attitude" ... designates any psychological disposition of being for or against something.'¹¹ Such a claim clearly applies to reactive attitudes. Gratitude is a way of being for (and resentment against) its object. Does it work for the propositional attitudes Russell took to be paradigmatic, namely, belief, doubt, and desire?¹² Desire is easy. It is a textbook case of being for something. The relevant sense of 'being for' need not be an all-things-considered being for, of course. I might desire another piece of cake at the same time I desire not to have or act on that desire. Nevertheless, to the extent that I desire another piece, I am for having it.

What about belief and doubt? Surely, I can doubt something (e.g., that my preferred political candidate will win the election) while being strongly for it and I can believe something (that she lost) while being against it. Nevertheless, as long as we make room for different types of valence, as we must, there is scope for thinking of believing and doubting as valenced mental states. When I believe something, I take it to be true. And I take being true to be an epistemically desirable feature of the thoughts to which I give credence. Similarly, when I doubt something, I am uncertain of its truth and I take that uncertainty to be an epistemic defect of the claim under consideration or the evidence offered in its support. Hence, in believing or doubting a proposition I could be said to have an epistemically valenced attitude. One way of carving up the domain of attitudes, then, will be in terms of different types of valence. There will be, among others, doxastic, conative, ethical, and aesthetic attitudes.¹³

The upshot of the foregoing discussion is an account of attitudes according to which they are mental states that a) can take objects, and b) are valenced. Such a unified account would reduce the risk of moral philosophers, psychologists, and the folk failing to communicate with epistemologists, philosophers of mind, and metaphysicians. It would also enable us to talk about each of the attitude types identified at the beginning of the section. 'Pro' and 'con' group attitudes in terms of their valence, 'fitting' and 'unfitting' in terms of their correctness, 'propositional' and 'non-propositional' in terms of their object, and 'participant' and 'objective' in terms of an agent's mode of engaging with that object.

Despite these virtues, readers raised on Quine will, no doubt, be unpersuaded by the rough sketch provided above. So I offer them an alternative that they should find more palatable. They are invited to think of 'attitude' as having both a wide and a narrow sense. When used in the wide sense, 'attitude' designates a mental state that can take an object. The narrow

¹¹ Stevenson, 140.

¹² See Russell, 21, 65, 94, 164, 167, 259, and 291.

¹³ An advantage to such an approach is that it would allow us to use a fitting-attitude theory to account for the full range of value properties.

sense adds valence. For reasons just mentioned I take all of the attitudes discussed in the remainder of the paper to have valence, and thus to be attitudes in both the wide and the narrow sense. However, the arguments of Section III do not require the reader to agree on this point. She could read all subsequent references to attitudes as employing the wide sense of ‘attitude’ and still follow the argument.

II. Practices

Thus far I have clarified what is meant by an attitude. However, Fricker intends to tell us something about practices. What, then, is a practice? Philosophers and social theorists frequently talk about practices, including cultural, religious, linguistic, epistemic, testimonial, interpretive, moral, and social practices. As with ‘attitudes’, it would be useful if there were a single underlying type, of which these were variants. However, different theorists use the term in different ways. For instance, many would consider promising a paradigmatic example of a practice,¹⁴ but Stanley Cavell argues that promises are not practices because they precede practices and bring them into existence.¹⁵ As with ‘attitudes’, how subsequent writers employ the term is best explained by the conversation of which they are a part, and little attempt has been made to link these conversations to one another. Again, a more unified account would be illuminating and might help reduce the degree to which theorists misunderstand one another.

The first step toward such an account is to note that a practice is a form of activity. In this respect, theoretical uses of ‘practice’ follow ordinary language. For instance, people commonly say, ‘I was raised Catholic’ or ‘I studied medicine’ before adding ‘but I’m not practicing.’ In such cases, the speaker knows something about church doctrine or medical theory but is not engaged in the forms of activity associated with this knowledge.

However, not every form of activity is a practice. Swallowing, for instance, is a form of activity but not a practice. What else is required? Andreas Reckwitz identifies a number of other features commonly associated with practices. ‘A “practice”,’ he writes, ‘is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.’¹⁶ Although Reckwitz, himself, is not clear on this point, the features he mentions need not all figure in every practice. For example, prayer is a widely recognised religious practice but, while it may involve objects, bodily movements, and emotions, it need not. At a minimum, routine, complexity, and thought are required to make a form of activity a practice.

Something like Reckwitz’s account looks promising and covers a range of things we might pick out with the English term ‘practice’. However, as it stands, it fails to capture a feature of practices that most theorists deem important. To see what is missing, consider the Sunday morning routines of two early-risers, Chen and Jen. Each Sunday, Chen rises with the sun, goes to the kitchen, and prepares something to eat. While eating he thinks about the activities of the day ahead and, once finished, goes to a building on the other side of town where he

¹⁴ See John Rawls, ‘Two Concepts of Rules’ [1955], *Collected Papers*, Samuel Freeman, ed. (Harvard 1999) 20-46.

¹⁵ Stanley Cavell, ‘Rules and Reasons,’ *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford 1979) 297.

¹⁶ Andreas Reckwitz, ‘Toward a Theory of Social Practices,’ *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2002) 249.

will spend his day. Jen does the same. It would be natural to say they share a routine. However, each of them has adopted this routine independently of the other. They have never met, live in geographically and culturally isolated locations, speak different languages, are part of different religious communities, and are unaware of each other's existence. Furthermore, the foods they eat will have different effects on them. Chen's will provide him with nutrition for running around the court at his tennis club, whereas Jen's will induce a headache and purge her system in accordance with the norms of her religious community. In such a case, although Chen and Jen are engaged in the same 'routinized type of behaviour,' which involves thought and a degree of complexity, it would be misleading to say they participate in the same practice.

To be 'a' practice there must be a more-than-merely-conceptual connection between their routines. Without such a connection, we have a type of behaviour. We may even have what in ordinary language we might call Chen's practice and Jen's practice, by which we mean their characteristic ways of thinking and acting when in certain kinds of circumstances.¹⁷ But we do not have a single practice. Why not? Practice theorists take practices to have explanatory value. One can appeal to a practice to answer both, 'What did she do?' and 'Why did she do it?' A pattern – even a repeated pattern – by itself cannot do that. It could be useful for predicting but it cannot explain. For a form of activity to be 'a' practice, in the theorist's somewhat specialised sense, something must link its instances together.

Three kinds of link might be proposed: 1) shared attitudes, 2) shared functional roles, or 3) shared norms. Raimo Tuomela's account of social practices is built around the first, namely, an intentional connection that he calls a 'shared we-attitude'. A person has a *we-attitude* when a) she has an attitude that b) she believes other members of her group also have and c) she believes that, like her, the other members of her group believe the attitude is held by its members.¹⁸ (Thus, what Tuomela calls a we-attitude technically consists in three attitudes, at least two of which are beliefs.) It is a *shared we-attitude* if she is right about (b) and (c). Imagine that each workday morning Jen meets Ben and they head to the whisky distillery where they work. If Jen, as malt master, desires to make a peaty island-style whisky, and believes Ben shares this desire and a reciprocal belief, then Jen's desire is a we-attitude. If Ben does, in fact, have this desire and believes Jen does too, it is a shared we-attitude. On Tuomela's account, Jen's and Ben's form of activity will be a practice if part of their reason for engaging in it is their shared we-attitude. '[T]he core sense of a social practice is a repeatedly performed collective social action because of a certain shared we-attitude, where the we-attitude must be a "primary" reason for the repeated activity, one without which the agents would not take part in it.'¹⁹

While a shared we-attitude is one way to forge a link between different agents' activities that can explain what they are doing and why, it is not the only way. To return to the case of Chen and Jen, not only do their behaviours lack an intentional connection, they also play different functional roles. The function of Chen's routine is to get him to the tennis club with the energy he needs to play the game. The function of Jen's is to empty her intestinal track and provoke reflection on suffering and the fragility of life. If, instead, their actions shared

¹⁷ When speaking of practices in this sense, we use a possessive rather than a definite or indefinite article. We also tend to require some degree of commitment on the part of the actor to behaving in this way. Such a commitment is part of what enables 'his practice' to do different conceptual work than 'his habit'.

¹⁸ Raimo Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Social Practices* (Cambridge 2002) 23.

¹⁹ Tuomela, 94.

the same functional role, it might make sense to refer to them as instances of a single practice even absent a shared we-attitude.²⁰ I say ‘might’ because sharing a functional role is not necessary and sometimes not even sufficient to weave instances of a routine, complex, thought-involving form of activity together into a single practice.

To see why sharing a functional role might not be sufficient, consider the activity of pairing up with a romantic partner in a years-long monogamous relationship. Assume the pairings in question each perform the functions of i) defining the space in which the relevant parties should/not engage in sexual activity, ii) strengthening the bonds between these parties and the children they raise, iii) providing a stable environment for those children, iv) creating a social unit in which benefits and burdens are shared, and v) forging familial ties between biologically unrelated persons (including their partner’s extended family). In some contexts, this might be all that is required for someone to engage in the practice of being married (think of common-law marriage). In others there will be additional requirements, such as that the parties are of different sexes, are of a certain age, are of the same race or religion, are not already married to someone else, have expressed their commitment to one another before a representative of their state or religious community, or have signed a legal document to that effect in the presence of qualified witnesses. Thus, couples A and B could each engage in maintaining a monogamous relationship that performed the abovementioned functions but only one of them – couple A, who live in the less restrictive social context – would be engaged in the practice of being married. The other couple, B, who live in a society that builds additional requirements into the definition of the practice, would not, and could be subject to sanctions that are applied to those who engage in certain types of behaviour without being married.

The marriage example points to a third way in which similar instances of activity might be linked to form a single practice, which is through shared rules or norms. This is how John Rawls conceives of ‘practices’; they are rule-defined forms of activity. The rules in question determine whether one participates or fails to participate in the practice and, if one participates, whether one does so well or badly.²¹ Take, for example, the practice of sitting an exam. If one is not in the designated room at the appointed time, one is not sitting an exam, even if one happens to be thinking or writing about the same questions that occupy the attention of the exam-takers. If one is in the specified place and time but chooses to draw pictures rather than follow the examiner’s instructions, then one is not sitting the exam. In each case, this is because there are *constitutive rules* for the practice of sitting an exam that define what kinds of behaviours count as participating in that activity. These rules include a specification of the task to be performed and the place and time of its performance. By contrast, if one is in the right location at the right time and responds to the examiner’s questions in a way that misses their point, then one is participating in the practice but doing so badly. This is because, in addition to constitutive rules there are also *normative rules* that spell out the standards of excellence for that kind of activity.

The contrast between constitutive and normative rules should not be overdrawn, since the standards of excellence for a practice are often part of what defines it.²² For instance, the practice of sitting an exam is partly defined by a constitutive rule stipulating that the aim is

²⁰ Fricker’s discussion of the practice of forgiveness follows this route, defining it in terms of its functional roles.

²¹ Rawls, 36ff.

²² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame 1984) 187.

for students to display their knowledge or skill. Here, an appeal is made to normative standards that exist independently of the practice of sitting an exam (namely, knowledge and skill), which are incorporated into its definition. However, even where such overlap exists, the normative and constitutive dimensions of the rules of a practice remain conceptually distinct.

To return now to our marriage example, in less restrictive cultures the practice of being married may be defined in terms of functional roles. In more restrictive ones, however, it is defined by constitutive rules that spell out which pairings count as participating in the practice. Furthermore, once the rules are in place, they can define the practice independently of whether it continues to perform the functional roles that gave rise to it in the first place. And this fact helps explain why shared functional roles are not necessary for two instances of a form of activity to participate in a single practice. Couples B and C, both of whom satisfy the constitutive rules that define being married in the more restrictive social context, will each participate in the practice of being married even if couple C's relationship does not fulfil any of the abovementioned functions (because they are biologically related, have no children, fight constantly, are estranged from their relatives, and signed a pre-nuptial agreement that ensures benefits are enjoyed and burdens born by the individual who incurs them).

Where does this discussion leave us with respect to understanding practices? Practices are routine, complex, thought-involving forms of activity whose instances are linked by shared functional roles, we-attitudes, or constitutive rules. We can streamline the account further by noticing that constitutive rules require shared we-attitudes. For the relocation of a piece on a chess board to count as a move in the game, those with knowledge of the game must take it to be consistent with (enough of) the rules of the game.²³ The we-attitude need not be shared by every player. Some behaviours that fit the pattern of the game will count as instances of participating in it even if the agent responsible for those behaviours fails to recognise they are part of a practice. But this is only true in virtue of the fact that a sufficient number of others participating in the activity share we-attitudes. If this is right, then the Rawlsian account picks out a subset of the class of practices linked by we-attitudes.²⁴

A final observation about practices is that they are often nested. We can engage in one practice by engaging in another. For example, one can sit an exam by writing an essay. Just as there are constitutive rules for sitting an exam, there are also constitutive rules for writing an essay. They include writing in complete sentences which have been organised into paragraphs that are structured thematically or argumentatively. The constitutive rules for sitting an exam and writing an essay are different – a person can often satisfy one without satisfying the other – so the practices are distinct. Nevertheless, on many occasions one can only satisfy the conditions for the former by satisfying those for the latter.

III. Forgiving Attitudes and Practices

²³ The purpose of the qualifier 'enough of' is to leave room for cheating. Some forms of cheating will still count as moves in the game, albeit illegal ones. Others will be significant enough departures that we take them to show that the cheater is no longer playing the game at all.

²⁴ The same will be true of MacIntyre's account of practices, which picks out a subset of Rawlsian practices.

Section I proposed that an attitude is a mental state that can take an object and is valenced. Section II put forward an account of practices according to which they are complex, routinized, thought-involving forms of activity whose instances are linked by shared functional roles or we-attitudes. We are now in a position to ask how attitudes and practices are related. There are several possibilities. 1) An attitude might be a *constituent* of a practice. Most obviously, a shared we-attitude is part of what makes many forms of activity into practices. 2) An attitude could serve as a *motive* for actions that participate in practices. For instance, the recipient of a gift might experience gratitude, which could lead her to participate in the practice of expressing appreciation. 3) An action that participates in or violates a practice may *evoke* an attitude, like gratitude or resentment. 4) An entire practice may elicit an attitudinal response, as it does when we encounter an unfamiliar practice and find it charming, repugnant, or puzzling. 5) A practice might *require* certain attitudes. In the practice of giving and receiving, a desire to give is expected on the part of the giver and gratitude on the part of the recipient. Such attitudes are specified by the standards of excellence for the practice. 6) A practice might also *habituate* someone to have an attitude because one's participation in the practice primes one to experience it.

Is there a seventh relationship between attitudes and practices, as well? Fricker, in her discussion of forgiveness, recommends that we take Strawson's account of the 'reactive attitude of forgiveness' to be 'an explanatorily basic form' of the practice of forgiveness.²⁵ This implies that an attitude might itself *be* a practice (or an instance of a practice).

There are several reasons for rejecting the proposal that an attitude might be a practice. Some apply to practices of all types. For example, A) an attitude commonly runs its course in a single episode, but a practice never does. For a form of activity to count as a practice, it must be repeated, because without repetition, one cannot have a routinized form of activity. Other objections apply specifically to the kinds of practices in which most theorists, including Fricker in her previous work, have taken the greatest interest, namely social practices. For instance, B) an attitude is something one experiences individually (even if it is a we-attitude whose content refers to other people), whereas a social practice is something in which we participate with others. Depending on the practice, they need not engage in the activity in my company or at the same time I do. Nevertheless, if it is to be a social practice, there must be others who engage in the activity as well. A further reason is C) attitudes and practices play different explanatory roles. Attitudes explain actions from the inside out, social practices from the outside in. When I explain an action by appealing to an attitude, I point to something about the person which accounts for what she is doing. When I appeal to a practice, by contrast, I account for her action by pointing to something outside her, to the functional roles her activity plays and the rules or other we-attitudes she has adopted with others. Still other objections apply only to practices that are linked by we-attitudes, as normative practices would be. These include D) an attitude is a mental state whose occurrence is a natural fact, whereas a practice is a social fact whose existence depends upon a group's awareness and acceptance of the rules or other we-attitudes that constitute it. Considerations (A) through (D) indicate that, whatever other relations might exist between them, an attitude cannot be a practice.

²⁵ Fricker, 14, 18.

How, then, should we think of forgiveness? Is it an attitude or a practice? Most philosophers have treated it as an attitude or a collection of attitudes.²⁶ They have proposed a range of attitudes that might be involved when someone forgives. One is a *belief* that the person being forgiven is guilty. If one did not believe the other had failed to fulfil an obligation or in some other way fallen short of a normative standard, there would be nothing to forgive. A second is a *letting go* of the anger, resentment, or other form of ill-will that is rooted in the other's moral failing. A third is a *commitment* to continuing to let go of that ill-will. A fourth is some measure of *positive regard* for the one being forgiven. A fifth is a *readiness to restore relations* with the one forgiven. Not all of these attitudes need be present in every instance of forgiveness (understood as a complex of attitudes). In most cases the first two will be sufficient.²⁷

What follows from thinking of forgiveness as a complex of attitudes? One thing that follows is that there is no obvious reason to think forgiving must wait until the wrongdoer has expressed repentance or mended his ways, contrary to what many philosophers – including those Fricker calls advocates of ‘moral justice forgiveness’ – have suggested. To see why, let us begin with a case concerned with a different set of attitudes. Owen Marshall's short stories are a fitting object of appreciation. Knowing this fact about Marshall's stories, however, does not give us a reason to think a particular reader, Brett, must appreciate them (now). We might even be surprised to find him experiencing appreciation, in spite of the fact that we know he has appreciated them in the past. For example, if Brett is reading ‘Supper Waltz Wilson’ for the umpteenth time, preparing to teach it yet again to a class of sixteen-year-olds more interested in Instagram than ideas, there are a number of attitudes we might expect him to have. Appreciation is not likely to be one of them.²⁸ And all the while his judgment regarding Marshall's literary talents might remain unchanged.

The point is not limited to aesthetic cases. As I have argued elsewhere,²⁹ most of the time there are more things of value in our environment than we have the intellectual or emotional capacity to appreciate. It is impossible for us always – or even usually – to have all of the attitudes that fit our circumstances. And some of the attitudes (like elation) that would fit one feature of our circumstances will be incompatible with other attitudes (like despair) that would fit other features, because we are not the kinds of creatures who are capable of experiencing those attitudes (to the required degree) at the same time. The upshot is this: the fact that X is a fitting object of attitude α at time t does not entail that a particular agent is obliged to feel α toward X at t. To apply this to the kind of case a potential forgiver might face, even if the wrongdoer continues to be a fitting object of resentment, it does not follow

²⁶ See, for example, Jeffrie Murphy, ‘Forgiveness and Resentment,’ *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 7 (1982): 503-516; Norvin Richards, ‘Forgiveness,’ *Ethics* 99 (1988): 77-97; Margaret Holmgren, ‘Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons,’ *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30.4 (1993): 341-352; David Novitz, ‘Forgiveness and Self-Respect,’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58.2 (1998): 299-315; Pamela Hieronymi, ‘Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness,’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62.3 (2001): 529-555; Lucy Allais, ‘Wiping the Slate Clean,’ *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 36.1 (2008): 33-68; and Alexandra Couto, ‘Reactive Attitudes, Forgiveness, and the Second-Person Standpoint,’ *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 19.5 (2016): 1309-1323.

²⁷ For further discussion, see Glen Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love* (Oxford 2012) chapter 1.

²⁸ For a discussion of some of the reasons why we might not expect Brett's attitude to be appreciation in this case, see Cheshire Calhoun, ‘Living with Boredom,’ in *Doing Valuable Time* (Oxford 2018) 117-144.

²⁹ Glen Pettigrove, ‘Fitting Attitudes and Forgiveness,’ *Forgiveness: New Philosophical Perspectives*, Michael McKenna, Dana Nelkin, and Brandon Warmke, eds (Oxford, forthcoming).

that the victim of his wrong – or anyone else – is obliged to feel resentment toward him either at the time of the wrongdoing or at some later time. Similarly, even if the wrongdoer now regrets his actions and has attempted to make amends for what he did, it does not follow that the victim is obliged to adopt a more positive attitude toward him.

The fittingness of an attitude, then, contributes to but does not by itself settle the broader normative question of whether or not someone should feel that attitude at a particular time. What does settle it? In everyday life, the gap between attitudes that are fitting and what someone ought to feel, all-things-considered, is filled by practices. So let us ask what happens when we look at forgiveness from the point of view of practices.

Philosophers occasionally speak of the practice of forgiveness.³⁰ But often the adoption of this terminology does little more than point out that forgiving is not just something that happens to us; it is also something we do. A few highlight a genuinely social practice. For instance, Joram Haber argues ‘I forgive you’ is a performative speech act.³¹ Since all performative utterances are social practices, it would follow that if ‘I forgive you’ performs the act of forgiving, then performative forgiving would be a social practice. However, no one has explored the normative significance of thinking about forgiveness as a practice, *per se*.

When thinking about forgiving practices and the norms that govern them, it is best to start with the wider category (or categories) of practices to which they belong. The most obvious is the set of practices concerned with transgressions. These practices fall into three broad types: practices of a) retaliation, b) moral repair, and c) therapy. Retaliatory practices can be found in all human cultures, but the details of those practices vary widely from one place or time to another. Who has the authority to retaliate (the victim, their clan, the elders, religious leaders, or officers of the state), the time frame for retaliation (immediately, within seven years, or whenever it is most strategic), the severity of the retaliation (within the constraints accepted by polite society, in proportion to the transgression, exacting a greater toll than the transgression), and the reasons for that retaliation (it will deter future wrongdoing from this transgressor, will serve as an example to others, will preserve honour, or is what the wrongdoer deserves) differ from one culture to another. For our purposes, three things about practices of retaliation are worth noting. First, the norms governing the practices are not only those related to the fittingness of the attitudes they involve. Nor, *contra* Fricker, are they just those stemming from the functional roles of the practices in question. They are also shaped by utility and tradition. Second, identifying a paradigm of the practice of retaliation will require one to identify the cultural context for which that activity is paradigmatic. If preserving family honour is the reason for retaliating, then one ought to ensure it is done in public. Retaliating in private will not do what is required. If, on the other hand, retaliating is about obeying the commands of the gods, balancing the scales of justice, or ensuring the wrongdoer is not left to enjoy ill-gotten gains, then publicity may be optional. Third, even if what one ought to do (in a moral or all-things-considered sense of ought) is not entirely determined by the practices endorsed within one’s cultural context(s), those practices have a bearing on what one should do. At the very least, cultural practices identify what others

³⁰ See, for example, Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing* (Cambridge 2006) 152; Alice MacLachlan, ‘Practicing Imperfect Forgiveness,’ *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy*, Lisa Tessman, ed. (Springer 2009) 185-204; and Laurent Jaffro, ‘Forgiveness and Weak Agency,’ *Proceedings and Addresses of the Aristotelian Society* 108 (2018): 107-125.

³¹ Joram Haber, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Study* (Rowan and Littlefield, 1991) 41-53

within the community expect of me. Insofar as my neighbours shape their choices around those expectations, that has a bearing on what I ought to do. In some contexts they may be relying on me to act in ways that further a communal goal (such as protecting the family honour or punishing law breakers). Thus, if the aim of our inquiry is to move from knowing which attitudes are fitting to knowing what someone ought to do, all things considered, we will need to attend to their cultural context and the form retaliatory practices take in that environment.

Practices of ‘moral repair’³² refer to what we do to address the damage wrongdoing causes, restore its victims, and mend the relationships in the community that have been strained or broken as a result. Since retaliating against the perpetrator does not of itself restore the victim or mend the relationship between the parties, practices of moral repair are distinct from those of retaliation, although in many cultural contexts they are closely linked. Just as practices of giving and receiving include the obligations of both givers and receivers, so also practices of moral repair include norms that govern more than one party. They spell out what wrongdoers, bystanders, and victims ought, ideally, to do in the aftermath of wrongdoing.

As with retaliation, practices of repair vary across cultures. What the transgressor should do typically includes an internal acknowledgment of their moral failing, an external acknowledgment of the same, an indication that one intends not to behave in this manner in future, and an attempt to make amends.³³ In some cultural contexts the internal acknowledgment of one’s failing is expected to involve strong emotions of guilt, shame, or remorse. In others only mild versions of these (or other) emotions are required, or even no emotion at all. The same variation can be found in the rules governing the external acknowledgement of one’s moral failing. There is the matter of the person to whom the acknowledgment is made (the victim, the victim’s family, the perpetrator’s family, the wider community, religious or political authorities), how public or private the acknowledgment should be, the words in which the acknowledgment should be couched (and how formal or informal, formulaic or spontaneous they should be), how emotional it should be, and whether it should be accompanied by a request for forgiveness, an expression of a desire for a renewed relationship, or a promise to keep one’s distance. The indication that one intends to behave differently in future, likewise, takes different forms. In some contexts the transgressor will be expected to declare that he has changed so thoroughly that he should be thought of as a different person than the one who performed the misdeed, whereas in others such a declaration would be seen as a way of evading responsibility for one’s past rather than taking responsibility for one’s future. In some contexts, transgressors will be expected to promise never to act in such a way again, while in others a more modest indication that they do not currently intend to repeat the offense is sufficient. How one goes about making amends also differs from one context to another. Take a simple case in which an object is taken or broken. In some contexts, one will be expected to return or replace it. In others, replacing the item might be seen to imply that one thinks the object’s owner cannot afford to replace it themselves, and thus one might be expected to make amends in some less direct way. Then there is the matter of doing penance (above and beyond making amends), which will be required in some cultures to a greater degree than in others.

³² I borrow the term from Walker (*Moral Repair*), but depart from her account in several respects.

³³ For a more extensive treatment of what is expected of transgressors in the aftermath of wrongdoing see Linda Radzik, *Making Amends* (Oxford 2009).

When we turn our attention to the actions of bystanders within practices of moral repair, we again find a diverse range of expectations. In some cultural contexts, the role of the bystander is quite demanding. Family, friends, witnesses, or the wider community help the victim absorb the costs of the wrong she has suffered or they actively encourage the transgressor to acknowledge his transgression and make amends. They may also encourage the victim to forgive or be reconciled with the transgressor. In other cultures, these demands may only apply if the victim (or transgressor) asks a bystander to become involved. Without such an invitation, bystanders are expected to mind their own business.

Similarly, with respect to the expectations that shape the victim's contribution to practices of moral repair, some cultures will expect the victim to take a passive role in the process. She is to wait until the wrongdoer has apologized and made amends, after which she should accept his apology and agree not to retaliate. Others will expect victims to show greater emotional involvement, demonstrate a greater generosity of spirit, or adopt a more pro-active approach to fostering reconciliation with the perpetrator. She may be expected to nurse her resentment and communicate her blame to the perpetrator. Or she may be expected to overcome her anger, relinquish her desire that the transgressor be punished (further), and muster a measure of good-will toward him. Some will expect the victim's work to be mostly an internal matter of regulating her emotions, whereas others will expect it to be chiefly a matter of external behaviours, such as making formulaic utterances ('I forgive you') or refraining from expressing any lingering ill-will in one's actions. Together these expectations will define the contours of practices of forgiveness within particular cultural contexts.

Even the description of practices of moral repair offered above has been greatly simplified by abstracting away from the details of the moral failing, the severity of the injury sustained by the victim, the nature of the relationship that existed between the parties prior to the transgression, and the resources the community has available to assist them. Taken together with the variety that has already been noted, this speaks to the difficulty involved in speaking of 'the' paradigm of 'the' practice of moral repair. It would be more accurate to speak of 'a' paradigm of 'a' practice of 'a' community in circumstances like these.

There are five things I would note about practices of moral repair that have a bearing on how we think about practices of forgiveness. First, what is often presented as *the* paradigm of the attitude of forgiveness is actually *a* paradigm of *a* practice of moral repair, of which forgiving is only a part. Consider, once again, Strawson's account of forgiveness: 'To ask to be forgiven is in part to acknowledge that the attitude displayed in our actions was such as might properly be resented and in part to repudiate that attitude for the future (or at least for the immediate future); and to forgive is to accept the repudiation and to forswear the resentment.'³⁴ It is an incomplete sketch of the practice, insofar as bystanders are omitted and details of how the acknowledgment, repudiation, and acceptance are to be performed are left out. And it is one in which a certain pride of place is given to what is expected of the wrongdoer. The forgiver's part is defined as a response to the wrongdoer's actions. But, it is a sketch of a practice of moral repair all the same, mapping out how things should go if the transgressor observes the practice (for what is presumably a fairly modest transgression) impeccably.

³⁴ Strawson, 63.

However, transgressors, bystanders, and victims do not always follow the script. And this brings us to the second thing worth noting about practices of moral repair. The paradigms we have considered have focused on what should be done when everyone plays their designated part. However, there will also often be paradigms for non-paradigmatic instances of a practice that spell out what to do when someone goes off script. Often that someone is the transgressor. When that happens how should the others respond? Should the victim double-down on resentment? Should she try to inspire him to acknowledge his wrongdoing and change his ways by engaging in what Trudy Govier and Colin Hirano call ‘Invitational Forgiveness’?³⁵ Should bystanders step in to help absorb the victim’s costs until such time as they can be extracted from the wrongdoer? Should they impose social sanctions on the wrongdoer such as excluding him from important social gatherings or refusing to conduct business with him? Sometimes the defection is from the victim. Even after the transgressor has done everything expected of him, the victim still holds it against him. In such a circumstance should he offer further penance or take additional steps to mend the relationship he has broken? Should key bystanders intervene on his behalf? Practices of moral repair have a defining set of functions that help answer these questions: restore victims and mend relationships. However, cultural variation will also affect the answers. One cultural variation that has an impact on answers to these questions in contemporary Western contexts is provided by therapeutic practices, which aim to help people deal with unwanted emotions and move past imperfectly resolved conflicts. One of the things therapeutic practices do is introduce a different set of norms to identify what counts as success, in which the actions of other parties take on a more limited role than they do in paradigmatic cases of moral repair.

The introduction of therapeutic practices brings us to the third thing worth noting about practices of moral repair, in particular, and social practices more generally. Practices often influence one another. Practices of retaliation or gift giving or parenting or therapy can come to influence how we think about practices of moral repair (and the practices of taking responsibility and forgiving that are part of them). Where this has happened, one would expect practices of moral repair to take a slightly different form than they do in contexts where it has not. We might, for example, come to think of forgiving as an instance of giving, and since giving is not about what the other party deserves, one might think forgiving need not be, either. Or we might come to think of moral repair as closely tied to retaliatory practices like punishment, in which case we might think we ought to refrain from forgiving until the transgressor has undergone the ritualised humiliation of offering a certain kind of apology and performing a series of penitential acts.

Fourth, to this point the practices that have been described fall under the wide umbrella of what could be called cultural practices. However, someone might insist that, while cultural practices are of interest to anthropologists, ethicists are interested in ‘moral practices’. In order to respond to such a claim, one would need to know what work ‘moral’ is doing in ‘moral practices’, and the answer to that question is not entirely clear.³⁶ One might, following Tim Scanlon, use ‘moral’ to pick out ‘what we owe to each other.’³⁷ But employing the term in this sense would not yield the contrast the imagined interlocutor has in

³⁵ Trudy Govier and Colin Hirano, ‘A Conception of Invitational Forgiveness,’ *Journal of Social Philosophy* 39.3 (2008): 429-444.

³⁶ Fricker occasionally speaks of ‘moral practices’, but she does not stop to explain what she means.

³⁷ T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Harvard 1998).

view. Using ‘moral’ in Scanlon’s sense would not identify a separate category of practices. Once a cultural practice is up and running, it often does pick out what we owe to each other. If I wrong you, I owe you an apology of the sort specified within the cultural practice of moral repair that is relevant to our interactions. To do otherwise would be to act on reasons you could reasonably reject. Using ‘moral’ in Scanlon’s sense also would not capture many instances of forgiveness. There is a lively debate surrounding whether or not forgiving is always supererogatory, but even the most vocal advocates of ‘conditional’ or ‘earned’ forgiveness typically agree that at least sometimes forgiving can be supererogatory. In those cases, forgiveness is not what is owed to the other. It goes beyond what is owed.

An alternative way to make sense of ‘moral practices’ would appeal to something like John Stuart Mill’s sense of ‘moral’, according to which moral activities are those that leave their agents open to a distinctive kind of blame or censure if they fail to comply with the relevant norms.³⁸ However, Mill’s sense of moral will not draw a bright line between moral and cultural practices either. Many cultural practices are moral in this sense. Even a practice that varies from one culture to the next, such as whether one keeps left or right when driving, is moral once the cultural practice is in place.³⁹ If a person knowingly flouts the norms of the cultural practice by driving on the other side of the road, she will be subject to the kind of blame that applies to those who violate other moral norms. How things are done around here can determine how things ought to be done, on pain of moral censure.

Even though Mill’s use of ‘moral’ will not support the objector’s strong contrast between moral and cultural norms, it does provide one way to make sense of ‘moral practices’. A moral practice would be one such that, if one broke its rules or failed to live up to its shared expectations, one would be subject to a distinctive kind of blame or censure. An upshot of thinking about moral practices in this way is that what one ought to do, in the moral sense of ‘ought’, will vary from one cultural context to another. This conclusion is compatible with relativism about all value properties, but it neither presupposes nor entails such a view. The claim being made here is much more modest. Before we can determine whether or how someone ought to forgive, or apologize, or retaliate, or convey gratitude, or perform a wide range of other actions that include or express an attitude, we need to know something about the cultural environment in which those actions are situated.⁴⁰

Once one has identified the relevant cultural environment, one knows what is expected. However, not all expectations are such that failing to conform to them leaves one open to blame or censure. One could, for example, exceed expectations by being more generous than was required. Furthermore, the expectations that give a practice its current shape can be challenged. Given how practices overlap, one might draw on the normative and conceptual resources of other practices to contest or modify an existing moral practice. So determining what a particular practice requires does not yet settle the question of what is morally required even within a given cultural context. But if the form of activity under consideration is part of a practice, then the question of what one morally should do cannot be settled without attending to that practice in its local form. Before we can speak about the moral practices of

³⁸ John Stuart Mill, ‘Utilitarianism,’ in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, John Gray, ed. (Oxford [1861]/1991) 184.

³⁹ For an extended defence of this claim, see Marinus Ferreira, *Limited Conventions about Morals* (PhD thesis, University of Auckland 2017).

⁴⁰ And this is true even if, as Mill does, one thinks the question will ultimately be determined by appealing to something that is not culturally variant, such as the principle of utility.

forgiveness, or moral repair, or therapy, or retaliation, we will need to know something about the relevant cultural environment.

Finally, if the argument of this paper is correct, previous philosophical discussions of the ethics of attitudes like anger, resentment, contempt, honour, and gratitude and of the practices to which they give rise like blaming, honouring, and forgiving should be read as prolegomena to the ethics of these attitudes and practices. Most have focused on the fittingness of the attitudes in question. Some, like Fricker, have considered the functional role of an associated practice in an idealised setting that abstracts away from the details of particular cases, their cultural contexts, and the web of related practices. Such studies highlight important factors that have a bearing on what a resentful, grateful, or forgiving agent should do. But by themselves they cannot settle the ethical question. The constitutive rules and other we-attitudes that define the attitude-expressing practice in the agent's own time and place also have a bearing on what she should do. So do a range of other practices that are conceptually, functionally, and traditionally interwoven with this one. Before we can answer the ethical questions faced by real agents, we must give those details the same careful attention.

IV. Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to shine a spotlight on a distinction that is often ignored in the philosophical literature on forgiveness and to suggest that it makes a profound difference to how we approach ethical questions. I propose a unifying account of the various things we call attitudes: An attitude is a mental state that can take an object and is valenced. I also propose a unifying account of practices: Practices are complex, thought-involving, routinized forms of activity whose instances are linked by shared functional roles or we-attitudes. Once attitudes and practices are defined, we can see both how they differ and how they are related. There are two upshots, one local and the other more general. The local upshot is that thinking about the normative contours of an activity like forgiving will require us to think not only about attitudes but also about practices. The more general upshot is, if we take the contrast between attitudes and practices seriously, then we will have to offer much more contextualized accounts of the norms that govern activities that express (or include) attitudes – activities like retaliating, apologizing, forgiving, giving, honouring, and numerous others – than has been customary in ethics.⁴¹

⁴¹ The ideas in this paper were first presented at the universities of Glasgow, St Andrews, and Stirling and I benefitted from the feedback offered on those occasions by Katharina Bernhard, Simon Hope, Colin Johnston, Gary Kemp, Alison Duncan Kerr, Fiona Macpherson, Alan Millar, Tim Mulgan, Adam Rieger, Ben Sachs, Kevin Scharp, and others. Thanks are due to Marinus Ferreira for instructive conversations about the moral significance of conventions. And I am particularly grateful to Michael Brady, Jennifer Corns, Robert Cowan, Katrina Hutchison, Catriona Mackenzie, Sam Shpall, and Mona Simion for their detailed and helpful comments on an earlier draft.