go back to the way things were. Progress has some downsides, but progress it is. This is true of moral progress too.

Iskra Fileva
University of Colorado Boulder

Cherry, Myisha. *Failures of Forgiveness: What We Get Wrong and How to Do Better*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023. Pp. 240. $27.95 (cloth).

"Forgive and forget." "Wipe the slate clean." These and similar messages urge us to move past wrongdoings through the power of forgiveness. Yet is it always right to forgive? Does forgiving run the risk of letting wrongdoers too easily off the hook? Or is it a requisite step in repairing broken relationships? And are all relationships worth mending?

In *Failures of Forgiveness: What We Get Wrong and How to Do Better* Myisha Cherry explores these interrelated questions to argue that forgiveness is not a magic bullet. While forgiving may help in the process of recovering from wrongdoing, we should not expect all victims to forgive. Nor should we criticize those whose forgiveness seems too generous. Given these concerns, the project Cherry sets out for herself is to circumscribe the phenomenon of forgiveness, to advocate greater compassion in honoring the choices of victims regarding forgiveness, and to canvass the areas of life where dilemmas concerning forgiveness are likely to emerge.

Cherry begins by distinguishing a narrow and more commonplace understanding of forgiveness from her broader conception of the phenomenon, before moving to practical applications of her view, including racial dynamics, familial entanglements, business relationships, and "cancel culture." She concludes with her vision for "radical repair," an endeavor that serves to redress harms by getting to their roots rather than relying on hasty and ineffective expressions of forgiveness.

In the first chapter of the book ("What to Expect When You Are Expecting Forgiveness"), Cherry carves out narrow and broad views of forgiveness. According to the "narrow view," forgiveness aims to eliminate or moderate anger in victims or to eradicate contempt or hatred of wrongdoers. For instance, on the "anger moderation" conception of forgiveness, we ought to practice forgiveness because excessive anger can "make us thirsty for revenge" (13). In contrast, "virtuous anger" can help "motivate us to engage in social change" or "express self-respect" (13). Forgiveness, on this view, teaches us to moderate anger and channel it in more positive directions.

Inspired by the work of Alice MacLachlan, Cherry contends that this view is overly limited because it fails to take into account several key aims of forgiveness that do not fall under the categories of eliminating or moderating anger or contempt. Relying on everyday examples, Cherry investigates a range of practices that fall outside of the scope of the narrow view but would also count as forgiveness. For example, forswearing revenge can provide "relief" for the offender, while shaking hands can pave the way for reconciliation. Likewise, the decision to "mend [a] relationship" but "not to continue it" would also count as forgiveness, as it brings a

certain reconciliation and closure between the wrongdoer and victim. After surveying these practices and their respective aims, Cherry provides a table charting the territory of forgiveness. According to this table, forgiveness serves not only to moderate anger or contempt but also to accomplish the following three objectives. First, it can relieve either "the pain of the victim" or the "moral anguish of the wrongdoer" (22). Second, it can release victims "from the hold that the wrongdoing may have on them" or wrongdoers "from being overburdened with a sense of indebtedness or from being a potential victim of retaliation" (22). Third, it can lead to reconciliation by "fixing" relationships.

The broad view defended by Cherry raises an important question: is there a common denominator that would help us determine which practices count as forgiveness? Cherry, as I interpret her, does not hold that there is one essential property that unites all cases of forgiveness. Instead, what ties them together are overlapping similarities in either aims or practices. Although Cherry does not explicitly state it, the phenomenon of forgiveness seems to be best captured by the notion of family resemblance.

The main upshot of the broad view is that it can help us become more understanding of those whose behavior (at first blush) may not appear to be forgiving. Consider the following case that Cherry cites from her personal life. Her stepfather engaged in an extramarital affair as her mother lay dying. While Cherry's sister decided to stay in contact with him, Cherry chose not to do so. Despite these differences in outward appearance, Cherry contends that both choices were instances of forgiveness. Her behavior involved "refraining from bringing up the wrongdoing in conversations with [her] family" (25), nor did she wish him ill or seek to retaliate by seeking to "make his life miserable" (25). Thus, interpreting Cherry's behavior as an instance of forgiveness can motivate us to praise her behavior instead of immediately writing it off as bitter or hostile.

Cherry's defense of the broad view brings up important methodological concerns: What examples should we use to delimit the phenomenon of forgiveness? Should we rely on our intuitions in doing so? Should we follow her in adopting counterintuitive examples to motivate the broad view? These concerns arise from the choice of certain cases, such as the one from her personal life, which are likely to appear at odds with our everyday ideas about forgiveness. Nevertheless, I understand her decision not to belabor methodology in a book aimed at both an academic and a general audience. However, it is worth flagging these concerns, as they would warrant further development for a different readership.

In the following chapter ("Forgivers and Withholders"), Cherry tackles what kinds of praise or criticism are appropriate for those who forgive and for those who withhold forgiveness. On the one hand, those who forgive are usually taken to be virtuous. Yet if the act of forgiving is overly hasty or seems too compassionate in proportion to the wrongdoing, forgivers can face criticism. Shouldn't we reproach their exonerating of wrongdoers? Wouldn't it be better to have those wrongdoers face the reality of their actions? It would seem that such forgivers set a poor example by suggesting that those who commit similar crimes will also be met with mercy. On the other hand, those who withhold forgiveness often come under fire for being harsh or for impeding forward progress. Aren't these traits of character and consequences cause for criticizing those who don't forgive? Given this dilemma,

Cherry advocates extending greater understanding to both forgivers and with-holders. On her account, individuals have highly particular needs that motivate their choices. We paint both generous forgivers and withholders in overly broad brushstrokes when we criticize their behavior out of hand. This conclusion leads Cherry in the next chapter ("Making a Good Ask") to argue that we ought to be respectful of those from whom we seek forgiveness: we ought not to pressure them to forgive and must be circumspect in inquiring about their decision to forgive or not. Forgiveness is not something one should automatically expect, nor does it fol-low a fixed time line. Instead, it depends on the psychology, personal history, and circumstances of each victim.

Cherry's book shines in the chapters on politics, race, and cancel culture, and I imagine that her readers (especially those who are familiar with her earlier work, *The Case for Rage*) will find the chapters on these topics most engaging.

In "Forgiveness as Political Project" (chap. 4), Cherry appeals to the South Af-rican Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to identify some of the merits and pitfalls of forgiveness. As she deftly shows, in many instances individuals in-volved in the TRC hearings were expected to forgive and were not allowed the op-portunity to voice their authentic feelings about the harms done to them. Besides this, by leaning heavily on Christian conceptions of forgiveness, the TRC ran afoul of and alienated non-Christian persons of faith and nonbelievers. On the whole, according to her analysis of the TRC hearings, using the language of forgiveness is insufficient alone to achieve political reconciliation. In her words, "Until repair becomes a prioritized political project, talk of forgiveness as *the* solution to our problems—without national commitments to wrestle with history, listen to victims, and rebuild our nation into a more just nation—will ring hollow and ineffective" (81–82). Thus, her discussion lays the ground for the book's final chapter, which deals with the topic of repairing individual relationships and social divisions.

Her investigation into forgiveness and race in "When Race Matters" (chap. 5) builds on her discussion of the TRC and the various pitfalls of asking others to for-give. Here Cherry uses examples of racially motivated crimes to frame her inquiry. She describes how, in many instances, Blacks in the United States have been asked to forgive crimes quickly so that wrongdoings could be "buried"—ostensibly for the sake of racial harmony. Yet this strategy ultimately fails in achieving reconcili-ation. Not only are the demands placed on victims of color lopsided compared to those placed on whites, but overly hasty requests can be self-defeating: "They stand in the way of forgiveness and repair because they are likely to make victims resis-tant to forgiveness" (94). Instead, Cherry advocates addressing victims with the three following questions: (1) "What do you want to tell us?" (2) "What can we do for you?" and (3) "What do you want to happen?" Taken together, these three questions can help victims achieve greater relief from the burdens of being wronged or seeing their loved ones harmed and can pave the way for constructive social change.

In the analysis of "cancel culture" in "Canceling versus Forgiving" (chap. 8), Cherry encourages us to avoid pitting "cancel culture" versus "forgiveness culture." She claims that "canceling" occurs in the context of transactional relationships and that it is legitimate to refrain from supporting artists or businesses when they violate one's moral principles. Unlike family members or friends, with whom our

personal lives are entangled, we are not closely tied to public figures and corporations. Therefore, it is not a priori incumbent on us to repair our relationships with them. Accordingly, Cherry cleaves a distinction between forgiving such entities and annulling further transactions with them. Just as forgiveness among individuals can take the form of reconciling but not pursuing a future relationship, so too canceling can include both reconciliation and the forgoing of further transactions. Cherry's argument is worth dwelling on, as "cancel culture" has become an increasingly polarizing practice. Critics of "cancel culture" have claimed that we should exercise greater understanding and mercy vis-à-vis those who have erred in their public statements or behavior, whereas defenders of "cancel culture" bristle at the thought that they should be more compassionate toward those whose actions are reprehensible. But if we take Cherry's description of the phenomenon of forgiveness seriously, then these critics miss the point: canceling and forgiving are compatible with one another. Just as one may sever ties with a personal connection while also forgiving them, so too one might "cancel" someone while forgiving them. Refraining from further transactions with a celebrity or corporation does not amount to seeking revenge, to take one example of unforgiveness. Overall, this chapter exemplifies the merits of the broad view of forgiveness and illustrates its practical relevance.

The chapters on family relationships (chap. 6, "Home Improvement") and the business world (chap. 7, "The Business of Forgiveness") also depend on Cherry's meticulous analysis of the aims and practices of forgiveness but are likely to be of greater interest to those who have experienced serious harms within their families or who are engaged in the business world. Likewise, the discussion of self-forgiveness in "Forgiving Yourself" (chap. 9), which considers the question of whether one can forgive oneself, echoes her general discussion of the merits and dangers of forgiveness and was not as captivating as her studies of sociopolitical issues.

The book culminates in a tenth chapter devoted to a project Cherry dubs "radical repair" ("Radical Repair: With or without Forgiveness"). As its name suggests, this project "attempts to get at the root of the problem, no matter the cost. It's about fixing what's actually broken, rather than opting for cosmetic repairs. It doesn't focus merely on symptoms, but on the cause" (179). Engaging in radical repair will entail the willingness to "embrace in discomfort" (179). It is also a matter of "teamwork"—that is, "radical repair" doesn't occur with the bestowal of an "I forgive you" from the victim. Victims need to be listened to, and more than anything, victims, wrongdoers, and their communities must participate in crafting innovative solutions to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Cherry's argument for radical repair is compelling: isn't it more important to engage in the concrete steps that will allow us to avoid future wrongdoing? Nevertheless, it raises the following questions: Should we eschew the language of forgiveness altogether and simply focus on radical repair? Why bother with the notion of forgiveness in the first place? Although she does not make this explicit, Cherry's appeal to the idea of a "forgiveness instinct" helps respond to these questions. According to her, this is the instinct to "repair and preserve the valuable relationships that we depend on for our survival" (189). She then explains that "the forgiveness instinct" can be "understood as one manifestation

of our more general instinct to repair" (189). In sum, forgiveness is one expression among several of our drive to mend broken relationships. But if this is the case, I wonder why Cherry only highlights this point at the end of her book. It would seem that the project of radical repair ought to occupy the limelight compared to some of the earlier discussions of our failures in forgiving.

Overall, *Failures of Forgiveness: What We Get Wrong and How to Do Better* succeeds in making a case for more nuanced discussions of forgiving and for preferring radical repair over superficial expressions of forgiveness. I applaud Cherry for the careful analysis of the phenomenon, the accessibility of her work, and her willingness to confront a tradition of idealizing the practice. Forgiveness, Cherry argues, is no panacea: not only can we do better, but we ought to.

CÉLINE LEBOEUF
Florida International University

Ferracioli, Luara. *Parenting and the Goods of Childhood.*
New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. 208. $83.00 (cloth).

Who is entitled to raise a child, why, and how much should the state intervene to enable parenting? As parents, what kind of childhood do we owe our children? These are enormous questions, philosophically and practically—and Luara Ferracioli takes them all on. The result is an impressive and stimulating read.

In the first half of the book, Ferracioli both upholds the individual decision to become a procreative parent and severely curtails the ways in which states can permissibly make this possible. She also expounds her moral commitment model: a rival to the more familiar causal or voluntarist derivations of parental rights and duties.

She defends procreative parenting against two challenges. One is that it is too costly to bring another human being into the world (environmentally and/or as a lost opportunity for children in need of adoption). The other is that babies, for their own sake, should be redistributed to better available parents. If parenting means exercising some paternalistic control over a child and being in a certain intimate relationship with them, then the loving bond between parent and child is, says Ferracioli, core to valuable parenting. It is in the child's interests, providing them with close, continuous care in ways that foster homes or children's homes cannot. And while this "deep and robust" (12) love can arise between other parents and children, procreative parents have a strong pro tanto reason for it, starting from before the child is born. Such love is justified, moreover, independent of any challenges that the child—or the relationship—will face.

That is not to say that only procreative parents are parents in a morally significant sense. On the contrary, it is an expressed strength of Ferracioli's moral commitment account that it accommodates both procreative and adoptive parenting. On her model, a morally legitimate parent-child relationship (and so the right to parent) derives neither from causing a child to come into the world nor from mere voluntary consent. Rather, it derives from the fact that this is a moral commitment: one "that persons make to morally valuable projects and relationships