Blaming Ourselves and Others

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The object of these commonplaces is to try to keep before our minds something it is easy to forget when we are engaged in philosophy, especially in our cool, contemporary style, viz. what it is actually like to be involved in ordinary inter-personal relationships, ranging from the most intimate to the most casual. (Strawson 1974: 7)

The angers between women will not kill us if we can articulate them with precision, if we listen to the content of what is said with at least as much intensity as we defend ourselves against the manner of saying. When we turn from anger we turn from insight, saying we will accept only the designs already known, deadly and safely familiar. I have tried to learn my anger's usefulness to me, as well as its limitations. (Lorde 1984: 131)

Introduction

Few philosophers challenge the moral significance of responsibility and accountability, even if they differ in their understandings of these terms. The moral practices associated with these concepts are widely thought of as valuable insofar as these practices can promote justice and facilitate forgiveness. There is less enthusiasm, though, for moral practices that include expressions of negative emotions, including blame, guilt, shame, anger, and resentment. According to some, it seems desirable, if possible, to eliminate these negative emotions from our moral practices while maintaining processes through which people can address harms and remedy wrongdoing. Why not make holding others accountable as palatable as possible?

I certainly understand the force of this position. It's my guess that any of us who have been on the receiving end of expressions of negative emotions can intuitively call to mind interactions that we wish could have been gentler, more measured, or more reasonable. We routinely tell people to take some time to "cool off" before confronting each other and we know that expressions of negative emotions like anger can contribute to cycles of emotional and physical violence. Negative emotions are often associated with increased stress and strained interpersonal relationships. Further, and frankly, I can easily call to mind moments when I have expressed excessive anger or blamed the wrong person because I was overcome with resentment or jealousy. I regret these moments, though I did learn who I do not want to be as a result of

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reflecting on my motivations and reasons for action.

Yet, there are those who insist on the positive moral value of the negative emotions. In "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," Audre Lorde affirms the necessity of using anger, "Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being;" she adds "focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change" (1984: 127). Similarly, Macalester Bell has recently argued for the moral importance of contempt as the best response to "vices of superiority" (2013: 15). She explains, "Contempt certainly has its dangers, and inapt contempt is at the heart of several vices, but it also has an important defensive role to play in our moral lives" (2013: 3). It looks like anger and contempt can serve as techniques to defend against a variety of moral harms. Blame, which often includes the expression of negative emotions, has also received a good deal of attention, with moral philosophers including T.M. Scanlon, George Sher, R. Jay Wallace, Victoria McGeer, Angela Smith, and Miranda Fricker offering accounts that recognize blame as morally appropriate, even essential, to our moral lives. This dissertation is situated within the debate over the moral value of blame; specifically, I attend to the absence of literature on self-blame and argue that self-blame has something to teach us about appropriate deployments of interpersonal blame.

It is worth noting that I did not begin this project with the aim of defending blame as a valuable moral practice. To the contrary, I thought of blame as a nasty, excessively punitive practice that feminist philosophers ought to reject. I worried, most of all, about the prevalence of victim-blaming in cases of relationship violence and sexual assault. I associated blame with what Nietzsche calls ressentiment. Yet, recent work on blame complicated my initial assumptions in

four important ways.[1] First, it became clear to me that blame could serve as a positive moral practice insofar as it can promote moral improvement by clarifying our motivations and reasons for action. As I understand it, blame takes the form of the question, "How could you?" Blame need not shut down moral conversations; in fact, sometimes blame opens up the space for difficult conflicts and discussions, if we are willing to learn how to do this well.[2]

Second, I recognized that my desire to eradicate blame failed to consider the potential moral value of what P.F. Strawson termed negative "reactive attitudes" (1974: 6). Attempting to eliminate the negative emotions and attitudes associated with blame began to look highly unlikely, and, more importantly, undesirable. What if expressions of the negative reactive attitudes and negative emotions accompanying blame play a crucial role in the practice of appropriately holding someone accountable? Is it possible that our negative emotions do not always get in the way, but sometimes enhance our moral practices? Blame, as a practice involving negative emotions, began to look indispensable to our moral lives. I realized that condemning blame altogether or condemning the negative attitudes and negative emotions that often accompany blame amounted to, what McGeer has aptly called, "sanitizing blame" and "taking the bile out of blame" (2013: 163-164).

Third, I risked unreflectively aligning myself with those who claim that negative emotions are evidence of weakness or ignorance. It is not difficult to call to mind examples. Racist and sexist stereotypes including (but certainly not limited to) the following unfairly

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[1] Specifically, the collection *Blame: Its Nature and Norms* edited by D. Justin Coates and Neal Tognazzini (2013) provides convincing evidence that blame can play a valuable role in our moral lives.

[2] For example, Victoria McGeer argues for the possibility of civilizing blame: "Hence in pursuit of the normative goal of civilizing blame, it makes sense to ask which practices and institutions best serve the end of capitalizing on blame's more sophisticated regulative characteristics, while checking, or reining in, those characteristics that have an unsavory and potentially destructive punitive edge" (2013: 183).

dismiss and infantilize moral interlocutors who express negative attitudes or emotions: "cry baby," "mama's boy," "hot-headed," "PMS-ing," "hormonal," "angry black man," "angry black woman," "angry lesbian," "too touchy," "too sensitive," etc. In the United States, we saw this play out when Donald Trump said the following about FOX News debate moderator Megyn Kelly who confronted him about his history of derogatory comments about women: "She gets out and she starts asking me all sorts of ridiculous questions. You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever. In my opinion, she was way off base" (Rucker 2015: *The Washington Post*). It looks like condemning blame because the practice often includes expressions of negative emotions can encourage ad hominem attacks against those who express these emotions. It seems highly plausible that, if Megyn Kelly expressed anger or indignation, this was a morally appropriate response to Trump's sexism. Her expression of a negative emotion should not undermine the content of her statements; in fact, viewers may have listened closer to Kelly given the emphasis that anger or indignation can lend to a claim.[3]

Finally, blame looks as though it may be morally valuable as part of a larger process, which includes practices like forgiveness, reconciliation, and apology. In order to arrive at these kinds of restorative or transformative practices, it seems important to first address moral harms through a practice like blame. Otherwise, we risk determining that a harm has occurred and moving on to the forgiveness process without affording the person who was harmed the opportunity to ask, "How could you do this?" Institutional and legal approaches to remedying wrongdoing are especially vulnerable to making this mistake; in a rush toward either forgiveness

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[3] I first wrote this preface in the fall of 2015, shortly after Trump made this remark about Kelly. Since then, his treatment of women has become a central focus of the general election, especially following the release of a video that features Trump objectifying women and bragging about sexual assault. Though initially I only intended to include this as a timely example of a pervasive problem, I am more convinced than ever, watching Trump's presidential bid, that we have a long way to go if we care about interrupting patterns of victim-blaming for sexual violence, including sexual assault and sexual harassment. I hope that this work on self-blame can make a small contribution to what will need to be a mass commitment to rejecting sexist oppression and sexual violence.

or punishment, the voices and desires of victims sometimes get lost. The goal of "moving on" or "bringing to justice" or "restoring the peace" can become the primary focus instead. For a powerful example, consider the following testimony from a South African woman regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in 1995 after the end of apartheid:

> In an interview after refusing to forgive Dirk Coetzee for killing and "braaing" her son, Mrs. Kondile says: "It is easy for Mandela and Tutu to forgive…they lead vindicated lives. In my life, nothing, not a single thing, has changed since my son was burnt by barbarians…nothing. Therefore I cannot forgive. (Krog 1998: 142)

Mrs. Kondile's refusal to forgive invites us to consider instances when victims may be expected to forgive, either for the good of their families or the good of their communities. But what exactly is the relationship between blame and forgiveness? Is it possible for someone to blame in morally appropriate ways without ever having the intention to forgive, or are morally appropriate blame and forgiveness necessarily linked? Mrs. Kondile's claim that she "cannot forgive" because nothing has changed ought to give us pause. If the goals of the TRC included both "truth" and "reconciliation"—what about blame? The ambiguous relationship between blame and forgiveness offered me a final reason to take a closer look at the moral value of blame.

It is clear to me, then, that we should not dismiss blame outright because it appears too nasty or ugly to qualify as a valuable moral practice. That a practice is ugly or punitive is not necessarily a reason to think it should be overcome or deemed valueless for moral life. This dissertation, instead, aims to differentiate between morally "appropriate" and "inappropriate" blaming practices. By appropriate, I mean that the practice promotes self-reflection and critical engagement with others in our moral communities for the purpose of asking, "How could you?" By inappropriate, I have in mind examples of blaming that fail to offer opportunities for self-reflection and critical engagement, including blaming that amounts to browbeating or oppression

for the purpose of accusing, "Look what you did!"[4] This distinction focuses on the *uses* of blame

in our moral lives. Lorde draws a similar distinction regarding the possible uses of anger:

> My anger is a response to racist attitudes and to the actions and presumptions that arise
> out of those attitudes. If your dealings with other women reflect those attitudes, then my
> anger and your attendant fears are spotlights that can be used for growth in the same way
> I have used learning to express anger for my growth. But for corrective surgery, not guilt.
> Guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against which we all flounder; they serve
> none of our futures. (1984: 124)

Lorde focuses on how anger can serve as a "spotlight" that locates racist attitudes. She does not

assume that anger is useful as such. Blame, too, can demonstrate the need to revisit one's

motivations and reasons for action. On my view, we call each other out for the purpose of asking,

"How could you?" rather than saying, "Look what you did!" Note that, for Lorde, the value of

anger is directly tied to the role that anger can play in shaping our *futures*. I similarly argue that

the forward-looking dimension of blame makes it a valuable practice in the service of learning

about the motivations and reasons for action within ourselves and our communities.

Some may wonder why I do not simply forget about blame and argue for the importance

of "holding responsible" or "holding accountable" as this language already seems to capture the

morally appropriate cases. I resist this move precisely because I want to put forward an account

that considers both the positive value and the possible abuses of negative emotions. It is true that

blame involves accountability and responsibility. But, more often than not, blame is not only

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[4] To get a sense of the kind of distinction that I draw between appropriate and inappropriate blame, consider how
Martin Luther King Jr. differentiates between a "just law" and an "unjust law" in "Letter from a Birmingham Jail":
"Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation
statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false
sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority." Although certainly not a perfect analogue, this
passage illustrates how to judge moral practices based on concrete social and political implications. Does the
practice uplift or degrade members of the moral community? I argue that appropriate blame, although it is a process
and may involve the expression of negative attitudes and emotions, ought to ultimately "uplift" those involved, and
the expression of the negative attitudes and emotions does not necessarily preclude this end.

this.[5] For this reason, I am not interested in making blame more palatable by talking about responsibility or accountability instead. Too often this risks theorizing away important aspects of blame. Instead, I aim to show that blame can serve as a valuable moral practice despite its possible abuses and bad reputation in some circles.

Chapter One opens with my responses to two strong objections against the vindication of blame as a positive moral practice, the Stoic Objection (1.1) and the Nietzschean Objection (1.2). Having addressed these objections, I introduce two desiderata that my view and competing views ought to be able to satisfy. I argue that, to vindicate blame, it is uncontroversial to think that accounts must at least be extensionally adequate and minimally revisionary (1.3). Given how frequently we blame ourselves, strangers, and the temporally distant dead, it is insufficient for a view to focus exclusively on interpersonal cases of blame, even if these are the most common. With these desiderata in place, I also identify four features of contemporary views on blame for the purpose of critically surveying this literature, specifically, T.M. Scanlon's relational model, Angela Smith's modifications to this model, George Sher's belief-desire model, and Miranda Fricker's communicative model (1.4). Having demonstrated some of the virtues and limitations of these views, I turn explicitly to Strawsonian views and situate my own account among them.

Chapter Two aims to clarify which aspects of my view align with contemporary work on Strawson's negative reactive attitudes. I conclude that most of these approaches seem to require supplemental resources to justify normative claims about reactive attitudes and moral communities. I am not optimistic that what Strawson gives us in "Freedom and Resentment" can

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[5] McGeer wonders about the psychological possibility of engaging in blame without experiencing any negative emotions: "Is it possible for creatures like us to engage in such a process under the burden of perceived injury without feeling or expressing angry emotions, however mild these may be? My response to this is brief. Perhaps it is possible, at least for the saints among us. But however much we may suppose this is a preferable state of affairs, I doubt it is practically available to the common run of humanity. And this must pose a serious challenge to any philosophical theory that recommends it" (2013: 181).

stand alone in support of the claim that blame is a positive moral practice, nor was this his aim.

While others have employed Kantian contractualism and consequentialism as companions to Strawson, I suggest that we consider the role that feminist ethics, specifically a feminist ethics of care, can play in rounding out a defense of blame and the negative reactive attitudes broadly. Strawson stresses the second-personal, or relational, standpoint and does not shy away from discussions of negative emotions. Although feminist care ethicists differ in the specifics of their ethical programs, the general account of the self developed by feminist care ethicists is a self that is constituted by relationships with others; we are vulnerable and social creatures who rely on others to exist, survive, and thrive. Yet, importantly, feminist care ethicists reject abuses of this vulnerability that take the form of patriarchal oppression.[6] For these reasons, I argue that a feminist ethics of care serves as a useful supplement to Strawson, if we hope to put forward an account of morally appropriate blame that explicitly safeguards against oppression.[7]

Additionally, I take a closer look at Strawson's claim that the reactive attitudes are normally expressed in three interconnected ways (towards oneself, towards others, indirectly on behalf of others). Though Strawson claims that members of a moral community will express all three types of the reactive attitudes, once we consider this from a feminist perspective, it becomes clear that while some may express indignation on behalf of others and guilt toward themselves, many will not express resentment or their expressions of resentment will not have much uptake given imbalances of power within moral communities. Instead some, specifically

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[6] I think, with Virginia Held, that an ethics of care should not substitute for an ethics of justice; instead we should work to develop accounts of "justice and care." But for the purpose of this dissertation and my defense of morally appropriate blame, I will focus on how the ethics of care offers an account of the self that acknowledges our inescapable vulnerability while explicitly arguing against patriarchal violence and oppression. This backdrop will assist me in making the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate blame.

[7] This is not to say that other ethical supplements to Strawson fail; I find the partnership between Strawson and a feminist ethics of care especially useful because these accounts hold me accountable as a philosopher committed to investigating the value of blame with sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and ableism at the front of my mind.

people who experience oppression in patriarchal communities, may excessively blame themselves in instances when blame is unnecessary or better expressed directly towards another in the form of resentment, anger, or confrontation. I rely on the work of Marilyn Frye to define oppression and Sandra Bartky to describe the process of feminist consciousness raising necessary to become aware of the impact that oppressive patriarchal norms have on one's ability to express the full range of reactive attitudes within one's moral communities.

Chapter Three turns directly to cases of self-blame, specifically case studies on self-blame for sexual assault and self-blame for remaining in an abusive relationship. The aim of this chapter is to mark the difference between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" self-blame, especially given the prevalence of self-blame among girls, women, and gender nonconforming people under conditions of patriarchal oppression. My strategy calls us to think about instances of appropriate self-blame as cases that include the recognition that one has failed to live up to *reasons of one's own* rather than failing to live up to someone else's reasons, e.g. heteronormative, patriarchal, or white supremacist reasons. In order to make this clearer, I find it helpful to introduce some terminology offered by Bernard Williams in "Internal and External Reasons" (1981) and "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame" (1995).

I borrow the terminology of internal and external reasons from Williams only insofar as I want to stress the difference between blaming oneself for failing on the basis of reasons of one's own and blaming oneself for failing on the basis of external reasons. I do this to safeguard against cases of blaming that amount to browbeating and oppression. It looks, then, as if appropriate self-blame has this internalist flavor about it. When we blame ourselves in ways that lead to self-revelation and self-transformation, we do so because we recognize that we failed to act on the basis of our own beliefs, desires, attitudes, and projects. Conversely, when we blame

ourselves in excessive or pathological ways, this often takes the form of blaming ourselves for failing to act on the basis of some external, possibly oppressive, reason.

In her well known collection of essays, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, Bartky describes her work as "a tale of the philosopher become exorcist of her own demons" (1990: 10). I think of my work on self-blame along similar lines. By marking the difference between appropriate and inappropriate self-blame, I offer an analysis that can begin to diagnose practices of self-blame that result from the "internalization" of external, patriarchal norms without abandoning the more promising aspects of blame. As Bartky explains, recognizing "internalized" oppression during the process of feminist consciousness raising is disorienting and difficult. Learning when and how to blame ourselves and others also shares these features; it's difficult but crucial work for dismantling patriarchal oppression.

Having established the difference between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" self-blame, I return to blame as such. I sketch my view of appropriate blame as an emotionally charged moral address that opens up the space for consideration of one's motivations and reasons for action. This occurs in the context of a moral exchange where the blamer calls on the blamed to account for herself by asking "How could you?" Yet, in doing so, the blamer renders herself vulnerable to the possibility that she may be mistaken. This means that the blamer must actively listen to the blamed, which may take the form of an excuse, an exemption, an apology, or the realization on the part of the blamer that she did not have the proper moral standing to blame. I offer examples of how my view makes sense of blaming friends, strangers, the temporally distant dead, and institutions. The dissertation concludes with suggestions for future work on blame.

Before moving forward, I want to acknowledge the following difficulty. If we take Strawson seriously and attempt to keep our everyday moral practices at the front of our minds,

we risk remaining at the descriptive level of analysis for the sake of focusing on how things really are. Although I argue that it is crucial to begin with our everyday moral practices if we want to avoid producing irrelevant or inaccurate theories, I do not think that this commits me to a view that is merely descriptive. Once we have a clear account of our everyday moral practices, which accommodates all relevant cases and does not "theorize away" or bracket important aspects of blame, we can begin to think about how we should blame ourselves and others. My analysis becomes normative as soon as I argue that there are morally appropriate and inappropriate ways to wield blame. Therefore, the desiderata that I put forth in Chapter One will serve as a necessary starting point, but by the end of the dissertation, I will argue that we can improve on how we currently practice blame in its various forms. Although I am committed to doing philosophy that remains grounded in the world as we know it, I also know that we can change ourselves and our moral communities for the better.

1. Historical Objections and Contemporary Views

386. The missing ear. – 'So long as one always lays the blame on others one still belongs to the mob, when one always assumes responsibility oneself one is on the path of wisdom; but the wise man blames no one, neither himself nor others.' - Who says this? - Epictetus, eighteen hundred years ago. - It was heard but forgotten. - No, it was not heard and forgotten: not everything gets forgotten. But there was lacking an ear for it, the ear of Epictetus. - So did he say it into his own ear? - Yes, that is how it is: wisdom is the whispering of the solitary to himself in the crowded marketplace. (Nietzsche 1986: 296)

Only recently has blame attracted sustained attention from philosophers. D. Justin Coates and Neal Tognazzini, editors of the anthology *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, note that "work on blame is still in its infancy," adding that "there is no generally accepted way of framing" the philosophical issues blame occasions (2013: 4). One can imagine that blame has been dismissed due to some well-known critical responses in the history of philosophy. There is the familiar Stoic view that blame focuses our desires on things outside of our control and therefore blame should be abandoned. For Epictetus, the philosopher neither blames himself nor others, as blame amounts to the futile and irrational wish that the world should be other than it actually is. There is also the Nietzschean view that understands blame as a form of ressentiment, or the need to make meaning over and against something external which results in self-denying asceticism instead of self-affirming transformation. Both the Stoic and Nietzschean views raise serious doubts about the moral appropriateness of blame. Since both recommend overcoming blame, those who argue that blame can play a positive role in moral philosophy should attend to these objections to avoid the assumption that blame is obviously appropriate as a moral practice.

The process of considering strong counterarguments is especially important because no philosopher claims that all examples of blame are morally appropriate. It is possible, then, that arguments against the moral appropriateness of blame will assist in drawing clear distinctions between the appropriate and inappropriate cases. Those committed to vindicating blame as a

morally appropriate practice can make use of anti-blame views to determine if these objections

are overstated (perhaps the objections are true of the inappropriate cases, but not the appropriate

cases) or altogether misguided. The goal, then, is not to reject these counter positions outright,

but rather to give them a generous read with the aim of learning something about blame from

those who think it irrational (such as the Stoics) or self-defeating (like Nietzsche).

The first two sections of this chapter address Stoic and Nietzschean doubts about the

moral appropriateness of blame. I respond to these objections while simultaneously mining these

accounts for useful observations about the nature and nastiness of blame. Having responded to

these objections, I turn to contemporary literature on blame in the third section and identify two

desiderata that a morally appropriate conception of blame should satisfy. For organizational

purposes, I also introduce a rough taxonomy of the primary themes in the literature on blame,

thereby offering one framework of the kind that Coates and Tognazzini claim is lacking. Then, in

the fourth section, I turn to the views of George Sher, T.M. Scanlon, and Miranda Fricker; I

make use of the desiderata and framework in Section 1.3 to note some strengths and weaknesses

in these accounts. The aim of this chapter, then, is twofold. First, I respond to strong

counterarguments in the history of philosophy, then I evaluate contemporary views of blame for

the purpose of eventually placing my own view among those in a larger body of literature.

Stoic Objections

In the opening lines of *The Enchiridion*, Epictetus famously explains that some things are

in our control and some things are not in our control (1994: Section 1). Personal opinion, pursuit,

desire, aversion, and our own actions are in our control; body, property, reputation, public office,

and the actions of others are not in our control (1994: Section 1). We ought not become

excessively attached to anything outside of our control if we desire tranquility. Blaming

ourselves and others, then, leads to disturbance and disillusion; we risk understanding the world

in terms of how we want it to be, rather than how it is. But, according to Epictetus, the way to

succeed is to want things to be as they are. Specifically, Epictetus instructs:

> Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things. Death, for instance, is not terrible, else it would have appeared so to Socrates. But the terror consists in our notion of death that it is terrible. When therefore we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never attribute it to others, but to ourselves; that is, to our own principles. An uninstructed person will lay the fault of his own bad condition upon others. Someone just starting instruction will lay the fault on himself. Some who is perfectly instructed will place blame neither on others nor on himself. (1994: Section 5)

His description of the philosopher is also telling:

> The condition and characteristic of a philosopher is, that he expects all hurt and benefit from himself. The marks of a proficient are, that he censures no one, praises no one, blames no one, accuses no one, says nothing concerning himself as being anybody, or knowing anything: when he is, in any instance, hindered or restrained, he accuses himself; and, if he is praised, he secretly laughs at the person who praises him; and, if he is censured, he makes no defense. (1994: Section 48)

One can certainly understand the desire to rid one's life of needless anxiety for the purpose of

achieving peace of mind. One may find attractive the suggestion that we should "secretly laugh"

at those who put too much stock in public image. It is true that dwelling on misfortune can

become excessive, as this tendency can prevent growth and healing in the aftermath of harm.

Epictetus is not the only Stoic philosopher to claim that blame is irrational and ought to

be abandoned.[8] Marcus Aurelius makes this point in *The Meditations*:

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[8] Although Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca are not the only Stoic philosophers one might consult on the moral appropriateness of blame, they are the three Stoics from whom we have completed writings: "We do not possess a single complete work by any of the first three heads of the Stoic school: the 'founder,' Zeno of Citium in Cyprus (344–262 BCE), Cleanthes (d. 232 BCE) or Chrysippus (d. ca. 206 BCE). Chrysippus was particularly prolific, composing over 165 works, but we have only fragments of his works. The only complete works by Stoic philosophers that we possess are those by writers of Imperial times, Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE), Epictetus (c. 55–135) and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180) and these works are principally focused on ethics" (Baltzly 2014). By noting their similar stances on blame, I do not mean to suggest that they are interchangeable or completely in-line with one another. Instead, it is worth noting that all three dismiss blame despite the differences between them.

> That which is really beautiful has no need of anything; not more than law, not more than truth, not more than benevolence or modesty. Which of these things is beautiful because it is praised, or spoiled by being blamed? Is such a thing as an emerald made worse than it was, if it is not praised? Or gold, ivory, purple, a lyre, a little knife, a flower, a shrub?" (1994: Book 4)

Seneca additionally warns that blaming all who are deserving would dominate our lives:

> Moreover, if it be the duty of the wise man to be angry at base deeds, and to be excited and saddened at crimes, then is there nothing more unhappy than the wise man, for all his life will be spent in anger and grief. What moment will there be at which he does not see something deserving of blame? Whenever he leaves his house he will be obliged to walk among men who are criminals, misers, spendthrifts, profligates, and who are happy in being so: he can turn his eyes in no direction without their finding something to shock them. He will faint, if he demands anger from himself as often as reason calls for it. (2005: Section 7)

As we cannot change the nature of something by praising or blaming it, blame appears to be irrational for Marcus Aurelius and counterproductive to achieving happiness for Seneca. All three Stoics make it clear that one can still experience emotions, have meaningful relationships, engage in self-improvement, and have long term goals as a Stoic. So, why not eliminate praise and blame? Why not abstain from comparing ourselves to others?

There are two replies to the Stoic anti-blame position worth considering. At this point, I aim only to rebuff, rather than refute, the abovementioned Stoic arguments against the moral appropriateness of blame. In other words, these replies are meant to show that the Stoic critique of blame is not immediately decisive; there are prima facie reasons to resist the Stoic conclusion.

First, it seems morally crucial to make comparisons between ourselves and others for the purpose of moral development and self-improvement. Blame is not necessarily irrational or an impediment to happiness if we consider the relationship between who we are and who we want to become in the future, both as individuals and as communities. Comparisons like blame and praise *as such* are not the problem; it is excessive or inappropriate blame and praise that look undesirable. Granted, many cases of pathological blame and self-blame arise as a result of

anxiety. Look no further than desires to conform to norms of beauty, health, femininity, masculinity, etc. For example, in his recent article in *The New York Times*, psychologist and family physician Leonard Sax asks "Why Do Girls Tend to Have More Anxiety Than Boys?" and reports the following danger with the gendered breakdown of social media use:[9]

> Some research has shown that in adolescence, girls tend to become more dissatisfied with their bodies, whereas boys tend to become *more* satisfied with *their* bodies. Another factor has to do with differences in how girls and boys use social media. A girl is much more likely than a boy to post a photo of herself wearing a swimsuit, while the boy is more likely to post a photo where the emphasis is on something he has *done* rather than on how he *looks*. If you don't like Jake's selfie showing off his big trophy, he may not care. But if you don't like Sonya's photo of herself wearing her bikini, she's more likely to take it personally. Imagine another girl sitting in her bedroom, alone. She's scrolling through other girls' Instagram and Snapchat feeds. She sees Sonya showing off her new bikini; Sonya looks awesome. She sees Madison at a party, having a blast. She sees Vanessa with her adorable new puppy. And she thinks: *I'm just sitting here in my bedroom, not doing anything. My life sucks.* (Sax 2016)

This example demonstrates how excessive comparisons among girls on social media can invite anxiety, but it is important to see that not all comparisons amount to this.[10]

Alternatively, consider the website, "Amy Poehler's Smart Girls," which features examples of girls thriving in sports, art, political movements, and science with the aim of empowering girls to be themselves and connect with each other. The mission statement reads, "We emphasize intelligence and imagination over 'fitting in.' We celebrate curiosity over gossip. We are a place where people can truly be their weird and wonderful selves" ("Amy Poehler's Smart Girls" 2016). Topics on the website include "advice, animals, art, authors, campaigns,

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[9] This example is not meant to be representative of the experiences of all girls, boys, or gender non-conforming adolescents. I understand that the article paints in broad, binary strokes. I only offer this as an example of how some recent research cites the practice of comparing oneself to others on social media as a source of anxiety especially in girls, seemingly making the Stoic point that comparisons do not lead to peace of mind or happiness.

[10] It is important to criticize the social and political institutions that produce and reinforce the norms that convince adolescent girls that they should conform to certain standards of beauty or femininity. The Stoic objection risks leaving patriarchal structures of power in place by focusing instead on the pointlessness of praise and blame. It is not enough to tell a girl that she should stop comparing herself to others when her desire to compare herself to others has developed and taken hold in a patriarchal culture that promotes competition and perfection among girls and women.

careers, comedy, culture, DIY, education, entrepreneurship, history, holidays, interviews, music, news, poetry, politics, science, self-care, sports, and take action tool-kits" ("Amy Poehler's Smart Girls" 2016). Similarly, the organization Girls Inc. has a dynamic website which invites girls to participate in educational and social justice driven projects, on topics including, "math and science education, pregnancy and drug abuse prevention, media literacy, economic literacy, adolescent health, violence prevention, and sports participation" (Girls Inc. 2016). The website connects girls with each other virtually in a section with the following description:

> Girls get a lot of negative messages telling them they can't do things or should look and behave in certain ways just because they're girls… Girls Inc. shows girls how to discover and get excited about their potential. Create a profile with an avatar and show what makes you strong, smart, and bold. Set and share goals online and watch videos about the amazing things girls and women have accomplished. (Girls Inc. 2016)

Returning to Sax, one encounters much different results when thinking of the girl in his example browsing the "Smart Girls" and "Girls Inc." websites instead of thinking "I'm just sitting here in my bedroom, not doing anything. My life sucks" (Sax 2016). Comparisons that involve praise and blame can serve as bedrock for collaboration and the recognition that we are not alone in developing ourselves and desiring better communities. Imagine that, upon noticing the kindness of a friend, I blame myself for carelessly hurting others in the past. This need not be understood as irrational insofar as I am not able to control my past behavior. Praising the kindness of others and blaming myself can lead to moral growth and self-transformation in the future. Further, comparing ourselves to others can help to clarify who we do not want to be. In blaming someone for their cruel behavior, I may firm up my own commitment to not behaving in cruel ways. In short, we can learn from our own moral mistakes and successes, as well as from those of others, for the purpose of exercising some control over our future actions.

My second reply to the Stoic dismissal of blame deals with the description of the

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"perfectly instructed" Stoic sage as someone who refrains from blaming others or himself. This seems extreme when thinking about what it means to be a human trying to live a moral life. Although we may look at this description with admiration, Epictetus does not offer an objection that tracks the moral activity of most human beings, a fact that Epictetus would readily grant as it is not entirely clear from the text that anyone (except maybe Socrates or Zeno) is "perfectly instructed" in the way that Epictetus describes. If the Stoic sage is exceptional, then it is still important to consider how praise and blame might have moral value for those who are not perfectly instructed Stoics, including those who are only partially instructed. Theorizing morality for those who are not (yet) perfectly instructed looks necessary for charting a route towards becoming a Stoic sage.

The closest that we get to an account of "appropriate" and "inappropriate" blame for those who are not yet Stoic sages has to do with the difference between blaming others and blaming ourselves. Specifically, Epictetus claims that those with *some* instruction (as opposed to those with no instruction) resist blaming others and *only* blame themselves, "An uninstructed person will lay the fault of his own bad condition upon others. Someone just starting instruction will lay the fault on himself. Some who is perfectly instructed will place blame neither on others nor on himself" (1994: Section 5). This is an interesting aspect of Epictetus' Stoicism, as the self serves as a middle ground between blaming others due to ignorance and blaming no one given the knowledge that things (including people) act according to their natures. Yet, this looks dangerous, given that many cases of excessive self-blame include feeling like "everything is my fault" even when this is not the case. Consider the pervasiveness of victim-blaming and "slut-shaming" following sexual violence in contemporary culture. One can imagine how it might be morally problematic, then, for Epictetus to advise the partially instructed to blame only herself

on the way to becoming a perfectly instructed Stoic sage who has abandoned blame altogether.

So, both the claim that we should not compare ourselves to others and the description of the perfectly instructed Stoic sage seem extreme and potentially unattainable. It is possible, though, to consider a more moderate Stoic view, which does not require one to dispense with blame altogether. In her recent interrogation of the moral appropriateness of anger, Martha Nussbaum acknowledges these extremities and adopts this kind of moderate Stoic position. She argues that there is value in thinking with the Stoics even if we do not accept their extreme theory of value (2016: 142). Because Nussbaum's work on anger contains lessons about what a moderate Stoic anti-blame position would look like, I respond to her with the aim of rebuffing even this moderate anti-blame view.[11]

Nussbaum doubts the moral appropriateness of anger, which she claims is always motivated by payback or the desire to elevate one's own status over another. She explains, "So, to put my radical claim succinctly: when anger makes sense, it is normatively problematic (focused narrowly on status); when it is normatively reasonable (focused on injury), it does not make good sense, and is normatively problematic in a different way. In a rational person, anger, realizing that, soon laughs at itself and goes away" (2016: 31). Because of this, she concludes that anger is only morally appropriate as a transitional emotion that ought to be abandoned or transformed as quickly as possible lest we expose ourselves and others to the "irrationality and

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[11] Nussbaum discusses the relationship between anger and blame in a five page appendix to her book. Ultimately she concludes that those who aim to provide a unified account of blame will fail: "In short, while it is very useful to distinguish these different cases, and while we surely learn a lot from the distinctions that these fine philosophers have introduced, human reactions come in many types, and the word 'blame' is very imprecise. Maybe it's not quite as duplicitous as 'privacy,' which covers things that have no common thread at all. But it's pretty empty and uninformative… Insofar as all these fine philosophers are pursuing a single essence, they appear to be pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp" (2016: 260). While I disagree with Nussbaum, I find that her description of the word 'blame' as imprecise actually captures something important about blame as such. With Williams, I argue that blame will always remain somewhat obscure both to blamer and blamed because we are not self-transparent creatures. So while we may not arrive at a single essence for blame, we can get curious about why blame seems so imprecise and how we can best clarify this common moral practice by way of reflecting on our motivations and reasons for action.

destructiveness" of anger (Nussbaum 2016: 40).

Nussbaum distinguishes between three arenas where we are vulnerable to feeling angry, (1) intimate relationships, (2) the middle realm of acquaintances, co-workers, and strangers, and (3) the political realm, specifically legal and social institutions (2016:7-8). Her reliance on what she refers to as "Stoicism qualified" features most prominently in her discussion of the middle realm (2016: 137). She claims that anger towards those who fall into this category is pointless: "In general, I shall argue that in this domain the Stoics are basically correct: most of these things (though not the last group) [namely, very serious wrongs] are not worth getting upset about, and it's a mistake to make them the object of any serious emotional concern" (2016: 139).

Nussbaum argues that most of the anger experienced in the middle realm is about trivial matters, such as petty grievances, poor driving, tardiness, gossip, and rudeness on the part of others. While she acknowledges that we also experience serious harms in this realm, such as sexual assault, she thinks that the best recourse in these cases is to the political realm, the criminal justice system.[12] She explains, "Seneca also recommends something further, of great importance: an attitude of amused detachment toward ourselves, so that we simply don't take what happens to us as the most world-shaking thing. It probably isn't. To the extent that it is of serious weight, we should turn things over to the Eumenides" (Nussbaum 2016: 168).[13] There's no place, then, for anger in the middle realm except as a motivation to seek out the legal system in cases of serious harm. Otherwise, we ought to let go of our anger in this realm because "there is so much behavior everywhere that is rude, inconsiderate, or in some way subpar. Detachment

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[12] This too quickly assumes that the criminal justice system can attend to serious wrongs like sexual assault in fair and unbiased ways. There is an abundance of evidence that the criminal justice system and law enforcement perpetuate racist and sexist practices. See Angela Davis' *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003) and Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010) for specific analyses along these lines.

[13] Those who have identified and theorized the prevalence of microaggressions may disagree with Nussbaum's descriptions of the middle realm as largely dealing with harms that do not carry serious moral weight.

is urgently needed if life is to go well" (Nussbaum 2016: 140).

It is not difficult to imagine how this rejection of anger also includes an indictment of blame, as it looks like blame may be pointless or appropriately the job of legal institutions from the perspective of a moderate Stoic. But it seems important to notice the role that detachment towards ourselves and others plays in Nussbaum's rejection of anger. It is fair enough to assume, with Seneca, that people will behave in ways that make us angry on a daily basis; rest assured, we will probably do the same. Yet, detachment is not obviously the best way to deal with this problem; this approach risks undervaluing the future oriented, educational role that blame and anger can play in our moral lives. Blame and anger can call others to account for their behavior without necessarily including the desire for punishment or shame. Additionally, expressions of blame and anger can serve the purpose of establishing boundaries in relationships; when someone oversteps or assumes access in a morally inappropriate way, detachment is not our only (or obviously the best) response. Instead, one may express anger or blame this person as a means of stressing the boundaries of that particular relationship, or attachment. Finally, it looks as though blame and other moral phenomena like apology and forgiveness are bound to each other. What would an apology be without blame? Surely the legal system cannot be relied on to facilitate our practices of apology and forgiveness. So, even a moderate Stoic view which would claim that blame ought to be overcome quickly and, when dealing with a serious harms, ought to be left to the justice system, is not obviously correct. The moderate Stoic must say more about the positive role that blame can play in our moral lives, along with the limitations of the criminal justice system tasked with adjudicating serious conflicts.

It appears that both the Stoic and moderate Stoic anti-blame positions make the mistake of thinking that all cases of blame are the worst kind of blame. Insofar as blame can serve the

function of clarifying reasons for action and establishing clear boundaries in relationships, it looks as if blame is not obviously pointless, irrational, or antithetical to happiness.

Nietzschean Objections

Taking up a strategy different from the Stoics, Nietzsche describes blame as a tool used by the weak to enhance self-worth by seeking revenge against others (1998: 17). Blame signals slave morality, or the reactive approach to life says " 'no' to an 'outside,' to a 'different,' to a 'not-self': and *this* 'no' is its creative deed" (Nietzsche 1998: 19). This concerns Nietzsche insofar as he thinks that, in order to avoid the danger of nihilism, humanity should overcome what he calls "the ascetic ideal" instead of continuing to make meaning out of practices of self-denial and suffering (1998: 106). In other words, we can adjust our attitude towards life to make meaning by becoming self-affirming "yes-sayers" instead of self-denying "no-sayers."

In the "Third Treatise" of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, when describing the ascetic priest's reversal of the direction of ressentiment among his followers, Nietzsche writes:

> Those who suffer are one and all possessed of a horrifying readiness and inventiveness in pretexts for painful affects; they savor even their suspicion, their brooding over bad deeds and apparent curtailments; they dig around after dark questionable stories in the viscera of their past and present, where they are free to wallow in a tormenting suspicion and to intoxicate themselves on their own poison of malice—they tear open the oldest wounds, they bleed to death from scars long healed, they make malefactors out of friend, wife, child, and whatever else stands closest to them. "I am suffering: for this someone must be to blame"—thus every diseased sheep thinks. But his shepherd, the ascetic priest, says to him: "That's right, my sheep! someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it—you alone are to blame for yourself!... That is bold enough, false enough: but one thing at least has been achieved by it, in this way, as noted, the direction of *ressentiment* has been—changed. (1998: 92)

Nietzsche laments the degree to which humanity has embraced the ascetic ideal; in fact, the passage above further motivates the importance of work on blame because of how often people turn negative practices and emotions inward on themselves in harmful ways. At the conclusion

of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche embraces an artistic, rather than ascetic, ideal (1998: 111). Yet, Nietzsche's description of how ressentiment turns inward to blame the self is primarily diagnostic. He worries about nihilism as the greatest danger; he is concerned that blaming and denying ourselves has left us weak and tired, burdened by the need to make meaning out of suffering (1998: 117). But he also thinks that humans have acquired depth and become more interesting as a result of this turn inward (Nietzsche 1998: 16). For him, it is not about embracing a more primitive time before the ascetic ideal took root. It is about looking ahead and overcoming this ideal with the very depth that it has made possible in us over time.

Despite Nietzsche's call to create new values, it is difficult to imagine humanity overcoming the ascetic ideal anytime soon. For everyday examples, look no further than practices of excessive dieting; consider the ressentiment-inspired practice of "trolling" on the Internet. This does not mean, however, that Nietzsche's distinction between self-affirmation and self-denial is not useful to those theorizing blame. It makes good sense to use Nietzsche's distinction between self-affirmation and self-denial, along with his description of ressentiment, to better diagnose and understand cases of morally appropriate and inappropriate blame.

John Pittman (2006) offers an excellent example of how to use of the concept of ressentiment as an analytical tool. Pitman argues that the structure of ressentiment uniquely exposes the reactive motivations of those who participated in lynch mobs in the U.S. South:

> Those who are weak-willed must need the solidarity of numbers to give expression to their cruel urges: only in the midst of the mob, where participation is encouraged, do these urges give rise to act. But if the lynch mob is constituted in some sense, and in part, by these powerful reactive feelings, then what is the original stimulus and object of these feelings? What are the reactive feelings a reaction to? The Nietzschean account of *ressentiment* points to the deep-etched impact of humiliations sustained by the powerless at the hands of the powerful. My suggestion here is that we are dealing with the trace of class and power relations manifested in the lives of poor, disenfranchised Southern whites, these lowest social orders of Southern white society that provided the vast bulk of the members of lynch mobs. (2006: 40-41)

Pittman concludes that poor white men were motivated to humiliate and murder Black people because these reactive feelings "could not safely be directed against their proper objects—that is, the powerful and wealthy plantocracy" (2006: 41). As the motivations of blamers are often obscure, it looks as if ressentiment can help to clarify violent and morally inappropriate blaming practices for the purpose of preventing these practices in the future. In this case, Pittman's claim that white poor mobs were, at least in part, motivated by feelings of ressentiment towards white plantation owners opens up the space for an analysis of lynching in the U.S. South which takes into consideration race and class when trying to understand the motivations of those who participated in these lynch mobs. Of course, gaining a better understanding of the motivations of lynch mobs in no way excuses their actions. Instead, Pittman makes it possible to see that morally inappropriate blame may take the following, horrific shape: Members of the lynch mob cannot directly blame wealthy white plantation owners for their relative poverty, so instead they redirect this blame by threatening and publicly murdering Black people in the South. Building on Nietzsche, Pittman offers an important reminder that the motivations of blamers are not often transparent; in some cases, ressentiment may play a crucial role in better understanding blame.

Further, the negative emotions that most often accompany blame like anger, shame, guilt, and resentment, are not necessarily markers of the "herd instinct" or slave morality (Nietzsche 1998: 11). These negative emotions can be affirmations of strength. Consider, for example, the "curse prayer." In "Only Justice Can Stop a Curse," Alice Walker explains how the curse prayer captures a hope for revenge that is born out of seeing generations of women and people of color abused, sterilized, and systematically killed. The following was a curse prayer collected by Zora Neal Hurston during her work as an anthropologist in the early twentieth century United States:

> To the Man God: O Great One, I have been sorely tried by my enemies and have been blasphemed and lied against. My good thoughts and my honest actions have been turned

to bad actions and dishonest ideas. My home has been ill-treated. My dear ones have been backbitten and their virtue questioned. O Man God, I beg that this that I ask for my enemies shall come to pass:

That the South wind shall scorch their bodies and make them wither and shall not be tempered to them. That the North wind shall freeze their blood and numb their muscles and that it shall not be tempered to them. That the West wind shall blow away their life's breath and will not leave their hair grow, and that their fingernails shall fall off and their bones shall crumble. That the East wind shall make their minds grow dark, their sight shall fall and their seed dry up so that they shall not multiply.

I ask that their fathers and mothers from their furthest generation will not intercede for them before the great throne, and that the wombs of their women shall not bear fruit except for strangers, and that they shall become extinct. I pray that the children who may come shall be weak of mind and paralyzed of limb and that they themselves shall curse them in their turn for ever turning the breath of life into their bodies.

I pray that disease and death shall be forever with them and that their worldly goods shall not prosper, and that their crops shall not multiply and that their cows, their sheep, and their hogs and all the living beasts shall die of starvation and thirst. I pray that their house shall be unroofed and that the rain, the thunder and lightening shall find the innermost recesses of their home and that the foundation shall crumble and the floods tear it asunder.

I pray that the sun shall not shed its rays on them in benevolence, but instead it shall beat down on them and bum them and destroy them. I pray that the moon shall not give them peace, but instead shall deride them and decry them and cause their minds to shrivel. I pray that their friends shall betray them and cause them loss of power, of gold and of silver, and that their enemies shall smite them until they beg for mercy which shall not be given them. I pray that their tongues shall forget how to speak in sweet words, and that it shall be paralyzed and that all about them shall be desolation, pestilence and death.

O Man God, I ask you for all these things because they have dragged me in the dust and destroyed my good name; broken my heart and caused me to curse the day that I was born. So be it. (1983: 338)

Although this curse prayer ends with what Nietzsche may think of as a denial of the self and an acquiescence to nihilism, the act of composing and reciting the curse prayer arguably comes from a place of strength and self-affirmation. The curse prayer, unlike the prayers of those in the ascetic priest's congregation, is not merely asking why bad things happen or searching for someone to blame for suffering. Instead it is an active expression of anger and power; it is as much a curse as it is a prayer. Walker writes about the curse prayer above, "I have often marveled at it. At the precision of its anger, the absoluteness of its bitterness. Its utter hatred of

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the enemies it condemns. It is a curse-prayer by a person who would readily, almost happily, commit suicide, if it meant her enemies would also die. Horribly" (1983: 338).

Rather than being an ascetic plea, it seems that this particular kind of prayer is very much a battle cry, something that Nietzsche, the polemicist, might appreciate. As a result, we ought not dismiss blame outright as either excessively nasty or a practice or self-denial, because, once situated within a social justice context, we may want to endorse some expressions of blame and the negative emotions that often accompany blame, even if Nietzsche would not have followed.

To summarize, the familiar anti-blame views are not necessarily decisive. The Stoic pointlessness objection and Nietzschean self-denying objection apply to some deployments of blame, but defects of these deployments owe to other features, not to blame as such. There are prima facie reasons to think that there are some cases where blame plays an appropriate moral role, including deployments of blame that positively contribute to (1) moral development and instruction, (2) clarification of boundaries in relationships, and (3) moral affirmation in the face of social injustice. It makes sense, then, to try to theorize blame in a way that recognizes its positive function in moral life. This requires the distinction (and a way of making the distinction) between morally appropriate and inappropriate blaming practices. The remainder of this chapter considers a few well-developed theories of blame that are of this kind.

The Contemporary Landscape

Having responded to some prominent objections to blame in the history of philosophy from the Stoic and Nietzschean positions, I turn now to contemporary views that attempt to theorize blame as a morally appropriate practice. Current philosophical discussions about the meaning and moral appropriateness of blame are situated at the crossroads of ethics, moral psychology, and social and political philosophy. It is clear enough that a better understanding of

how to best wield blame can transform our moral practices, institutions, and relationships. However, even if it does not seem very difficult to imagine why studying blame matters, it is difficult to say exactly what blame is and how it is different from other responsibility-based moral practices. To start, it seems uncontroversial to think that an analysis of morally appropriate blame should begin by satisfying the following two desiderata:

> (1) the analysis should be **extensionally adequate** insofar as it will be able to capture the full range of cases where blame looks appropriate including self-blame, interpersonal blame, blaming strangers, blaming the temporally distant dead, and blaming non-persons such as institutions.
>
> (2) the analysis should be **minimally revisionary** insofar as it will (a) stay true to our practices of blaming and being blamed and (b) keep blame distinct from other nearby, but different moral phenomena whenever possible.

An account of blame should be extensionally adequate and minimally revisionary because, in order to determine when blame is morally appropriate, a view should begin by considering the full range of blaming practices. A description of blame that does not satisfy the abovementioned desiderata looks ill-equipped to move forward to the normative questions regarding the moral appropriateness of blame because this risks leaving too large a gap between our current blaming practices and our normative theories about blame.

Though critics may argue that this approach risks beginning with a large amount of cases that are irrelevant or counterproductive to constructing an account of morally appropriate blame, the greater danger lies in constructing a normative theory that may be of little use to those currently engaged in the practice of blaming. This method of beginning with descriptive cases for the purpose of developing a normative theory can be understood as reflective equilibrium.[14]

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[14] Norman Daniels offers a helpful description of the meaning and purpose of reflective equilibrium: "Viewed most generally, a 'reflective equilibrium' is the end-point of a deliberative process in which we reflect on and revise our beliefs about an area of inquiry, moral or non-moral. The inquiry might be as specific as the moral question, 'What is the right thing to do in this case?' or the logical question, 'Is this the correct inference to make?' Alternatively, the inquiry might be much more general, asking which theory or account of justice or right action we should accept, or which principles of inductive reasoning we should use. We can also refer to the process or method itself as the

Yet, as Valerie Tiberius (2014) makes clear, starting with descriptive cases that capture our everyday judgments does not mean that one is required to determine that the majority of these judgements are morally appropriate:

> Reflective equilibrium does not require us to preserve all of our judgments. Some of them may have to be given up when we arrive at the best theory. What this means is that there may be a gap between the best theory and what we happen to think. Reflective equilibrium "cleans up" our intuitions about cases, revising and pruning as necessary to reach an equilibrium point. The bigger the gap, the more we can complain that the theory of responsibility we have been offered isn't really a theory of what we mean by responsibility. It's good to keep in mind, though, that because our various judgments and beliefs are not perfectly consistent, every theory will create some gap. (2014: 134)

Methodologically, then, the two desiderata offered above begin by taking stock of practices commonly understood as blame for the purpose of developing an account of blame that distinguishes between morally appropriate and inappropriate deployments. There will be some deployments of blame that we have to give up once we distinguish between morally appropriate and inappropriate blame. This is not a problem, though. The point is not to preserve as many of our current practices as possible; the point is to put forward an account of morally appropriate blame that can transform how we practice blame in the future without neglecting aspects of our current blaming practices which seem theoretically unwieldy or inconvenient.

Turning back to the specific desiderata, although cases of interpersonal blame may be the most common, it is important to consider a wide range of blaming practices when trying to

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'method of reflective equilibrium.' The method of reflective equilibrium can be carried out by individuals acting separately or together. In the latter case, the method is dialogical and agreement among participants may or may not be accompanied by a search for coherence" and "In thinking about the course of right action in a particular case, we often appeal to reasons and principles that are notoriously general and lack the kind of specificity that make them suitable to govern the case at hand without committing us to implications we cannot accept in other contexts. This requires that we refine or specify the reasons and principles if we are to provide appropriate justifications for what we do and appropriate guidance for related cases. Philosophers who have focused attention on the importance of specification have drawn on the method of reflective equilibrium for their insights into the problem." (SEP 2016).

determine how to appropriately blame in the future.[15] If a view is not extensionally adequate, it risks putting forward an account of blame that is well-suited to capture the interpersonal cases, but, similar to the craftsmen in Plato's *Apology*, assumes it understands all kinds of blame because it understands *one* kind of blame. This leaves the view vulnerable to the criticism that there are morally significant aspects of blame that are not best captured by the interpersonal cases, but are more prominently featured in other kinds of cases. Without a view that at least attempts to be extensionally adequate, we risk thinking we understand all of blame without learning from its various and distinct iterations, such as blaming ourselves, blaming strangers, blaming the temporally distant dead, and blaming institutions.

In addition, an account of blame ought to be minimally revisionary to avoid confusing blame with other moral practices. Though blame, as a moral practice, often co-exists with moral emotions such as shame, guilt, and anger, these are not obviously interchangeable phenomena. One should not avoid the difficulty of distinguishing between these moral phenomena because the differences are not immediately clear. It is important make distinctions between blame and other nearby moral phenomena so that we do not make narrow assumptions about the scope of blame based on the moral emotion expressed while engaged in the practice of blaming. The difficulty lies in keeping blame as distinct as possible from other moral phenomena without treating blame as if it can be neatly extracted from a larger set of moral attitudes and emotions.

With these desiderata in place, let's begin with a map of the major fault lines in the literature. As Coates and Tognazzini observe, "beliefs, desires, emotions, dispositions, overt

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[15]   Throughout the dissertation, I focus mostly on pervasive blaming practices in the contemporary United States because these are the practices with which I am most intimately familiar. Of course, there is value in doing a cross-cultural study of how blaming practices vary based on historical, national, racial, and socio-economic contexts. Yet, I see value in beginning from one's own practices (in this case, my own) as a safeguard against making assumptions about the practices of others for the purpose of supplying evidence for one's theoretical arguments.

behaviors, and speech acts all can seem, from certain perspectives, like plausible candidate's for

what's essential to blame." (2013: 7). Despite these differences, accounts of blame in the

literature fall along a spectrum with respect to four features captured in the following table:

Table 1. Aspects of Blame

	Expressive	**Non-expressive**
POINT	The point of blame is to communicate moral disapproval to the blamed party. These views most often understand blame as a moral address or conversation between the blamer and the blamed, rather than simply the judgement on the part of the blamer that the blamed party is blameworthy.	These views do not assume that the point of blame is for the blamer to communicate something to the blamed party in the form of a moral address. These views focus more on the judgments of the blamer and the actions of the blamed party.
	Relational	**Non-relational**
FOCUS	The relationship between the blamer and the blamed party plays a defining role in the account of blame and impacts the kind of response that a blamer has based on relationship-specific expectations. These views presuppose a relationship between the blamer and the blamed party.	The relationship between the blamer and the blamed party does not play a central role. No relationship between the blamer and the blamed is presupposed. Instead, the focus is on the judgments, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, or desires of the blamer and the actions of the blameworthy party.
	Affective	**Non-affective**
CONTENT	These views stress the affective dimensions of blame by expressly focusing on the negative emotions and negative reactive attitudes that most often accompany the belief on the part of the blamer that the blamed party is blameworthy.	These views deny that any negative emotions or negative reactive attitudes need to be present in blaming practices.
	Forward-looking	**Backward-looking**
ORIENTATION	These views find blame valuable given the potential for blame to alter someone's future behavior, educate someone, or educate members of the moral community. These views tend to prominently feature the communicative dimension/ call and response structure of blame.	These views do not require blame to have any future oriented goals. Blame functions primarily as a backward-looking opportunity for reflection.

Although Coates and Tognazzini accurately note that the literature on blame is only just

beginning to develop, the framework above can serve as a rough tool for those trying to keep

track of the larger trends in emerging accounts of blame. By considering (1) the point, (2) the focus, (3) the content, and (4) the orientation of an account of morally appropriate blame, patterns and priorities in recent accounts become clearer.

When considering the point of blame, some views focus on its communicative purpose. Blame is a moral practice that takes the form of a moral address, conversation, or confrontation between the blamer and the blamed party. Alternatively, some views fall to the other end of the spectrum; the point of blame, instead, is for the blamer to judge the blamed party blameworthy. The blamer need not communicate this judgment or confront the blamed party; the blamer may instead distance herself from the blamed party as a result of her judgement of blameworthiness.

Regarding the focus of blame, theorists emphasize the relationship between the blamer and the blamed party more, less, or not at all. Some views presuppose a relationship between blamer and blamed; this pre-existing relationship is crucial to understanding why we blame others. For example, if someone with whom we have a relationship fails to live up to our reasonable expectations, then we blame this person because of this failure to meet relationship-specific standards. On the other end of the spectrum, some views focus exclusively on certain states of mind of the blamer, such as the blamer's beliefs, judgments, attitudes, emotions, or desires. Some of these views also focus more on blameworthy actions, rather than the relationship of between the blamer and the blamed party.

There is contentious debate about the content of blame, specifically the role that negative emotions or negative reactive attitudes play in blaming practices. While some argue that blame always includes the presence of negative emotions or reactive attitudes such as anger, shame, guilt, or resentment, others claim that it is possible to blame without experiencing any negative emotions or reactive attitudes. Those who argue that blame includes this affective dimension

make the case that the judgment of blameworthiness is only a *part* of the practice of blaming. To focus exclusively on the judgment of the blamer fails to address the emotions that are either necessarily or frequently experienced by blamers. Those who argue that blame need not feature an affective dimension do not claim that blame cannot include negative emotions or reactive attitudes; they only claim that negative emotions and reactive attitudes are not essential and ought not impact the definition of blame in any significant way.

Finally, contemporary views on blame differ in their understanding of blame's orientation. Some views focus exclusively on blame as a practice directed at the past. These backward-looking views are concerned with the response of a blamer to a past action (or negligent inaction) on the part of the blamed party. At the other end of the spectrum, future oriented accounts of blame are concerned with the educational role that blame can play in practices of moral development and self-transformation. Blame can serve as a practice by which the blamer communicates a judgment of blameworthiness to the blamed party with the aim of showing that person how he or she might change in the future.

These four features of blame are not meant to be strict or exhaustive categories. Views fall roughly along a spectrum that includes these features. In the following section, I consider three influential accounts of blame, those developed by George Sher, T.M. Scanlon, and Miranda Fricker, using the two desiderata and four features put forward in this section as analytical tools.

Critical Responses to Contemporary Literature

There are a number of competing theories of blame in the contemporary philosophical literature. In this section, I consider three influential views, specifically George Sher's belief-desire model, T.M. Scanlon's relational model (and Angela Smith's modification of his view), and Miranda Fricker's communicative model; my aim is to identify some strengths and weakness

of these views based on the desiderata and features explained in the previous section.[16]

George Sher begins his influential work on blame with an observation that Coates and Tognazzini echo when they claim that only recently has blame attracted sustained attention:

> Blame is as common as water and as transparent to the gaze. We all know what it is but we cannot explain what we know by describing the experience. Often, there is no experience to describe. We also cannot explain what we know by specifying blame's purpose, since genuine blame is always impotent because always after the fact. Given its ubiquity, its elusiveness, and its evident moral importance, we might expect philosophers to have scrutinized blame carefully. But, strikingly, they have not. The 2003 edition of *The Philosopher's Index*, which publishes abstracts of all the books and articles that appear on each topic in philosophy within a given year, contains 114 entries on responsibility and 24 on punishment but only 2 on blame. I am not sure why blame has not received more attention, but whatever the explanation, the absence of a significant literature on the topic is really quite remarkable. (2006: vii)

Attending to the absence of literature on blame, Sher puts forward an account which understands blame as "a reaction to a person on the basis of the wrongness of what he has done" (2006: 7). Specifically, Sher says that blame is the belief-desire pair that includes the belief that someone is blameworthy for having acted badly or for being a bad person and "the single desire that the person in question not have performed his past bad act" or acted on the basis of bad character (2006: 112). Sher acknowledges that some cases of blame involve anger or resentment, but he does not think that this is necessary to the nature of blame. Sher offers the following description of his task: "Because my topic is the nature of blame itself—because I am seeking neither a conceptual analysis nor a dictionary definition but something more akin to a theory—the natural way to approach it is to ask what could fill the causal and normative role that we know blame to occupy" (Sher 2006: 112). Sher determines that negative emotions and reactive attitudes are not necessary to the essential structure of blame, but are instead "related to blame only as reactions

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[16] There are, of course, more accounts of blame in the contemporary literature. I selected these views because they have been influential and demonstrate larger trends within the literature. For additional accounts of blame, see *Blame: Its Nature and Norms* edited by D. Justin Coates and Neal Tognazzini (2013).

that blamers are disposed to have" (2006: 14).

Insofar as Sher's theory of blame focuses exclusively on the belief-desire pair of the blamer, his view is non-expressive and non-relational. The view does not presuppose a relationship between the blamer and the blamed party, nor does it require that the blamer communicate his or her beliefs and desires to the blamed party. This is, in part, because Sher's account of blame is backward-looking, a feature of his understanding of blame present at the very beginning of his preface when he writes that "genuine blame is always impotent because always after the fact" (2006: vii). Blame, also, is non-affective, as the belief-desire pair that constitutes blame need not include any negative emotions or negative reactive attitudes. Sher writes that "it is perfectly possible to blame someone without being angry at him, without displaying any hostility toward him, without reproaching him" and argues that this disqualifies the negative reactive attitudes as a fundamental feature of blame (Sher 2006: 96).

Turning to the desiderata, Sher's view looks extensionally adequate. His account can accommodate cases of blaming strangers, the temporally distant dead, and the self, as well as the more common interpersonal cases. However, Sher remains vulnerable to the criticism that his account is too revisionary because it is unclear that the belief-desire combination he puts forward exclusively captures blame. Arguably, this belief-desire pair could also describe other backward looking responses such as pity, disappointment, regret, or sympathy. In his quest for a theory of the nature of blame, Sher has watered-down or flattened blame to a theory that could describe a number of moral phenomena that we should at least attempt to keep distinct. Furthermore, as Angela Smith observes, it is not clear that the desire that accompanies the belief that someone is blameworthy always has the content of wishing that the person had not performed the past act. She suggests, "In fact—and this is a sad truth about us—I think it is rather common for us to

relish the missteps of others, yet this in no way inhibits our tendency to blame individuals for their misdeeds" (2013: 35).

In contrast with Sher, T.M. Scanlon provides a definition of blame that places more emphasis on the expectations and intentions involved in the relationship between blamer and the blameworthy party than on actions or emotions: "To blame a person is to judge him or her to be blameworthy and to take your relationship with him or her to be modified in a way that this judgment of impaired relations holds to be appropriate" (2008: 128). Cleared of any negative emotional valence, the blamer withdraws her good will from the blameworthy person if no good excuse is given for the blameworthy action (2008: 128-129). Scanlon offers the example of a friend (Joe) who shares confidential information about you behind your back: "The question is not just about how he will act in the future but about what happened in the past, and what it indicates about Joe's attitude toward me and the nature of our relationship" (2008: 129). Specifically, Scanlon says that there are three possible reactions that a blamer may have to Joe:

> First, I might consider whether I should continue to regard Joe as a friend. An answer to this question is a judgment about the meaning of Joe's action—about what it shows about his attitude toward me, considered in relation to the requirements of friendship, and about the significance of that attitude for our relationship. Second, I might revise my attitude toward Joe in the way that this judgment holds to be appropriate. I might, for example, cease to value spending time with him in the way one does with a friend, and I might revise my intentions to confide in him and to encourage him to confide in me. Third, I might complain to Joe about his conduct, demand an explanation or justification, or indicate in some other way that I no longer see him as a friend. (2008: 129-130)

These three reactions, however, are not all required to constitute blame. Scanlon argues that while blame will necessarily include a judgment of blameworthiness which impairs the relationship between the blamer and the blamed party, it need not include the third reaction of complaining or communicating blame (2008: 131). He leaves room for this reaction, but does not think it necessary to the structure of blame given how often we judge others to be blameworthy

and adjust our expectations of them without actually communicating this fact to them.

Scanlon's view, then, is non-expressive, relational, non-affective, and backward-looking. While one may express his or her judgment of blameworthiness, this is not a crucial aspect of the view. Yet, the relationship between the blamer and the blamed party is fundamental to the view insofar as the judgment of blameworthiness arises as a result of a failure to meet relationship-specific standards. Regarding the non-affective dimension of Scanlon's view, and returning to the case of Joe, Scanlon explains that it is not necessary to feel any negative emotion when adjusting expectations and withdrawing good will from Joe: "I might also resent his behavior, or feel some other moral emotion. But this is not required for blame, in my view—I might just feel sad" (2008: 136). Finally, because Scanlon does not require the blamer to communicate blame to the blamed party, the view is primarily backward looking. Insofar as the blamer adjusts his or her expectations, perhaps it can be said that this view falls closer to the middle of the spectrum between backward looking and forward looking, but this would be a much weaker description of forward looking than views that stress blame's role in moral education and moral development.

It seems, then, that Scanlon's view is neither extensionally adequate nor minimally revisionary. First, as Sher has argued in a recent critical reflection, Scanlon's account struggles to remain relevant in cases of blaming strangers or the temporally distant dead, failing to satisfy the first desiderata. Sher points out that Scanlon's account "must be backed by an explanation of how standards that call for blame-constituting reactions to those who damage relationships can be built right into the very relationships they damage" (2013: 51). Sher claims that Scanlon cannot account for what it is about relationships to strangers or the temporally distant dead that grounds blaming them if blame is the acknowledgment that the blameworthy party has damaged

an existing relationship.[17] Second, it has struck some critics that Scanlon's view is not minimally revisionary because his definition of blame does not necessarily involve any negative reactive attitudes or negative emotions. R. Jay Wallace has recently called this "leaving the blame out of blame" (2011: 349) and Victoria McGeer has called this "sanitizing" blame (2013: 163). For a view that makes relationships foundational, critics have questioned Scanlon's claim that the judgment of blameworthiness is essential while the experience of moral emotions is not.

Also regarding the second desiderata, the fact that Scanlon's view is non-expressive but relational has struck some as an odd pairing because one might assume that a relational account of blame is meant to provoke a response from the blameworthy party. As Angela Smith argues, "If blame is not even incipiently communicative, as Scanlon claims, then it becomes merely a one-sided adjustment of attitudes, intentions, and expectations in response to assessments of relational impairment. I find it odd that a view that places such importance on the role of relationships should end up with a view of blame that seems so deeply nonrelational" (2013: 41).

Smith suggests that by modifying Scanlon's view to focus on blame as moral protest, she can remedy the abovementioned criticism. She explains that blame as moral protest has two aims, "first, to register the fact that the person wronged did not deserve such treatment by challenging the moral claim implicit in the wrongdoer's action; second, to prompt moral recognition and acknowledgment of this fact on the part of the wrongdoer and/or others in the moral community" (2013: 43). Although this revision strengthens Scanlon's view insofar as it invites recognition on the part of the wrongdoer, it remains unclear that Smith's moral protest account actually gets at the importance of the relationship between the blamer and the blamed

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[17] Scanlon responds to this by arguing that all members of humanity are related. We can therefore modify our relationship to anyone—friend or stranger, living or dead—insofar as we have a shared humanity through our rationality (2013: 87). However, this seems to expand the definition of relationship so much that it is unclear how to address any important differences between, say, blaming an intimate partner and blaming a stranger.

party because the protest still focuses on the claim implicit in the person's action, which seems to require a level of transparency that is not obviously available in most relationships.

Taking a different approach from Sher and Scanlon, Miranda Fricker has recently put forward an account of appropriate blame which she calls 'Communicative Blame.' Her aim is two-fold; she seeks to describe the practice of blame for the purpose of discovering the point of blame. She argues that once we see that the point of blame is transformative rather than simply punitive, critics of blame will have more difficulty dismissing it outright. With these critics in mind, Fricker beings by asking, "Why does blame have a bad name?" (2016: 168). It makes sense for Fricker to begin here because in doing so she can acknowledge (without agreeing with) those who say that blame has no valuable purpose. She locates six pathologies of blame that contribute to its bad reputation and concludes that "it will be simplest to describe these pathologies of blame in terms of the positive conditions on appropriate blame which they reveal by implication" (2016: 168).

To avoid pathological blame, Fricker argues that appropriate blame should satisfy the following desiderata: (1) "the blamed party must be blameworthy," (2) "blame must of course be proportionate to the wrongdoing, (3) "blame should be appropriately contained in its proper remit, both temporally and in terms of the relationship(s) it affects," (4) "blame must be expressed in the proper ethical register" without "thinking excessively ill of another's character," (5) "blame must be geared to people's entitlement to take some risks in learning how to do things for themselves and make their own mistakes," and (6) "blame is inappropriate when it is applied in cases that exhibit a certain kind of 'incident' or outcome moral luck—the kind that involves what we might call a no-fault moral responsibility" (2016: 168-170).

Having dismissed pathological practices of blame, Fricker puts forward her positive

account of 'Communicative Blame' which she defines as a blamer "finding fault with the other party, communicating this judgment of fault to them with the added force of some negative emotional charge" (2016: 172). With this description on the table, she arrives at the illocutionary and perlocutionary points of blame. Regarding the illocutionary point, she writes:

> On this picture of things, we see Communicative Blame and remorse as partner emotional cognitions, each bearing the same moral content (X wronged Y) but where the content is grasped from the opposite points of view of wronged and wrongdoer, each of whom apprehends this content in a way that is infused with a perspectively appropriate moral emotion. By way of this moral psychological calibration these two essential moral emotions—first blame and then remorse—work together to bring increased alignment between the moral understandings of the blamer and wrongdoer. (2016: 173)

The perlocutionary point, then, of communicative blame is to inspire a change in behavior on the part of the wrong doer on the basis of the abovementioned remorse. Fricker explains:

> the perlocutionary point of Communicative Blame is to prompt a change for the better in the behaviour (inner and outer) of the wrongdoer. You want your neighbours to feel sorry with a view to their coming to see things differently and mend their ways. Communicative Blame will be well designed to effect this practical aim insofar as the pained awareness that is remorse, brought about by the blamer's expression of hurt, is likely to prompt the desired change in the wrongdoer. (2016: 173-174)

The basic structure of Fricker's 'Communicative Blame' is now clear. Her view is expressive, relational, affective, and future oriented. The blamer expresses blame to the wrongdoer; the wrongdoer feels remorse. This exchange leads the wrongdoer to consider her reasons for action alongside the moral reasons of the blamer; hopefully this leads to shared moral understanding and positive changes in the behavior of the wrongdoer. But, what if the wrongdoer refuses to feel remorse? What if there is no uptake on the part of the wrongdoer?

To address this concern, Fricker relies on Bernard Williams' discussion of blame as a 'proleptic mechanism.' She argues that this mode makes it possible to blame a wrongdoer as if she possesses reasons to feel remorse. Fricker clearly sees that an account of 'Communicative Blame' that relies on uptake on the part of the wrongdoer will not capture cases where the

wrongdoer refuses to listen. She supplements her account with the possibility that

'Communicative Blame' can also function as a 'proleptic mechanism':

> What the proleptic possibility effectively reveals (but which Williams does not bring out, for his interests lie elsewhere) is that when blame functions proleptically, as we can now see only Communicative Blame is able, it exhibits a social constructive power by which the object of any such communication has pressure exerted on her to move towards shared reasons. The blamer cares about gaining the acknowledgement she feels was withheld from her; while the blamed party (if the blame communicated is to achieve its illocutionary point) cares in some more general way about the esteem of the blamer, with the result that the accusation of fault might be sufficient to bring a change of reasons. (2016: 176)

After this discussion of 'Communicative Blame' as a 'proleptic mechanism,' Fricker moves on

to the extension of her view in cases of self-blame and third party blame, making her view

extensionally adequate. Yet, her view is overly revisionary insofar as she restricts the response of

the blamed party to remorse in cases of appropriate blame.[18]

Fricker's view is overly revisionary because it is not difficult to imagine many cases

where, if uptake failed initially and the blamer resorted to putting more general psychological

pressure on the blamed party, the blamed party may feel remorse *not* for the initial act that the

blamer took issue with, but for much different reasons related to the esteem of the blamer. For

example, although I may fail to feel remorse or see the reasons that you are citing for why I

should feel remorse, if you put more general psychological pressure on me, I will likely begin to

express remorse. Consider just some of the following forms that blame as a 'proleptic

mechanism' might take: (1) "I'm not sure that I can associate with someone who would not feel

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[18] Although it is clear to me that the most basic cases of blame have a 'call and response' structure, I do not follow Fricker in thinking that this response must take the form of remorse in all cases of appropriate blame. In an attempt to uncover the point of blame, it looks like Fricker includes what she takes to be the results of appropriate blame (remorse, apology, change in behavior, moral education) in her description of the practice. This risks losing sight of the value of blame as a moral practice; blame demands a response that jump starts moral interrogation on the part of both blamer and wrongdoer, not only the wrongdoer. The productive value of blame, then, does not lie in treating the blamed party as if she understands your reasons for blaming her. Instead, blame operates in the obscure world of human motivations and emotions, which often do not become transparent to the blamer or the blamed until during the actual practice of blaming.

bad for x," (2) "People who do not recognize the harm of x are people who I could never be friends with," (3) "The person who I married would never do x and fail to feel remorse," (4) "No daughter of mine would do x without apologizing," and "A real Christian would never say x without remorse." These are examples of the blamer exerting psychological pressure on the blamed party in an attempt to make her come around. This incentivizes the process for the blamed party making it "in her best interest" to see things the way that the blamer sees them to retain the esteem of the blamer. Fricker's account fails to satisfy the second desiderata because the view is overly revisionary in determining the response of the blamed party.

To review, then, I began this chapter by responding to two strong anti-blame views in the history of philosophy, the Stoic objection that blame is irrational and the Nietzschean objection that blame is a practice of self-denial. I argued that both objections make the mistake of assuming that all cases of blame are the worst kinds of cases. Following this discussion of historical anti-blame views, I turned to the contemporary landscape and introduced two desiderata which an account of morally appropriate blame should satisfy and a framework for understanding the point, focus, content, and orientation of contemporary views. Then, I used the desiderata and framework as tools to analyze accounts of morally appropriate blame offered by George Sher (2006), T.M. Scanlon (2008), and Miranda Fricker (2016).

Specifically, Sher offers an account of blame that is non-expressive, non-relational, non-affective, and backward looking. Though his view seems extensionally adequate, it is not minimally revisionary. Scanlon theorizes blame as non-expressive, relational, non-affective, and backward looking, though his approach does have a slight forward looking dimension insofar as the blamer adjusts her expectations of the blamed party and withdraws good will, which impacts the future of the relationship between the blamer and the blamed party. Finally, Miranda

Fricker's view is expressive, relational, affective, and forward looking. She takes care to make her view extensionally adequate, but the view is overly revisionary in its understanding of the response of the blamed party. The following table summarizes these views:

Table 2. Contemporary Views

Author	Point	Focus	Content	Orientation
Sher	Non-expressive	Non-relational	Non-affective	Backward-looking
Scanlon	Non-expressive	Relational	Non-affective	Backward-looking
Fricker	Expressive	Relational	Affective	Backward-looking and Forward-looking

There are more views in the contemporary literature which I do not evaluate here. Specifically, there are a number of philosophers inspired by P.F. Strawson who stress the importance of making the negative reactive attitudes central to an analysis of blame. The reactive attitudes include guilt, blame, resentment, and gratitude, to name a few. Importantly, in these views, responsibility is not theoretically determined independent of moral practices. People expect a basic amount of good will from others in a moral community and react when they do not receive this minimal amount of respect. In the following chapter, I take a closer look at Strawsonian approaches to blame with the eventual aim of situating my own view among them.

2. Strawsonian Accounts of Blame and Feminist Care Ethics

> We should think of the many different kinds of relationship which we can have with other people – as sharers of a common interest; as members of the same family; as colleagues; as friends; as lovers; as chance parties to an enormous range of transactions and encounters. Then we should think, in each of these connections in turn, and in others, of the kind of importance we attach to the attitudes and intentions towards us of those who stand in these relationships to us, and of the kinds of reactive attitudes and feelings to which we ourselves are prone. (Strawson 2008: 6)

> The ethics of care recognizes that human beings are dependent for many years of their lives, that the moral claim of those dependent on us for the care they need is pressing, and that there are highly important moral aspects in developing the relations of caring that enable human beings to live and progress. (Held 2005: 10)

Chapter One identified some strengths and weaknesses of three influential accounts of blame, namely those of George Sher, T.M. Scanlon, and Miranda Fricker. These accounts, however, are by no means exhaustive of the range of literature that has emerged on blame in the past ten years or so. Specifically, none of the views surveyed so far make central what P.F. Strawson termed the 'reactive attitudes' in his well-known essay, "Freedom and Resentment," which Coates and Tognazzini deem "the founding document of contemporary work on blame" (2013: 5). Strawsonian views have the following advantage: these views do not neglect or theorize away the emotive aspects of blame like some other influential accounts, including those of Scanlon and Sher. Instead, views inspired by Strawson make negative emotions like guilt, resentment, and indignation central to practices of blame.

Though this is the case, upon returning to Strawson, I argue that his approach is not well equipped to make sense of the negative emotions present in blaming practices that occur in moral communities that operate under oppressive conditions. When considering our negative reactive attitudes, it is crucial to consider the oppressive power dynamics that may shape these attitudes and reactions. I join Marilyn Frye in thinking about oppression in the following way:

> The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction. It is the experience of being caged in: all avenues, in every direction, are blocked or booby trapped. (Frye 1983:4)[19]

Because Strawson does not consider how the reactive attitudes might be operating within oppressive moral communities, I argue for an account of blame that takes seriously the central role of the negative emotions in our moral lives *and* an account that attends to the power dynamics present in moral communities, with specific emphasis on how experiences of oppression impact how we blame ourselves and others. This requires saying more than Strawson does about how and why members of moral communities may become critical of some deployments of the reactive attitudes, despite their own reliance on these reactive attitudes. Following Sandra Bartky, I argue that members of moral communities can experience something like what she describes in "Toward a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness;" as we become conscious of our own oppression, we become morally critical of ourselves and others.

The chapter proceeds in five parts. Section 2.1 reviews the main ideas in Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment." In Section 2.2, I consider accounts of blame inspired by Strawson, specifically those of R. Jay Wallace and Victoria McGeer, and contrast these views with those discussed in Chapter One. Section 2.3 notices a general trend in work done by philosophers who build on Strawson; it looks as though philosophers supplement Strawson with (or claim that Strawson has underlying commitments to) a more robust ethical program in order to address questions concerning the moral appropriateness of the reactive attitudes. Strawson claims that

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[19] Frye's definition of oppression is not the only one worth consulting, but I find her definition instructive because she provides such an accessible and accurate image, viz. the bird cage. On her view, one cannot extract a practice or reaction and analyze it independent of the larger social structure within which it exists. This is also true of my analysis of the reactive attitudes in Strawson. I argue that we should consider how these reactive attitudes operate within larger networks of oppression. For additional feminist accounts of oppression see Iris Young's "Five Faces of Oppression," Sandra Bartky's "On Psychological Oppression," and Ann Cudd's *Analyzing Oppression*.

these attitudes, including guilt, resentment, indignation, gratitude, and other practices that express praise and blame are inescapably human. This, however, does not yet show that these attitudes are morally appropriate, which is why Strawson seems to need some kind of moral supplement.

In Section 2.4, I argue that a feminist ethics of care can serve as a promising moral supplement to Strawson given the importance both approaches assign to interpersonal relationships, the participant attitude, and practices of holding ourselves and each other responsible in an inescapably social world. Then, the final section relies on Frye and Bartky to diagnose a problem in Strawson, namely the assumption that members of moral communities will express all three kinds of reactive attitudes (towards the self, directly towards others, indirectly on behalf of others). I argue that once we consider these three expressions from a feminist perspective, it becomes clear that while some may express indignation on behalf of others and guilt toward themselves, many will not express resentment due to diminished self-worth or a failure on the part of others to take that expression of resentment seriously. This leads me to Chapter Three, which focuses on self-blame in light of the observation that oppressive conditions often facilitate self-blame on the part of those who are oppressed.

Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment"

Though Strawson's discussion of the reactive attitudes in "Freedom and Resentment" has influenced a great deal of work in moral philosophy, Strawson did not consider himself a moral philosopher first and foremost, if at all:

> 1960 was a full year. I was elected to the British Academy and delivered there a lecture, "Freedom and Resentment", which is one of my very few ventures into moral philosophy. Another such venture, written about the same time, and published in 1961 (the year of the birth of my younger daughter, Virginia), I entitled "Social Morality and Individual Ideal". Between them, these two papers effectively embody all I have thought

or have to say in a philosophical area which, important as I recognize it to be, I have never found as intellectually gripping as those to which I have given more attention. (2008: xxvi)

Despite Strawson's description of his own relationship to moral philosophy, "Freedom and Resentment" is a lecture-turned-essay that offers more to its readers each time it is read. The essay attends to the free will and determinism debate as it relates to moral responsibility.

Strawson begins by noting that there are those philosophers who "say they do not know what the thesis of determinism is. Others say, or imply, that they do know what it is" (2008: 1). Among those who claim that they know something about the thesis of determinism, Strawson identifies two main camps, the pessimists and the optimists.[20] The pessimists doubt that "the practices of punishing and blaming, of expressing moral condemnation and approval" have any justification if determinism is shown to be true (Strawson 2008: 1). How could these practices make sense if it was shown to be true that moral agents do not have any control over their actions? The optimists, who he says operate on the basis of a "one-eyed utilitarianism," claim that, even if the thesis of determinism was shown to be true, practices of blaming, praising, and holding responsible would still have value, as these practices can be used to control populations and maintain order in society (Strawson 2008: 25). Strawson locates himself in the first category introduced, those who do not know what the thesis of determinism is. Yet, he sees value in trying to reconcile these two camps, though he recognizes that in trying to do so, his account "is likely to seem wrongheaded to everyone" (Strawson 2008: 2).

Following his distinction between the pessimists and the optimists, Strawson stages a kind of dialogue between these parties, noting how each would respond when challenged. Upon

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[20] Strawson also notes a third possible stance, that of the "genuine moral skeptic" who thinks that "the notions of moral guilt, of blame, of moral responsibility are inherently confused and that we can see this to be so if we consider the consequences either of the truth of determinism or of its falsity. The holders of this opinion agree with the pessimists that these notions lack application if determinism is true, and add simply that they also lack it if determinism is false" (2008: 1).

hearing the optimist justify moral practices solely on the basis of efficacy, Strawson imagines

that the pessimist would be quick to note "that **just** punishment and **moral** condemnation imply

moral guilt and guilt implies moral responsibility" which implies freedom and the falsity of

determinism (2008: 2-3). The optimist, then, could reply by positing a definition of freedom

based on the facts as we currently know them. This requires nothing more than the absence of

conditions such as "compulsion by another, or innate incapacity, or insanity" (Strawson 2008: 3).

The pessimist, dissatisfied, thinks of our moral practices as tracking a quality missing in the

optimist's account, namely desert:

> Then what does the pessimist find missing? When he tries to answer this question, his
> language is apt to alternate between the very familiar and the very unfamiliar. Thus he
> may say, familiarly enough, that the man who is the subject of justified punishment,
> blame or moral condemnation must really **deserve** it; and then add, perhaps, that, in the
> case at least where he is blamed for a positive act rather than an omission, the condition
> of his really deserving blame is something that goes beyond the negative freedoms that
> the optimist concedes. It is, say, a genuinely free identification of the will with the act.
> And this is the condition that is incompatible with the truth of determinism. (2008: 3)

The pessimist and optimist continue until they arrive at the following stalemate; the optimist

claims that, given the facts as we know them, the truth of determinism would not render our

practices of moral praise and blame useless because these practices could still be used for the

purposes of social control, cooperation, and organization. The pessimist, still desiring more,

claims that this description fails to capture something crucial about these practices as moral

practices (Strawson 2008: 4). The pessimist hence draws the conclusion that the facts as we

know them suggest that there is no such thing as moral responsibility. At this point, Strawson

calls attention to a kind of practice previously neglected by both camps as an intervention into

this debate which might give "the optimist something more to say" (2008:4).

Strawson notices that the debate heretofore has assumed an objective stance towards the

practices and agents under discussion. In other words, both the pessimist and the optimist started

from a position which assumed that it was possible to debate the value of moral practices from a

distance, or removed from, their own lived experiences of these practices. Strawson writes:

> I want to speak, at least at first, of something else: of the non-detached attitudes and
> reactions of people directly involved in transactions with each other; of the attitudes and
> reactions of offended parties and beneficiaries; of such things as gratitude, resentment,
> forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings. (2008: 5)

So, instead of entering the debate by immediately appealing to an abstract category such as

blameworthiness, which the pessimist would claim depends on the falsity of determinism,

Strawson shifts the gaze to our everyday reactions toward ourselves and each other. This shift to

our experiences of and participation in moral practices invites us to begin from the participant

stance. As one might imagine, this approach comes with its own set of difficulties:

> What I have to say consists largely of commonplaces. So my language, like that of
> commonplaces generally, will be quite unscientific and imprecise. The central
> commonplace that I want to insist on is the very great importance that we attach to the
> attitudes and intentions towards us of other human beings, and the great extent to which
> our personal feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, our beliefs about these
> attitudes and intentions. I can give no simple description of the field of phenomena at the
> centre of which stands this commonplace truth; for the field is too complex. (2008: 5)

Strawson, then, warns that when attempting to talk about our relationships, he will not simplify

complicated practices for the purpose of false precision. Strawson notes that there are a number

of ways of talking about these commonplaces that invoke concepts like self-respect, human

dignity, the need for love, etc. but considers this "jargon" useful only insofar as it helps to:

> emphasize how much we actually mind, how much it matters to us, whether the actions
> of other people – and particularly of **some** other people – reflect attitudes towards us of
> goodwill, affection, or esteem on the one hand or contempt, indifference, or malevolence
> on the other. (2008: 5)

Instead of beginning by positing some inherent human quality like dignity or capacity like

freedom of the will, Strawson points to a collection of ambiguous attitudes and reactions upon

which we place great importance for establishing and maintaining our interpersonal relationships

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and moral norms. Upon studying these reactions, it becomes clear that we expect a basic amount of good will from those with whom we share a moral community and we react negatively when we feel that this minimal amount of good will has not been satisfied (2008: 7). "Goodwill," as described by Strawson, means something along the lines of "due moral regard" or "recognition of basic moral standing" between members of a shared moral community.

Moving forward, Strawson refers to these attitudes and practices as 'reactive attitudes' and gives us a rough sketch of what he has in mind, mentioning attitudes like guilt, resentment, indignation, gratitude, and forgiveness. Referring to resentment and gratitude, Strawson explains:

> If someone treads on my hand accidentally, while trying to help me, the pain may be no less acute than if he treads on it in contemptuous disregard of my existence or with a malevolent wish to injure me. But I shall generally feel in the second case a kind and degree of resentment that I shall not feel in the first. If someone's actions help me to some benefit I desire, then I am benefited in any case; but if he intended them so to benefit me because of his general goodwill towards me, I shall reasonably feel a gratitude which I should not feel at all if the benefit was an incidental consequence, unintended or even regretted by him, of some plan of action with a different aim. (2008: 6)

It is not difficult to imagine additional examples of the kind mentioned by Strawson; in fact, our ability to quickly call to mind many examples supports Strawson's thesis. Consider how often people feel slighted when a friend or partner fails to call back. Upon learning that this person dealt with an emergency at work, resentment usually dissipates. But, if the friend or partner simply fails to care enough to call back, resentment often lingers, even grows.

Given how easy it is to call to mind everyday examples of what Strawson calls the reactive attitudes, it makes less sense to begin to understand blame by trying to objectively isolate and determine which kinds of actions or people are inherently blameworthy. Instead, as we see with the examples mentioned above, the same action carried out by the same person changes radically based on the attitude expressed by the action. We largely react to the expression of this attitude, not the action or person as such. This observation leads Strawson to

note that there will be cases when we react to a perceived slight because we assume that someone's action expressed ill will, but learn that this was not true for one of two reasons, either due to details about the situation or the action which were not clear (the presence of coercion or emergency, for example) or because the person lacks the capacity to express such an attitude or perceive the basic demand for good will towards others (children or people with some kinds of cognitive disabilities, for example).

In "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme," Gary Watson supplies helpful language for these two kinds. He calls pleas of the first kind "excusing" conditions and pleas of the second kind "exempting" conditions (2004: 227-228). For example, we may *excuse* a friend who lashes out at us once we learn that she was not acting like herself due to some kind of emergency or tragedy, like losing her job or learning that she has a serious illness. Under normal circumstances, we expect this friend to treat us with a minimal amount of good will, but we excuse her given the impact that this stressful or life-changing information has had on her actions. If, however, our four year old niece screams at us for failing to pay enough attention to her rather than her brother, we typically see her as morally exempt; though we may attempt to educate her in that moment, we do not think that her action amounted to a moral failure deserving of a reactive attitude like resentment.[21]

Strawson's approach to the question of responsibility, including practices of praising and blaming, then, does not assume that virtuous or vicious intent is easily detectable. When we express a reactive attitude like resentment and blame someone for a perceived harm, it is always possible that the person has a valid excuse or may be exempt. Interpersonal interactions are rarely transparent; this, in turn, suggests that the meaning of responsibility, including the practice

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[21] Granted, spending time with children can be frustrating and anger-inducing for lots of reasons, but not typically because we expect them to treat us as members of a shared moral community, at least not yet.

of holding responsible by blaming, will require knowing something about the motivations, intentions, social situation, and capacities, at least, of those blamed.

Though he begins his investigation into the free will and determinism debate by highlighting the participant stance, Strawson does not dismiss the objective stance altogether. He explains that we are able to take this detached, scientific attitude toward ourselves and others, especially those who are "partially or wholly inhibited by abnormalities or by immaturity":

> To adopt the objective attitude to another human being is to see him, perhaps, as an object of social policy; as a subject for what, in a wide range of sense, might be called treatment; as something certainly to be taken account, perhaps precautionary account, of; to be managed or handled or cured or trained; perhaps simply to be avoided, though this gerundive is not peculiar to cases of objectivity of attitude. (2008: 9) [22]

Strawson adds that, though we may take the objective attitude most often towards those who are at least partially exempt from our reactive attitudes, such as children, we also may take this stance toward those who are full members of our moral community as a kind of "refuge" (2008: 10). Consider deciding to take the objective attitude towards your sister given something that she did or failed to do in order to prevent yourself from feeling increased stress on an already difficult day. Imagine, for example, that while on your way to an important job interview, you realize that your partner left very little gas in the car that you share. Instead of confronting her or him in that moment, you might take the objective stance, stop for some gas, and focus on doing well in the interview. This is one way that a temporary deployment of the objective attitude may serve as a refuge. Strawson makes this point with the following caveat though; we cannot

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[22] Given the many abuses of those considered "abnormal" or "immature" throughout history, I bristle each time that I read this passage. Yet, Strawson's observations regarding the fact that we can take the objective attitude towards ourselves and others serves as a good reminder to do so with caution and care. There is a big difference between taking the objective attitude for the purpose of encouraging healthy blood pressure and taking the objective attitude for the purpose of "correcting" a perceived abnormality like homosexuality or hysteria. Further, Strawson's point is that, as humans, we begin from our interpersonal engagements and the participant attitude. For humans, the objective attitude is a suspension of the more common and primary attitude, the participant attitude.

maintain this stance for long periods of time. Instead, the desire to continue to view another

member of the moral community, such as a partner or parent or co-worker, this way usually

suggests that the relationship has been or should be altered or severed in some significant way.

Though as humans we are able to take an objective stance towards ourselves and others for

various reasons, this attitude is not instructive regarding responsibility because our practices of

holding one another responsible require the opposing stance, the participant attitude.

Because Strawson approaches the question of responsibility by beginning with our

participant, interpersonal expectations of and reactions to each other, he explains that reactive

attitudes can be expressed in three interconnected ways, towards the self, directly towards others,

or indirectly on behalf of others (2008: 16). As an example of a self-directed reactive attitude, he

offers guilt. Resentment is an example of a reactive attitude expressed directly; indignation is

expressed on behalf of another. Despite the differences in form, Strawson explains:

> All these three types of attitude are humanly connected. One who manifested the personal
> reactive attitudes in a high degree but showed no inclination at all to their vicarious
> analogues would appear as an abnormal case of moral egocentricity, as a kind of moral
> solipsist…In general, though within varying limits, we demand of others for others, as
> well as of ourselves for others, something of the regard which we demand of others for
> ourselves. Can we imagine, besides that of the moral solipsist, any other case of one or
> two of these three types of attitude being fully developed, but quite unaccompanied by
> any trace, however slight, of the remaining two or one? If we can, then we imagine
> something far below or far above the level of our common humanity – a moral idiot or a
> saint. For all these types of attitude alike have common roots in our human nature and our
> membership of human communities. (2008: 16-17)

Keeping in mind Strawson's warning about the imprecision of language given the topic, a basic

sketch has become clear enough. Instead of trying to uncover the meaning and limitations of

responsibility by taking the objective attitude which argues on the basis of detached concepts,

Strawson starts with engaged practices of responsibility. By beginning here, he notices that

practices of holding ourselves and each other responsible stem from the expectation that we have

for a minimal amount of good will from others in our moral communities and the subsequent

moral demand that others treat us with this minimal amount of good will. Watson introduces

language which helps to summarize this dynamic within the moral community:

> What is fresh in "Freedom and Resentment", as I read it, are two related ideas: that our
> sense of ourselves and one another as morally responsible agents and (accordingly) as
> morally responsible to one another is integral to ("given with") human sociality itself, and
> that attempts to ground "responsibility practices" in some reality external to human
> nature are misguided. Strawson identifies two components of human sociality as crucial
> here. First, we care deeply (and "for its own sake") about how people regard one another.
> Second, this concern manifests itself in a demand or expectation to be treated with regard
> and good will. Following Strawson, let's call these the basic concern and the basic
> demand respectively. (2014: 17)

When we perceive that another has not met our basic demand for good will, we react *because* we

care. The reactive attitudes, like resentment and indignation, arise as a result of a perceived

slight, which often has more to do with what we assume were the motivations accompanying an

action, e.g. I react to the carelessness of someone who steps on my foot because I see her as

acting as if I do not matter. Upon expressing a reactive attitude, it may become clear that the

offending person either had a good excuse or is exempt because of incapacity to understand the

basic demand for good will between moral community members. There is no neat taxonomy of

the reactive attitudes; any attempt to extract and analyze these attitudes independent of each

other will fail to understand that these attitudes are deeply intertwined and interdependent.

Strawson does note, though, that the reactive attitudes can be self-directed, aimed directly at

another, or expressed indirectly on behalf of another. As Watson makes clear, the basic concern

and the basic demand for good will animate all three kinds of reactive attitudes.

Returning to the debate on free will and determinism, Strawson arrives at the following

two conclusions:

> So my answer has two parts. The first is that we cannot, as we are, seriously envisage
> ourselves adopting a thoroughgoing objectivity of attitude to others as a result of

theoretical conviction of the truth of determinism; and the second is that when we do in fact adopt such an attitude in a particular case, our doing so is not the consequence of a theoretical conviction which might be expressed as 'Determinism in this case', but is a consequence of our abandoning, for different reasons in different cases, the ordinary inter-personal attitudes (2008: 14).

It is funny and revealing to return to the debate between the pessimist and the optimist and imagine that it continues until one side becomes frustrated or feels misunderstood. Upon feeling this, one side might express something like resentment or decide to abandon the conversation because it has become impossible to "talk in objective terms" for too long. This would, of course, make Strawson's point that when discussing the meaning and limitations of responsibility, we need to start from our interpersonal practices of holding ourselves and each other responsible. If we try to imagine humanity without the susceptibility to reactive attitudes and practices of blaming and praising, it seems like we have imagined something too far from how we behave in our everyday engagements with each other. The fact that the reactive attitudes seem inescapable, though, does not yet claim that these attitudes are morally appropriate or morally positive attitudes. The next two sections consider some contemporary work on Strawson that seeks to build on and supplement his insightful recognition of our deeply social natures.

Contemporary Accounts of Blame Inspired by Strawson

Though Strawson does not refer to blame specifically as a reactive attitude, he makes it clear that we express reactive attitudes like guilt, resentment, and indignation when we blame ourselves and others. Blaming and praising are described, respectively, as ways that we either hold others responsible for perceived slights or recognize others for moral accomplishments.

In a collection devoted to the work of T.M. Scanlon, R. Jay Wallace offers an account of blame inspired by Strawson's discussion of the reactive attitudes. Wallace challenges Scanlon's relational model of blame, claiming that it "leaves the blame out of blame" insofar as it neglects the reactive attitudes (2011: 349). In his earlier work, Wallace defines blame as the following:

I propose that blame involves a susceptibility to the reactive emotions, and that the responses of moral sanction serve to express these emotions. Because of the connection of the reactive emotions with expectations, this account makes sense of the backward looking character of blame and moral sanction, which are essentially reactions to a moral wrong. (Wallace 1994: 11)

Here it is instructive to return to the table introduced in Chapter One. Making use of the table, we

see that Wallace criticizes the non-affective dimension of Scanlon's relational view. According

to Wallace, Scanlon's descriptions of how blame operates in relationships are stripped of crucial

emotive elements. Recall that Scanlon leaves room in his account for the appropriateness of

experiencing emotions, but does not consider this a necessary or defining feature of blame. In

contrast, Wallace asks readers to imagine what it means to be a good friend. He claims that

friendship includes actively caring for others in ways that express this care through emotions

(2011: 356). These emotions are not tangential or secondary to the expectations and intentions

involved in the friendship. Similarly, Wallace thinks that Scanlon cannot relegate the emotional

aspects of blame to a position less important than the judgments, expectations, intentions, and

attitudes involved in blaming:

Resentment and the other reactive emotions do not leave everything else as it otherwise would be; they transform your activities, giving them an expressive character that would be completely missing in their absence. My contention is that this expressive connection to the reactive sentiments is the key to understanding the special quality of blame. To count as blaming a person, you have to be *exercised* by what they have done, and to be exercised in the relevant way just is to be subject to one of the reactive sentiments that Scanlon himself concedes to be appropriate responses to blameworthy conduct. (2011: 357)

Wallace, then, draws attention to an aspect of blame not prominently featured in the belief-

desire, relational, or communicative models discussed in Chapter One. By way of focusing on

the centrality of the reactive attitudes like resentment, indignation, and guilt, Wallace addresses

what we might refer to as the phenomenology of blame, or what it feels like to blame ourselves

and others. [23] He claims that this includes feeling exercised by a person or action; it is not

sufficient to define blame only by way of the judgment of blameworthiness or the judgment that

a relationship has been impaired. If we fail to consider the emotional, expressive aspects of

blame, we risk misunderstanding how we actually blame ourselves and others. Wallace offers the

following instructive analogy:

> Take the case of artistic or intellectual pursuits, such as opera or philosophy. To acknowledge that these are valuable activities is, among other things, to acknowledge that there is reason to support them, to engage in them oneself if one has the requisite talents and interests, to learn about them and try to understand them, and so on. But one can acknowledge all these things without actually valuing opera or philosophy oneself. There is an additional quality of emotional engagement that characterizes the attitudes of people who genuinely value these pursuits; they take a real interest in them, care about whether they are in a good or a bad way, become excited when there are opportunities to engage in activities related to these pursuits, and are subject to distress when opportunities of this kind are lacking. (2011: 367)

Wallace's account of blame, then, draws on Strawson's observation that the participant attitude

includes expressions of reactive attitudes, hurt feelings, and the expectation that people care

about themselves and each other as members of moral communities. By way of contrast to

Scanlon's relational view, Wallace offers an account of blame that puts the reactive attitudes

front and center. The view does well satisfying the two desiderata introduced in Chapter One. As

Strawson and Wallace explain, the reactive attitudes can be expressed towards the self, directly

towards others in a personal way, or indirectly on behalf of others in a more impersonal way.

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[23] In his book, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, R. Jay Wallace argues for a narrow interpretation of the reactive attitudes, limiting his discussion to resentment, indignation, and guilt. Regarding his decision to interpret Strawson narrowly, Wallace writes: "I therefore follow a different strategy for developing the Strawsonian approach. Instead of interpreting the reactive attitudes simply as those emotions implicated in interpersonal relations, I construe them more narrowly, taking the paradigms to be resentment, indignation, and guilt. Interpreting the reactive emotions in this narrow way permits us to understand how these emotions hang together as a class. The key, I argue, lies in their distinctive connection with expectations. Thus, episodes of guilt, resentment, and indignation are caused by the belief that an expectation to which one holds a person has been breached; the connection with expectations gives the reactive emotions common propositional objects, tying them together as a class" (1994: 11).

This accounts for a wide range of cases, including strangers and the temporally distant dead, beyond the second personal interactions so often considered paradigmatic of blame. The view seems minimally revisionary insofar as it does not conflate the reactive attitudes with blame. When we blame, we express the reactive attitudes, like guilt, resentment, and indignation. This distinction between the practice of blaming and the reactive attitudes helps to keep blame distinct from other nearby moral phenomena.

Regarding the features of blame, Wallace's view is expressive insofar as the reactive attitudes express a kind of moral disapproval or outrage, though this need not be communicated directly to the blamed party (Wallace 1994: 55). It is clear that this view is also relational and affective given the focus on the reactive attitudes. Finally, Wallace's view is backward looking insofar as the intention is not to improve or alter future behavior. This is an interesting aspect of Wallace's view and distinguishes his view from McGeer's view, discussed subsequently.

Wallace goes into detail on this final point in *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* when he differentiates his view from what he calls "the economy of threats" account of moral blame which considers blame morally appropriate given its potential to serve as a deterrent:

> These forms of moral treatment are construed as part of an economy of threats designed to influence people—the person directly blamed or sanctioned, as well as others in that person's milieu—to avoid undesirable actions. Appealing as it does to our forward-looking concern to influence peoples' behavior for the better, a kind of generalized beneficence, the economy of threats approach has a recognizably utilitarian character. (1994: 54)

Wallace is critical of this view on the following three fronts. First, he claims that the economy of threats which includes blame as a deterrent thinks of blame exclusively in terms of sanctioning and controlling behavior; this criticism is similar to that raised against the optimist in Strawson's discussion of the free will and determinism debate (1994: 55). Second, Wallace explains that

thinking of blame as a deterrent fails to capture our practices of holding responsible insofar as it

has the goal of impacting the behavior of those beyond the blameworthy party:

> The attitudinal aspect of blame is backward-looking and focused on the individual agent
> who has done something morally wrong; insofar as sanctioning behavior expresses the
> attitude of blame, it too looks back to the commission of a moral wrong, and is directed at
> the individual agent who is morally at fault. But forward-looking beneficent concern does
> not have this kind of focus. It is not directed exclusively toward the individual agent who
> has done something morally wrong, but takes account of anyone else who is susceptible
> to being influenced by our responses--thus moral sanctions are not meant to deter only
> the agent at fault from future wrongdoing, but to serve as an example that will deter other
> agents as well, on the economy of threats approach. (1994: 55-56)

Finally, Wallace points out that blame defined within an economy of threats need not rely on the

falsity of determinism at all. As he thinks that the debate between compatibilists and

incompatibilists raises important questions about free will and responsibility, it is to the

detriment of those who hold the economy of threats view to simply dismiss this debate. I

elaborate on Wallace's criticisms of this view because I am in agreement with his rejection of

understanding blame as a part of an economy of threats designed to change behavior. This was

one of my main concerns with Fricker's discussion of the proleptic function of blame. However,

it is also important to see that this is not the only way that blame can have a future oriented

dimension. Blame is not exclusively backward looking just because it is not best understood as a

deterrent in an economy of threats. Blame can serve other forward looking functions, as made

clear by Victoria McGeer.

McGeer shares Wallace's concern that some influential approaches have neglected

important emotional aspects of blame. She calls this "sanitizing blame" and writes:

> The broader philosophical project that drives much of this work on blame is therefore one
> of showing how it can be a normatively acceptable, even valuable response to
> wrongdoing. I call this the project of 'civilizing blame' and agree with moral
> philosophers that it is an important one to pursue, but not, I claim, at the expense of
> taking the bile out of blame. In my view, this contravenes a constraint that any
> satisfactory theory of blame must meet—that is should direct us to a psychologically

plausible phenomenon, however unsavory, that answers to our ordinary conception of blame: it satisfies the ordinary connotations for the term, including connotations of resentment and anger and desire for payback. The challenge is to accept this constraint while showing that blame may nevertheless be a normatively fitting response to wrongdoing. (2013: 163)

McGeer argues that her account of blame can meet this challenge. Drawing on insights from

Strawson and interdisciplinary literature in evolutionary biology, cognitive neuroscience, cultural

anthropology, and experimental economics, she introduces a naturalist, functionalist account of

blame. This account interrogates the role that anger has played in our blaming activities through

time. Taking this evolutionary approach allows for McGeer to focus on the functions of anger

and blame, rather than fixating on "so-called essential features (features present in every

legitimate instance of blame)" like those who so often end up sanitizing blame (2013: 168).

Before going into detail about her account, McGeer anticipates and dispenses with the

objection that negative emotions like anger are not essential to understanding blame because

there are cases of blaming that do not appear to include negative emotions or negative reactive

attitudes. She thinks that dismissing the role that negative emotions play in blame on this basis

runs the risk of being too revisionary in search of a difficult (if not impossible) to determine

essence and argues, instead, that the fact that there are some exceptional cases of blaming that do

not seem to include the presence of negative emotions does not mean that these emotions are not

crucial to understanding the evolutionary development and functions of blame:

> By making sense of the fact that exceptional cases are beside the point, it lends credibility to the conceptual point that blame would not be blame absent the characteristic presence (and effect) of certain core emotions: anger, indignation, and resentment. Of course, as we know from everyday experience, the intensity of these emotions may vary widely, running the gambit from mild irritation all the way through to burning outrage. And the duration of these emotional episodes may vary as well, from relatively fleeting to unhappily persistent…Yet even amid such variability, what I am calling the emotional tone of blame –the anger, resentment, indignation—remains relatively constant. (2013: 170)

McGeer shifts the conversation from asking "What is blame?" to "What has been the purpose or function of blame?" She tracks blame's evolutionary development and role in enforcing social norms in even primitive societies and arrives at the following basic account of blame:

> At the most elemental level, blame is a quasi-autonomous, emotionally mediated response to others that is specifically prompted by, and targeted on, behavior that transgresses personally or socially valued norms. Despite its quasi-autonomous (nonreflective) character, this blaming response has both a backward-looking appraisal dimension and a forward-looking regulative dimension. The backward-looking appraisal dimension consists in coding—that is, perceiving—others' behavior as (offensively) transgressive; the forward-looking regulative dimension consists in an aggressive (punitive response aimed and changing or inhibiting such behavior). (2013: 172)

This elemental description of blame is just a start for McGeer, though. Next, keeping in mind the challenges that she identified at the beginning of the article, McGeer returns to our everyday practices of blame to see if this basic account rings true of these practices. Does blame function in this backward-looking and forward looking way? McGeer argues that blame does have this structure, though the forward-looking dimension need not take an aggressive or punitive form.

The forward-looking dimension of blame becomes especially clear when we think about blame as a process. Though blame begins as a reaction to a perceived slight, this does not mean that we blame indefinitely. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find an account which argued for the normative importance of blame if assigning blame were like identifying and assigning some inherent, static quality like "evil" or "sinfulness" for this purpose alone. Instead, blame's forward-looking dimension becomes clear when we think about how blame dissipates:

> My point is to highlight a dynamic trajectory of unfolding events, orchestrated back and forth between blamer and wrongdoer, which we recognize as having a normatively appropriate, even desirable structure because of the potential power it has to develop the moral understanding of all parties in a normative dispute—most importantly, the offender's, but often as well the moral understanding of those who would call the offender to account. (2013: 175)

McGeer acknowledges that this process is not "typically easy or straightforward" but when successful results in "the blamer's mollification, understanding, and even forgiveness" (2013: 175). Further, though she determines that blame is "an evolved reaction to transgressive behavior," she argues that we can build on this to develop practices of blaming based on a "dialogical" rather than punitive structure (McGeer 2013: 175, 184). As a model, she contrasts practices of restorative justice with practices of retributive justice and argues that restorative justice practices offer an example of morally appropriate and valuable blame.

McGeer's account of blame, then, focuses on blame as a dynamic process between the blamer and the blamed party. Though it is not immediately clear that the view is extensionally adequate, it does not require much of a leap to recognize that even blaming ourselves, the dead, or strangers can have a dialogical function, even if this does not take the form of a dialogue communicated out loud between two people. Considering the possible valid excuses or exemptions that may be at work when blaming could serve to produce a dialogical effect between the blamer and the blamed party. The view explicitly strives to be minimally revisionary and satisfies the second desiderata insofar as we understand blame as a process that most often includes negative emotions. This structure allows for us to see some differences between the practice of blaming and the feeling and expression of anger, resentment, and other emotions.

Regarding the features of blame, McGeer develops a view that is expressive, relational, affective, and both backward and forward-looking. This view does not fall prey to the worry expressed by Wallace regarding the "economy of threats" because the function of blame is not to control others, but to engage in a dynamic, though often heated, moral conversation that focuses on the process, not achieving some particular result. Both Wallace and McGeer build on Strawson to develop accounts of blame which give the reactive attitudes and negative emotions a

central role, but Wallace does not go as far as McGeer in claiming that blame has this forward-looking dimension as a constitutive feature. To summarize, then, the following views are in play:

Table 3. Contemporary Views Expanded

Author	Point	Focus	Content	Orientation
Sher	Non-expressive	Non-relational	Non-affective	Backward-looking
Scanlon	Non-expressive	Relational	Non-affective	Backward-looking
Fricker	Expressive	Relational	Affective	Backward-looking and Forward-looking
Wallace	Expressive	Relational	Affective	Backward-looking
McGeer	Expressive	Relational	Affective	Backward-looking and Forward-looking

Having discussed two accounts of blame which build on themes in Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment," specifically his discussion of the reactive attitudes and the attention that he pays to the participant stance, I notice a more general trend in work done on Strawson. Though Strawson claims that we would be unrecognizable to ourselves without the reactive attitudes and our practices of blaming and praising, this does not yet establish these attitudes and practices as normatively valuable. To this end, it looks as if philosophers are in the position of needing to normatively ground Strawson's claims regarding the participant stance and the reactive attitudes by either claiming that Strawson has an underlying commitment to a more general ethical program or by supplementing Strawson with a stronger ethical view. The following section briefly establishes this pattern for the purpose of suggesting, in Section 2.4, that a feminist ethics of care looks like a promising, until now overlooked, supplement to Strawson.

Strawson and Ethics

My aim in this section is to identify the general trend of pairing Strawson with more robust ethical programs as evidence that this looks necessary in order to differentiate between morally appropriate and inappropriate deployments of blame, praise, and the reactive attitudes.

In his attempt to establish an ethics on the basis of the second personal standpoint, Stephen Darwall claims that members of a shared moral community must necessarily recognize one another as free, competent, rational agents. He understands the reactive attitudes as forms of communication between members of a moral community who recognize each other as having shared standing as morally competent agents. Aligning closely with Kant, Darwall arrives at the following conclusion regarding Strawson, the moral community, and ethics:

> I believe that the role of second-personal attitudes and the second-person stance in mediating (mutual) accountability in Kantian and contractualist ethical conceptions marks a deep difference with the ethical views (frequently ethics of virtue) of thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Hume, and Nietzsche (to give four prominent, but quite different, examples), for whom evaluation of conduct and character does not take a fundamentally second-personal form. (2009: 77)

Darwall argues that Kantian contractualist approaches to ethics best capture Strawson's description of the reactive attitudes insofar as to address someone from the second personal standpoint is to already recognize them as members of a shared community who possess the ability to recognize human dignity and the freedom to act in ways that respect this dignity. When one fails to do this, reactive attitudes result. This supplement is necessary because Strawson does not say that members of a shared moral community deserve to be treated with respect or dignity; Strawson says that members of a shared moral community expect to be treated with good will. Strawson makes a descriptive claim regarding how much we care about how others treat us in our moral communities. Darwall builds on this, with the help of Kantian contractualist ethics, to claim that to expect that others treat us with respect and to react with resentment if they do not

meet this standard is to already assume that members of the moral community are deserving of good will given recognition of their standing as morally competent, free and rational agents.

In a collection published to mark the 50th anniversary of "Freedom and Resentment," Lucy Allais also makes sense of the reactive attitudes, the moral community, and forgiveness by aligning Strawson with Kant. If we understand members of our shared moral community as free and rational agents, Allais argues, it is possible to rationally forgive because we can treat a wrongdoer as better than her action(s). Forgiveness involves giving a wrongdoer "more than is her due" because we are capable of recognizing the wrongdoer as more than the results produced by the causal chain of her actions (2014: 53). This ability to see people as more than their actions on the basis of their standing as free and rational agents lends normative force to Strawson's distinction between the objective and participant attitudes:

> If we view people from what Strawson calls the objective view and Kant thinks of as the perspective of empirical knowledge and science (which both involve determining causal explanations), there will be some fact of the matter about which states caused the agent to act as she did and what kind of causal outputs her mental structure is likely to have. This does not leave space for changing our affective evaluation of her in a way that is both elective and not irrational. However, if seeing agents as free and responsible involves seeing them as having the capacity to initiate actions that are not a determined function of previous states of the universe, including their own psychological states, then space is opened up for affectively orienting ourselves towards others in ways that appraise them as better than their actions indicate them to be. (Allais 2014: 53)

Allais underscores the danger of attempting to determine the meaning of moral responsibility from the objective standpoint. If we treat people merely as objects to be managed, we fail to capture something crucial about moral responsibility; we are participants in a shared moral community whose freedom and rationality make the participant attitude, reactive attitudes, expectations and demands for good will, and forgiveness possible. Again, with Kant as a supplement to establish the normative demand that we treat free and rational agents with respect, Strawson's description of the moral community becomes prescriptive of this demand.

Taking a different strategy from Darwall or Allais, McGeer argues that there is an underlying commitment to a broad kind of consequentialism present in "Freedom and Resentment." She acknowledges that, while some features of Strawson's view in "Freedom and Resentment" are widely agreed upon, reading him as a consequentialist is not:

> As I read the text there are in fact three mutually reinforcing prongs to Strawson's defence of a robust conception of responsibility in "Freedom and Resentment": his naturalism (by which I mean a resistance to certain metaphysical considerations and/or debates about free will in light of our natural human attitudes and commitments); his pragmatism (by which I mean an emphasis on our everyday attitudes and practices of "holding responsible"); and his consequentialism (which I will elucidate presently). The first two prongs of Strawson's view are often recognized and discussed; the third is not. (2014: 65)

Though McGeer knows her qualification of Strawson as a kind of consequentialist is not a dominant or popular view among Strawsonian scholars, she returns to Strawson to remind readers that he sets out to locate a further and better response for the optimist in the debate on free will and determinism. Relying on the distinction between "direct" and "indirect" consequentialism, McGeer explains that, while the "one-eyed utilitarian" mentioned by Strawson may be a direct consequentialist, there is a more complicated and sophisticated position, that of the indirect consequentialist (2014: 82). The indirect consequentialist recognizes that sometimes the greatest good is achieved indirectly, by exiting or abandoning a practice. Describing this consequentialist position beyond that of the direct consequentialist, McGeer writes:

> If consequentialists are not to become enslaved to the practice as such, they need to be able to identify cases where the good is better served by exiting the practice. But if they are not to undermine the good that is served by participating in the practice, they cannot continually monitor the likely upshot of their choices, as from a calculating consequentialist perspective. (2014: 83-84)

In order to determine the normative worth, then, of the reactive attitudes, an indirect consequentialist need not go about this by means of strict calculation of what is the neutral good for the moral community or the net worth of good produced by the expressing reactive attitudes:

Reactive attitudes and practices can be comparatively assessed in light of their aptness for producing a certain good; and it seems clear from what has gone before that the good in question is the good of regulating behaviour by means of developing and/or supporting people's moral understanding. Interpreting Strawson in this light not only saves his view from a certain naturalistic complacency, it provides a generative research programme, for instance in the field of criminal justice, where there is much debate concerning the appropriate institutional expression of our reactive attitudes and practices. (2014: 88)

McGeer differs from those who claim that Strawson needs a moral supplement insofar as she reads him as already addressing normative concerns in "Freedom and Resentment." Once we establish that praise, blame, and the reactive attitudes can be compared with each other and with forms of life deprived of these practices, McGeer does not think that Strawson's optimist needs additional moral justification beyond appeal to what she calls "human flourishing":

But the pessimist seemingly wants more: the pessimist wants to know what justifies these attitudes and practices as a whole; what justifies this reactively permeated human form of life (*modulo* the truth of determinism)? To take this question seriously, the consequentialist must again have recourse to a consideration of the putative good that is thereby promoted, relative to engaging in some alternative form of life. But what kind of good could we be talking about at such a fundamental level of consideration? As I read it, the answer implicit in Strawson's response is that it is the kind of good that ought to be self-evident when we contemplate a social life replete with our human form of relationships and commitments, as against one that is stripped of all of that. *Au fond*, it is the kind of good that flows from living our human kind of life according to our nature as normatively responsive creatures. Call it "human flourishing" for want of a better term. Thus, when the pessimist presses her justificatory demand, there seems to be little left to say. (2014: 89-90)

Though McGeer does not supplement Strawson with a more robust ethical program, she argues for his commitment to a broader consequentialism in order to justify an alternative reading of Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment" as already expressing normative views.

To make sense of the moral expectations and demands in "Freedom and Resentment" beyond Strawson's descriptive claims, Darwall and Allais rely on Kant and McGeer situates Strawson within a larger consequentialist framework. Though I do not refute these approaches, McGeer's argument has an advantage over the Kantian view. If normativity in Strawson is justified by way of Kant, it is possible that emotions, especially negative emotions, will be

thought unnecessary to understanding obligations within moral communities. Darwall, for example, argues that negative emotions are not essential to the structure of reactive attitudes:

> So why don't reactive attitudes involve the desire to retaliate? Don't "retributive" sentiments invariably bring in hostility and animosity, or at least some desire to balance a harming evil with some proportionate harm? Two ideas seem to be utterly essential to reactive attitudes. The first is that of a claim or demand, and the second is that of the corresponding statuses of addresser and addressee: the authority to address the demand and the standing to be thus addressed and, consequently, to have to answer to the addresser, to be accountable or responsible to her for acknowledging and discharging the demand. Beyond these two essential elements, however, everything else seems, in principle, up for normative discussion and debate. (2009: 83)

Part of the appeal of Strawson's view has been the strength of his claims about the role that reactive attitudes and emotions play as expressions of moral demands. Further, by stressing human dignity as that which connects us to others, it becomes possible to let the differences and difficulties in our moral relationships fade into the background in favor of an account that stresses the universal aspects of our moral lives like freedom, rationality, and equality.

McGeer avoids this possible weakness by appealing to consequentialism and human flourishing. This avoids having to claim that we are all bound to each other based on our shared rationality and freedom. Instead, she thinks that the optimist in "Freedom and Resentment" doesn't need justification that runs deeper than what is self-evident. There are basic moral expectations and demands in our moral practices and moral communities because we desire this kind of flourishing, or expression of good will toward ourselves and for others. John Stuart Mill argues for the importance of resisting the urge to overemphasize the importance of freedom:

> The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental and spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest. (1991: 17)

It looks as if, rather than having to justify our moral practices by appealing to a foundational universal quality like human dignity, McGeer and Mill are able to justify moral demands within moral communities without having to "go deeper" than the moral practices of people. Insofar as we care about what others think and say and do, and we think that others owe us a minimal amount of good will, we, in turn, ought to afford this to others as they also have these expectations of us. Because of this, McGeer's claim regarding Strawson's consequentialism remains focused on the reactive attitudes, emotions, and blaming and praising practices without having to stray from Strawson to establish normativity in the ways that those who pair Kant with Strawson must.

This said, it is important to think about possible barriers to a view which relies on human flourishing to establish normativity. In order to correct for possible oppressive imbalances of power present in moral communities, which claim to promote human flourishing or personal liberty, we need to say more about what human flourishing actually looks like in practice and what conditions must be in place to think of oneself as someone deserving of flourishing. In other words, under oppressive conditions, perhaps it is not so self-evident to members of moral communities that they are deserving of reciprocal opportunities to flourish. The next section argues that, while others have supplemented Strawson with ethical programs like Kantian contractualism and consequentialism, a feminist ethics of care is positioned to locate normativity in Strawson on unique grounds given the shared focus on interpersonal relationships, the participant attitude, and practices of holding ourselves and each other responsible in an inescapably social world.

Strawson and a Feminist Ethics of Care

Having noticed a more general trend which pairs Strawson with broader ethical programs

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like Kantian contractualism and consequentialism for the purpose of establishing (or

emphasizing) normative commitments in "Freedom and Resentment," this section argues that a

feminist ethics of care can serve as a promising, until now neglected, supplement to Strawson.

Since Carol Gilligan's publication of *In a Different Voice* in 1982, there has been an

abundance of diverse work which falls broadly under the heading of "the ethics of care."

Importantly, this includes literature criticizing the ethics of care for initially failing to take an

intersectional approach, which considers the nexus of race, class, sex, gender, ability, age etc.

when identifying and correcting for oppressive practices. As observed by Andrea D. Green in her

essay, "In a Different Room: Toward an African American Woman's Ethic of Care and Justice,"

"Even if the methodological shift from absolutism to constructivism is accomplished in *In a*

Different Voice, the woman's ethos described therein is that of a mainstream White woman's

social world and, thus, it cannot adequately capture the social reality of Black or other minority

women" (2004: 60). Gilligan acknowledges the color blind elements of her original work in the

forward to *Race-ing Moral Formation: African American Perspectives on Care and Justice*:

> I remember the moment—the voice of an African American student electrifying the large lecture hall in the staid Georgian building where I was teaching a class on moral development, his question suddenly illuminating the unspoken: the presupposition that Heinz was White, that if he stole an overpriced drug to save his wife's life, a judge would agree that stealing in this case was the right thing to do. The moral logic was impeccable, but what if Heinz were Black? What would the judge do then? Wouldn't the story change? Wouldn't the conversation with the judge be different? We all knew that it would." (2004: ix)

With Gilligan's reflections in mind, and for the purpose of the dissertation, I rely on Virginia

Held's discussion of the ethics of care in *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, Global*, as this

text does an excellent job of consolidating past work for the purpose of correcting for biases,

responding to objections, and determining future aims.[24]

Held argues that the ethics of care constitutes a paradigm distinct from virtue ethics, deontology, and utilitarianism given the focus on ethical agents as relational and interpersonal:

> The ethics of care usually works with a conception of persons as relational rather than the self-sufficient independent individuals of the dominant moral theories. The dominant theories can be interpreted as importing into moral theory a concept of the person developed primarily for liberal, political, and economic theory, seeing the person as a rational, autonomous agent, or a self-interested individual. (2006: 13)

Care ethics explicitly disallows any such interpretation of ethical subjects. Held stresses shared human experiences of vulnerability and care, including childhood and old age, as shared experiences that carry normative force. She claims that we are ethical subjects insofar as we are relational subjects constituted by our social dependencies and responsibilities. She acknowledges that not all working on the ethics of care are keen on the term "care," but clarifies that these approaches are roughly aligned in affording vulnerability, dependency, and the need for love a kind of significance previously neglected in Western philosophy and ethics (Held 2006: 9).

Specifically, Held cites five distinct features of the ethics of care as a moral theory: (1) the ethics of care recognizes "the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility," (2) "the ethics of care values emotion rather than rejects it," (3) "the ethics of care respects rather than removes itself from the claims of particular others with whom we share actual relationships," (4) the ethics of care "reconceptualizes traditional notions about the public and the private," including challenging practices of oppression and (5) the ethics of care "characteristically sees persons as relational and interdependent, morally and epistemologically" (2006: 10-13).

Having briefly outlined these five features of the ethics of care, Held addresses the

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[24] There are many excellent resources on the ethics of care. Because I engage only with Held in this dissertation, I make it clear that this is "a feminist ethics of care" and does not represent all views that go by this name.

objection from those who think that an ethics of care cannot co-exist with theories of justice. Held argues that care and justice attend to distinct, but necessarily connected social and political questions; one approach may be more suited than another on a case by case basis and both can inform our moral thinking and practices:

> The question remains, however, whether justice should be thought to be incorporated into any ethic of care that will be adequate or whether we should keep the notions of justice and care and their associated ethics conceptually distinct. There is much to be said for recognizing how the ethics of care values interrelatedness and responsiveness to the needs of particular others, how the ethics of justice values fairness and rights, and how these are different emphases. Too much integration will lose sight of these valid differences. (2006: 16)

So, why focus on care as a guiding moral norm? Held explains:

> The concept of care has the advantage of not losing sight of the work involved in caring for people and of not lending itself to the interpretation of morality as ideal but impractical to which advocates of the ethics of care often object. Care is both value and practice. (2006: 9)

This claim that care is both "value and practice" invites us to return to Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment." After staging the debate that leads to a stalemate between the pessimist and the optimist on free will and determinism, Strawson pivots away from the detached objective attitude toward the non-detached participant attitude. Instead of continuing to interrogate the meaning and possibility of responsibility in objective terms, Strawson begins by focusing on how much we care about how others treat us across a range of different kinds of relationships, including our relationships with intimate partners, children, parents, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances within shared moral communities (2008: 6). On the basis of these relationships, we develop expectations, the most minimal of which is a basic expectation of good will from those with whom we share communities. Reactive attitudes arise as a result of failing to meet (guilt, resentment, indignation) or exceeding these expectations (gratitude). As Gary Watson notes:

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> The starting point of the argument is of course that our practices bottom out in sentiments and concerns, the susceptibility to which defines our sociality. These ground a normative framework, I take it, because sentiments are ways of valuing, and valuing is taking certain considerations as reasons. This stance is implicit in the basic concern to stand in participant relationships of a certain character. It is true that Strawson doesn't explicitly speak of valuing in this connection, but insofar as valuing is implicit in the sentiments and is connected with taking things to be reasons, this seems to me an appropriate construal and also required to make sense of the idea of "internal justification." (2014: 21-22)

Care ethics is compatible with Watson's reading of Strawson given the focus on care as both value and practice. With the ethics of care, our practices bottom out at caring. Insofar as we are all born into a world that requires others to care for us to ensure our survival, we develop expectations of care that constitute the fabric of our moral communities. If an expectation of care is not met, it is easy to imagine someone expressing what Strawson calls a reactive attitude. In fact, built into the core commitment of the ethics of care is the claim that emotions are valuable and not to be rejected as irrational. It is possible, then, as Watson does, to consider caring a kind of valuing, implicit within which is a normative commitment to the idea that each of us deserves care, or, in the case of Strawson, basic good will as members of shared moral communities.

Though the shared focus on interpersonal relationships, the value of emotions, and the inescapability of the social world suggests that a feminist ethics of care can serve as a solid supplement to "Freedom and Resentment," Held's approach is a promising companion to Strawson for an additional reason. When considering the moral appropriateness of our practices of praising and blaming, along with the moral appropriateness of the reactive attitudes, a feminist ethics of care has the advantage of evaluating a wide-range of practices with the following strong commitment to identifying and eradicating oppressive social practices and institutions in mind:

> Instead of seeing the corporate sector, and military strength, and government and law as the most important segments of society deserving the highest levels of wealth and power, a caring society might see the tasks of bringing up children, educating its members, meeting the needs of all, achieving peace and treasuring the environment, and doing these

in the best ways possible to be that to which the greatest social efforts of all should be devoted. One can recognize that something comparable to legal constraints and police enforcement, including at a global level, may always be necessary for special cases, but also that caring societies could greatly decrease the need for them. The social changes a focus on care would require would be as profound as can be imagined. The ethics of care as it has developed is most certainly not limited to the sphere of family and personal relations. When its social and political implications are understood, it is a radical ethic calling for a profound restructuring of society. (Held 2006: 19)

Implicit in our concern about ourselves and each other there is a moral responsibility to care. We need look no further than our practices of caring to arrive at the normative claim that since we are all vulnerable and indebted to the care of others, we ought to care as well. Yet, specifically pairing Strawson with a feminist ethics of care seems promising for differentiating between morally appropriate and inappropriate practices because this approach explicitly seeks to safeguard against oppressive deployments of praise, blame, and the reactive attitudes. In Chapter Three, I offer a feminist approach to blame inspired by Strawson, which seeks to preserve the morally promising aspects of blame without reinforcing oppressive deployments. Yet, before moving on to this, there is one aspect of Strawson's account which *does not* pair neatly with the feminist view. I discuss Strawson's assumption regarding the three-fold expression of the reactive attitudes in the next and final section of this chapter.

Reactive Attitudes in Oppressive Moral Communities

Having identified a feminist ethics of care as a strong lens through which we can establish normativity in "Freedom and Resentment," the two are not entirely consistent. Specifically, once we revisit Strawson from a feminist perspective, the following comment in Strawson regarding the interconnected expression of the reactive attitudes seems wrong:

All these three types of attitude are humanly connected. One who manifested the personal reactive attitudes in a high degree but showed no inclination at all to their vicarious analogues would appear as an abnormal case of moral egocentricity, as a kind of moral solipsist…In general, though within varying limits, we demand of others for others, as well as of ourselves for others, something of the regard which we demand of others for

ourselves. Can we imagine, besides that of the moral solipsist, any other case of one or two of these three types of attitude being fully developed, but quite unaccompanied by any trace, however slight, of the remaining two or one? If we can, then we imagine something far below or far above the level of our common humanity – a moral idiot or a saint. For all these types of attitude alike have common roots in our human nature and our membership of human communities. (2008: 16-17)

Strawson says that the three types of attitude, namely those directed at ourselves like guilt, those directed at others like resentment, and those directed at others on behalf of others like indignation will manifest in each member of a moral community. At first glance, this seems right. Who would feel guilty for harming another, but not express resentment if someone harmed them in the same way? It seems like all three types of the reactive attitudes work together to hold ourselves and each other accountable within our moral communities.

Yet, when we consider the manifestation and expression of the reactive attitudes within oppressive moral communities, it becomes easy to imagine the incongruent expression of these three types of reactive attitudes. In her highly influential collection, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, Frye notes that the word "oppression" has become overused to describe any kind of discomfort or harm (1983: 1). Frye reminds readers that experiences of oppression involve the systematic, and often seemingly mundane, production of a double-bind:

> The root of the word "oppression" is the element "press." *The press of the crowd; pressed into military service; to press a pair of pants; printing press; press the button*. Presses are used to mold things or flatten them or reduce them in bulk, sometimes to reduce them by squeezing out the gases or liquids in them. Something pressed is something caught between or among forces and barriers which are so related to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict or prevent the thing's motion or mobility. Mold. Immobilize. Reduce.

> The mundane experience of the oppressed provides another clue. One of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed people is the double bind – situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation. For example, it is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signal our docility and our acquiescence in our situation. We need not, then, be taken note of. We acquiesce in being made invisible, in our occupying no space. We participate in our own erasure. On the other hand, anything but the sunniest countenance exposes us to being perceived as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous. This means, at the least, that we may be found

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"difficult" or unpleasant to work with, which is enough to cost one one's livelihood; at worst, being seen as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous has been known to result in rape, arrest, beating, and murder. One can only choose to risk one's preferred form and rate of annihilation. (Frye 1983: 2)

In patriarchal communities it is not uncommon for oppressed people to blame themselves for failing to live up to patriarchal norms without it being possible or appropriate to express resentment towards others. This may take the form of "participating in our own erasure" because we do not think ourselves worthy of the same treatment as privileged members of our moral communities. Or, we may try to express resentment directly, but experience what Frye refers to as a double-bind; upon expressing our resentment in response to oppressive treatment, we are deemed "crazy" or "put in our place" and made to feel as though we are in the wrong.

This unearths a tension between Strawson's description of the reactive attitudes and a feminist ethics of care. It looks as if members of moral communities who experience oppression may express self-reactive attitudes in excessive or pathological ways due to oppressive norms, the kind of norms that Held tells us we ought to radically reform.[25] Further, "Freedom and Resentment" does not offer an account of how members of moral communities might critically evaluate their own expressions of the reactive attitudes. Strawson notes that we can be mistaken and that the targets of our reactive attitudes might be excused or exempt. But, overall, Strawson's focus is on how entrenched we are in our interpersonal relationships, not on how to best navigate or experience these relationships. With this said, I see no reason why, through a process like

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[25] I take it that a self-reflexive attitude like guilt can be experienced in pathological or excessive ways. By pathological, I have in mind those expressions of guilt that result from developing habits under oppressive conditions and continuing to practice these habits, such as feeling guilty, even when it is not morally appropriate to feel this way because we have nothing to feel guilty for. For example, it is common for girls and women to develop "people pleasing" habits given our upbringing and socialization. This can result in pathologically blaming ourselves for failing to please everyone around us, when this ought not be an expectation placed on us to begin with. This is slightly different from blaming ourselves in excessive ways, which is also encouraged under oppressive conditions. Perhaps we forget to call on our mother's birthday. We remember, call the next day, and apologize for the mistake. However, even though our mother tells us not to worry, we continue to blame ourselves and beat ourselves up for being a bad and ungrateful daughter. While there may have been a legitimate reason to blame ourselves briefly and remedy the situation, it does not call for on-going, or excessive, feelings of guilt.

feminist consciousness raising, one could not become aware of just how entrenched they are in their practices and relationships with the eventual aim of reforming both for the better.

So, in the case of the person who expresses the self-directed reactive attitude of guilt excessively toward herself, it is possible that she may or may not understand her guilt as, at least in part, motivated by patriarchal oppressive norms operative in her relationships. Becoming aware of one's oppression is necessary to interrupting and reforming the practices that shape one's oppression. As Bartky explains, the process of becoming aware of one's own oppression requires a certain amount of suspicion about the world as we know (or thought we knew) it:

> Little political, professional, educational, or leisure-time activity is free of the blight of sexism. Startlingly few personal relationships exist without it. Feminist consciousness is a little like paranoia, especially when the feminist first begins to apprehend the full extent of sex discrimination and the subtlety and variety of the ways in which it is enforced. Its agents are everywhere, even inside her own mind, since she can fall prey to self-doubt or a temptation to compliance. In response to this, the feminist becomes vigilant and suspicious. Her apprehension of things, especially of direct or indirect communication with other people is characterized by what I call "*wariness*." Wariness is anticipation of the possibility of attack, of affront or insult, of disparagement, ridicule, or the hurting blindness of others. It is a mode of experience which anticipates experience in a certain way; it is an apprehension of the inherently threatening character of established society. While it is primarily the established order of things of which the feminist is wary, she is wary of herself too. (1984: 18-19)

Because of this, the next chapter begins by consulting the contemporary literature on to see what others have said about self-blame. Strawson assumes that one must be a moral saint, solipsist, or idiot in order to have severe discord between the three types of reactive attitudes. I contend that one need only experience oppression in a moral community for this to be the case.

This chapter has taken a closer look at Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment," accounts of blame that are inspired by Strawson, and the relationship between Strawson and broader ethical theories. I argue that a feminist ethics of care can serve as a strong supplement to Strawson insofar as this approach can attend to the power dynamics and biases that may

contribute to oppression within moral communities. Additionally, I returned to Strawson's claim

that the reactive attitudes are normally expressed in three interconnected ways. Though Strawson

claims that members of a moral community will express all three types, once we consider this

from a feminist perspective, it becomes clear that while some may fully express guilt toward

themselves, many will not express resentment or their expressions of resentment will not have

uptake. Instead some, especially girls, women, and gender non-conforming people who

experience oppression in patriarchal communities, may excessively blame themselves in

instances when blame is unnecessary or better expressed directly towards another in the form of

resentment or anger.[26] In Chapter Three, I notice a curious lacuna in the contemporary literature

on blame, namely the lack of attention paid to self-blame and I argue that starting from self-

blame can help us to better understand blame generally.

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[26] For the purpose of the dissertation, and in the next chapter, I focus mostly on the experiences of girls and women in patriarchal moral communities. This is not to say that these experiences of oppression are any more or less significant than other experiences of oppression. I am committed to thinking about oppression intersectionally, or recognizing the intersections of various oppressive forces like patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, heteronormativity, ableism, and ageism. Future work on blame and oppression would do well to expand on how excessive or pathological self-blame manifests across the intersectional nexus of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc. in moral communities within and beyond the United States.

3. How to Blame Ourselves and Others

> We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and for good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how then should it happen that we *find* ourselves one day? (Nietzsche 1998: 1)

> No longer do we have to practice upon ourselves that mutilation of intellect and personality required of individuals who, caught up in an irrational and destructive system, are nevertheless not allowed to regard it as anything but sane, progressive, and normal. Moreover, that feeling of alienation from established society which is so prominent a feature of feminist experience may be counterbalanced by a new identification with women of all conditions and a growing sense of solidarity with other feminists. (Bartky 1990: 21)

In Chapter Two, I argued that Strawsonian accounts of blame are attractive because these approaches do not shy away from expressions of negative reactive attitudes and emotions. I suggested that a feminist ethics of care offers a strong supplement to Strawson insofar as this pairing can focus on our necessary interdependence while paying explicit attention to how oppressive norms may impact deployments of the reactive attitudes. The pairing of Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment" with a feminist ethics of care, however, reveals an imbalance in what Strawson assumes to be the normal human tendency to express all three kinds of reactive attitudes (towards oneself, directly towards others, indirectly on behalf of others). To the contrary, it looks as if those who experience oppression may excessively blame themselves due to internalized oppressive norms or a failure of uptake by other people in their moral communities. This chapter, then, is devoted to learning more about the structure of self-blame for the purpose of distinguishing between morally appropriate and inappropriate blame generally.

The first section of this chapter returns to the accounts of blame previously discussed in the dissertation to see what they have to say about self-blame. Upon doing so, I notice that the influential views either have little to say about self-blame or assume that the structure of interpersonal blame can be easily adapted to accommodate practices of self-blame. This gap in

the literature risks leaving those who blame themselves excessively due to oppressive norms without philosophical resources to think through the differences between appropriate and inappropriate self-blame. For example, it should be clear that there is an important difference between blaming oneself for experiencing sexual assault and blaming oneself for failing to support one's sister without a good excuse. It is morally inappropriate to think that a victim of sexual assault should blame herself, while it seems reasonable to expect someone to morally blame herself for failing to support her sister without a good excuse.

Taking my cue from feminist philosophers who begin from intersectional lived experiences of oppression, the second section of the chapter considers cases of self-blame under oppressive conditions, specifically the pervasiveness of (1) self-blame following sexual assault and (2) self-blame for remaining in an abusive relationship.[27] I discuss these cases because one might assume that, under non-oppressive conditions, someone would never blame themselves for being the victim or survivor of sexual violence.[28] However, under the current oppressive conditions in the United States, it is common for people who experience sexual assault or relationship violence to blame themselves and common for others to blame victims. Upon listening to these narratives, it becomes clear that those who wish to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate self-blame, without reinforcing oppressive norms, will need more

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[27] I am indebted to Kimberle Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" (1993). Crenshaw's article continues to hold me responsible when working on sexual violence, especially given my privileged position as a white, cis-gender woman working at Vanderbilt University. She argues, "The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite- that it frequently conflates or ignores intra group differences. In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. Moreover, ignoring differences **within** groups frequently contributes to tension **among** groups, another problem of identity politics that frustrates efforts to politicize violence against women." (1993: 1242)

[28] Throughout this chapter, I refer to "victims," "survivors," and "people who experience violence" because those who experience violence do not all self-identify in the same ways. It is most important when referring to someone who experiences violence to adopt the language **used by this person**, as not to further harm or isolate this person.

than what is currently offered by the contemporary philosophical accounts of blame.

To this end, in Section Three, I find it helpful to introduce some terminology offered by Bernard Williams in "Internal and External Reasons" (1981) and "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame" (1995). I borrow the terminology of internal and external reasons from Williams only insofar as I want to stress the difference between blaming oneself for failing on the basis of reasons of one's own and blaming oneself for failing on the basis of external reasons. I do this to safeguard against cases of blaming that amount to browbeating and oppression. It looks, then, as if appropriate self-blame has this internalist flavor. When we blame ourselves in ways that lead to self-revelation and self-transformation, we do so because we recognize that we failed to act on the basis of our own beliefs, desires, attitudes, and projects. Conversely, when we blame ourselves in excessive or pathological ways, this often takes the form of blaming ourselves for failing to act on the basis of some external, possibly oppressive, reason.

Of course, the differences between our internal and external reasons are not immediately transparent to us; Williams stresses the fact that some aspects of blame will always remain obscure to both the blamer and the blamed. Further, it looks as though we may need more than the distinction between internal and external reasons to capture what we might understand as "internalized" reasons, or reasons that are internal, but somehow alien, to our other beliefs, desires, attitudes, projects, etc. This might include a reason for action that we have internalized through habit, but would not endorse upon critical self-reflection. Talk of internalized reasons is difficult, though, especially in connection with blame. Are we to blame for actions motivated by internalized oppressive reasons? What is the difference between identifying an internalized but alien reason and changing one's mind? These are intriguing questions and I do not have clear answers, nor is it my primary aim in the dissertation to get to the bottom of this issue. But, in an

attempt to *begin* to understand how to identify and eradicate these internalized but alien

oppressive reasons, I conclude this section with a further discussion of Sandra Bartky's work on

the phenomenology of feminist consciousness as this process relates to critical self-reflection.

In the fourth section, I return to blame as such and argue that a careful look at self-blame

provides a novel foundation upon which we can distinguish between appropriate and

inappropriate blame generally. I develop my view of appropriate blame and explain how it

operates in cases of interpersonal blame, stranger blame, blaming the temporally distant dead,

and blaming institutions. The dissertation then concludes with suggestions for future work.

Self-blame in the Contemporary Literature

Contemporary accounts of blame make some mention of self-blame, but mostly as an

afterthought or as a form of apology. On the surface, Scanlon's view looks like it will struggle

the most to accommodate cases of self-blame given its focus on interpersonal relationships.

Scanlon anticipates this objection and describes self-blame in the following way:

> One can also blame **oneself** for one's own lack of ambition, or for other faults or transgressions. The very idea of blaming oneself may seem at first to present a difficulty for my account of blame, which emphasizes the defective character of the blamed person's relations with **others**. But this is not in fact a problem. To begin with, my account can easily allow for the fact that one can take oneself to be **blameworthy** for lacking proper concern for others. One can make a judgment of blameworthiness about oneself as well as about anyone else, friend or stranger. In all these cases this is a judgment about how the blamed person's relations with others are impaired. But when the person is oneself, and the judgment is about one's own relations with others, specifically about the attitudes they have reason to hold toward one, this gives rise to special concern, regret, and a desire to change things. These responses constitute **blame** of oneself: because of one's own attitudes toward and treatment of others, one can no longer endorse one's own feelings and actions, but must instead endorse the criticisms and accusations made against oneself by others. One cannot, so to speak, be one's own friend. (2008: 154)

He goes on to say that this estrangement from the self is uncomfortable, but we should be careful

not to rationalize away our discomfort by excusing our own actions without having good

excuses. He says that we can blame ourselves for character flaws that do not involve our treatment of others and this results in "an inability to 'count on' oneself" (2008: 155).

This treatment of self-blame spans less than two pages in Scanlon's book and his view of self-blame remains open to the same criticisms leveled by Wallace and McGeer regarding interpersonal blame. Scanlon accounts for self-blame as self-alienation, but does not consider the negative emotions that could arise from this kind of alienation, such as anger and guilt. Additionally, Scanlon does not say how one would begin the process of repairing one's relationship with oneself, which must necessarily take a different structure than interpersonal blame. Whereas it is possible for blame to achieve some kind of resolution through the act of distancing in the interpersonal cases, this does not look as promising for cases of self-blame.

Moving on, Sher also discusses self-blame in his belief-desire account, but this discussion is limited insofar as he too quickly collapses self-blame into apology. He explains:

> The final blame-related reaction that I will mention, apology, is a manifestation of self-blame rather than blame of another, but is in other respects quite similar to reproach. Like a reprimand but unlike a hostile gesture, every apology is necessarily an apology for something. Like a reprimand, too, an apology is always addressed to another person—in this case, the one we think we have wronged—in a way that alludes to the badness of what has been done. Because this allusion is again meant to be understood—because our apology will fall as flat as our reproach if our interlocutor does not know what we are talking about—apologizing also appears to have a communicative dimension. What we are trying communicate, and how the communication is related to blame itself, are as problematic here as in the case of reproach. (2006: 94)

He goes on to claim that self-blame as apology is necessarily "communicative" but does not necessarily involve negative emotions or attitudes. He writes, "it is perfectly possible to blame someone without being angry at him, without displaying any hostility toward him, without reproaching him" and argues that this disqualifies the negative reactive attitudes as fundamental in all cases of blame (Sher 2006: 96). It looks as if self-blame, then, is rendered indistinguishable from cases of self-directed regret or disappointment.

Furthermore, there may be important reasons to keep apology and self-blame distinct. Do all cases of self-blame manifest as apology? Are all apologies cases of self-blame? On Sher's view, this seems like the case, but there may be distinctions between self-blame and apology worth preserving. For example, Strawson notes that the self-reflective cases of blame prompt guilt as a reactive attitude (2008: 16). Given Sher's description of self-blame as apology (rather than apology as a possible result of self-blame), it is unclear how Sher's account can accommodate cases of self-blame which produce guilt but do not result in an apology.

Fricker also discusses the extension of her communicative view to cases of first-personal blame. Similar to Sher, Fricker thinks of self-blame exclusively in terms of remorse:

> First let me consider first-personal blame—self-blame. Self-blame is already indicated at the heart of the successful second-personal interaction, inasmuch as remorse entails self-blame. The remorseful wrongdoer must inevitably see herself as blameworthy. Communicative Blame, therefore, gives immediate rise to the reflexive phenomenon of self-blame. Indeed it is fitting to speculate that this is the primary setting in which we learn to hold ourselves responsible for our actions: through the discipline of others communicating their blame regarding what we have done. (2016: 177)

Recall that Fricker begins her article by identifying six features of appropriate blame and dismissing the corresponding pathological features of blame. She begins by arguing that for blame to be appropriate, the target of blame must be blameworthy. To be sure, this is an uncontroversial view in the literature on blame. Once Fricker stipulates this, it makes sense why she limits the response of the wrongdoer in appropriate blame to remorse. However, this runs a significant risk, namely that those who consider themselves blameworthy when they are not actually blameworthy will feel excessive remorse, in some cases due to pervasive oppressive norms. I fear that Fricker's dismissal of the pathologies that give blame a bad name, while well-intentioned, assumes more transparency than most people or situations actually afford.

When a view stipulates that, in order for blame to be appropriate, the blamed party must

actually be blameworthy, this invites further inquiry into what counts as blameworthy behavior. We can imagine garden variety cases of harms that would register as blameworthy to most people. I, though, am interested in more difficult cases, not cases in which someone refuses to take responsibility for their actions, but cases in which someone considers themselves excessively responsible and blames themselves for failing to live up to oppressive norms.

Some may be quick to dismiss these cases as obviously identifiable, but we need only think about the differing norms surrounding parenting and sexual activity in the United States to see that views on what counts as blameworthy behavior will differ vastly based on social, political, and religious values. This means that any view which stipulates that, in cases of appropriate blame, the blamed party must be blameworthy also should say something about who determines what counts as blameworthy. In the following section, I consider experiences of self-blame following sexual assault and relationship violence to demonstrate why stipulating a standard of blameworthiness without explicitly safeguarding against appeals to oppressive norms is not sufficient to make the cut between appropriate and inappropriate blame, especially for those who consider themselves excessively blameworthy due to these oppressive norms.

"Pardon My [Patriarchal, Oppressive] Language"

Victim-blaming is a common practice in contemporary United States culture. A recent Department of Justice investigation of the Baltimore Police Department unearthed evidence of systemic oppression against people, specifically women, who report sexual violence:

> …officers and detectives in BPD's Sex Offense Unit often question victims in a manner that puts the blame for the sexual assault on the victim's shoulders—for example, with questions suggesting the victims should feel personally responsible for the potential consequences of a criminal report on a suspect or for having engaged in behavior that invited the assault. In their interviews of women reporting sexual assault, for example, BPD detectives ask questions such as "Why are you messing that guy's life up?" (2016: 122)

It is not difficult to see how this is an example of oppressive behavior with Frye's definition in mind. The question, "Why are you messing that guy's life up?" clearly aims to put (or press) the person who experiences sexual assault back "in her place" within the oppressive patriarchal structure. The police officers press the victims of sexual assault to defend themselves for reporting. It is apparent why a woman might blame herself if members of her moral community refuse to listen to her attempts to express resentment towards the person who committed the assault. Questioning the sanity or standing of the victim as someone who can legitimately report harm occurs all-too-often when women experience sexual assault. The reality of what happened is denied by way of denying the agency or "purity" of those who experience sexual violence:

> We were also troubled by statements of BPD detectives suggesting an undue skepticism of reports of sexual assault. One victim advocate told us about a detective in the BPD Sex Offense Unit making comments at a party, in the company of BPD officers and victim advocates, that, "in homicide, there are real victims; all our cases are bullshit." When another person suggested the detective soften the statement, the detective added, "Ok, 90 percent." We also reviewed e-mail correspondence between a BPD officer and a prosecutor in which they openly expressed their contempt for and disbelief of a woman who had reported a sexual assault: the prosecutor wrote that "this case is crazy. . . I am not excited about charging it. This victim seems like a conniving little whore. (pardon my language)."; the BPD officer replied, "Lmao! I feel the same." (Department of Justice 2016: 122)

The prosecutor in the e-mail exchange demonstrates how it is possible for uptake to fail when a victim expresses resentment. The sentence—"This victim seems like a conniving little whore"—makes it clear that the word "victim" serves here only as a general legal category (reserved for the victims of "real" crimes like homicide). The prosecutor both calls the case "crazy" and suggests that the victim is undeserving of the State's time or attention. Even if the prosecutor and BPD officer pretend to treat the victim with respect to her face (and that's granting them a lot), the victim does not register as a person deserving of the opportunity to accuse someone of sexual assault, because she is "a conniving whore," which is, apparently, hilarious.

To laugh at someone's accusations of sexual violence is to act as if they do not have the standing to blame the person who assaulted them. When oppressive authorities engage in this behavior toward victims, the resentment of the victim often increases but has limited avenues for expression and uptake. The danger, of course, is that this resentment gets laughed at by authorities and, consequently, pushed back onto the victim herself; perhaps she thinks "maybe I am crazy" or "I guess I do deserve this because of how I was dressed." Here we see an example of how it would be possible for someone to begin expressing self-reflexive reactive attitudes like guilt excessively, systematically unable to express resentment directly due to the oppressive practices which determine who and what counts as blameworthy in the moral community.

In her influential book, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, Susan Brison argues for a relational understanding of human subjectivity. Brison claims that subjects are constituted through discourse with empathetic listeners. Given that subjects are "made" in relation to one another, subjects can also be "unmade" when "reduced to silence, to the status of an object, or, worse, made into someone else's speech, an instrument of another's agency" (2002: 116). She recounts being sexually assaulted, strangled multiple times, and left for dead in a ravine in France. She reviews conversations with medical professionals, law enforcement, prosecutors, therapists, and family members in the days, months, and years after the assault:

> Not surprisingly, I felt I was taken more seriously as a victim of a near-fatal murder attempt. But that description of the assault provided others with no explanation of what happened, no motivation on the part of my assailant. Later, when people asked me why this man tried to kill me, I revealed that it was a sexual assault, and most people were satisfied with this as an explanation. It made some kind of sense to them. But it made no sense to me. Although the most succinct and accurate description of what occurred now seems to me to be "attempted sexual murder," it still makes little sense to me, even though I am now more aware (than I was before the assault) of the genre (of crime, of pornography, of literature, of art) of sexual murder. (2002: 91)

The fact that those surrounding Brison were able to make sense of the connection between sexual assault and attempted murder betrays something important about the structure of society. Sexual assault is something understandable and expected under oppressive patriarchal social conditions. This does not mean, however, that accusations of sexual violence will be taken seriously by authorities, as demonstrated in the DOJ report on the Baltimore Police Department.

As Brison goes on to say in the book, girls and women are surrounded by information about the likelihood of their own seemingly inescapable experiences of rape from a very young age. Because girls and women live in a culture saturated with images and examples of sexual violence, we come to expect that we will one day be victims of sexual assault or rape ourselves. When this does happen, it is possible to think that "it was only a matter of time" or that we ought to blame ourselves for failing to follow the instructions of educators or authorities on how to "avoid" becoming victims of sexual violence. Either way, the experience feels familiar:

> Girls in our society are raised with so many cautionary tales about rape that, even if we are not assaulted in childhood, we enter womanhood freighted with postmemories of sexual violence. The postmemory of rape not only haunts the present, however, as do the postmemories of children of Holocaust survivors, but also reaches into the future in the form of fear, a kind of prememory of what, at times, seems almost inevitable: one's own future experience of being raped. Postmemories (of other women's rapes) are transmuted into prememories (of one's own future rape) through early and ongoing socialization of girls and women, and both inflect the actual experiences and memories of rape survivors. (2002: 87)

The combination of what Brison calls women's "prememories" of what seems like the "almost inevitable" future experience of sexual violence paired with the pervasiveness of victim-blaming creates an environment which facilitates self-blame for sexual violence. For example, if authorities do not believe me or they mock my attempts to express anger for what happened and I have grown up thinking that I was inevitably going to become a victim given the pervasiveness of sexual violence in my society, it is not difficult to imagine why I would ultimately blame

myself, as I may feel powerless to have control over any other aspects of my experience.

Additionally, people who remain in abusive relationships, though they are themselves

victims and survivors of violence, are often blamed for facilitating their abuse. The following

interview between NPR reporter Audie Cornish and Bev Gooden reveals how pervasive this is:

> **CORNISH**: Bev Gooden was no hashtag activist. She was an HR manager in Charlotte, North Carolina. But on September 8, she, like many of us, saw the video footage of NFL player Ray Rice punching his then-fiancée, Janay Palmer. And suddenly, Bev Gooden found something else to tweet about - domestic abuse.

> **GOODEN**: I tried to leave the house once after an abusive episode, and he blocked me. He slept in front of the door that entire night - #WhyIStayed.

> **CORNISH**: And then she sent out this.

> **GOODEN**: I stayed because my pastor told me that God hates divorce. It didn't cross my mind that God might hate abuse, too.

> **CORNISH**: And a little later, this one.

> **GOODEN**: He said he would change. He promised it was the last time. I believed him. He lied.

> **CORNISH**: This is how Bev Gooden told her friends, family and all of Twitter she'd once been in an abusive marriage, abuse she never reported to police. Now divorced, she felt herself getting riled up over the way people online were talking about Janay Palmer.

> **GOODEN**: I was watching these tweets in real-time, and they were overwhelmingly pointed at Janay. And they were asking why she stayed with Ray after, you know, the full video came out. And so everyone was saying, you know, well, she must want his money or she is stupid. And so in that moment, I was so angry, I kind of felt that guilt and shame come back. And I just kind of shut off these tweets just to kind of drive the point home that I had a reason, you know, that Janay probably has a reason, and that it's the wrong question.

> **CORNISH**: Why is it the wrong question?

> **GOODEN**: You know, it's the wrong question because there are so many other questions that are pertinent, such as are you OK? You know, how can I help you? What do you need?…But I think with all the criticisms, the key for me is that #WhyIStayed isn't an endorsement of staying in an abusive relationship. You know, rather it's simply providing an answer to society's question. They asked and we answered. There are many reasons why someone would stay. And domestic violence isn't cut and dry. It's not easy, you know, to just say well, he hit you, you'll leave. It's very complex. (2014)

The hashtag "#WhyIStayed" prompted hundreds of responses from women across Twitter explaining something which they ought not have to explain. In fact, reasons why some women remain in abusive relationships include fear that no one will believe them or fear that they will be understood as complicit in their own abuse. Furthermore, the risk of death at the hands of an abusive partner increases when someone who experiences relationship violence threatens to or actually leaves an abusive partner (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: 2016). Importantly, Bev Gooden calls out the oppressive structure of responses to violence aimed at victims; we ought to ask "Are you ok?" instead of "Why did you stay?"[29]

The practice of blaming the victim of domestic abuse becomes even more pronounced when there are children involved. Across the country there are "Failure to Protect" laws which are used to target "bad mothers" who, while experiencing abuse alongside their children, do not successfully report this abuse to authorities. In an excellent and infuriating article, Alex Campbell of Buzz Feed documents the use of "Failure to Protect" laws across the country to convict women of murder, child abuse, and neglect. Though the ruling of court in the following case was eventually overturned, the conviction of Victoria Phanthtaranth illuminates how both individual people and systems, like the criminal justice system, blame victims of abuse:

> "You know, this case has haunted me," Judge Kenneth Watson said in open court this March. Before him, in prison-standard jumpsuit, was a 24-year-old woman named Victoria Phanthtaranth. Just a year earlier, Watson, a state judge in Oklahoma City, had sentenced her to 35 years in prison.
>
> Now Watson was reconsidering her plight. In three and a half decades of practicing law, he said from the bench, "I've never had a case that has stuck with me the way this has stuck with me."

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[29] My intuition is that those who blame survivors of domestic violence do so in part to distance themselves from the idea that they too could be a victim of this kind of violence. This deflection or detachment from what happened may make some feel less anxiety and less fear for their own safety, but this momentary ease of worry upholds oppressive norms which contribute to women blaming themselves for their own abuse.

After Phanthtaranth's 3-year-old daughter Alexis died from a massive skull fracture, investigators determined that Alexis' stepfather Freddy Mendez had caused the fatal injuries. But there seemed to be little doubt that, at the very least, Phanthtaranth did little to stop him.

"Everybody just thought that she was complicit," Watson told BuzzFeed News. In a plea deal, she pled guilty to "murder by permitting child abuse."

Then Mendez's murder case went to trial, and Phanthtaranth testified for two days, under no promise of a lighter sentence. Mendez was convicted, but after the trial Watson's court reporter talked to jurors about Phanthtaranth's testimony. "Most of the women on the jury were just in tears about what had happened," Watson said.

Mendez's killing of little Alexis was brutal — he picked her up and slammed her into the ground — but so was his treatment of Phanthtaranth. One way he liked to get her attention, she told the court, was to grab her by the throat. A few weeks before he killed the girl, Mendez threw Phanthtaranth in his family's swimming pool, then he continued hitting her in the bedroom, pushing her into the closet. When he was done, he demanded that she make him a sandwich. He called her his maid and his slave.

Though Phanthtaranth had enlisted a friend to get out of a previous abusive relationship, she didn't tell the friend much about this one, because, she testified, she was "ashamed and embarrassed."

Prosecutors agreed to allow for a new hearing, in which Watson would decide whether to alter her sentence.

Phanthtaranth's ankle chains clinked as she ambled up to the witness stand. She was asked to raise her voice so everyone could hear her. Prosecutor Gayland Gieger asked what she would go back and change. "You know how many times I've thought about that?" she said.

She said she wondered whether she should have just killed Mendez — "forgive me for saying that," she told the court — or found some other way to get away from him. Her mind often wandered to the simple fact that she was holding her son as she watched her infant daughter suffer the fatal injuries. "Does it mean that I chose my son over my daughter?" she asked.

With both sides finished, Watson said he would impose a strict probation plan and suspend the remainder of Phanthtaranth's sentence. She is now free and works as a cashier. (2014)

Phanthtaranth's testimony and question to the judge exemplify what Frye calls a double bind; how should a mother choose between her daughter and her son? This question shows up the fact that this is no choice at all. Upon hearing about the death of a child at the hands of an

abusive family member, people often look to other family members and blame them for failing to

intervene. While the anger and sadness felt in response to a case like this may certainly elicit

indignation on behalf of the abused child, it is important not to blame another survivor of abuse

in response. This misdirected indignation and resentment contributes to self-blame on the part of

mothers caught, to borrow Frye's image, as if in a birdcage unable to intervene, leave, or blame

anyone but themselves. When patriarchal society blames the victims of sexual violence and

domestic abuse instead of those who perpetrate it, self-blame and guilt become more pervasive.

In "Untangling Self-Blame and Mother-Blame in Women's and Children's Perspectives

on Maternal Protectiveness in Domestic Violence: Implications for Practice" (2015), Moulding,

Buchanan, and Wendt argue, on the basis of their interviews with mothers and children who

experienced domestic abuse in the past, that legal and medical professionals ought to promote:

> …a critical perspective on the discourses that scaffold mother-blame for 'failure to
> protect', and the double bind of protection that they create, could deepen practitioners'
> understandings of the social forces that keep women in violent relationships and the risk
> to safety that this brings. Increased insight into the social construction of mother-blame
> could also provide a platform for practitioners to help women challenge assumptions
> about where responsibility for violence lies as part of developing conversations with
> women and children about expectations of fatherhood and the unacceptability of
> violence. (2015: 258)

The authors base this conclusion on their study consisting of interviews with nine mothers who

were "recruited through the South Australian Coalition of Domestic Violence Services while 16

individuals (14 women and 2 men) who self-identified as having grown up in domestic violence

were also recruited through this same coalition and through advertisements in the local press"

(2015: 251). [30] These interviews yielded the following narratives which I include to stress how

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[30] The authors describe their methodology in the following way: "Our study was based on a feminist social
constructivist perspective that emphasises the place of language in the construction of social reality and the
centrality of women's own perceptions and stories (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Sarantakos, 2005), in this
case, women's constructions of maternal protectiveness in domestic violence. We also drew on a relational
empowerment methodology that looked to create a communicative space, based in caring, to enhance individuals'

painful and, yet, common it is for women who are mothers to blame themselves for abuse

perpetrated by their partners against themselves and their children:

> **CHLOE**: 'So it [domestic violence] made me depressed… With my son I felt it. I felt like I neglected him and I still have a lot of guilt over that... I feel sorry because I… didn't want to pick him up – I was tired… I just didn't have enough for him… Yeah, so I feel really horrible about that… that's my guilt as a Mum with my post-natal [depression] not diagnosed, and my DV [domestic violence], yeah, not knowing what to do and how to cope.' (2015: 254)

> **ROSE**: 'And instead of following my instincts that I don't want to bring children up in that situation… I made those choices… I knew what he was like, I was angry at myself, very angry and it is hard to admit that… you made that mistake, you haven't done the right thing by your children.' (2015: 254)

> **CLARA**: '[The psychiatrist's] report [to the family court] said I was jealous and enmeshed and wanted to keep all their [the children's] love to myself…. the father was – what did he say? – a charming man that presented with a lovely English accent, delightful, and I was a woman of obvious low self-esteem….. Christ sake, it's very confusing when as a woman we're taught that we're meant to be quiet, well-behaved, rely on our instincts, and our emotions, have a good mothering instinct to protect our children, except from their father, you must not protect children from their father…. I saw him pick up our son when he was two and throw him across the room, and my son bounced off the wall and just sat on the floor stunned with his mouth open, unable to take a breath because he was so shocked, and when he finally did take a breath, he screamed and screamed and screamed… So then…. I'm supposed to leave the children with that person to look after? … and then I'm the one that's labelled as a bit crazy and obstructive and jealous when I don't want to?' (2015: 256)

I include these narratives in an attempt to center the experiences of those who have experienced

self-blame due to the oppressive norms and practices that redirect blame from perpetrators of

violence onto victims and survivors of violence. An analysis like this which focuses explicitly on

the relationship between blame and oppressive norms as they manifest in the lives of women

who experience domestic abuse is not nearly sufficient, but it is necessary and currently lacking

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abilities to clarify their feelings and thoughts (VanderPlaat 1998). Principles of relational empowerment require that knowledge creation is based on emotional authenticity between researchers and the researched that can be voiced through a communication of care. We therefore utilised skills of empathetic listening, attended to emotions and followed the narratives of women to build relationships in the interview setting." (2015: 251)

in the literature emerging on the meaning and value of blame as a moral practice.[31] In the

following section, I argue that once we differentiate between "internal" and "external" reasons,

we may be better equipped to begin to let go of inappropriate blame due to oppressive norms.

Reasons of One's Own

After considering some narratives of self-blame from those who have experienced sexual

violence and relationship abuse, it is clear that, in part, self-blame has to do with one's own

assessment of one's own blameworthiness based on one's perceived reasons for action. For

example, Rose claims that she made a mistake by bringing children into the world because she

knew that her partner was abusive. She blames herself because she "made those choices."

Similarly, Chloe regrets that she did not have enough energy and affection for her son because

she was dealing with, what she refers to as, "my DV." With a feminist ethics of care in mind, it is

understandable why both would blame themselves for the abuse experienced by their children

due to (1) the expectation in patriarchal culture that women, especially mothers, will attend to the

vulnerability of those in need and (2) the assumption in patriarchal culture that women are

responsible for providing a nurturing home/ private environment for their families and children.

In contrast, though, Clara calls into question a society in which women are taught that

"we're meant to be quiet, well-behaved, rely on our instincts, and our emotions, have a good

mothering instinct to protect our children, except from their father" (2015: 256). She

demonstrates how difficult it can be to differentiate between one's own reasons and the reasons

reinforced by patriarchal culture. We see, then, that to better understand self-blame, we will need

to explore some epistemological questions about what counts as a reason for action, when one is

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[31] I say that my analysis is not nearly sufficient because I have not come close to accounting for experiences of self-blame across a wide range of intersections which include experiences shaped by race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, nationality, and age. I hope to expand on this section in a longer version of the manuscript and welcome suggestions.

blameworthy for acting as a result of one's reasons, and when one is not blameworthy but *feels* blameworthy as a result of oppressive norms.

As one possible intervention into practices of blaming oneself due to oppressive norms, I find it helpful to introduce some terminology offered by Bernard Williams in his influential articles, "Internal and External Reasons" (1981) and "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame" (1995).[32] In these essays, Williams pursues an analysis of what it means for an agent to have a reason to perform some action, Φ. What does it mean for someone to have a reason to do something? Williams points out that the answer is ambiguous and provides two possible interpretations. The internalist about reasons for acting claims that in order for an agent to have a reason to Φ, it must be the case that performing this action bears the right relation to his own motivational set, or his "desires, evaluations, attitudes, projects, and so on" (1995: 35). An agent, then, must be able to reach a reason for action "by a sound deliberative route from the motivations he already has"(1995: 35). By contrast, the externalist about reasons does not maintain that there is a necessary connection between one's motivational set and one's reason to act. You may have an external reason to perform an action independent of your own desires, evaluations, attitudes, projects, etc. In other words, another person can claim that you have a reason to Φ without any concern for what motivates you in particular.

Importantly, our motivational sets are not completely transparent to ourselves or others.

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[32] Though it is not my intention to weigh in on the debate about internal and external reasons as such, I find Williams's account attractive insofar as he focuses on blame as hoping to achieve recognition by connecting with an agent's reasons for action and asking "How could you?" rather than by forcefully saying, "Look what you did!" This passage from Williams's "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame" captures the potential that I see in his work for safeguarding against oppressive deployments of blame: "Externalism is indeed external, and the image of blame that can be derived from its account of reasons, in failing to provide any way to engage with an agent's actual motivations, leaves us also without ethical resources. It gives us no way of understanding the difference between a blame that might hope to achieve recognition, and the blame that hopes by mere force to focus on the agent's reasons a judgement that represents in fact only a rejection (perhaps an entirely justified rejection) of what he has done. It leaves us, that is to say, in the condition of moralism." (1995: 44)

However, on the internalist view of reasons, when I act, I am motivated by a reason that I could reach through a sound deliberative route on the basis of my own motivational set. Williams offers two examples that demonstrate the difference between internal and external reasons. I include these examples to establish a basic difference between acting on the basis of reasons of one's own and acting on the basis of external reasons. First, consider the following example about a man who wants a gin and tonic, but mistakes a bottle of petrol for a bottle of gin:

> The agent believes that this stuff is gin when it is in fact petrol. He wants a gin and tonic. Has he reason, or a reason, to mix this stuff with tonic and drink it? …On the one hand, it is just very odd to say that he has a reason to drink this stuff, and natural to say that he has no reason to drink it, although he thinks that he has. On the other hand, if he does drink it, we not only have an explanation of his doing so (a reason why he did it) but we have such an explanation that is of the reason-for-action form. (Williams 1981: 102)

From the externalist perspective, it looks as if the agent did not have a reason to mix the drink. Why? It was petrol and not gin. But it is unclear that this is actually the case because the agent did have a reason to mix the drink motivated by his desire for a gin and tonic. This raises questions about what it means to have a reason for action and what relation this reason bears to one's motivational set, including one's beliefs, desires, evaluations, attitudes, and projects.

Williams also demonstrates the internalist view of reasons in the following example:

> One example of this, which is uncontentiously related to questions raised by the internalist view, is given by advice in the 'if I were you ...' mode. Taking other people's perspective on a situation, we hope to be able to point out that they have reason to do things they did not think they had reason to do, or, perhaps, less reason to do certain things than they thought they had. (1995: 36)

When we give advice, then, we do so on the basis of what we know about another person's motivations, beliefs, desires, projects, etc. Based on what we know about what motivates another person, we suggest a reason for her to act, that she could reach herself, on the basis of her motivational set. I borrow the terminology of internal and external reasons from Williams only insofar as I want to stress the difference between blaming oneself for failing on the basis of

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reasons of one's own and blaming oneself for failing on the basis of external reasons, including the oppressive demands present in society. It looks, then, as if appropriate self-blame has this internalist flavor about it. When we blame ourselves in ways that lead to self-revelation and self-transformation, we do so because we recognize that we failed to act on the basis of our own beliefs, desires, attitudes, and projects. Conversely, when we blame ourselves in excessive or pathological ways, this often takes the form of blaming ourselves for failing to act on the basis of some external, often oppressive, reason as discussed in the previous section.

Returning, then, to Rose's claim that she should have known better than to bring a child into the world, we might wonder about what Williams calls her "motivational set." It looks as if Rose had the desire to have a child and intended for mothering to be one of her life projects. It does not follow, though, that she is blameworthy because her desire and life project were impacted by the violent actions of her partner. She blames herself for making a mistake, but upon reflection, it seems clear that the only one to blame for the abuse of her child is the perpetrator of the abuse. Rose was not motivated to have a child by a reason or desire related to abuse. In this case, by focusing on Rose's reasons for action, it becomes apparent that she is not blameworthy. This may not convince Rose right away or at all, but I hope that it might interrupt some patterns of pathological or excessive self-blame by offering one possible way for those who blame themselves to ask, "**Why** am I blaming myself for what happened? **Should** I blame myself?"

Here I want to anticipate and respond to an important possible objection to my use of Williams on internal reasons to understand blame and self-blame related to sexual violence. On this view, it looks as if I would also need to consider the motivational set of someone who **perpetrates** violence, in order to say that he or she **has a reason** to stop acting this way. At least, I would have to think that this person could arrive at this conclusion through a sound deliberative

route. Many would object that it does not matter why a perpetrator acts; this person has a reason to stop abusing no matter what the contents of his or her motivational set. Williams offers one response to this possible objection by clarifying the scope of his claims about internal reasons:

> There are of course many things that a speaker may say to one who is not disposed to Φ when the speaker thinks that he should be, as that he is inconsiderate, or cruel, or selfish, or imprudent; or that things, and he, would be a lot nicer if he were so motivated. Any of these can be sensible things to say. But one who makes a great deal out of putting the criticism in the form of an external reason statement seems concerned to say that what is particularly wrong with the agent is that he is *irrational*. It is this theorist who particularly needs to make this charge precise: in particular, because he wants any rational agent, as such, to acknowledge the requirement to do the thing in question. (1981: 110)

Williams, then, makes it clear that one may be morally critical of perpetrators of abuse by deeming their actions cruel or unethical. The only thing that an internalist about reasons cannot say about perpetrators of abuse is that they are irrational. But, given how sexual violence and domestic abuse often unfold in contemporary U.S. culture, I do not see this as a setback for my view. While I understand the desire to call perpetrators "crazy" or "irrational," I do not think that this is necessary for moral condemnation. In fact, by taking an internalist approach to understanding reasons for action, we may come to see that patterns of sexual violence and domestic abuse are frighteningly rational, not only to perpetrators but to those who perpetuate oppressive norms in their moral communities. Recall Brison's claim that "it made sense" to those around her that her attacker would attempt to kill her after sexually assaulting her. Consider how often perpetrators of domestic violence rely on rationality to engage in the practice of "gas lighting" or making those who experience abuse feel crazy or irrational themselves. I take it that the primary complaint against those who commit abuse should not be that they are irrational, but rather should focus on holding them accountable for their lack of care toward others. This is another advantage of thinking about blame through the lens of a feminist ethics of care; this

approach does not start from rationality to establish moral responsibility. Insofar as we are all

vulnerable and dependent, we owe each other care and abuses of this vulnerability are abhorrent.

Insofar as the combination of a feminist ethics of care and Strawson's "Freedom and

Resentment" focused my attention on the lack of literature on appropriate and inappropriate self-

blame, I want to note an additional, but difficult, advantage of beginning from self-blame. It is

true that, under patriarchal oppressive conditions, women, girls, and gender nonconforming

people may blame themselves excessively for failing to live up to oppressive norms or failing to

receive uptake from oppressive listeners. Investigating the reasons why one blames oneself

offers an opportunity to begin the difficult process of parsing which examples of self-blame are

inappropriate (disconnected from one's values, projects, goals, and reasons) and which examples

of self-blame are appropriate (reflective of a genuine failure to meet one's expectations for

oneself based on one's values, projects, goals, and reasons). During this process, though, one

may realize that while blaming oneself excessively or pathologically due to oppressive norms,

one also perpetuated oppressive norms. Cherrí Moraga explains this possible danger:

> He [the oppressor] fears he will discover in himself the same aches, the same longings as those of the people he has shitted on. He fears the immobilization threatened by his own incipient guilt. He fears he will have to change his life once he has seen himself in the bodies of the people he has called different. He fears the hatred, anger, and vengeance of those he has hurt.
>
> This is the oppressor's nightmare, but it is not exclusive to him. We women have a similar nightmare, for each of us in some way has been both oppressed and oppressor. We are afraid to look at how we have failed each other. We are afraid to see how we have taken the values of our oppressor into our hearts and turned them against ourselves and one another. We are afraid to admit how deeply "the man's" words have been ingrained in us. To assess the damage is a dangerous act. I think of how, even as a feminist lesbian, I have so wanted to ignore my own homophobia, my own hatred of myself for being queer. I have not wanted to admit that my deepest personal sense of myself has not quite "caught up" with my woman-identified politics… Similarly, in a white-dominated world, there is little getting around racism and our own internalization of it. It's always there, embodied in some one we least expect to rub up against.

When we do rub up against this person, *there* then is the challenge. *There* then is the opportunity to look at the nightmare within us. But we usually shrink from such a challenge. (1981: 32-33)

When reflecting on one's tendency to blame oneself, it is possible that self-blame emerges as double-edged. Yes, it is inappropriate to blame oneself for failing to conform to oppressive norms, but it is also possible that, in trying to conform to these standards, one has become appropriately blameworthy for preserving the oppression others, especially as taking an intersectional approach means that, while one may have inappropriately blamed oneself due to sexist norms, one may be appropriately blameworthy for perpetuating racist or classist norms. This demonstrates the importance of considering blame a process through which we learn uncomfortable lessons about ourselves. This process can bring to the surface deep-seated biases which have taken up residence in our motivational sets, but it is up to us to decide whether we will confront or ignore what we learn about ourselves from blaming ourselves and others.

Finally, thinking about deep-seated biases invites further reflection on the possible presence of "internalized" but alien reasons in our motivational sets. It is not readily apparent to us that we have internalized a reason until we have occasion to become conscious of a contradiction between that reason for action and our other reasons, beliefs, desires, attitudes, projects, etc. As Bartky explains, in feminist movements, this has been called the process of "consciousness-raising" and often takes place when one notices and experiences contradiction:

What triggered feminist consciousness most immediately, no doubt, were the civil rights movement and peace and student movements of the sixties; while they had other aims as well, the latter movements may also be read as expressions of protest against the growing bureaucratization, depersonalization, and inhumanity of late capitalist society. Women often found themselves forced to take subordinate positions within these movements; it did not take long for them to see the contradiction between the oppression these movements were fighting in the larger society and their own continuing oppression in the life of these movements themselves. (1990: 13)

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Noticing contradictions, though, does not only occur on the level of social movements. As we become aware of the influence that oppression has had on our development, socialization, moral commitments, and future aims, we experience an on-going process of self-transformation:

> To develop feminist consciousness is to live a part of one's life in a sort of **ambiguous ethical situation** which existentialist writers have been most adept at describing. Here it might be objected that the feature of feminist experience I have been describing is characteristic not of a fully emergent feminist consciousness but of periods of transition to such consciousness, that the feminist is a person who has chosen her moral paradigm and who no longer suffers the inner conflicts of those in ambiguous moral predicaments. I would deny this. Even the woman who has decided to be this new person and not that old one, can be tormented by recurring doubts. (1990: 20)

Bartky's discussion of what feminist consciousness raising feels like can inform how we think about the differences between appropriate and inappropriate self-blame. On my view, appropriate self-blame asks, "How could I have done this?" This occasions reflection on our motivations and reasons for action. This is not easy work. We might talk through our reasons for action with a friend or counselor. We might come to see that we acted on a reason that we no longer endorse or a reason that was so deeply ingrained in our motivational set from our upbringing that we did not realize it was a part of our motivational set at all. This process, though difficult, results in learning about ourselves and thinking about who we want to be in the future. In contrast, inappropriate self-blame takes the form of saying, "Look what I did!" This does not invite self-reflection and often induces excessive or pathological guilt. In these cases, it is entirely possible that we blame ourselves for something that is not our fault, but appears to be our fault due to oppressive expectations placed on us, which we have internalized over time.

This discussion by no means exhausts the relationship between internal, external, and internalized reasons, but I'm suspicious of any account that claims to neatly distinguish between these three without saying that there will always be ambiguity and self-doubt present in our attempts to interrogate our reasons for action. With Held's claim that "care is both value and

practice" in mind, it seems most important to take this ambiguity seriously while caring about how to best blame ourselves and others, as we will inevitably fall short of who we want to be. The next section elaborates on my positive view of blame and extends this view from the self to interpersonal cases and cases involving strangers, the temporally distant dead, and institutions.

Blame Reconsidered

Having suggested a new way to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate self-blame, we can now extend these observations to blame as such. Here is my basic account of appropriate blame.[33] Blame is an emotionally charged moral address that opens up the space for consideration of one's motivations and reasons for action in the form of the question, "How could you?" This occurs in the context of a moral conversation or conflict where the blamer calls on the blamed to account for herself. Yet, in doing so, the blamer renders herself vulnerable to the possibility that she may be mistaken. This means that the blamer must actively listen to the response from the blamed, which may take the form of an excuse, an exemption, or the realization on the part of the blamer that she did not have the proper moral standing to blame.

So, blame, on my view, has a few important features. First, blame is not unidirectional. It should not take the form of one-sided domination or control. Blame is the beginning of a moral exchange, a conversation or a conflict. In blaming, the blamer makes herself vulnerable to the possibility that she may be wrong about what happened or wrong to blame in the first place. The blamer is also vulnerable to recognizing that her expectations are not transparent or universal. Upon learning more about the norms and practices of other moral communities, the blamer may realize that she was relying on stereotypes or assumptions when she blamed. Importantly, blaming someone has as much to do with addressing them as actively listening to them.

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[33] For the remainder of this section, all references to "blame" refer to "appropriate blame" unless otherwise noted.

At this point, I realize that some may not follow me in thinking that victims of sexual violence owe perpetrators the opportunity to explain why they perpetrated assault or on-going abuse. Contact between victims and perpetrators of abuse may be dangerous. I agree with this wholeheartedly. On my view, though, it will be important for members of the moral community to ask the person who commits a harm, "How could you have done this?" in an attempt to prevent future harms and interrogate possible oppressive norms operative in that moral community. I do not think that victims ought to have to listen to the reasons that motivated those who harmed them. I do think, however, that encouraging both victims and fellow members of moral communities to ask the person who commits a harm, "How could you have done this?" may prevent self-blame and victim-blaming following sexual assault and domestic abuse by keeping the focus on the person who acted violently.

Second, blame is most often emotionally charged. Blame opens up a space for us to consider the motivations of self and others. The difficulty is in remembering that blame does not often begin as a cool, emotionless consideration of these motivations. We get angry and resent ourselves and others. We express outrage; we feel ashamed. It's often ugly. Yet, the presence of these emotions need not get in the way of a moral exchange. In fact, these emotions may serve as evidence that we *care* and want to better understand how someone (including ourselves) could act in certain ways. Recalling the basic features of a feminist ethics of care, this can lead to personal and interpersonal transformations that do not neglect the importance of emotions.

Third, blame does not assume that our reasons for acting are transparent to ourselves or others. As Williams notes, "[blame] must very often be obscure to those who are blaming, and quite probably indeterminate in itself, what the motivational state is of the person being blamed" (1995: 43). As Bartky explained, coming to understand one's motivations under oppressive

conditions can include long periods of ambiguity and self-doubt. The productive value of blame, then, does not lie in dissecting a situation until your anger or sadness or shame is assuaged by certainty or apology. Instead, blame operates in the obscure world of human motivations and emotions, which are not often transparent. Despite the obscurity and ambiguity, though, I think that blame is a *process* with the potential to facilitate critical reflection and transformation.

Fourth, and this requires some more explanation, one's standing to blame another person matters. With Strawson's discussion of the participant attitude and Held's description of the self as interdependent in mind, it makes sense that the relationship between blamer and blamed should play a role in determining when blame is appropriately wielded. Here, it is instructive to consider a recent article by Macalester Bell on standing conditions to blame. In "The Standing to Blame: A Critique" (2013), Bell challenges theories that claim that standing plays a central role in blaming practices. These standard accounts posit that it is not enough for the target of blame to be blameworthy; the blamer also must have the proper standing to blame the wrongdoer. Bell identifies four different standing conditions, (1) the Business Condition, (2) the Contemporary Condition, (3) the Nonhypocricy Condition, and (4) the Noncomplicity Condition.[34] Bell offers critical responses to each of these conditions with the aim of convincing readers that the standard account of standing in blame should be rejected. She notes that defenders of the standard account claim that standing conditions "provide a bulwark against moralism and excessive condemnation" (2013: 279).

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[34] The first condition is the Business Condition. Bell explains, "According to the most prominent version of this line of thought, standing to blame is analogous to the doctrine of standing in law" (2013: 269). However, Bell also recognizes that there are those who defend the Business Condition on moral grounds "arguing that when we blame without standing we evince a moral fault," such as the failure to respect the privacy of another (2013: 270). The second condition is the Contemporary Condition which "states that the blamer must inhabit the same moral community as the person blamed" (2013: 271). The third condition is the Nonhypocricy Condition. This condition claims that "one forfeits one's standing to blame if one manifests the same flaw that one attempts to criticize in another" (2013: 272). Finally, because of the Noncomplicity Condition, "one's standing to blame is compromised if one is complicit in the wrongdoing that is the focus of one's blame" (2013: 276).

Bell rejects this claim stating that "the standard account seems to encourage the very moralism that its defenders decry. If the only people with the standing to blame are those with pristine moral records, this suggests that blame is a kind of privilege that is given as a reward to the morally pure. This strikes me as a highly moralistic, and disturbing, characterization of blame" (2013: 279). It is not difficult to imagine the kind of "morally pure" blamer that Bell describes. Right-wing conservative politicians and religious spokespeople often claim that those who engage in what they call "impure" practices ought not weigh in on debates surrounding "family values." Yet, as with the case of Josh Duggar, we often learn that those blaming "secular society" for the downfall of "American family values" are anything but moral saints. So I agree with Bell that strict adherence to the Nonhypocricy and Noncomplicity Conditions may reinforce the kind of moralism that advocates of the standard account claim to want to prevent.

That said, I am not convinced that we should reject standing conditions as such. Specifically, I think that we should engage in a closer analysis of the Business Condition. Bell's main target in this section is Angela Smith, who argues for "a well-developed sense of what is and is not 'our business'" in order to promote the "smooth functioning of society" (2013: 270):

> Smith asks us to imagine attending a party where we encounter a man who constantly interrupts and belittles his wife's contributions to the conversation. She argues that blaming the husband would be morally inappropriate unless one is a close associate of the couple (2007: 478). For her, the Business Condition is justified because we ought to respect persons' privacy. (2013: 270 [the internal reference is Bell citing Smith])

According to Bell, Smith's interpretation is flawed in three ways. First, Bell claims that blaming the husband for his publicly expressed derogatory remarks does not obviously violate his privacy. Second, Bell thinks that, in Smith's example, would-be blamers who are not a close associates of the couple would need to divulge information about themselves in order to establish their standing as someone who can appropriately condemn the husband for his behavior. Bell

says, "In this way, the standard account has the potential to lead to greater violations of privacy than standingless blame" (2013: 271). Third, Bell thinks that even if the would-be blamer violated the privacy of the wrongdoer, this should not disqualify the blamer from expressing blame: "Blamers may evince all sorts of moral faults in their critical interventions, but these faults need not undermine the moral appropriateness of reproach in every instance" (2013: 271).

It is uncontroversial to think that the husband in Smith's example deserves to be told that he is behaving badly. But there are two concerns that I have with standingless blame in cases where something is "none of our business." Both deal with the relationship between the would-be blamer and the wife in the dinner party case. I agree with Bell that intervention should not be restricted on the basis of respecting the privacy of the husband. However, I am struck by Bell's lack of discussion of the wife. If we widen our analysis of the situation beyond blamer and wrongdoer to consider the position of the wife, this case becomes complicated in ways that convince me to hesitate before endorsing standingless blame across the board.

According to Bell, lack of standing should not prevent a would-be blamer from morally criticizing the husband. Let us imagine that a bystander does interrupt the husband and blame him for his behavior. How does this impact the wife? Perhaps she feels emboldened to join in the criticisms of her husband. Perhaps she tells the bystander to "mind her own business" or affirms her husband by saying that he was right to belittle her contributions. These are just a few of the possible outcomes that could result if a bystander blamed the husband. These outcomes do not seem so objectionable that the blamer would be left thinking "It was not my place to intervene."

Now, let's consider two additional possible outcomes. First, imagine that a bystander condemns the husband for belittling his wife. The wife becomes upset with the bystander for speaking on her behalf. Perhaps the wife planned to intervene on her own behalf, in her own

words. Maybe the wife knows that it is fitting to blame her husband but does not think that the party is the place to do so for any number of good reasons. Second, imagine that a bystander condemns the husband. After the party, as we know is often the case with domestic violence, this makes things worse. Although the bystander intended to condemn the husband and defend the wife, the wife suffers additional abuse because of the bystander's intervention.

These possible outcomes give me pause. The first case raises questions about the agency of the wife. As would-be blamers, should we intervene on behalf of any victim of wrongdoing? It is conceivable that speaking for the wife in this case could further silence her and undermine her agency as a would-be blamer. Is this a risk that a bystander ought to take in order to condemn a wrongdoer? Maybe. It is true that bystanders ought to intervene in some cases of wrongdoing. As Bell notes, "We should pay attention to the critical activities of those around us even when we do not have a clear stake in the criticism" (2013: 280). I do not disagree, however, I think that we need a more nuanced account of when and, more importantly, **how** a bystander should intervene. To this end, those of us working on blame might consider consulting ethical arguments for and against speaking for others. This leaves me thinking that standing should play a role in identifying cases of appropriate blame, if only because I do not think that we have thought enough about who ought to blame when a group witnesses wrongdoing.

One last thought about standing. Because I analyze blame not only through the lens of Strawson and feminist care ethics, but also as a practice that can reinforce oppression, it seems important to consider how the Business Condition operates in critical discussions about the role that allies should play in "calling out" oppressive practices. Though it certainly is not the case that people should think of white supremacy, misogyny, classism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, or ableism as "none of their business," I am committed to a view that centers the needs

and experiences of those most directly impacted by oppression. Sometimes, this may mean that we step aside or serve as allies in order to support the blaming practices of those most impacted.

Regarding the features of blame introduced earlier in the dissertation, my view is relational, expressive, affective, and both backward and forward-looking. While acknowledging that more work must be done to unpack the specifics of how this account plays out across moral conversations and conflicts, I see my view as extensionally adequate and minimally revisionary. In addition to accommodating cases of self-blame, my account of blame can make sense of blaming strangers, the temporally distant dead, and institutions.

With strangers, we can imagine the following case: I blame someone I do not know. In blaming, I say, "account for yourself." This opens up the space where I can consider possible motivations and reasons for action of the person I am blaming, including the possibility that she has a good excuse. The blamed person may not be able to physically speak back to me, but I can remain open to learning more about (1) her motivations and (2) my claim that she did something blameworthy. This is not easy work. It may be the case that we have immediate access to the motivations and reasons for actions of a stranger. Perhaps this person has published their aims; perhaps this person provided testimony clarifying their reasons for action. It may be that we do not know the identity of the stranger and must do our best to imagine someone in that position.[35] But it is important not to blame strangers too quickly, especially given the inaccuracy of,

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[35] One might wonder, how can we imagine the situation of a stranger? (A version of Meno's paradox: How will you look for something that you do not know at all?) Here I think it is instructive to consider the role that art and literature can play in the development of our moral practices. Iris Murdoch convincingly argues that art offers us the opportunity to observe moral conflicts in an unselfish way; fiction offers us access to worlds and relationships beyond our own. She thinks that we can only develop strong moral habits by considering moral problems and duties within context: "Art then is not a diversion or a side-issue, it is the most educational of all human activities and a place in which the nature of morality can be seen. Art gives a clear sense to many ideas which seem more puzzling when we meet with them elsewhere, and it is a clue to what happens elsewhere" (1997: 372). It is possible, then, that we can develop our habits as moral blamers by engaging with art that invites us to ask of characters, "How could you?" in culturally and historically diverse contexts.

especially criminal, convictions in the United States. Take, for example, the experience of those known as "The Central Park Five." As made clear in the recent documentary about their wrongful conviction and imprisonment:

> In 1989, five black and Latino teenagers from Harlem were arrested and later convicted of brutally beating and raping a white woman in New York City's Central Park. New York Mayor Ed Koch called it the "crime of the century" and it remains to date one of the biggest media stories of our time. The five each spent between 6 and 13 years in prison before a shocking confession from a serial rapist and DNA evidence proved their innocence. Set against a backdrop of a decaying city beset by violence and racial tension, THE CENTRAL PARK FIVE tells the story of how five lives were upended by the rush to judgment by police, a sensationalist media and a devastating miscarriage of justice. (The Central Park Five, @TheCentralParkFive 2012)

In this case, evidence including the forced confessions of those involved, suggested that they were blameworthy of assault and rape. However, this was not the case. When blaming strangers, it seems important not to quickly jump to conclusions before interrogating the evidence and possible oppressive forces at play; it is far too tempting to blame someone from a distance without making a good faith effort to consider the specifics of the particular case.

The same holds true in cases of the temporally distant dead. Just because someone is dead does not mean that we cannot blame them and attempt to understand their motivations, possibly through letters, diaries, autobiographies, and other sources. Again, this may be hard work. But I hope that it has become clear that I do not take blaming lightly. The process of blaming the temporally distant dead calls for active inquiry and what Watson has called "interpretive generosity" or adopting an interpretation of others that does not cast them "simply as losers, as weak, as irredeemably defective in ways that differentiate them significantly from you and me" (2013: 290). Now, sometimes, this will result in determining that we are right to blame those of the past for their actions, especially because these actions continue to animate our current social,

political, and economic realities. In his now well-known article for *The Atlantic*, "The Case for Reparations," Ta-Nehisi Coates has argues the following convincingly:

> We invoke the words of Jefferson and Lincoln because they say something about our legacy and our traditions. We do this because we recognize our links to the past—at least when they flatter us. But black history does not flatter American democracy; it chastens it. The popular mocking of reparations as a harebrained scheme authored by wild-eyed lefties and intellectually unserious black nationalists is fear masquerading as laughter. Black nationalists have always perceived something unmentionable about America that integrationists dare not acknowledge—that white supremacy is not merely the work of hotheaded demagogues, or a matter of false consciousness, but a force so fundamental to America that it is difficult to imagine the country without it.
>
> And so we must imagine a new country. Reparations—by which I mean the full acceptance of our collective biography and its consequences—is the price we must pay to see ourselves squarely. The recovering alcoholic may well have to live with his illness for the rest of his life. But at least he is not living a drunken lie. Reparations beckons us to reject the intoxication of hubris and see America as it is—the work of fallible humans.
>
> Won't reparations divide us? Not any more than we are already divided. The wealth gap merely puts a number on something we feel but cannot say—that American prosperity was ill-gotten and selective in its distribution. What is needed is an airing of family secrets, a settling with old ghosts. What is needed is a healing of the American psyche and the banishment of white guilt.
>
> What I'm talking about is more than recompense for past injustices—more than a handout, a payoff, hush money, or a reluctant bribe. What I'm talking about is a national reckoning that would lead to spiritual renewal. Reparations would mean the end of scarfing hot dogs on the Fourth of July while denying the facts of our heritage. Reparations would mean the end of yelling "patriotism" while waving a Confederate flag. Reparations would mean a revolution of the American consciousness, a reconciling of our self-image as the great democratizer with the facts of our history. (2014)

Coates makes clear that it is possible to interrogate and blame the actions of those in the past and the present for the purpose of a forward-looking aim. He locates white guilt as one possible answer to the question, "How could you do that?" and argues that this is not a morally convincing excuse. (I agree.) Any account of blame that hopes to safeguard against oppressive deployments of blame must also take seriously how past oppressive deployments of blame continue to inform practices in our contemporary moral communities. Coates calls for "a reconciling of our self-image" on the national scale; here we see how starting from self-blame

for the purpose of self-reflection and self-transformation can inform collective blame as well.

Finally, insofar as institutions are often the targets of blame, much more work needs to be done on exactly who or what we blame when we blame institutions. One might imagine blaming the people in power, or critically assessing the mission statement of a particular organization as a means of asking, "How could you?" Though it is not yet clear to me exactly how to understand institutional blame, I consider it especially important given its ability to provoke members of moral communities to investigate their own complicity in supporting blameworthy institutions. When doing this work, it will be important to differentiate between institutions like *corporations* as opposed to institutions like white supremacy. Given that social and political philosophers talk about both in terms of institutional power, we will need an account of how to talk back in the form of asking institutions, "How could you do this?" While I can easily imagine this question posed to corporations, police, and government agencies in the form of protest or petition, it is more difficult to begin to imagine how to question dominant institutions like patriarchy. Perhaps the answer lies in targeting more specific institutions and people who support patriarchy. In any case, this is a productive area for future work on appropriate and inappropriate blame.

In addition to being extensionally adequate, my approach is also minimally revisionary insofar as I do not attempt to "sanitize blame" or conflate our blaming practices with other moral phenomena. For example, blame, as opposed to guilt and shame, stands out to me as the beginning of a moral exchange. The practice of blaming does not make a definitive claim about the wrongness of an action or the badness of a person. It creates the conditions for further interrogation of the motivations and expectations of self and others. Blame opens the space to question the motivations of self and others, but this is not easy or formulaic. On my view, the obscurity is not a problem, though. I am trying to determine if blame has positive value in our

moral lives. Insofar as blame directs our attention to the motivations of self and others through moral address aimed at learning about ourselves and others in morally productive ways, I see positive value in it. Blame, on my account, involves active listening in response to calling out, and it is difficult for me to imagine our moral lives and practices without this.

Conclusion

I think it important to conclude with a discussion of what I did not consider in this dissertation, specifically the importance of interrogating practices of apology and forgiveness in addition to practices of blame. Because I argue that blame ought to be understood as a dynamic process through which we can clarify motivations and reasons for action, blame is much more than a judgment of blameworthiness on the part of a blamer or the desire that things had been different in the past. This said, blame is not a process that should linger beyond its moral usefulness. Recall Audre Lorde's comments on anger in the preface, "I have used learning to express anger for my growth. But for corrective surgery, not guilt. Guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against which we all flounder; they serve none of our futures" (1984: 124). While I do not think that we ought to rush to dispense with expressing blame or the negative emotions that come along with blame, it does seem crucial to keep the moral purpose of blame in mind, lest we fall into excessive or pathological patterns of blaming ourselves and others.

Regarding the relationship between apology and forgiveness, it seems necessary not to immediately collapse these two. In the same way that we encounter our blaming practices within the context of a social and political world, we see that some practices of apology and forgiveness are deeply entrenched in dogmatic, often religiously dogmatic, institutions. We ought to be vigilant to explore the historical roots of our practices of apology and forgiveness in order to determine why they have force in our moral lives. Is forgiveness powerful because members of moral communities are reminded of the shared ability to make mistakes and change future behavior? Or does forgiveness reinforce oppressive norms, such as requiring women to seek the

forgiveness of male figures of authority in order to be "saved" or "spared" from eternal harms?[36] Theorists and genealogists of apology and forgiveness ought to (1) track important differences between these two terms and (2) pay careful attention to the social and political contexts within which these moral practices are deemed appropriate or inappropriate.

Additionally, in this dissertation, I do not describe in detail the structures or attributes of the emotions that most often accompany practices of blame, such as guilt, shame, anger, resentment, and indignation. While I note that Strawson (and Wallace after him) aligns guilt with the first personal, resentment with the second personal, and indignation with the third personal, I do not claim that these are the only or the most important emotions to consider when theorizing our blaming practices. With Williams, I am convinced that blame will always have obscure aspects, but, in each instance of blame, we ought to consider to the best of our ability what work these negative emotions are doing for us. How can I use my anger or my sadness to transform myself and my community? This does not assume that we have complete control over our expressions of emotion, but does challenge us to reflect while we cry, to take care while we rage.

Next, while the blaming practices discussed in the dissertation are restricted to our moral exchanges that do not fall primarily under the heading of "criminal justice," I want to make clear my commitment to a radical rethinking of criminal and judicial practices in the United States. My work for the past three years with men on death row in Nashville has convinced me that

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[36] Here I have in mind Pope Francis's 2015 declaration that Catholic priests have the temporary ability (without getting special permission from a bishop) to forgive women who have had abortions. The pope wrote: "I have met so many women who bear in their heart the scar of this agonizing and painful decision. What has happened is profoundly unjust; yet only understanding the truth of it can enable one not to lose hope. The forgiveness of God cannot be denied to one who has repented, especially when that person approaches the Sacrament of Confession with a sincere heart in order to obtain reconciliation with the Father. For this reason too, I have decided, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, to concede to all priests for the Jubilee Year the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it. May priests fulfil this great task by expressing words of genuine welcome combined with a reflection that explains the gravity of the sin committed, besides indicating a path of authentic conversion by which to obtain the true and generous forgiveness of the Father who renews all with his presence." (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2015)

mass incarceration is not necessary to uphold justice. As opposed to a punishment-based retributive model of justice, I endorse transformative justice, theorized by the child abuse prevention organization, Generation Five, as a response "to the lack of—and the critical need for—a liberatory approach to violence. A liberatory approach seeks safety and accountability without relying on alienation, punishment, or State or systemic violence, including incarceration and policing" (2007: 5). I see my account of blame as consistent with transformative justice models and will further elaborate on this relationship in future work.

Finally, though I have attempted through my source material, to take an intersectional approach, there is much more work to be done on how self-blame and blame manifest differently across the nexus of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, nationality, and age. I was first attracted to blame as a dissertation topic because it seemed like something that we do every day, but we do not do very well. I aimed to engage with the contemporary philosophical literature on blame, while simultaneously consulting feminist sources, which have not been a part of this conversation to date. Additionally, I noticed a gap in the literature concerning self-blame and recognized the importance of addressing self-blame in depth. With this in mind, I conclude with a passage from Adrienne Rich's *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, as a reminder of the ethical and political importance of seeking self-knowledge and interrogating practices of self-blame. Rich provides an eloquent justification for my project, in which I brought together sources unlikely to otherwise speak to each other, for the purpose of better understanding myself and others:

> Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history; it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society… We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it, not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (1979: 35)

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